
MEDIEVAL CROSSOVER

Reading the Secular against the Sacred

BARBARA NEWMAN



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PREFACE

Jack shall have Jill;

Nought shall go ill;

The man shall have his mare again,

And all shall be well.

—*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, III.ii.461–64

A Midsummer Night's Dream is the perfect secular comedy. It ends with a few marriages, resolves the absurd twists of its plot, and lets everyone live happily ever after. The supernatural is present, as it must be in every fully imagined world—but the fairies are not angels, and Puck is no devil. Rather, he is the mischievous sprite who declaims these lines as complication bends its merry course toward resolution. Such a comedy is inconceivable in the Middle Ages. Though “all shall be well” is a celebrated medieval refrain, it occurs in a wholly different context where the agent of restoration is—not Puck. The reason that purely secular comedy (or tragedy) cannot exist in a medieval frame of reference is

simple, but this kind of simplicity can be so obvious as to elude our sight. Sacred and secular coexist in our world, after all, just as they did in the Middle Ages. But for us, the secular is the normative, unmarked default category, while the sacred is the marked, asymmetrical Other. In the Middle Ages it was the reverse.

In American culture, “sacred music” and “gospel” are niche markets within the wide world of music, which is presumed secular unless stated otherwise. The same holds true of “spirituality” and “Christian fiction” as publishers’ categories. So thoroughly has secularism become our default that even the religious speak of “giving God a place in their lives,” as if he were lucky to get a slice of the pie. This way of thinking would again have been impossible in a medieval context. By saying this I do not wish to revive the old cliché about an Age of Faith, for levels of faith varied then as they do now, if less openly.¹ What I mean is rather that the sacred was the inclusive whole in which the secular had to establish a niche. That is why the profane appears so ubiquitously in the mode of parody: gargoyles on cathedral roofs, obscene marginalia in books of hours, marital squabbles on misericords, lecherous monks in fabliaux, foxes preaching to hens in beast epics, and so forth. Despite generations of wishful thinking by scholars, little if any of this is transgressive, any more than the shelves of spiritual self-help books at Barnes & Noble are subversive of capitalism. For to parody the sacred is emphatically to engage with it, not to create an autonomous secular sphere. The sacred might be viewed with skeptical, profane, or jaded eyes, but it was still the sacred.

In many ways, the Middle Ages needed the classical world in order to imagine a secular one. Only a pre-Christian worldview, complete in itself, might compete—if not on equal terms, then at least on its own footing—with the sacred world bounded by Creation and Doom. But even so, the sacred tended to reemerge at the very least as a framing device. Medieval chroniclers could fit all of classical history within a narrative framed by the six biblical ages, just as allegorists could accommodate any number of pagan deities in their Christian mythogra-

1. Steven Justice, “Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?” *Representations* 103 (2008): 1–29.

phies. Dante's *Commedia* encloses a capacious secular sphere, both ancient and modern, within the sacred without remainder. Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, which for most of its gorgeous length is humanistic, classical, and pagan, ends with a jarring Christian turn, just as the *Knight's Tale* ends with Boethian providence, the *Canterbury Tales* as a whole with the Parson, and the poet's career with the Retractions. Even Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the closest thing to a secular comic masterpiece that the Middle Ages produced, begins with the Black Death and ends with Griselda, whose allegorical purport was obligingly spelled out by Petrarch. But if *A Midsummer Night's Dream* still classicizes, it is in name only, for there is little of the Athenian about Shakespeare's befuddled lovers. What sets Renaissance humanism apart from medieval humanism is neither a love of the classical nor a penchant to mock the holy, for both had been alive and well for centuries. It is rather the imagining of a secular realm that could, but did not necessarily, engage in any way with the sacred.

This book is about the terms of engagement between sacred and secular before the early modern shift. It interprets the secular as always already in dialogue with the sacred, and it probes that dialogue's many modes. For convenience I refer to this dialectical relationship as "crossover" by analogy with contemporary works that combine distinct genres, such as the graphic novel and the rock opera. In those genres an elite art form (literary fiction, opera) melds seamlessly with a popular one (comic books, rock music). Without pushing the comparison too far, such modern forms furnish analogies for medieval hybrid genres like the motet, the hagiographic romance, and the literature of *la mystique courtoise*, or courtly mysticism. This is not to say that the modern distinction of elite vs. popular maps onto the same categories in the Middle Ages, much less those of sacred and secular. Yet crossing the boundary between them creates a similar sense of novelty and excitement, of being where the action is, that attracts avant-garde audiences while provoking a few sniffs of disapproval from conservatives. Crossover is not a genre in itself, but a mode of interaction, an openness to the meeting or even merger of sacred and secular in a wide variety of forms. In chapter 1 I sketch a few of the principles that shape their interaction: the *sic et non* principle, or hermeneutics of both/and; the principle of double judgment, governed by the paradox of *felix culpa*; the confluence of pagan

matiere and Christian *sen* in some Arthurian romances; and the rule of convergent idealism (“everything that rises must converge”) in hagiographic romance. Examples are supplied by a wide range of texts, including *Amis and Amiloun*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a Czech *Life* of St. Catherine, Hartmann von Aue’s *Gregorius*, *Sir Gowther*, and episodes from the *Prose Lancelot*. The four chapters that follow analyze case studies in greater depth.

In chapter 2 I continue my exploration of romance, concentrating on the technique of double coding: the propensity of certain texts to enable both sacred and secular readings, rewarding a hermeneutic strategy of double judgment. The chapter deals with selected Lancelot-Grail romances, from Chrétien de Troyes’ *Knight of the Cart* (or *Lancelot*, 1170s) through *Perlesvaus* (ca. 1200–1210) and *The Quest of the Holy Grail* (ca. 1225) to the ending of Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur* (1470). Another form of double coding in these texts, probably more visible to the modern than the medieval reader, sets the plot motifs of Arthurian romance, derived ultimately from pagan mythology and folklore, against their intended meanings, which characteristically fuse Christian and secular elements.

Chapter 3, “The Literary Traditions of Marguerite Porete,” treats the conversion of secular literary forms—the love lyric and the inescapably profane *Romance of the Rose*—to the purposes of divine love. It aims to illumine Marguerite’s *Mirror of Simple Souls* (ca. 1290–1306) by examining her literary milieu, which was rife with sacred love songs composed by and for beguines, as well as clerical efforts to adapt, interpolate, or compete with the *Rose* in order to promote a love quite different from that sought by Amant. This chapter breaks new ground by reading the *Mirror* against the background not of heresy, mysticism, or women’s writing, but of French vernacular theology.

Chapter 4 investigates parody of the sacred. Since the “high” genres of medieval literature (courtly romance, hagiography, love lyric, hymnody, devotional prose) all display strong idealizing tendencies, the “low” genres (satire, fabliau, beast epic, dramatic farce) achieve much of their counter-idealizing effect by parodying the tropes and conventions of those modes. Because parody may be the relationship we understand most easily, I have chosen some out-of-the-way material to illustrate the very different forms it could take. *Le lai d’Ignaure* (ca. 1200),

a macabre short romance, obliquely mocks women's eucharistic devotion, while the satirical *Dispute between God and His Mother* (1450) skewers Marian piety and a great deal more. More disturbingly, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* (1389) adapts a form of political satire—the Latin Gospel parody—to celebrate a pogrom, thus profoundly challenging our sense of parody as a comic or subversive mode.

The Grail and the Rose, as icons of sacred and secular love in medieval literature, are the yin and yang of this study. In the classic Taoist symbol, a spot of dark yin balances the bright realm of yang and vice versa. Similarly, chapter 2 asks what the advent of the Grail does to the predominantly secular world of Arthurian romance, and chapter 3 asks how the Rose can be accommodated in the sacred world of beguine writing. After the interlude of chapter 4, my last chapter asks how a writer equally devoted to chivalry, piety, and *fin'amor* tried to integrate the Grail knights' quest for purity with Amant's quest for sexual love. It examines parallel works by the same author, René of Anjou (d. 1480), to study the convergence of sacred and secular on both textual and iconographic planes. This royal connoisseur commissioned princely illustrations for his two allegories, both built around the fashionable conceit of the externalized heart. René's spiritual allegory, *The Mortification of Vain Pleasure*, is gendered female, starring the Soul and the Virtues, while his secular, erotic allegory, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, is gendered male, with the knight Cuer and his squire Désir Ardent as the protagonists. Surprisingly, however, both texts bring their protagonists to exactly the same point in the end. Because *The Love-Smitten Heart* populates the allegorical landscape of *The Quest of the Holy Grail* with characters from *The Romance of the Rose*, it enables us to pick up the threads of those texts once more and follow them to an unlikely yet satisfying convergence.

Hoping that students of both French and English literature will find their way to this book, I have supplied original texts as well as translations for all passages I cite. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own. Without attempting rhyme, I have tried at least to replicate the octosyllabic meter of medieval French verse. In the case of Chrétien de Troyes, I have used Ruth Harwood Cline's remarkable poetic versions; her sprightly couplets imitate the form and tone of the originals to the extent that an English version can. Biblical verses are translated

directly from the Latin Vulgate, though I have tried where possible to stay close to the wording of the Revised Standard Version. At the end of this volume I append a new edition and translation of *The Dispute between God and His Mother*, along with an annotated translation of *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*. (Eva Steinová's critical edition of the latter text is under copyright; an older edition is available in good libraries.) I hope that teachers and students will find it useful to have these rarities now readily at hand.

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND THANK ALL THOSE who have contributed to the formation of this book. I am grateful, first, to the Medieval Institute at the University of Notre Dame for their invitation to deliver the 2011 Conway Lectures in Medieval Studies. Without them, this book would never have been written. I must also thank the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for an impossibly generous grant, which not only provided a research leave but also supported the Mellon Symposium on Medieval Subjectivity, held at Northwestern University in July 2011. I thank all the participants in that symposium, students and faculty alike, for their extraordinarily helpful feedback. My colleagues in medieval studies at Northwestern, as well as our tireless interlibrary loan team, have created an ideal climate for this project. I am grateful to the Knights of Columbus Vatican Film Library, St. Louis University, for letting me consult a microfilm of *La Desputoison de Dieu et de sa mère*.

A portion of chapter 3 appeared in an earlier form as "The Mirror and the Rose: Marguerite Porete's Encounter with the *Dieu d'Amours*," in *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Bradley Warren (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 105–23. Part of chapter 4 was published as "*The Passion of the Jews of Prague*: The Pogrom of 1389 and the Lessons of a Medieval Parody," in *Church History* 81 (March 2012): 1–26. I thank the publishers for permission to reprint this material.

Sean Field, Richard Kieckhefer, Zan Kocher, Robert Lerner, and Lori Walters have thoroughly vetted my chapter on Marguerite Porete. A portion of that chapter was also presented as the annual Morimichi Watanabe lecture of the American Cusanus Society in May 2012. I am

especially grateful to Sean Field, Zan Kocher, and John Van Engen for sharing their unpublished work on Marguerite, and to Lori Walters for allowing me to see her work on *The Romance of the Rose* and Chrétien de Troyes. William Paden Jr. has once again given me the benefit of his expertise in Old and Middle French philology, and Judith Davis has reviewed my account of *The Dispute between God and His Mother*. Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, Eva Steinová, and two anonymous readers offered excellent advice on *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*. Eva Steinová graciously allowed me to base my translation on her new critical edition of the Latin text, which she prepared as a 2010 M.A. thesis at Masaryk University in Brno. A comparatist must always turn gratefully to the help of specialists, so I am especially glad to have found the perfect press readers in Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner and Sylvia Huot, who were generous with both enthusiasm and detailed critiques. I am deeply indebted to their own work on Chrétien and the *Rose*, respectively; this book would be much the poorer without their advice. Ann Delgehausen, my copyeditor, has been a tireless advocate for perplexed readers.

To my students, also, I offer thanks: to my undergraduates over the years for demanding a course on “Christian and Pagan in Medieval Literature”; to Jesse Njus for her knowledge of French and Italian Passion plays, Joshua Byron Smith for his wise cautions about “Celtic” literature, Lewis Wallace for his pathbreaking work on St. Ontcommen, and Steven Rozenski for discovering “St. Merlin.” My husband, Richard Kieckhefer, has been, as always, the most generous, patient, and stimulating of conversation partners. To our cats I promise extra treats, with warm thanks for their rhetorical aid: Felicitas, Hyperbole, and the peerless Oxymoron, muse of this volume.

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CHAPTER I

THEORIZING CROSSOVER
Principles and Case Studies

Do I contradict myself?

Very well then, I contradict myself.

—Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SACRED AND SECULAR IN MEDIEVAL literature is not a new problem. But it is one that urgently needs to be reconceptualized, for the last frontal assault on that topic dominated the field for thirty years until, after long and furious debates, scholars turned away in sheer exhaustion. So a quick review of the state of the question, first in English, then in French studies, will clear the ground for our inquiry.

Few ideologies have divided medievalists so bitterly as the critical movement called “exegetics,” or simply “Robertsonianism” after its founder, D. W. Robertson Jr.¹ In a series of influential articles and in his 1962 colossus, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives*, the Princeton medievalist took deadly aim at humanistic scholarship on

Chaucer and other canonical works treating “the myth of courtly love”: Andreas Capellanus’s *De amore*, the works of Chrétien de Troyes, the *Romance of the Rose*.² According to Robertson, these and all medieval secular texts do no more and no less than what Scripture does, as Augustine had explained in *De doctrina christiana*.³ They promote charity and condemn cupidity, striving with all the means at their disposal—direct exhortation, allegory, irony—to turn human affections away from carnal desires toward the love of God. Robertson’s arsenal was the *Patrologia Latina*, which furnished him with a correct interpretive code for the countless symbols that humanistic readers, in their naïveté, misread by taking them at face value. He also drew on the sister discourses of mythography and iconography, but had little interest in later medieval exegesis—or in the florilegia from which clerics usually acquired their patristic learning.⁴

The debate between exegetical critics and their foes, led by the Yale Chaucerian E. Talbot Donaldson,⁵ raged from the 1950s through the 1970s and did not truly end until 1987, when Lee Patterson characterized exegetics as “a root-and-branch, no-holds-barred, take-no-prisoners attack” on liberal humanism, even as he set out to formulate the principles of a new historicism that would amend its faults.⁶ (It was Patterson who belatedly coined the term *exegetics*; Robertson preferred to call himself an allegorist or simply a historical critic.)⁷ Although it is decades since anyone seriously professed a Robertsonian line, this “ghost of Criticism Past” still haunts the conversation.⁸ In a bracingly polemical essay in 2009, Steven Justice maintained that Robertson “left the field better than he found it, because he infuriated it into a bout of defensive learning . . . , not because he either persuaded it to agree or provoked it to disagree intelligently.”⁹ Though Robertson used his conservative, ideologically static Middle Ages as a club to bash modernity, Justice argues that he anticipated the leftist historicism of Foucault, for both worked from a “breathhtakingly relativist and constructivist model of historical culture.”¹⁰ Patterson made a similar point when he traced the intellectual roots of exegetics to nineteenth-century *Geistesgeschichte*.¹¹ Whether they incline to the right or the left, such critical programs share the notion of an airtight period subjectivity. Robertson’s “medieval mind,” like the Hegelian *Zeitgeist* or the Foucauldian *episteme*, totalizes the mentality and cultural production of a past era so fully that it

can neither account for real diversity within that past nor explain how the past became the present.¹²

With respect to the question of sacred and secular, fruitful theorizing in English departments effectively shut down in the wake of Robertsonianism. Battle-weary medievalists left exegetics behind to follow the linguistic turn, the materialist turn, and the feminist and queer turns, though such excellent scholars as Robert Kaske, Judson Boyce Allen, and Alastair Minnis continued to study the influence of Latin preaching and theology on vernacular writings. Meanwhile a vast corpus of Middle English and (*a fortiori*) Anglo-Norman religious literature languished unread in manuscripts and volumes of the Early English Text Society. But with the religious turn of the past two decades, these writings have sparked a new interest in the study of vernacular theology, a movement spearheaded by Nicholas Watson.¹³ This prolific critical school looks at devotional, catechetical, and pastoral writings for what they can tell us about such topics as heresy and dissent, lay literacy, language hierarchies and translation practices, gender, interiority, and the history of the book, as well as theology itself. A decade ago, two valuable essay collections—*The Vernacular Spirit* and *The Vulgar Tongue*—approached these issues in a pan-European context.¹⁴ Both focused on the vernacular as an emergent medium for religious teaching and expression. This book aims to advance that project, but takes crossover rather than vernacularity as its starting point.

French medievalism remained largely untouched by exegetics, though Robertson found a kindred spirit in the allegorical critic Jacques Ribard. In recent years the study of French vernacular theology has been vigorously taken up by Geneviève Hasenohr, Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, and Yelena Masur-Matusevich, to name just a few. For the late Middle Ages, the towering figure of Jean Gerson commands the most attention. But the phenomenon of crossover first emerged in late twelfth-century Paris and northern France, so French literature boasts the oldest, largest, and most varied corpus of crossover texts, ably explored by Daniel Poirion and Sylvia Huot, among others. In the introduction to her important 2009 anthology, *The Church and Vernacular Literature in Medieval France*, Dorothea Kullmann writes that the old binaries of clerical and lay, sacred and profane, Latin and vernacular cultures are no longer tenable, yet the alternative model of a “cultural

continuum” seems too simplistic. Vernacular genres like biblical paraphrase, motets, devotional songs, hagiography, miracles of the Virgin, beguine poetry, and Grail romance, as well as Latin treatises that cite French popular songs, testify to an intense, dynamic concern with bridging the divide between clerics and their lay patrons and audiences. But there remains an edgy, experimental quality to many of these works: “All these authors seem well aware that they are somehow crossing borders, combining material from different areas, negating genre conventions or adopting genres for different purposes. They clearly mean to achieve particular effects by making unusual choices.”¹⁵ As a growing horde of Parisian-trained clerics fanned out into secular and ecclesiastical courts, or faced a future with shaky prospects of employment, they had every reason to innovate “while trying to reconcile the requirements of [their] ecclesiastical status and . . . learned aspirations with the more practical or frivolous interests of lay patrons,” or else with those patrons’ pastoral care.¹⁶ The same “clerical dilemma” affected Anglo-Norman clerks in the entourage of Henry II.¹⁷ Later, with the rise of Oxford and Cambridge and the expansion of English court bureaucracies, the phenomenon became widespread in England and spurred a comparable surge in literary production.¹⁸

Closely related to the rise of crossover is a phenomenon that has been more fully explored in French scholarship—the conspicuous twelfth-century taste for paradox and *coincidentia oppositorum*. Painting with a broad brush, historian Constance Bouchard maintains that twelfth-century thought in many spheres, from conflict resolution to the ideology of gender, was characterized by a “discourse of opposites,” which she traces to a fascination with dialectical reasoning on the one hand, Gospel paradox on the other. Rather than attempting to resolve contradictions, she asserts, twelfth-century thinkers “were perfectly willing to have two opposing things be true at the same time,” as we can see in works ranging from Abelard’s *Sic et Non* to Chrétien’s *Chevalier de la Charrette* (*Lancelot*) to Andreas Capellanus’s *De amore*.¹⁹ Catherine Brown and Sarah Kay have produced subtle literary studies in the same vein. In *Contrary Things*, Brown argues that discord, obscurity, and contradiction were valued in the Middle Ages as teaching tools and spurs to thought—understandably in a culture that sharpened its wits by constant engagement with that thorniest, most contradictory of texts,

the Bible. Students today may be distressed by medieval authors' ceaseless assertion of opposites, such as Andreas's claims in Books I and III of *De amore* that the love of women is at once the source of all virtue and a damnable folly. Yet Brown asserts that if we wish to confront medieval alterity, we can do so nowhere more fruitfully than in "these puzzling places between affirmation and negation, between *either/or* and *both-and*."²⁰ Much of her work develops what I would call a "hermeneutics of both/and," a mode of reading that, "pedagogically and philosophically speaking, tries to have its cake and eat it."²¹ This book will pursue a related project on a different front. Sarah Kay likewise perceives that "courtly texts exhibit a particular pleasure in contradiction." Love in romances, for example, is both "sensual and spiritual, normative and transgressive, secret and known," and in this ambivalence it mimics the paradoxical character of religious texts, where "loss is gain, death is the key to life, the lowly are exalted."²²

Both Bouchard and Brown cite Jean de Meun's famous passage on contraries, which interrupts the pornographic climax of the *Romance of the Rose*:

Aussi va des contraires choses,
 Les unes sont des autres gloses;
 Et qui l'une en vuet defenir,
 De l'autre li doit sovenir,
 Ou ja par nulle entencion
 N'i metra diffinicion;
 Car qui des deus n'a connoissance
 Ja n'i metera difference,
 Sanz quoi ne puet venir en place
 Diffinicion que l'en face.²³

So it goes with contrary things:
 They are glosses of each other,
 And whoever wants to define one
 Must bear the other one in mind,
 Or never, by any effort,
 Will any definition stand.
 For no one who does not know both

Can tell the difference between them,
 Without which no definition
 Can ever carry conviction.

The “contrary things” in this case are the Lover’s coupling with his Rose and the metaphor in which he cloaks it: a pilgrim reaches his shrine and venerates the relics he has sought. So, more specifically, the two contraries are two kinds of body parts: the bones of dead saints and the genitals of live seducers. Much earlier in the poem, the Lover had taken offense at Reason’s use of obscenity. Reason replied (in lines shocking enough to be excluded from many manuscripts) that things are what they are, regardless of names, so one might just as well call balls relics, relics balls:

Et quant por reliques m’oïsses
 Coilles nommer, le mot preïsses
 Por si bel, et tant le prisasses,
 Que partout coilles aorasses
 Et les baisasses en eglises
 En or et en argent assises.²⁴

And when you had heard me name balls
 As relics, you would take that word
 To be so fair, and prize it so,
 That everywhere you’d worship balls
 And venerate them in churches,
 Arrayed in gold and silver shrines.

In a hilarious *reductio ad absurdum*, the Lover does just that. More broadly, of course, the two contraries are the sacred and the profane. Without his euphemistic metaphor of shrines and relics, which on the Lover’s own terms precludes obscenity, the climactic rape/seduction would be far less obscene—but also less funny. Here the secular appropriates the sacred through parody, so their “discourse of opposites” is essential to Jean de Meun’s effect. But I do not wish to present the relationship of sacred and secular as always involving opposition or “contrary things.” The problematics of crossover and paradox overlap; they do not coincide.

This book suggests an overarching, comparative framework to discuss the interplay of sacred and profane in (primarily) French and English texts, though it lays no claim to a totalizing paradigm. In calling the sacred a “default category,” I do not mean to say it is always the dominant one, much less a univocal discourse such as Robertson imagined. Exegetical critics liked to cite the patristic metaphor of wheat and chaff, in which the literal sense of a text is merely a husk to be stripped away, exposing the sweet kernel of allegorical meaning.²⁵ I prefer a more symmetrical model: sometimes the sacred and the secular flow together like oil and water, layered but stubbornly distinct. At other times they merge like water and wine, an image dear to mystical writers, producing a blend that may or may not be inebriating.

A HERMENEUTICS OF BOTH/AND

My method has been inductive, starting with case studies rather than theories, but in this introductory chapter I will formulate some of the principles I have learned from them. In *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages*, I introduced the concept of “imaginative theology,” defining it as “the pursuit of serious religious and theological thought through the techniques of imaginative literature, especially vision, dialogue, and personification.”²⁶ That concept allows for the very significant role that I believe the imagination, both literary and pictorial, played in the development as well as the expression of religious thought. I would describe three of the texts discussed here—*The Quest of the Holy Grail*, *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, and *The Mortification of Vain Pleasure*—as works of imaginative theology. But the concept also has its converse, which I explore further in this book.

Living in a place as culturally saturated with religion as medieval Europe, dominated both intellectually and institutionally by the Church, could not fail to color the imaginations not just of the devout, but also of ordinary Christians, or even those who were not pious at all. That does not mean, however, that every allusion to the sacred needs to be assessed at its full theological weight. So, following the lead of Catherine Brown and Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, I will articulate a principle of both/and: when sacred and secular meanings both present themselves in a text, yet cannot be harmoniously reconciled, it is not always

necessary to choose between them. Speaking of Chrétien de Troyes and his continuators, Bruckner observes that romance “eschews the restrictions of either/or and claims the non-Aristotelian logic of and/both. . . . [O]pposing terms remain present, equally valid, as they interact in a potentially creative tension that neither dismisses nor suppresses either one but forces us to deal with the paradoxical combination of both.”²⁷ If we wanted to give this rule a medieval name, we could call it the “*sic et non* principle.” Sometimes incompatible meanings simply collide—though the *apparent* necessity to choose between them may have been meant as a conscious device to provoke discussion, like the conflicting authorities in Abelard’s textbook *Sic et Non*, the disputing voices in the Old Occitan *partimen*, and the *demandes d’amour* that punctuate love stories.²⁸ Wherever such an ambiguity has spawned a notorious crux in critical debate, we may suspect this principle at work.

As a far-reaching cultural practice, the *sic et non* principle can be exemplified in visual and musical art as well as in texts. This in fact was the premise of a 2006 exhibition, *Secular Sacred*, at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. The essays in its catalogue argue that “just as there is no clear dividing line between sacred and secular medieval texts, neither can such a boundary be established between objects.”²⁹ A fine example of their mutual interpenetration is the beautifully painted Florentine tray (ca. 1390–1420) recently ascribed to Francesco di Michele (Figure 1). In this “Triumph of Venus” we see the crowned, naked goddess, her blonde tresses tumbling over her shoulders, in a golden mandorla like the one that surrounds the Virgin Mary at her Assumption. Winged like an angel, Venus extends her hands in a gesture of self-display or self-offering. Golden rays stream outward from all parts of her body, but especially from her vulva, to dazzle the eyes of six fully clothed, kneeling lovers, who appear to be worshipping her. Inscriptions identify them as Achilles, Tristan, Lancelot, Samson, Paris, and Troilus—one biblical, three classical, and two medieval, a sign of inclusiveness. They kneel in a lush garden; a tree laden with ripe fruit stands directly beneath the goddess. On either side of her hovers an angel, again reminiscent of the Assumption—or perhaps they are Cupids, for one holds a bow and the other an arrow. On further scrutiny, however, they have most unangelic—some would say demonic—claws in place of feet. For that matter, the wings of the goddess are black, not a promising color.



Figure 1. *The Triumph of Venus*. Florentine *desco da parto* (birth salver), ca. 1390–1420. Ascribed to Francesco di Michele. Paris, Louvre.

This design immediately suggests two opposed interpretive possibilities.³⁰ Does it exalt sexual love by boldly assimilating *Venus generosa* to the Queen of Heaven? In that case it would be analogous to a celebrated stanza from the *Carmina burana*. A lover hails his beloved as if she were the Virgin, only to end on a quite different note:

Ave, formossissima, gemma pretiosa,
ave, decus virginum, virgo gloriosa,
ave, lumen luminum, ave, mundi rosa,
Blanziflor et Helena, Venus generosa!³¹

Hail, most beautiful, precious jewel!
 Hail, pride of virgins, glorious virgin!
 Hail, light of lights, hail, rose of the world,
 Blanche fleur and Helen, generous Venus!³²

Conversely, does the design verge on blasphemy, using its sacred parody to showcase the concupiscence and folly of the deluded lovers? Certainly it would be right at home among the plates in *A Preface to Chaucer*, which serve to reveal the Christian iconography underlying images that purportedly glorify carnal love. A latter-day Robertsonian might point to the goddess's inky wings, the rapacious talons of her attending "angels," and the six male gazes fixed on her pudenda to make precisely this point. He would not be altogether wrong; it would be dishonest to ignore these elements.

Nevertheless, the object's historical context makes it unlikely that this was the primary meaning intended,³³ for the tray is a *desco da parto*, or "birth salver." Gifts of this kind were purchased or commissioned by Tuscan husbands for their wives to celebrate a successful childbirth—a custom that began around 1370, in the post-plague generation, when fertility was vitally important not only for the family, but for the body politic.³⁴ Such objects were cherished, often customized (if not specially commissioned) with a family crest on the reverse. Protected with a cloth, they would be used to carry wine, gifts, and sweetmeats to the new mother during her lying-in. Children often inherited and treasured the *deschi* given to their mothers when they were born. In that context, it would be an ungracious father indeed who commissioned such a precious object for such an auspicious occasion merely to drive home a moral that shamed his own love as well as the fruitfulness of his wife.³⁵ So the meaning of the tray seems to be a case of both/and. Venus is truly exalted, sexual love and fertility rightly celebrated; yet too great an adoration of the goddess poses a spiritual danger. As Alcuin Blamires puts it, "a certain transcendental solemnity" coexists with humor, making the tone of the object, as with so many medieval texts about love, "wonderfully difficult to gauge."³⁶

For a textual analogue we might turn to the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, where Chauntecleer quotes the antifeminist maxim, "mulier est ho-

minis confusio" (woman is man's ruin), and translates it for his wife as "Womman is mannes joye and al his blis" (vv. 3,164–66). If we ask the rather silly question—which version does Chauntecleer "really believe"?—the answer would have to be both: he loves his Pertelote and "fethers" her twenty times before dawn, yet (wisely, as it happens) distrusts her advice about laxatives. Asking the same question of the Nun's Priest or of Chaucer himself would be even sillier. In this case, the misogynist Latin tag and its pro-feminine vernacular "translation" collide in outright contradiction. The priest (or swaggering cock) will have his little joke at the expense of women, but the soothing version that Pertelote and a substantial part of Chaucer's audience understood takes the sting out of it. Yet whichever side one chooses to privilege, there is always an *e contra*. Ambivalence is itself a key part of the meaning that must not be exegeted away.

A similar aesthetic of inclusiveness, of both/and, governs the musical genre of motets—the crossover genre *par excellence*. A motet is a polyphonic song with two to four voices, most often three. The lowest voice is the tenor, or *cantus firmus*, a brief phrase of Latin plainchant, sung slowly and repeatedly to accompany the higher parts. The middle and upper voices (called "motetus" and "triplum," or treble) sing longer melodies, usually in French though sometimes in Latin. Motets are textually as well as musically polyphonic, or, to use Bakhtin's term, *heteroglossic*. Like characters in a play, each speaking in his or her distinctive register and style, the parts interact without losing their autonomy; no single voice is privileged. For example, the motetus may sing a *chanson courtoise*, lamenting the pangs of unrequited love, while the triplum sings a contrasting *pastourelle* (seduction song about a shepherdess), a *reverdie* (spring song in praise of love), a prayer to the Virgin, or a *chanson de mal-mariée* (song of an unhappy wife longing for her lover). Meanwhile the tenor intones "hodie" or "libera me" or "gaudete"—some phrase chosen from anywhere in the vast repertoire of chant. For the trained clerical singers who composed and performed these pieces, the tenor melody evoked the longer text from which it came, with all the biblical and liturgical resonance of a given feast. Since either or both of the upper parts might be contrafacts—new texts set to pre-existing tunes—they too could spur aural reminiscence.³⁷ Motets thus afforded an intricate, sophisticated pleasure for professional musicians,

steeped in sacred and vernacular song. But they could also be performed at court festivals, university functions, or taverns where clerics went to unwind. “One must assume,” Sylvia Huot writes, “that the motet, a blend of High Style courtly lyric, Low Style popular lyric, and sacred music, was at home in various settings, some more decorous than others.”³⁸ Although it might seem difficult to hear all its artfully blended, simultaneous lines at once, this problem did not seem to trouble contemporaries, any more than it did in the case of polyphonic church music.³⁹

As an example of the divergent interpretations such a piece might provoke, Huot cites the trilingual motet *Aucuns vont souvent / Amor, qui cor vulnerat / Kyrie eleison*.⁴⁰ The text of the Latin motetus, “Amor, qui cor vulnerat,” condemns amorous desire: a love generated by *carnalis affectio* can virtually never (*numquam . . . vel raro*) be without sin, for the more we love transient things, the less we love God. So this text exhorts charity and denounces cupidity. Meanwhile the triplum sings “Aucuns vont souvent,” a courtly lyric, which maintains that all honor, courtesy, and virtue stem from the love of one’s *amie*, if that love is humble and free of falsehood. Those who attack love do so only *par leur envie*, because they are envious. The tenor, “Kyrie eleison” (Lord have mercy), is among the most familiar liturgical phrases. If a listener favored the motetus, the piece for him would be a strictly moral one, with the triplum illustrating the self-deception of lovers and the tenor praying for their conversion. But another hearer might privilege the triplum. In that case the sour moralist’s sermon would betray his envy, and the tenor’s petition might mean: stop being so hard on faithful lovers! In yet another possibility, the triplum and the motetus converge from different angles on the same message: both voices condemn greedy, dishonest love, the first from a courtly perspective, the second from a spiritual one. “Kyrie eleison” might then be a prayer that all lovers would prove sincere and humble. So, like the painted “Triumph of Venus” or Chauntecleer’s mismatched text and translation, the motet lets its audience choose between meanings—and, just as different listeners might choose different ones, so might the same listener hearing different performances. What these three examples do on a small scale, a capacious work like the *Romance of the Rose* does on a massive one.

In the sections that follow I will outline three corollaries of the both/and principle, exemplified in romances. These are the principle of

double judgment, grounded in the biblical and liturgical theme of *felix culpa*; the position of the secular as a middle ground between competing (pagan and Christian) forms of the sacred; and the rule of convergent idealism, apparent in the hybrid genre of hagiographic romance.

FELIX CULPA AND THE PRINCIPLE OF DOUBLE JUDGMENT

A hermeneutics of both/and was indispensable for exegesis, given the multiplicity of meanings as well as the frequent contradictions to be found in Scripture. “Influential hermeneutic ‘rules’ like . . . the Augustinian law of charity teach exegetes to read scriptural opposition not primarily through the disambiguating division of *either/or*,” as Brown rightly observes, “but rather through the sacramentally multiple *both-and*.”⁴¹ One of the most important cases of both/and is the liturgical paradox of the *felix culpa*, or “fortunate fault.” The phrase occurs in the Exsultet, a hymn sung at the Easter Vigil:

O certe necessarium Adae peccatum, quod Christi morte deletum est!
O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!⁴²

O truly needful sin of Adam, blotted out by the death of Christ!
O fortunate fault, that deserved to have so great a Redeemer!

In a more popular form the same idea shapes a Middle English lyric, often set to music:

Adam lay ybounden, bounden in a bond,
Four thousand winter thoughte he not too long;
And al was for an apple, an apple that he took,
As clerkes finden writen, writen in hire book.
Ne hadde the apple taken been, the apple taken been,
Ne hadde nevere Oure Lady ybeen hevene Queen.
Blessed be the time that apple taken was:
Therfore we mown singen *Deo gratias*.⁴³

In short, since God brings good out of evil, humankind is better off after the Redemption than it was before the Fall. But the doctrine is ethically troubling, for it seems to entail the corollary that evil is itself

a good because, without it, a greater good would never have been. What might follow from the belief that sin—either sin in general or the particular sin I’m about to commit—is “truly needful”? If Mary’s queenship justifies Adam’s transgression, with all the miseries it spawned, then what greater good will justify my own transgression? For such reasons the idea was a controversial one. It was emphatically championed by St. Ambrose, the likely author of the *Exsultet*, who proclaimed that the Fall “did us more good than harm” and even that “guilt is more fruitful than innocence” (with a wicked pun on *fructuosior*).⁴⁴ In the mid-fifth century, as the *Exsultet* was establishing itself in the liturgy, Pope Leo I (d. 461) asserted that “we have gained more through Christ’s ineffable grace than we had lost through the devil’s envy.”⁴⁵ Pope Gregory I (590–604), a zealous partisan of the paradox, asked,

Quae major culpa, quam illa, qua omnes morimur? Et quae major bonitas, quam illa, per quam a morte liberamur? Et quidem, nisi Adam peccaret, Redemptorem nostrum carnem suscipere nostram non oporteret. . . . Magna quippe sunt mala, quae per primae culpa meritum patimur, sed quis electus nolle peiora perpeti, quam tantum Redemptorem non habere?⁴⁶

What guilt is greater than that by which we all die? And what goodness greater than that by which we are delivered from death? And surely, unless Adam had sinned, it would not have been fitting for our Redeemer to take our flesh. . . . Great indeed are the evils we deservedly suffer because of the first sin; yet who of the elect would not willingly endure even worse ones, rather than not have so great a Redeemer?

But Augustine was ambivalent about the idea, while other church fathers opposed it or maintained a discreet silence. In fact, the *felix culpa* verse was contested and at times even stricken from the liturgy. It does not appear in the influential Romano-German Pontifical (tenth century), and Abbot Hugh of Cluny (d. 1109) purged the offending sentences from the Cluniac Easter rite. But the fortunate fault and necessary sin were decisively restored in the liturgical reforms of Pope Innocent III (1198–1216).⁴⁷ Thereafter the *felix culpa* became a linchpin of orthodoxy. Thomas Aquinas, for example, cited the verse while dis-

cussing whether God would have become incarnate if man had not sinned.⁴⁸ He opined that an Incarnation without a Fall would have been possible, but unnecessary,

for God permits evil in order to draw some greater good from it. Hence it is said in Romans [5:20] that “where transgression abounded, grace abounded the more”; and in the blessing of the paschal candle it is said, “O fortunate fault, that deserved to have so great a Redeemer!”

Deus enim permittit mala fieri ut inde aliquid melius eliciat. Unde dicitur Rom. 5: “Ubi abundavit delictum, superabundavit et gratia.” Unde et in benedictione cerei paschalis dicitur: “O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!”⁴⁹

Interestingly, the *felix culpa* was restored at precisely the time that many of the romances and vernacular theologies explored in this book were first taking shape, giving the idea greater currency. As we shall see below, some of Christendom’s most flamboyant heresies spring from the paradox of *felix culpa*, and some of its most acrobatic mental feats from attempts to resolve it.

But the fortunate fault is not just a patristic theorem to account for the Fall; it is also a pervasive pattern within the Bible. That pattern exists on the level of narrative, not theological statement, and it is entwined with a hermeneutic strategy I call the “principle of double judgment,” by which the same act appears simultaneously good and evil. Hence the Bible’s fascination with the trickster, a character type who perfectly illustrates Martin Luther’s paradox of *simul justus et peccator*, the “righteous sinner.” Such a person’s acts cannot be assessed by a single moral standard; they require two conflicting judgments dictated by competing codes.

In the Old Testament, the *felix culpa* principle takes a strong and a weak form. In the weak form, a character sins but repents, and divine providence brings good out of evil. David’s sin with Bathsheba is a case in point (2 Samuel 11–12). The king sees Uriah the Hittite’s wife bathing and lusts for her. When she becomes pregnant, David arranges to have Uriah killed in battle so that he can marry Bathsheba. This sin is unambiguously denounced by Nathan the prophet, moving the king to

penance (Vulg. Psalm 50). God punishes David through the death of Bathsheba's first son, but their next son is Solomon, Israel's greatest king. A more elaborate narrative of this type is the Joseph saga (Genesis 37–50). Jealous of their father's favorite, Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery in Egypt, where he rises through his merits to become the Pharaoh's right-hand man. With his divine gift for interpreting dreams, Joseph foresees and stores food for a coming famine, saving both the Egyptians and his own brothers, who come to buy grain from him. In a moving recognition scene, Joseph tells the penitent brothers, "do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life" (Gen. 45:5). Providence again redeems and even justifies the sin. In the New Testament, the best example is "the woman who was a sinner," understood in the Middle Ages as Mary Magdalene. This woman, who "loved much" because she had been forgiven much (Luke 7:37–47), would become Jesus's most faithful disciple and the first witness to his resurrection. Each case can be seen as a *felix culpa*—but there is no pretense that David's adultery and murder, the vengeance of Joseph's brothers, or the supposed prostitution of Mary Magdalene is anything other than sin.

These stories are morally unproblematic and make fine sermon texts. But in the strong-form *felix culpa* tales, the sinful act itself is rewarded or even commanded by God. The Binding of Isaac is the most infamous: God himself tells Abraham to sacrifice his son, which the patriarch prepares to do without hesitation. It is only when Abraham has bound the child to the altar and lifted his knife that "the angel of the Lord" intervenes to prevent the murder. God then tells Abraham, "Because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you" (Gen. 22:16–17). Beginning with Paul and James in the New Testament, exegetes have written much about faith, obedience, and the substitution of animal for human sacrifice.⁵⁰ But, however exegesis tries to palliate God's command, there is no denying that schizophrenics, fanatics, and holy warriors throughout history have killed people because they thought God willed it—the terrorists of September 11 being a recent case. For sheer horror, Søren Kierkegaard's evocation of Abraham's moral plight remains unsurpassed. It is with good reason that he called his book *Fear and Trembling*.⁵¹

If Abraham's shocking *culpa* is *felix*, it is by no means the only one. A crucial sin is ascribed explicitly to God, who hardens Pharaoh's heart

in the exodus (Exod. 9:12, 10:1, 10:27, 11:10) in order to gain glory (Exod. 14:17–18). Other sins are retroactively approved by God. The childless Tamar veils herself as a prostitute and seduces her father-in-law, Judah, in order to conceive a son (Genesis 38). Jacob connives with his mother, Rebekah, to steal his father's blessing, which by right belongs to his brother Esau (Genesis 27). His wife Rachel steals her father's household gods (Genesis 31:19–35), an act that manages to break three of the Ten Commandments at once—theft, idolatry, and dishonoring a parent. Yet the God of the Bible sides with these tricksters against the conventionally righteous. The cunning Jacob, not the stolid Esau, fathers the chosen people. Judah, who at first wants Tamar burned for whoredom, wryly admits when exposed as her child's father that “she is more righteous than I” (Gen. 38:26). Rachel, though initially barren, is the favored wife, bearing two sons whom Jacob loves more than her sister's seven. Trickery, it seems, is rewarded especially in sexual matters. In fact, Matthew's lineage of Jesus (1:1–16) mentions only five women, including Tamar and “the wife of Uriah.” In between come Rahab the harlot (Joshua 2) and Ruth, another sexually irregular heroine. The fifth woman is Mary, as if to show that her pregnancy takes its place in a long series of blessed but transgressive unions. Non-transgressive mothers go nameless.

Applied to biblical narrative, then, *felix culpa* in its weak form justifies evil deeds because good has come out of them. In its strong form, it proclaims an evil deed to be good because God wills it, posing an acute moral difficulty. When Jacob impersonates Esau to beguile their blind, dying father, does he do the right thing? Of course not: he lies to his father, defrauds his brother, and starts a feud that will last for generations. Yet from another perspective, Jacob is in the right—for God wills it so. This is the principle of double judgment in action. Morality, based on the Bible's own laws, dictates one judgment, but the logic of the story demands another: the protagonists of the central plot line are those whom God favors. While the Torah legally privileges the eldest son (Deut. 21:15–17), narratively it favors the younger, a pattern that plays itself out time and again.

The trickiness of the Bible's heroes and heroines—and their God—is not always acknowledged by medieval exegetes. Sometimes they use the rabbinic strategy of midrash, inventing reasons for God's inexplicable judgments (e.g., why did Esau not deserve his father's blessing?).

More often they allegorize. But the tenor of such allegorical readings often violates the literal sense, a problem that exegetes sometimes faced head-on. According to an influential maxim ascribed to Gregory I, the *sensus mysticus* can openly contradict the *sensus litteralis*:

often something is a virtue in the historical narrative, a fault in the allegorical interpretation, just as a fault in the actual deed is sometimes a virtue in the prophetic writing.

Saepe res quaelibet per historiam virtus est, per significationem culpa; sicut aliquando culpa in facto, in scripto prophetiae virtus.⁵²

A test case for this version of both/and is the story of David and Bathsheba. Citing Gregory and the Carolingian exegete Claudius of Turin, the *Glossa ordinaria* admits that David behaved badly. According to ordinary norms, he is the villain of this story, Uriah its innocent victim. Allegorically, however, David is a type of Christ, while Uriah signifies the Jewish people. Bathsheba stands for the Law, which must be wrenched away from its carnal, literal sense and converted to a spiritual understanding. Thus David/Christ takes Uriah's wife for himself, commanding Uriah to "go to his house and wash." In other words, the Jew should return to his conscience, cleansing the filth of his evil deeds with the tears of penance and the water of baptism. When Uriah refuses, he shows that he can understand God's law only in terms of "carnal sacrifices," for he has no interest in higher things. Since he clings to the letter of the Law, disdaining its spiritual sense, David makes him carry the letter that commands his own death, for "the Jew is the bearer of the Law by which, convicted, he will die."

The *Glossa* frankly acknowledges that this reading is counter-intuitive:

Quid ergo per factum istud David scelestius? Quid Uria mundius? Sed ad mysterium: quid David sanctius? Quid Uria infidelius? Quia ille per vitae culpam prophetiae signat innocentiam; et iste per vitae innocentiam in prophetia exprimit culpam.⁵³

What can be more wicked than David on account of this deed? What can be purer than Uriah? But mystically, what can be holier than David

or more faithless than Uriah? For the former through the guilt of his life prophetically signifies innocence, and the latter through the innocence of his life prophetically expresses guilt.

Henri de Lubac calls this “one of the most astonishing laws of doctrinal exegesis,” but it was a commonplace, gaining renewed currency in the twelfth century.⁵⁴ Rupert of Deutz and Richard of Saint-Victor, two of the most important commentators of the age, both accepted it. Innocent III agreed: “the historical record does not always correspond to the allegorical picture; sometimes the signifier may be evil and the signified good, and vice versa.”⁵⁵ The rule of allegorical inversion was buttressed on the one hand by the rhetorical figure of *antiphrasis* (saying the opposite of what is meant), and on the other by the pseudo-Dionysian penchant for “unlike likenesses,” whereby demeaning images of God (like a worm) are preferred to those that seem fitting (like the sun) because the latter risk being taken too literally. This exegetical strategy would have made medieval readers highly sensitive to the principle of double judgment, and it helps to account for some key moments in romance. While the notion that an evil may *signify* a good is not the same as asserting that the evil *is itself* good, the two principles are closely related; and it is no coincidence that Gregory I was an influential champion of both.

Carried to extremes, the *felix culpa* paradox could even inspire readings that dissented from received tradition. Two sins in particular, the disobedience of Eve and the betrayal of Judas, sparked a movement of radical counterexegesis. The normative response was to deplore these sins above all others. Despite the Exsultet, therefore, Eve legitimates a long tradition of misogyny, while Judas does the same for anti-Semitism. Eve’s bad example proves that women must never teach or hold authority over men (1 Timothy 2:11–14), while Judas proves that Jews are false, avaricious betrayers of their Messiah. But each heinous sin is balanced by a righteous deed. Eve’s disobedience is countered by Mary’s obedience, and Judas’s despair by Peter’s contrition. Though both disciples betrayed Christ, Judas despaired and killed himself, while Peter repented and sought forgiveness. Hence one is damned in the lowest pit of hell, while the other holds the keys to heaven. Such is the orthodox view.

A countertradition, however, emerged as early as the second century with the Gnostics. According to the *Secret Book of John* in the Nag

Hammadi corpus, Eve is really a heroine—either the divine Sophia in human form or else a wise woman guided by her.⁵⁶ On this reading of Genesis, God (or rather, the arrogant, inferior deity who created this world) forbids the Tree of Knowledge out of jealousy, wishing to preserve his monopoly on the knowledge of good and evil. But Eve, by taking the fruit and sharing it with Adam, begins their slow, arduous liberation from the false paradise of ignorance. The defense of Judas, surfacing in the recently rediscovered *Gospel of Judas*, takes a similar line. On the revisionist view, the betrayer is exonerated or even revered because without him, Jesus would not have died, so humanity would not have been saved. Accordingly, Judas was doing God's will, and in some versions, he does so with Christ's full knowledge and consent.⁵⁷

Although it was commonplace to call the sin of Adam a *felix culpa* with specific reference to the Redemption, the principle became far more dangerous when applied to sin in general—or, worst of all, to one's own sins. But a few medieval theologians wrestled (at their peril) with its more radical implications. Marguerite Porete, plumbing the depths of abjection, declared herself to be a consummate sinner and even “the sum of all evils,” lacking the least shard of goodness. But, since God's generosity could not resist showering all the riches of his mercy on her infinite poverty, the very nothingness of her “annihilated soul” made her “the salvation of every creature and the glory of God.” [Mais encore, qui plus est, {je suis} le salut mesmes de toute creature, et la gloire de Dieu; et vous diray comment, pourquoy, et en quoy. Pource que je suis la somme de tous mauux.]⁵⁸ Double judgment applies in force. Paradoxically, the annihilated soul is the sum of all evils *and* the salvation of all creatures. What is more, she is the one precisely *because* she is the other. It is the very depth of the creature's evil—or better, the self-confessed depth of evil—that occasions the plenitude of God's goodness. Unfortunately, the Paris theologians who condemned Marguerite's book, and the inquisitor who sentenced her to death for heresy in 1310, saw only the evil.⁵⁹

A very different case, though with oddly similar implications, came before a panel of Paris theologians in 1347. John of Mirecourt, a Cistercian philosopher and disciple of Ockham, was charged with maintaining fifty condemned propositions, including these dizzying statements on God's responsibility for evil:

10. Quod Deus facit quod aliquis peccat et quod sit peccator, et quod vult voluntate beneplaciti quod iste sit peccator. 11. Quod nullus peccat volendo aliququaliter aliter quam Deus velit eum velle. 14. Quod Deus facit malum esse et peccatum esse, et quod peccator peccatum vult et facit esse. 15. Quod peccatum magis est bonum quam malum. 16. Quod aliquis facit aliquid et omnino taliter qualiter Deus vult ipsum facere voluntate beneplaciti, et tamen talis sic faciens peccat. 17. Quod quicumque peccat, conformat voluntatem suam voluntati beneplaciti Dei, sic quod ille vult, sicut Deus vult ipsum velle.⁶⁰

10. That God causes a person to sin and be a sinner, and wills in his good pleasure that this person should be a sinner. 11. That no one sins by willing anything different in any way from what God wants him to will. 14. That God causes evil and sin to exist, while the sinner wills a sin and makes it happen. 15. That sin is more good than evil. 16. That a person may do something exactly as God wills in his good pleasure that he should do it—and yet in doing so, such a person sins. 17. That anyone who sins conforms his will to the good pleasure of God, such that he wills exactly what God wants him to will.

These propositions follow from John's Ockhamite, or nominalist, emphasis on the *absoluta Dei potentia*. God's power takes precedence over his goodness, such that whatever he wills is good simply because he wills it; and no human will can genuinely resist the divine will, even if it tries. Ironically, the diametrically opposed positions of Marguerite Porete and John of Mirecourt yield the same troubling results. Marguerite believed that the human will must annihilate itself, for otherwise it can only obstruct the will of God. Anything willed by a created will, even a virtuous act, is *ipso facto* sinful because only God can will and perform the good. John of Mirecourt believed the opposite: God's absolute power is such that no one, however sinful, can ever will anything *except* the will of God. But from the standpoint of commonsense ethics, it comes down to the same paradox. For Marguerite, God saves the world through the "sum of all evils" that is the created but surrendered will. For John, every *culpa* is *felix*, without exception, because God is its author and cause.

John Wyclif, another theologian of suspect orthodoxy, meditated on the *felix culpa* in a Christmas sermon—a moment of high optimism

in the liturgical year. For Wyclif, the notion of Adam's "blesful synne" coupled with the *absoluta Dei potentia* suggested that this must be the best of all possible worlds, for its condition is "bettered" by everything that happens, whether good or evil. "As many men seien, alle thingis comen for the beste; for alle comen for [because of] Goddis ordenance, and so thei comen for God himsilf; and so alle thingis that comen fallen for the beste thing that mai be. Moreover to another witt men seien, that this world is beterid bi everything that fallith therinne, where that it be good or yvel."⁶¹ Interestingly, this optimistic passage does not appear in Wyclif's parallel Latin sermon for the same feast. One can easily see how an idea thrown about loosely in pastoral consolation ("there, there, it's all for the best!"), if taken literally and generalized, could lead to serious ethical trouble.

Julian of Norwich, an even greater optimist, escaped condemnation. But, when she explicitly formulated the principle of double judgment, she expressed anxious concern lest it compromise her orthodoxy. From a vision that took her twenty years to fathom, she came to see why the original *culpa*, the sin of Adam, was *felix*. Her vision represents a servant so eager to perform his lord's will that he races off and stumbles into a ditch, where he hurts himself too badly to rise. Nor can he see the face of his lord, whom he imagines to be terribly angry. But in fact, the lord observes his servant's fall "with pity, not with blame," and plans to compensate him richly for the pain he endures. *Sub specie eternitatis*, the servant Adam is also Christ; the Fall therefore *is* the Incarnation. These are not two opposing moments, one cancelling the other, but a single, all-encompassing event. "When Adam felle," Julian writes, "Godes sonne fell . . . into the [hollow] of the maidens wombe."⁶² Drawing out the implications, she perceives that in God's eyes, all sin is like the servant's fall. Hence there is "neither wrath nor forgiveness in his sight," for where we see our own and Adam's wrongs, God sees only the goodwill of Christ.⁶³ Grappling with the disparity between this revelation and the teaching of Holy Church, Julian concludes in anguish that there are, indeed, two judgments.⁶⁴ The "lower doom," or judgment of the Church, teaches that sins deserve blame and punishment, and this perception is not wrong. Repentance, punishment, and the fear of God's anger humble and purify the soul. But according to the "higher doom" of the revelation, we need fear no wrath, for in every soul that shall be

saved, there is a godly will that never consented to sin and will never be punished.⁶⁵ These two judgments coexist and both are true; but they cannot be reconciled.

I have shown that the maxim of *felix culpa*, triumphantly proclaimed each Easter, is but the most forceful statement of a broader principle: what ordinary morality sees as evil may, *sub specie eternitatis*, be good. The Bible's legacy of holy sins—and holy sinners—underlies the strange exegetical habit of devising allegorical readings that reverse the ethical values of a narrative, requiring the exercise of double judgment. What must be literally condemned is symbolically praised, and *vice versa*. This principle appears both in heterodox sources like the ancient Gnostics and in orthodox authorities as unimpeachable as Gregory I and Innocent III. In theology, the notion of evil as a kind of good turns up especially in nominalist thinkers committed to the *absoluta Dei potentia* (William of Ockham, Robert Holcot, John of Mirecourt), but also in radical mystics. What exegetes and theologians did in one way, romance writers did in another: they reflected on the *felix culpa* through the medium of fiction. This principle, with its corresponding hermeneutics of double judgment, does not merely turn up in isolated cases; it belongs to the deep structure of medieval romance. As we will see, many of the most celebrated romance heroes achieve triumph, redemption, or even sainthood precisely through their sins, either because of their heroic penance (the weak form of *felix culpa*) or because the sin itself leads to a glorious outcome (the strong form). It is the latter case that most clearly calls for double judgment.

God's penchant for smiling on sexual tricksters seems especially to have impressed romance writers, for this motif reappears in the tricked ordeals and duplicitous oaths that abound in romance.⁶⁶ To take only the most famous, in the *Tristan* story Isolde is charged with adultery and forced to undergo a trial by hot iron. She cleverly doctors her oath by arranging beforehand for Tristan, disguised as a beggar, to carry her across a stream on his shoulders. The queen can then swear, as it were playfully, that she has never held any man but her husband "and this poor beggar" between her legs. Since this is technically true, she escapes unharmed. But can God be satisfied by mere literal truth when the substance of an oath is false? Like Jacob, Rebekah, and Rachel, Isolde "presumes very far upon her Maker's courtesy," as Gottfried von Strassburg sardonically

remarks.⁶⁷ In another leaf from the biblical playbook, illicit unions are justified, like David's, by their holy offspring—as we will see especially in the case of Galahad.

Amis and Amiloun, a romance of friendship from the late thirteenth century, confronts its heroes with a sharp conflict between truth and *treuthe*—between honesty in the ethical sense and an extreme form of personal loyalty.⁶⁸ The knight Amis, who has slept with his lord's daughter, dares not face a trial by combat because he is guilty. So he asks his look-alike friend, Amiloun, to fight in his place. An angel warns Amiloun before the battle that if he goes ahead and pretends to be Amis, he will be stricken by leprosy. Amiloun fights anyway, wins, and contracts the disease just as the angel threatened. But is his leprosy a punishment for Amiloun's deceitful act or an ordeal of saintly purification? Double judgment is required; it might be either or both. Later on, Amis commits what seems to be an even more heinous sin. After he is reunited with his now severely disabled friend, Amis is advised in a dream that, if he kills his two children, he can cure Amiloun with their blood. (According to folk belief, only the life-blood of a child or a virgin could heal a leper.) In effect, Amis faces the trial of Abraham. Like Abraham he consents, murdering the boys in cold blood on Christmas Eve. The romance not only vindicates his loyalty—and declares his *culpa* to be *felix*—with Amiloun's healing, but adds the further miracle of the children's resurrection. Both friends thus explicitly violate divine law, but are saved and very nearly canonized by another law: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend" (John 15:13). Such moments challenge readers to decide which of the two possible, or indeed necessary, judgments is the higher.

Amis and Amiloun belongs to a large family of related texts in Latin, French, and other tongues, and in some, the friends are indeed sainted.⁶⁹ In the late eleventh century, the monk Radulfus Tortarius wrote a Latin verse abstract of a lost *chanson de geste* about the pair. His version mentions Cupid, Mars, Erebus, and the Stygian judge, but lacks any Christian reference.⁷⁰ On the other hand, the twelfth-century *Vita Sanctorum Amici et Amelii* makes the tale hagiographic, followed by many similar versions. Without eliminating its morally problematic elements, the hagiographer adds some pious language and lets the friends die as *milites Christi* in Charlemagne's army. After death their tombs are found mi-

raculously united, and the legend ends by naming their shared feast day.⁷¹ Some of the ambiguities of *Amis*, then, may derive from a long series of attempts to impose Christianity on a pagan folktale. As we shall see, this case is far from unique.

PAGAN *MATIERE*, CHRISTIAN *SEN*,
AND SECULAR *CONJOINTURE*

We are accustomed to thinking of sacred and secular as opposed or at least complementary terms. But in many romances we confront a third term—*pagan*—that interestingly complicates this situation. The popular fund of material that contemporaries called “the matter of Britain” derives many of its proper names and motifs from Welsh, Irish, Cornish, and Breton legends.⁷² Though only the first two of these literatures survive, with no texts predating the advent of Christianity, they have long been thought to preserve pagan lore transmitted orally before monks introduced writing. In the early twentieth century, the attempt to recover ancient British paganism from romances was a thriving scholarly enterprise. Inspired by Sir James Frazer’s classic, *The Golden Bough* (1890–1915), source hunters trawled the seas of romance for pearls of archaic myth. Reaching its apogee in the works of R. S. Loomis, the Celtic school found a treasure trove of ancient deities, cultic sites, and fragments of myth and ritual buried in romance plots.⁷³ Though it remains surprisingly difficult to specify the routes by which French authors acquired their Celtic materials,⁷⁴ this school has produced some solid achievements. Rachel Bromwich’s list of Celtic motifs in romance is still useful: among these are hags transformed into beautiful maidens, the hunt for a white stag that leads to the otherworld, Arthur’s custom of waiting for a marvel before he dines, kings wounded through the thighs, beheading games, magic fountains linked with fairies, wastelands, quests for magical objects, cauldrons of plenty, sword bridges, turning castles, and severed heads on stakes.⁷⁵

For literary critics, this line of inquiry has been a mixed blessing. While Celtic enthusiasts spilled much ink on so-called lost archetypes, few showed any interest in romances as literature. Rather, they tended to treat their authors as incompetent bunglers who, misunderstanding

the pagan sources of their own narratives, spoiled them with “improvements.”⁷⁶ The Celtic vogue was also compromised by its own excesses, including the questionable judgments of scholars who could not read Celtic languages. So, after the heyday of mythological source hunting, the balance of interest shifted toward meanings that writers intentionally gave their work, or that medieval audiences could plausibly have found there. Chrétien de Troyes, the inventor of the Arthurian romance genre, identified three core elements of his craft: *matiere* (plot), *sen* (meaning or theme), and *conjointure* (artful construction).⁷⁷ Romance scholars have focused on each in turn. After the quest for pagan *matiere* had run its course, the study of *sen* prevailed from the 1950s through the 1970s, dominated on the one hand by exegetics, on the other by a fascination with courtly love. Recent critics have devoted more attention to *conjointure*, the artistry of the writers. While concern with meaning has hardly disappeared, it is now directed less to all-embracing thematic than to local meanings, created through the subtle effects of interlace and the web of intra- and intertextual allusions.

Here and in chapter 2, I aim to pay equal attention to *matiere*, *sen*, and *conjointure* as I explore the relationship of sacred and secular. But reviving *matiere* as a topic for scrutiny has led to the unexpected observation that, in the matter of Britain, the secular can be a meeting place for two rival forms of the sacred. Some authors showed little interest in the remote origins of their material, but others clearly had what Stuart Piggott, speaking of a later period, has called “antiquarian imagination.”⁷⁸ Chrétien de Troyes in particular did not borrow from oral legends haphazardly, nor are the mythic elements in his works a mere narrative detritus from an ill-comprehended past. Rather, as Laurent Guyénot has argued, they attest to “a subtle art of the implicit by which the poet evokes his sources even as he diverts them, and seeks to transport us from one degree of reading to another.”⁷⁹ Just as Boccaccio and Chaucer tried to give works like the *Teseida* and *Troilus and Criseyde* an authentically classical air, Chrétien and other romancers took pleasure in imagining ancient Britain, though with less evidence to build on. Among these are the anonymous authors of the early thirteenth-century *Perlesvaus* (analyzed in chapter 2), the mid-fourteenth-century *Perceforest*, and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

To indicate what I mean, I will look at two pagan motifs, the challenge scenario and the beheading game, and ask how romance writers

chose either to secularize or to Christianize them. One of the most common episodes in romance runs as follows, *mutatis mutandis*. A knight called “the Black,” “the Red,” or “the Proud” defends a designated site, such as a forest glade, chapel, castle, crossroads, ford, or island. Often the site features a spring shaded by a spreading tree, with a damsel—or fairy—seated beneath the tree or in a pavilion nearby. The site may be protected by enchantments or ominously fenced with the heads of previous challengers. Knights errant signify their intent to challenge by performing some ritual act, such as crossing a boundary, pouring water over a rock, blowing a horn, or striking a shield that hangs from the tree. If the challenger vanquishes the defender, he wins his land and lady as a reward. The catch is that the successful challenger must in turn become a defender, continuing the custom—sometimes for a year’s or seven years’ term, more often until he is himself defeated.⁸⁰

As John Darrah has shown, this ubiquitous motif closely resembles the archaic ritual that inspired Frazer’s quest.⁸¹ The sacred grove of Diana beside Lake Nemi, at Aricia, was ruled by a priest-king who obtained that post by killing his predecessor and retained it until he himself was killed. This rite haunted classicists long beyond the Middle Ages; Thomas Babington Macaulay wrote memorably of Aricia’s trees—

Those trees in whose dim shadow
The ghastly priest doth reign,
The priest who slew the slayer
And shall himself be slain.⁸²

A challenge was signalled by plucking the famous golden bough—or so at any rate wrote Servius, a commentator on Virgil.⁸³ This atavistic priesthood survived into imperial times and is well attested by classical writers.⁸⁴ In Frazer’s reconstruction of the myth, the “king of the wood” (*rex nemorensis*) was the sacred consort of the goddess, and their coupling ensured the fertility of the land. The periodic sacrifice of the priest-king by ritual combat was necessary to ensure that the priest remained young and virile, for if he aged or sickened, catastrophe would follow.

Several elements of this ritual recur in the romance scenario: the forest glade with its sacred spring and tree, the damsel (as successor to Diana), and the combat, obliging the successful challenger to become defender in his turn. Possession of the lady confers possession of her

territory, be it a castle, an island, or some mythic realm. Thus the succession is maintained: *le roi est mort, vive le roi*. In identifying this motif as pagan, I do not mean to assert that similar rituals took place in ancient Britain, though the scenario might conceivably preserve memories of some prehistoric rite. But if so, the matter is no more susceptible of proof than the “historical Arthur” who led British resistance to the Saxons—or not—at the turn of the fifth century.⁸⁵ For criticism, both questions are moot. By whatever route such motifs first passed from oral into literary tradition, they propagated themselves by performance and text alike, as authors in each generation interpreted, improvised, and innovated freely. The outlines of the scenario are clear enough; the pertinent question is what writers did with it.

The most striking feature of such episodes is that a successful challenge does not solve, but creates a problem for the challenger. In Chrétien’s *Yvain*, for example, the hero seeks out the Thunderstorm Fountain in the forest of Broceliande, where he provokes a magical storm by pouring water on a stone. This summons the guardian of the fountain, whom Yvain defeats and kills. Though he narrowly escapes being guillotined by trap doors, he goes on to marry the Lady of the Fountain (called Laudine, perhaps from *l’ondine* or water-fairy), and becomes the new defender.⁸⁶ Chrétien secularizes the challenge by making it a psychological dilemma for the lady: how can she marry her late husband’s murderer, as the mythic formula demands, without becoming the lustful, faithless widow of misogynist lore? Her maid Lunete possesses the rhetorical skills to win Laudine’s consent to the marriage—one of her arguments being that the fountain still needs a defender because the custom of the castle must not be broken.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, Yvain still has a problem, which is also Chrétien’s problem. If the hero settles down with his wife to live happily ever after, ceasing to pursue adventures, he will lose his honor and the poet will lose his story. Any position that immobilizes the hero spells the death of romance—and, since a long stint as defender of the fountain would do precisely that, it must at all costs be avoided. So, at Gawain’s instigation, Yvain abandons both lady and fountain to resume the life of a knight errant—only to lose his love, his mind, and his very self. In the end he regains with great effort what he at first won all too easily, and Chrétien arrives at his desired equilibrium between love and honor.

Renaut de Bâgé's romance *Le bel inconnu* (*The Fair Unknown*), indebted to Chrétien, poses a similar dilemma. Here a knight called Malgier the Grey defends a causeway leading to the Isle of Gold. At the end of the causeway is a pavilion guarded by a palisade, each of its sharp stakes topped by a knight's head still in its helmet. When the Fair Unknown defeats Malgier, the defender's lady—the fairy Maiden of the White Hands—welcomes the victorious challenger as her love.⁸⁸ For his sake she even promises to end the custom of her castle, whereby he would have had to defend the island for seven years before winning her. But, since he is en route to rescue a princess from enchantment, he flees by night to avoid the trap of marriage—only to realize that he has fallen desperately in love with the fairy. His remaining adventures pit this love against that of Blonde Esmeree, the princess whom he releases from her dragon-form and eventually marries to become king of Wales. Here too, the pagan motif is secularized, but its danger is clear. Not to challenge Malgier would be unthinkable and defeat would mean certain death, but victory carries the risk of lifelong entrapment. Even under ideal circumstances, fulfillment with an otherworldly beloved at the challenge site would mean renunciation of honor and glory in this world, as well as an end of adventures. The romance in fact ends with the knight's marriage to Blonde Esmeree, whom some have seen as not only the rival, but the double of the fairy maid.⁸⁹

In the *Prose Lancelot*, the magical constraints are even clearer as the defender's role becomes a refuge for temporarily disgraced knights. In one adventure a cruel knight builds a castle on the Forbidden Hill, which has a fine spring below and a beautiful sycamore on top. He holds this site against all comers for twenty years until defeated by Lancelot's cousin, Sir Bors, who calls himself "Bors the Dispossessed." When he first challenges the defender, Bors is compelled to swear that if he wins, he will guard the castle for the rest of his life until defeated—and slay all vanquished challengers. Fortunately, he inserts an exception clause that lets him merely imprison knights of the Round Table. This permits him to avoid beheading Gawain, Yvain, Hector, and other Arthurian stalwarts. Eventually Lancelot arrives and challenges Bors by blowing an ivory horn that hangs on the tree. The cousins joust fiercely until at last, recognizing one another, they agree to abandon the custom, and Bors promises to free the defeated Round Table knights from his prison.⁹⁰

The expedient of two heroes fighting to a draw, borrowed from Chrétien, seems somehow to break the spell, liberating the prisoners and releasing the defender from his magical entrapment. As usual in romance, the more brutally the friends have maimed each other, the more heartily they rejoice to learn one another's identity. The exchange of savage blows creates the tightest of homosocial bonds.⁹¹

The Isle of Joy episode that ends the romance is similar, but here the writer manipulates the motif ironically. Lancelot takes over the isle when, after a period of madness, he is healed by the Grail. Bearing a defender's black arms, he calls himself *li chevalier malfet* (the guilty knight)⁹² because he inadvertently betrayed Guenevere while under enchantment. Banished for his infidelity, he lives perforce with King Pellès' daughter and their son, Galahad, but steadfastly refuses to love her. So, instead of fighting for the lady he ostensibly defends, he fights secretly for the one he has lost; his shield depicts a knight on his knees before a queen. In the guise of the Guilty Knight, Lancelot defeats more than two thousand challengers—until Perceval frees him by fighting to a draw, as in the preceding incident, so the custom can be abolished. Lancelot certainly experiences no "joy" on the island, where he never ceases to mourn the loss of Guenevere. Yet "the people of the land" call it the Isle of Joy because of the lady's damsels, who dance a carol every morning around a pine tree "with the greatest joy that any man ever saw."⁹³ Irrational and unexplained, this is another pagan motif, the enchanted carol—which haunts exemplum literature as a punishment for sacrilege or lust.⁹⁴ Earlier in the romance, Lancelot himself had been trapped in such a dance.⁹⁵

In all these texts, the challenge formula is a useful plot device, secularized and rationalized. Chrétien uses it in *Yvain* to explore the lady's psychology, while in the other romances it poses a danger of entrapment for the hero, whether in self-indulgent love (*The Fair Unknown*), erotic guilt (the Isle of Joy), or a dubious honor that amounts to imprisonment (the Forbidden Hill). Like other so-called evil customs in romance, the challenge is a negative condition that the hero must accept only for the sake of abolishing it. In contrast to customs that have existed from time immemorial, constituting a legal precedent, "evil customs" have been imposed at the arbitrary will of some cruel or selfish individual.⁹⁶ They cannot be brought to an end until they have been si-

multaneously fulfilled and resisted, for a hero has no leverage to end a custom until he defeats its upholder. Yet if he *merely* defeats him, he must take his place and the custom perdures.⁹⁷ Twelfth-century reformers, as John Van Engen has argued, sought in all spheres to supplant “evil custom” with principle, reason, and written law. From Gregory VII to Gratian to Abelard, reformers represented customary practice as the enemy of truth and justice.⁹⁸ In romance, this principle is lightly transposed: “abolishing the evil customs” becomes synonymous with “ending the enchantments of Britain” or, in modern parlance, putting an end to pagan survivals. Overthrowing such customs then signifies the hero’s Christianizing mission. On a parallel reading that takes account of the anti-Judaism so often voiced in romance, Jacques Ribard argues that these “customs” are metaphors of the Old or Jewish Law as twelfth-century Christians understood it (*law* being the standard term for *religion*).⁹⁹ For Jacques Ribard, *coutume* and *aventure* are analogous to Pauline *law* and *grace*: the hero, like Christ in Paul’s theology, comes both to abolish the law and to fulfill it.¹⁰⁰ Thus *custom* signifies bondage to a sinful past, while *adventure* casts the hero in the role of redeemer.

In the *Prose Tristan*, a largely secular romance, at least one challenge is presented in this light.¹⁰¹ At the Castle of Tears, an evil custom demands that every visiting lady must lose her head unless she is more beautiful than the defender’s lady. But if the visitor is judged fairer, the defender must behead his own lady. The castle passes from giant to giant until the time of King Arthur, when Tristan conquers its defender and Yseult wins the beauty contest. Later we learn that the custom was established by Dialetes, a pagan giant who resisted the evangelizing mission of Joseph of Arimathea. When his twelve sons converted, he killed them all in a rage, then went mad with grief, beheaded all the Christians in the land, and built a castle at the scene of his crimes. The custom finally ends when Galehaut, son of the Beautiful Giantess reluctantly slain by Tristan, returns to avenge his parents. Himself a half-giant, he makes peace with Tristan instead, so mutual forgiveness breaks the pagan spell and ends the cycle of vengeance.

Beheading is another pagan motif whose prominence in romance is out of all proportion to medieval practice. Though noblemen convicted of high treason were beheaded, this was not a common means of execution, and it was just one of many ways to kill an enemy in war.

So the severed heads of romance evoke a distant, more primitive world with alien styles of combat and, arguably, ritual. Severed heads have in fact been found at many Iron Age sites in Britain—fixed on the gate of a hill fort, buried in pits, decorating ramparts, set at regular intervals in a moat. At the fort of Carrawburgh along Hadrian's Wall, archeologists discovered a skull at the bottom of a sacred spring dedicated to the Romano-British goddess Coventina.¹⁰² In Welsh legend, King Bran the Blessed asks his followers to cut off his head and carry it with them as a talisman. As long as the head lives on and continues to speak, the heroes feast with it in a joyful otherworld.¹⁰³ This character is the archetype of the Bron who first appears in a Grail legend by Robert de Boron.¹⁰⁴ *Peredur*, a Welsh Grail romance adapted from Chrétien's *Perceval*, replaces the eucharistic wafer served in the French poet's Grail with a severed head, likewise borne on a ceremonial platter.¹⁰⁵ This bloody Grail procession may fuse a pagan beheading fetish with Christian veneration for the head of John the Baptist—a relic so coveted in the Middle Ages that, if it had truly graced all the churches that claimed it, he would have had more heads than the Beast of the Apocalypse. The sacred spring of Holywell, a Welsh pilgrimage site, is supposed to have sprung from the severed head of St. Winefride in the seventh century—a legend that may transmute an older pagan tradition like that of Coventina's well.

Holy Head, not far from Holywell, happens to be one of the sites Sir Gawain passes on his way to the Green Chapel, where he awaits his own beheading.¹⁰⁶ In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the best-known of several romances that include a beheading game, the anonymous poet's *conjointure* achieves a perfect fusion of pagan, Christian, and secular themes. Scholars long ago traced the poem's central plot device to an Irish tale, *Bricriu's Feast* (ca. 1100), in which a hideous creature called the "Bachlach" (churl) challenges the heroes of Ulster to a beheading contest.¹⁰⁷ All four are willing to strike, but only Cuchulainn beheads the creature. When the Bachlach returns, having survived decapitation, Cuchulainn accepts a return blow—which the Bachlach delivers with the blunt of his axe, praising the hero's courage. The Green Knight has the same miraculous ability to survive beheading, yet he is imagined quite differently. Though giants are typically coarse and misshapen, the Green Knight is only a "half-giant" (*half-etayn*, 140). In spite of his

superhuman size and strength—not to mention supernatural color—he has attractive features, a slender waist, and exquisite courtly garb, including a fur-lined mantle and gem-studded gear that the princeliest knight could wear with pride. Even his green horse has a carefully curled mane and tail entwined with golden thread!

The knight's *enker grene* skin and hair, unprecedented in romance, assimilate him to the Green Man who often appears as an architectural ornament, with his face sprouting vegetation and his hair wreathed in leaves.¹⁰⁸ A green man with the ability to survive beheading might seem the perfect representative of the dying-and-rising vegetation god beloved of myth critics, though this theory has been largely abandoned.¹⁰⁹ Yet pagan folkways were adapted to fit Christian times: a ninth-century cleric had condemned the pagan custom of wearing animal masks on the Kalends of January, but court documents attest that such masks were still worn at Christmas revels in the *Gawain* poet's lifetime.¹¹⁰ Whether one prefers a benign or a malefic account of paganism in the poem, the Green Knight can be read either way. His courtly attire, holly branch, and proposal of a *Crystemas gomen* (283)¹¹¹ support a benign reading. But it is hard to imagine a more terrifying site of pagan worship than his Green Chapel, a barrow situated among great crags beside a turbulent stream. Gawain calls it a "chapel of meschaunce," the "corsedest kyrk that euer I com inne" (2195–96)—the kind of place where, he imagines, the devil himself might sing matins at midnight (2187–88).

In the late Anglo-Saxon period, the barrows once used as pagan burial sites were already feared as haunted, sinister places, and archaeological evidence shows that in Christian times, criminals were beheaded at such sites, perhaps "to be tormented in the afterlife by the evil spirits which dwelt in the mound."¹¹² Records indicate that as late as 1261, some barrows were notorious dens of outlaws. So it would not be surprising if an antiquarian writer like the *Gawain* poet made use of such traditions. Some critics believe he had an actual place in mind for the Green Chapel: either Ludchurch or Wetton Hill, both in the rugged Peak District of Staffordshire.¹¹³ As it happens, both have pagan connections. Wetton Hill stands amid a Bronze Age burial ground near Thor's Cave, while the deep, suggestively named cleft of Ludchurch is, like Stonehenge, oriented to the midsummer sun. Only on Midsummer

Day do the sun's rays penetrate the depth of its chasm. Gawain, of course, visits at the antipodes of the year, the time of deepest darkness.

As if the Green Knight's menacing form, the fearsome Green Chapel, and the beheading game were not enough to create a darkly pagan mood, we have the Knight's final confession that he owes his shape-shifting to the "myght of Morgne la Faye" (2446). The famous sorceress—Arthur's sister, Gawain's aunt—is often styled "la Faye" (the fairy), but the *Gawain* poet goes further and calls her "Morgan the goddess" (2452), as if deliberately repaganizing a character whom others preferred to demythologize.¹¹⁴ Together, the seductive Lady Bertilak and the hideous, *auncian* Morgan (948) recall the two forms of the Irish Goddess of Sovereignty, one young and beautiful, the other a hag or "loathly lady." Best known from the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, this motif occurs in many other romances, including "The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle."¹¹⁵ The shape-shifting Goddess of Sovereignty probably underlies the poet's representation of Bertilak's two women, seemingly opposite yet in close collusion. Just as Sir Bertilak and the Green Knight represent contrasting phases of the same human-yet-supernatural character, so also with Lady Bertilak and "Morgan the goddess."¹¹⁶

While its ambience and *matiere* are convincingly pagan, the *sen* of *Sir Gawain* is unmistakably Christian. As one might expect from the poet of *Cleanness* and *Pearl*, *Sir Gawain* turns out to be a study in Christian ethics, pitting the hero's moral perfectionism against the leniency—or laxity—of the Arthurian court. The Green Knight occupies a problematic space between. As the antagonist who overtly challenges Gawain to the beheading game, while covertly testing him in the exchange-of-winnings game (which includes Lady Bertilak's kisses), the Green Knight subjects the unwitting hero to an exemplary godgame. This is a strategy, in the concept of John Fowles, devised by one literary character to entrap another, using "a mazelike sequence of false accounts" to make the protagonist a pawn in the godlike master-player's game.¹¹⁷ Although the pawn, in this case Gawain, cannot possibly win, in another sense he wins by losing, for godgames are ultimately benign: their purpose is to initiate the player into a deeper knowledge of life and of his own identity. Gawain, like the first-time reader, cannot know that Sir Bertilak and the Green Knight are one and the same; nor that

Lady Bertilak is in collusion with her husband; nor that the outcome of the beheading game depends on the way he plays the exchange game; nor that the green girdle, which purports to save his life, is what most endangers it; nor that Morgan la Faye has devised the whole scheme for her own inscrutable ends.

Yet what Gawain experiences as a diabolical godgame is, for the reader, the most satisfying *conjointure* in all romance—as tightly knotted as the pentangle or the green girdle. Though we too may err in the labyrinth of secrets, we can enjoy the game all the more because our own heads are not at stake.¹¹⁸ Stunned by the Green Knight's final revelations, Gawain—and we readers—must rethink whatever we thought we knew. Most remarkably, we must now see this conspicuously pagan character in the role of a Christian priest as Gawain confesses, with deep embarrassment, his “trecherye and vntrawthe” (2383). The Green Knight's sacramental language is clear:

Thou art confessed so clene, beknownen of thy mysses,
And hatz the penaunce apert of the poynt of myn egge,
I halde the polysed of that plyght and pured as clene
As thou hadez neuer forfeget sythen thou watz fyrst borne. (2390–93)

You have confessed so cleanly and acknowledged your faults,
And endured the plain penance of the point of my blade,
That I hold you polished from guilt and as perfectly pure
As if you had never transgressed since the day you were born.

By contrast, Gawain's earlier confession to a priest cannot have been pure: if he had owned up to possessing the girdle, he would have had to return it to receive absolution, and if he did not own up, he omitted a crucial sin.¹¹⁹ So the Catholic confession proves to be false and the pagan one, valid. Even in his Christian guise as Sir Bertilak, the Green Knight is a layman with no power to absolve. Only his status as the master-player in a godgame—and thus a figure of God within the tale—grants him such power.

Double coding and double judgment define every aspect of the poem. The Green Knight, in Lawrence Besserman's words, is “*both* god-like *and* demonic. . . . [H]e functions as a type of the slain and risen

Christ, expunger of aristocratic pride *and also* as a demonic, beheaded-but-still-living wild man."¹²⁰ Even more memorably, C. S. Lewis calls him "a living *coincidentia oppositorum* . . . as full of demoniac energy as old Karamazov, yet, in his own house, as jolly as a Dickensian Christmas host; now exhibiting a ferocity so gleeful that it is almost genial, and now a geniality so outrageous that it borders on the ferocious."¹²¹ For Philip O'Mara, Bertilak can be a chivalric model and sage counselor only through the magic of a pagan goddess: "He is, in other words, good to the extent that he is evil."¹²² O'Mara speculates that the *Gawain* poet knew the works of Robert Holcot (d. 1349), an Ockhamite theologian whose views on God and evil were similar to those of John of Mirecourt. While admitting that these theologians "show an unhealthy relish for paradoxes which, if taken seriously, create misery and terror," O'Mara emphasizes the more optimistic side of Holcot's thought, such as his belief that righteous pagans could be saved.¹²³ Though the evidence for our poet's knowledge of Holcot is not conclusive, he undeniably shares his taste for moral paradox.

The poem's duplicity, and thus its persistent demand for double judgment, only begins with the Green Knight. Morgan la Faye, read by some as a mere *dea ex machina* to justify an implausible plot, impresses others as the poem's prime mover.¹²⁴ Christ and Mary, answering a prayer, lead the hero to the castle of Morgan the Goddess and the Green Knight—indicating that God and his mother themselves have a hand in the godgame. The pentangle symbolizes Gawain's courtly virtues and knightly prowess, but also the five wounds of Christ and five joys of Mary—and outside the poem, it figures prominently as a magical emblem. That other magical emblem, the green girdle, becomes a badge of shame to Gawain, yet a badge of honor to the Arthurian court. The poem's scribe connected it to Edward III's Order of the Garter.¹²⁵ Each of these symbols, therefore, receives a secular, chivalric interpretation that overlays both pagan and Christian meanings, available within and beyond the poem itself.

The final duality, of course, concerns the question of how grievously the hero sins. Does his *culpa*, his acceptance of the girdle, turn out to be *felix* in the end? In an earnestly moral reading, Victor Haines argues that it does, which is why previous moral readers can be ranged along a spectrum from the "extreme felix school" to the "extreme culpa

school.”¹²⁶ Gawain’s somber penitence strikes his comrades and many readers as excessive, yet it marks a necessary phase: he must abandon belief in his own impossible perfection to adopt a more truthful humility. Hence both judgments, the hero’s self-abasing remorse and the court’s forgiving laughter, are ultimately true, just as both aspects of the Green Knight are true. In this poem of uproarious yet chastened mirth, where “blysse and blunder” (18) coincide in the end, it is only fitting that the pagan and the Christian should also coincide. Both are cleverly concealed, for the unsuspecting pawn, behind the façade of a brilliant secular romance.

HAGIOGRAPHIC ROMANCE:

“EVERYTHING THAT RISES MUST CONVERGE”

Even more than the confluence of Christian and pagan, the mingling of genres is endemic to crossover texts. As countless studies have demonstrated, the love lyric could easily be adapted to either a human or a divine beloved; textual and musical crossover worked in both directions.¹²⁷ In narrative we find the same phenomenon. Hagiography, as soon as it crossed the language barrier, merged so often with romance that critics have coined the term *hagiographic romance* for the hybrid.¹²⁸ This mixed genre may have possessed for medieval readers some of the same edginess that graphic novels do today. Saints’ lives were quintessentially *legenda*—authoritative Latin texts to be read in church—while the very word *romance* designates the vernacular. Yet the biographical element in both genres encouraged their fusion; each tends to follow the career of a single hero/ine from illustrious *enfances* to a holy or glorious end.

Perhaps more important, an idealizing luster surrounds both hero and saint. In Flannery O’Connor’s words, “everything that rises must converge”; and in honor as in love, what but the secular can furnish analogues for the sacred? The romance hero/ine may end by inheriting the throne or marrying the prince; the saintly hero/ine wins a throne in heaven or a celestial marriage bed. Translated or adapted from Latin *vitae*, vernacular saints’ lives freely introduced romance elements, while romance heroes were made to teeter on the brink of sainthood. As

Brigitte Cazelles observes, “thirteenth-century verse hagiographers . . . consistently turned to secular fiction as a mode of literary composition that could help sustain both the prestige of hagiographic writing and the hearers’ interest”—though the same process can be seen in prose.¹²⁹ In this section I will look at three subtypes of hagiographic romance: virgin martyr legends, transvestite saints, and holy sinners. In the first type, we see a progressive development from hagiography toward romance. In the others, the process more often moves in the opposite direction.

The legend of St. Catherine of Alexandria, that most regal and stylish of virgin martyrs, offers a particularly fine example of crossover in action.¹³⁰ Sometime between 1360 and 1375, a Prague Dominican wrote a Czech life of the saint, with emphasis on her passion. After enthusiastically describing the special whips designed for the virgin’s torture, he explains that they produced “on her body ribbons of six colors, signs of true love for her beloved as a lady should [have].” As the naked Catherine endured scourging, her cheeks paled to a livid green for shame and her white flesh blossomed with the scarlet roses of her blood, darkening to black as it congealed. Her bruises beneath the skin turned deep blue, while her golden hair, entangled by the whips,

got matted in the flesh, where it glistened through the blood. Thus these colors shone, one next to the other, here in the skin, here in the bruise: white, black, green, blue, gold, and red, each in its own substance. O, how this love had pitched so richly all its tents that this maiden beloved of God is able to suffer such torture! The precious drink of Isolde had previously been given to her when, in her dreams, she was betrothed to Tristan, who is the lord of all things, above whom none is more powerful.¹³¹

Here is the late medieval aesthetic of violence in full bloom.¹³² It offers one more point of convergence between hagiography and romance as the one bleeds into the other. Catherine’s mangled flesh, evoking horror and wonder, clothes her in the symbolic colors of *fin’amor*: red for ardor, white for hope, blue for fidelity. A lady “should” be attired with such “ribbons” to display her love—an inspiring model for the nuns whom the author no doubt wished to encourage in their practice of flagellation. And what lady could be worthier to die for love than this

saintly Isolde, already betrothed to her celestial Tristan? The hero's very name, interpreted as "sorrow" (from *triste*), cast him as a suitable figure of Christ in his Passion.

Did the writer use the analogy of Catherine as Isolde for its shock value? Though it still has power to startle, this was not the first time a *Vita Sanctae Catharinae* had encountered a version of *Tristan*. Two centuries earlier, the nun Clemence of Barking—one of the few known female hagiographers—wrote an Anglo-Norman life of the saint, drawing extensively on the *Tristan* of Thomas of Britain. For Clemence, however, it is not Christ who resembles Tristan. Far from it! Amplifying her Latin original, she significantly alters the scene where Maxentius, the pagan emperor, swears to behead his queen because Catherine has converted her. In the Latin he merely rages. But in the Anglo-Norman, Clemence gives the emperor a long, rhetorical lament. Lovesick, he wonders how he will ever live without his beloved:

Las, que me valt ore m'amur,
Quant n'i receif el que dultur.
En grant tristur demenrai ma vie,
Quant jo vus perdrai, bele amie
Kar sule esteies mun delit,
Et jeo le ten, . . .
Chaitifs ore sui, tut deceu,
Mort et trai et confundeu.
Or n'arai mais nul reconfort;
Or ne desir el que la mort.

Alas, what good is my love to me now
when all I get from it is pain?
In great sadness I shall lead my life
when I lose you, fair friend.
For you alone were my delight,
and I yours . . .
Now I am wretched, totally discomfited,
slain, betrayed, and undone.
Now I shall never again find solace.
Now I desire nothing but death.¹³³

Although Maxentius himself is to blame for the queen's execution, he postures as a self-pitying *fin amant* in language modelled on Tristan's soliloquy when he parts from Yseult. Clemence was undoubtedly appealing to the tastes of her audience, but she associates *Tristan*-love with the villain, not the heroine of her legend.¹³⁴ In the two hundred years that separate Clemence from the Bohemian writer, the idiom of piety had changed so much that the love of Tristan and Isolde had become less a contrast than a model for the love of Christ and Catherine.

The Czech writer's treatment of Isolde was facilitated by Gottfried von Strassburg, whose German adaptation of Thomas (ca. 1210) became the classic *Tristan*. At the end of his prologue, Gottfried presents his tale of illicit love as a communion feast:

Deist aller edelen herzen brôt.
 hie mite sô lebet ir beider tôt.
 wir lesen ir leben, wir lesen ir tôt,
 unde ist uns daz süeze also brôt.
 Ir leben, ir tôt sint unser brôt.
 sus lebet ir leben, sus lebet ir tôt.
 sus lebent si noch und sint doch tôt,
 und ist ir tôt der lebenden brôt.¹³⁵

This is bread to all noble hearts.
 With this, the death of both lives on.
 We read their life, we read their death,
 and this to us is sweet as bread.
 Their life, their death, are bread to us.
 So lives their life, so lives their death.
 So still they live, and yet are dead,
 and their death is the bread of the living.

Gottfried's erotic eucharist constructs his audience as a community of *edele herzen*; his ideal reader already participates in that blessed communion for whom Tristan and Isolde become exemplary saints and martyrs of love. We could easily read their drinking of the potion as a *felix culpa*. Throughout the romance, Gottfried encourages us to see the lovers in a sympathetic light through his idealizing language and such

symbolically charged scenes as the Grotto of Love, which plays on allegories of the church building to make their crystalline bed an altar. At the same time, however, he presents an unblinking narrative of the pair's moral degeneration. We see them involved in ever-deepening adultery, deception, and betrayal. Isolde even attempts to murder her faithful Brangaene, whom Tristan in turn shamelessly manipulates, and eventually he commits the ultimate sin of marrying another—at which point Gottfried's narrative breaks off. The romance pushes its demand for double judgment to the breaking point, beyond which perhaps the poet himself could not continue. Nevertheless, the Czech hagiographer did not hesitate to use Gottfried's doomed lovers as an analogue for the holiest love of all.

The image of St. Catherine as Isolde is only one, specialized example of a broader convergence between virgin martyrs and romance heroines. Even within the Latin tradition, there is a vast distance between the sober *acta* of the early martyrs and the hugely popular *Legenda aurea* (*The Golden Legend*, ca. 1260). Jacopo da Voragine's legends, the basis of so many vernacular versions, add a lavish dose of folklore, apocryphal adventures, and, not least, sadism; one scholar counts eighty-one types of torture.¹³⁶ Although the *Legenda* includes only twenty-two women (about 14 percent of the total), more than half of these are virgin martyrs, among the most popular saints in Europe. The standard virgin martyr legend takes a highly stereotypical form.¹³⁷ Young, rich, and beautiful, the virgin is desired by a pagan suitor who woos her with threats and promises, and/or is pressed by her father to marry. Indignantly refusing, she reveals that she is a Christian and has vowed her virginity to a bridegroom nobler than any earthly prince. For this she is subjected to an escalating spiral of tortures that may involve public nudity, mutilation, and the threat of rape—though that threat is never carried out because she cannot lose her talismanic virginity. When spectators in the arena observe the maiden's courage and miraculous endurance, mass conversions ensue. In a crescendo building up to the virgin's triumphant death, her most prominent converts achieve martyrdom before she does. Meanwhile, she is healed and comforted by Christ or an angel night after night in her dungeon. At last, once she has proven her constancy, she is beheaded with a prayer upon her lips, and her soul ascends joyfully to her heavenly nuptials.

In a witty and illuminating study, Jocelyn Wogan-Browne compares this pattern with the underlying plot structure of Harlequin romances analyzed by Janice Radway. They prove to be remarkably similar, except that in the modern romances the hero is an ambivalent figure, alternately cruel and tender to the heroine. In the virgin martyr romance, cruelty and tenderness are split between two potential bridegrooms, the pagan suitor and the heavenly Lord.¹³⁸ Similarities emerge most clearly when we read the martyr's legend as it is meant to be read, as a tale of tribulations en route to marriage. "Nuptiality" and "dotality" are the heroine's essential traits, signifying "the virgin's capacity to be given and to give."¹³⁹ Separated from her beloved, wooed and threatened by a dangerous rival, faithful through myriad sufferings that prove her love, and consoled by faithful confidantes, the bride wins through to union at last. Like modern romance heroines, too, she is an aggressive wooer, often the first to declare her longing. Her emphatic rejection of the pagan suitor allows her to display initiative and agency—a feature prominent in the legend of Catherine, who defeats and converts fifty pagan philosophers in a public debate. Once she has attained heavenly queenship, the saint offers, like an earthly queen, to intercede with the king for all who require her help.

Not all saintly virgins fit this model, but some who depart from it are even more romance-like—especially the transvestite saints. More than thirty such legends are recorded, a few perhaps historical, most rooted in Hellenistic romance or the early Christian ideal of the virile woman.¹⁴⁰ The saint variously known as Marina, Pelagia, or Margaret is a female monk, having taken that role either at her father's bidding or to expiate her own sins.¹⁴¹ When the local innkeeper's daughter becomes pregnant and accuses "Marinus" of fathering her baby, he is temporarily banished from his abbey, raising the child himself to avoid blowing his cover. Marina's true sex is discovered only when her fellow monks wash her body for burial. Such cross-dressing, calumny, exile, and narrow escape are the stuff of romance as well. In the thirteenth-century romance *Silence*, Marina's tale finds a secular analogue: the cross-dressed hero/ine is raised as a boy, grows up to be a fine minstrel and then a valiant knight, faces calumny as a homosexual after spurning the advances of a wicked queen, and finally returns to her birth gender, just in time to be shoehorned into a royal marriage.¹⁴² Both the

hagiographic and romance versions of this plot could be taken to argue that the best man for the job—be it monk, minstrel, or warrior—may sometimes be a woman.¹⁴³

In a few cases, life disconcertingly imitates art. Five contemporary sources honor the cross-dressed “Saint” Hildegund of Schönau, alias Brother Joseph (d. 1188), who spent a year as a Cistercian novice before her premature death.¹⁴⁴ Her story, allegedly based on a deathbed confession, has numerous romance traits. Taken by her father on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, Hildegund wears a boy’s clothes for convenience but finds herself alone when he dies on the return journey. Alternately begging and studying, she eventually gets a job as a papal courier but is accused of theft and has to face an ordeal by hot iron, then hanging—which she miraculously survives, being transported by an angel from Augsburg to Verona. Yet her tale has enough non-stereotypical features that some historians think Hildegund may really have existed. Oblique evidence for that possibility comes from a tale about Hildegard of Bingen (d. 1179), who met a young woman named Gertrud that “had transformed herself into a scholar.” Hildegard saw through Gertrud’s male disguise immediately and warned her to change back because she had not long to live.¹⁴⁵ The tale is atypical both because it belongs to no standard category of miracles (although it is presented as one), and because convention demanded that a cross-gender disguise should be impenetrable. (This is still the case in Shakespeare’s comedies.) It is interesting that an intellectual woman so often praised for her “virile mind” should disapprove of this stratagem for female education.¹⁴⁶ But the exemplum of Gertrud also suggests that enterprising women, perhaps inspired by the transvestite saints’ legends, did at times adopt male disguise.

One woman who undoubtedly existed, Christina of Markyate (d. ca. 1160), is known from an unfinished *vita* composed by a monk who knew her well.¹⁴⁷ But her story too is filled with romance episodes, beginning with a dramatic escape by night from her parents’ house, disguised in men’s clothing, to avoid the consummation of a forced marriage. Although Christina maintains that she vowed her virginity to Christ as a child, she must endure hair-raising tribulations before she can publicly adopt a religious life. Most of these involve men, such as Bishop Raoul Flambard, who tries to rape her; the hermit Roger, in whose tiny cell she hides for four years in chaste cohabitation; an unnamed cleric for whom

she burns in lust; and finally Abbot Geoffrey of St. Alban's, her patron and protégé, with whom she forms such an intimate friendship that rumors buzz. Stephen Jaeger describes the *Vita Christinae* as "a kind of summa of erotic-spiritual love; it might be justly called *scala amoris* or *de gradibus amoris*."¹⁴⁸ Despite its apparent realism and closeness to its subject, romance conventions almost certainly played a role in shaping Christina's *Life*.¹⁴⁹ What we cannot know is how far they shaped her life itself. Insofar as all sainthood is a form of *imitatio*, imitating hagiographic romance models might have become Christina's own way of imitating Christ.

Perhaps the ultimate virgin martyr as romance heroine is the legendary St. Wilgefortis (from *virgo fortis*), a saint known elsewhere as Ontcommer, Kümmernis, or Uncumber. Popular in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries across much of Europe, Wilgefortis is a compound of folklore and iconography. Though her origins are obscure, one branch of her legend apparently derived from the *Volto Santo*, or Holy Face of Lucca, a miracle-working early medieval crucifix that depicts a fully clothed Christ reigning from the tree, with no sign of pain. Copies of this crucifix, disseminated widely, were sometimes taken for images of a bearded, crucified woman. In time the *Volto Santo* iconography became attached to the legend of a princess who, in her desperation to escape a forced marriage, prays to Christ for some deformity and grows a full beard overnight. Charged with sorcery, the virgin is crucified by her irate father and earns a martyr's crown. Though texts about Wilgefortis are scarce, images abound (see Figure 2).¹⁵⁰ Uniquely, she manages to combine the typical features of a virgin martyr and a transvestite heroine. Prominent among those who sought her patronage were wives trapped in abusive marriages, who prayed to her to be "unencumbered" of their husbands. All but forgotten after the seventeenth century, she has lately reemerged as a patron saint of the transgender community.¹⁵¹

If the virgin martyr tends to move from pure hagiography progressively into the romance sphere, the reverse is true of the holy sinner. Male and female patterns of sanctity differ as widely in hagiographic romance as they do in Latin *vitae*. For female saints, such as virgin martyrs and even transvestites, virginity remains paramount, with a rare exception for prostitutes who become spectacular penitents (Mary Magdalene, Mary of Egypt,¹⁵² Thaïs the courtesan). Since the virgin must



Figure 2. St. Ontcommier (aka St. Wilgefortis). *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, ca. 1475. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vind. 1857, fol. 125v.

remain pure in mind as well as body, her narrative is one of temptations resisted and torments bravely overcome. For the legendary male saint, however, a different romance model predominates: after brilliant early success he falls into sin and misery, enduring harsh penance in order to regain his stature. As we have seen, Amis and Amiloun—heroes of a *chanson de geste* and later of romance—came to be represented in one textual tradition as saints, largely because of the sins they commit in allegiance to a higher cause. Although that cause is not obedience to God but mutual loyalty, they are willing to sin boldly for the sake of their friendship and suffer accordingly, like Tristan and Isolde and other heterosexual couples. God, it seems (or at least the God of romance), cannot ultimately resist such fidelity in love. As we will see in chapter 2, both the Vulgate Cycle and Malory grant Guenevere's lover a saintly end in spite of or even because of his illicit passion—a classic case of double judgment.

Other legendary heroes even found a place in the liturgical calendar, such as Julian the Hospitaller, also known as St. Julien le Pauvre.¹⁵³ While hunting one day he encounters a magic stag—the animal that, in Celtic lore, leads its pursuers to the otherworld.¹⁵⁴ The stag prophesies that Julian is destined to kill both his parents, so, like Oedipus, he flees home to avoid that fate. Much later, after he is knighted and married, Julian's parents arrive at his castle, having sought their lost son for many years. His wife graciously allows them to sleep in her own bed. When Julian returns from hunting after dark and finds them, he assumes that his wife has taken a lover and kills them both, no questions asked. Having thus fulfilled the stag's prophecy, he does penance by founding a hospice, where he and his wife shelter travellers and ferry them across a river until Christ, in the guise of a sick pilgrim, reveals that his penance has been accepted. This pattern of catastrophic sin and heroic penance characterizes a whole class of holy sinners who, like King David, learn compassion and humility by falling into the depths of evil. For female penitents, the paradigmatic sin is always prostitution; for men, it is more varied. Two of the most remarkable hagiographic romances of this type are Hartmann von Aue's *Gregorius* (ca. 1190) and the Middle English *Sir Gowther* (ca. 1400).

Gregorius, like the legend of St. Julian, descends at some distance from the tale of Oedipus.¹⁵⁵ The poet introduces his romance as “diu seltsaenen maere / von dem guoten sündære,” or “the strange tale of the good sinner”—an oxymoron that summons the reader to double judgment from the start.¹⁵⁶ *Gregorius* is the child of deliberate brother-sister incest. A wise counsellor advises his remorseful parents to do penance, so the father embarks on crusade and soon dies. The mother takes up a life of charity, casting her son adrift like Moses on the water, in a chest laden with gold, precious silks, and an ivory tablet relating the story of his birth. Rescued by fishermen, the boy is raised in a monastery. But when he comes of age and learns his true identity, he insists against the abbot's advice on being knighted. Soon he has occasion to relieve a besieged city and wed its conveniently single lady, not realizing that she is both his mother and his aunt.

Unlike his parents, *Gregorius* sins in ignorance but is nonetheless horrified when the truth comes out. Leaving his wife/mother/aunt at once, he advises her to adopt a strict ascetic regimen. He himself finds

a fisherman to lock him with iron shackles atop a cliff on a desert island, naked except for a hairshirt, with neither food nor shelter. The fisherman tosses the key into the depths of the sea, but Gregorius survives for seventeen years—on nothing but water trickling from the rock. At the height of his penance, the pope dies. When the conclave is deadlocked, God sends two holy men a vision, revealing that the next pope is living as a hermit on such-and-such a cliff. By another miracle, the key to his fetter turns up inside a fish caught by the same fisherman for the Roman legates' dinner. Atop the rock they discover the pale, shaggy, emaciated hermit, full of festering wounds. Needless to say, he resists election:

sô hôhe sô mîn schulde stât,
sô möhte boum unde gras
und swaz ie grüenes bî mir was
dorren von der grimme
mîner unreinen stimme
und von der unsüeze
mîner baren vüeze.

The guilt I carry is so great,
Each blade of grass and every tree,
Whatever there was of green near me,
Would wither and wilt at the wild tone
My unclean voice now calls its own;
And all would perish that's clean and sweet,
Touched by the foulness of my feet!¹⁵⁷

Gregorius categorically refuses to go to Rome without the lost tablet narrating his birth, so it is duly sought and found. Though long buried, the tablet appears “as new as when it came from its maker's hand” (vv. 3733–35). This miracle suggests not only that the material is undecayed, but also that its writing is effaced, a sign in many exempla that a sin has been absolved. Critics, to be sure, do not agree about how sinful Gregorius is in the first place. Technically he is not guilty of his parents' incest, though he is profoundly shamed by it, and his own is unintended. Before his fall, however, he is morally average at best, as we

glean from his pride in even a tainted noble lineage and his rejection of the abbot's advice. Only sin and virtuoso penance transform him into the saint he would not otherwise have become. The legates take the holy penitent, now called "this sinless man" (v. 3658), to Rome, where he is raised to the throne of Peter as all the bells ring of their own accord. As pope he reigns with mercy and justice and displays a gift of miraculous healing.

The romance thus conveys a stunningly optimistic message: even the most monstrous sin conceivable can be expunged by penance. This optimism is even more apparent in its French source, the anonymous *Vie du pape saint Grégoire*, whose title suggests its closeness to hagiography.¹⁵⁸ As Daniel Rocher observes, the French poet explicitly spells out the *felix culpa* theology that is only implicit in Hartmann's romance.¹⁵⁹ When the saint's parents come together in incest, the French author remarks how the Devil gloats, unaware that God is already planning his defeat through "cel saintisme engendrement"—"this most holy conception"—enabled by their sin.¹⁶⁰ Similarly, when the French Grégoire discovers that his wife is his mother, he thanks God for revealing this sin so he can do penance, warning the Devil not to boast until he has seen the austerities he will perform to obtain God's pardon. In Hartmann's poem, Gregorius is less hagiographically if more plausibly furious at God. But, despite the shift from apocryphal hagiography to hagiographic romance, the *felix culpa* pattern remains deeply ingrained in the narrative.

The tale ends when the hero's long-suffering mother arrives to confess to the holy pope. In a second recognition scene, Gregorius grants her absolution and the two live inseparably but chastely until death, when both are received into heaven as God's elect children (*ûz erweltiu gotes kint*, v. 3954). He who is already the same woman's son, nephew, and husband now becomes her father in Christ and finally her brother in heaven. As in Marian hymns that play on the symbolically incestuous union between Christ and his mother/sister/bride, redeemed incest paradoxically becomes a sign of wholeness.¹⁶¹ Since the wrong relations of the past cannot be undone, redemption lies in moving through and beyond them to complete the full cycle of possible relationships, ending with all the elect as siblings under the fatherhood of God. Of course incest could also be redeemed by allegory, as attempted in the

vast exempla collection known as the *Gesta Romanorum*.¹⁶² On this writer's interpretation, Gregorius begins as a figure of *humanum genus* begotten of those incestuous siblings, body and soul. Exposed on the sea of human misery, he is saved by a fisherman (a prelate as "fisher of men") and raised by the abbot, who signifies God. In maturity he becomes a type of Christ and grows up to marry his mother, the Church. This is the same type of double judgment we saw in the exegesis of David and Bathsheba: a marriage that is ethically monstrous becomes allegorically sacred.

Perhaps the most spectacular of all holy sinners is Sir Gowther, who is literally the son of a demon.¹⁶³ When a duchess, desperate for offspring, prays for a child by any means, an incubus appears in the guise of her husband and rapes her. (The poet says Gowther is "Merlin's half-brother, for one fiend begot them both.")¹⁶⁴ Evil from birth, the infant kills nine wet nurses, by sucking them dry, and bites off his own mother's nipple. By fifteen he is a monster—murdering for pleasure, inciting priests to suicide, raping nuns, burning churches. His father dies of grief and his mother locks herself in her strongest castle. Oddly, though Gowther feels no remorse for any of these crimes, he repents when his mother is forced to reveal his true paternity. Determined to seek salvation, he now heads for Rome to ask absolution of the pope. As penance he is commanded henceforth to play the fool, pretend to be mute, and eat no food but what he can snatch from the mouth of dogs. In the guise of "Hob the Fool," eating beneath the emperor's table, Gowther endures this penance until the sultan comes to woo the emperor's beautiful daughter (who is also mute), declaring war when his suit is denied.

Gowther now silently prays for a horse and arms to help his master, and God grants his wish. On three successive days he turns the tide of battle—first in coal-black, then in blood-red, and finally in milk-white arms. But each night he resumes his humble place among the dogs, so only the princess knows who the mystery knight really is. On the third day, when the emperor is taken captive, Gowther rescues him by cutting off the sultan's head, thus ending the war. Seeing her beloved knight wounded, however, the princess faints in grief and falls from her tower window. Although presumed dead, on the third day she regains life and speech, proclaiming God's forgiveness to the penitent. In an

extravagant happy ending, Gowther becomes first emperor, then saint; he provides for his mother, founds an abbey and a convent to pray for his victims, marries the princess, inherits the throne, and reigns in peace and justice. At last he is buried in the abbey he founded, where he is venerated as a saint (“a varré corsent parfett,” v. 721) and impressive miracles occur at his tomb.

Attesting the same penitential optimism as *Gregorius*, *Sir Gowther* reveals a more distinctive lay sensibility. Though Hartmann von Aue was himself a layman, he strongly suggests that priesthood is a higher vocation than knighthood. When the novice monk rejects the old abbot’s offer to make him his successor and insists on the chivalric career he longs for, the abbot warns him:

swer sich von phaffen bilde
gote machet wilde
unde ritterschaft begât,
der muoz mit maniger missetât
verwürken sêle und lip.

The religious who will turn
In estrangement, God to spurn,
And the life of knighthood lead,
Is apt through many a wicked deed
His body and his soul to lose.¹⁶⁵

These words prove prophetic, for even though *Gregorius* commits no deliberate sin, his first knightly success leads directly to his downfall. Gowther, on the other hand, is given the opportunity to redeem himself through chivalry. Having sinned through lawless and indiscriminate violence, he is required as penance to live like the inhuman creature he has become, eating with animals and renouncing the use of speech. Significantly, however, the one papal demand he bluntly rejects is that he lay down his weapon; he claims he cannot survive without it because his friends are few. So it is with the same mighty falchion he had used in his life of crime that Gowther slays the sultan. God does not finally require him to renounce violence, only to learn the right use of it—killing Saracens in battle. It is that noble deed that wins him the crown, the princess, and the declaration of God’s mercy. Signifi-

cantly, sainthood is added almost as a happy afterthought to his secular redemption. If hagiography and romance are evenly balanced in *Gregorius*, *Sir Gowther* clearly tilts to the romance side. Here it is the secular that appropriates the sacred.

The story of a half-devil who achieves holiness has numerous analogues, most famously *Robert le Diable* (the proximate source of *Sir Gowther*)¹⁶⁶ and the legend of Merlin spun by Geoffrey of Monmouth and Robert de Boron. Romance saints like Julien le Pauvre, Gregorius, Robert le Diable, and Sir Gowther may have been invented to meet lay religious needs for a male penitential hero just as spectacular as Mary Magdalene or Mary of Egypt. We might assume that even the most credulous medieval reader would recognize the fictionality of such tales. Yet such was their narrative appeal, coupled with their comforting moral about the efficacy of penance, that the sheer will to believe could override all skepticism. Hence an anonymous English Carthusian, translating Werner Rolewinck's *Fasciculus temporum* (a work contemporary with *Le Morte Darthur*), could not resist interpolating a prayer to St. Merlin in his litany to fifth-century saints. His language is, to be sure, conditional:

O merline begeten apon a woman by a fend ȝit thou was of holy life & had spirit of p[ro]phcey. & stirrit Wortigon[us] king of Briton & Vt[er] pendragon & Arthur to many gud wark[is] & incresinge of the cristen faith yf thou be a saint in hevyn. for the l.o. I[he]su [pray for us hertelly].¹⁶⁷

O Merlin, begotten on a woman by a fiend, yet thou wast of holy life and had a spirit of prophecy, and stirred Vortigern king of Britain and Uther Pendragon and Arthur to many good works and to the increase of the Christian faith. If thou be a saint in heaven, for the love of Jesus, pray for us heartily.

“Yf thou be a saint in hevyn”! With these words a nameless monk’s piety, patriotism, and antiquarian zeal cross the line from literary crossover into actual prayer.

One hero of hagiographic romance, the most famous of them all, fits none of these patterns. Sir Galahad, the knight created for the express purpose of achieving the Holy Grail, is both a paragon of chivalry

and a male counterpart to the virgin martyrs. For all practical purposes, the author of *The Quest of the Holy Grail* invented the male virgin. Many celibate monks may of course have been virgins, but their biographers take no special note of it, for the liturgical class of “holy virgins” includes only women.¹⁶⁸ (A rare exception is St. Alexis, another romance-like figure whose eleventh-century *Vie* is among the oldest compositions in French.)¹⁶⁹ Galahad, the consummate male virgin, is admired for this virtue as much as any princess. Begotten by Lancelot on King Pelles’ virgin daughter (a *felix culpa* analyzed in chapter 2), he is raised not at court but in a nunnery, which he leaves only after he is knighted—making his skill in horsemanship and swordplay rather mysterious. A model of purity, Galahad does not resist sexual temptation like his companions, Perceval and Bors, for he feels none. So great is the magic power of his virginity that he can cool a boiling fountain or heal a wounded king with his touch, in addition to sitting in the Siege Perilous, pulling a sword from a stone, and other feats reserved for messianic heroes. Unlike a normal romance hero, he has no misadventures and makes no mistakes, yet he is invincible in combat; even Lancelot cannot resist him. Galahad is, in effect, unfallen man; he is also *alter Christus*, though in a very different sense from his contemporary, Francis of Assisi.¹⁷⁰ In fact, he incarnates the “new kind of chivalry” praised by Bernard of Clairvaux in *De laude novae militiae*, a tract of exhortation for the Knights Templars:

Impavidus profecto miles, et omni ex parte securus, qui ut corpus ferri, sic animum fidei lorica induitur. Utrisque nimirum munitus armis, nec daemonem timet, nec hominem. Nec vero mortem formidat, qui mori desiderat. . . . Ita denique miro quodam ac singulari modo cernuntur et agnis mitiores, et leonibus ferociore, ut pene dubitem quid potius censam appellandos, monachos videlicet an milites, nisi quod utrumque forsan congruentius nominarim.

He is truly a fearless knight and secure on every side, for his soul is protected by the armor of faith just as his body is protected by armor of steel. He is thus doubly armed and need fear neither demons nor men. Not that he fears death—no, he desires it. . . . Thus in a wondrous and unique manner [such knights] appear gentler than lambs,

yet fiercer than lions. I do not know if it would be more appropriate to refer to them as monks or as soldiers, unless perhaps it would be better to recognize them as being both.¹⁷¹

Though the reality of the Templars fell far short of Bernard's ideal, Galahad at least fulfills it. Alone among romance heroes, he is not only a compound of knight and monk, but a mystic as well. Having achieved the Grail, he reigns as king for a year in the realm of Sarraz—which signifies both a spiritual otherworld and the land of the Saracens, regained at last.¹⁷² After a final vision of the Grail, he receives the rare boon of dying at his own desire. But the sublime epiphany he sees in the holy vessel this last time is not the mystery of the Trinity, the Incarnation, or the miracle of transubstantiation, for all these have already been revealed. His climactic vision, rather, discloses “the source of great valor and the fountainhead of prowess” (*l'acomençaille des granz hardemenz et l'achoisson des proeces*)—an apotheosis of chivalry itself.¹⁷³ So daring at this moment is the fusion of knight and saint, of the ultimate mysteries of faith with the glorification of arms, that even Malory (whom no one has ever accused of mysticism) chose to leave it out. Sir Gowther and Sir Galahad could not be less alike. But at the point of crossover from worldly to celestial glory, everything that rises must converge.

CHAPTER 2

DOUBLE CODING

Knights of Arthur, Knights of Christ

THE MATTER OF BRITAIN IS PASSING STRANGE, WHICH IS WHY medieval readers liked it—and why it still fascinates today.¹ Knights errant wander through the forest in search of adventure, traversing an enchanted landscape where fairies, giants, dwarves, and dragons abound, but an artisan or peasant is seldom seen. Random jousts occur daily, organized combat rarely. With astonishing freedom damsels ride where they will, delivering enigmatic messages, issuing imperious commands. Ladies are won in combat by total strangers, including the murderers of their former lords. Fair Unknowns, their identity mysterious even to themselves, erupt onto the chivalric scene. Maimed kings of impossible age, wounded through both thighs, rule over waste lands. Single combat ends in beheading, often at the behest of damsels. Castles offer hospitality hedged by barbaric customs, to be first obeyed and only then abolished by the hero.

In chapter 1, I focused on the pagan *matiere* that underlies so much of Arthurian romance. Here I will study the play of sacred and secular, pagan and Christian, in four texts: Chrétien de Troyes' *Chevalier de la Charrette* (*Lancelot*); the Grail romances of *Perlesvaus* and *La Queste del*

Saint Graal, read in counterpoint; and the ending of Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*. I have chosen these texts because the Lancelot-Grail material affords so many instances of double coding in both of the forms I have described: the overlay of pagan *matiere* with Christian *sen*, and the ambiguity or duplicity of moral judgment.² Chrétien's romance, rich in mythic materials, invests the ultimate tale of *fin' amor* with tantalizing hints of Christian allegory. Just how much weight to give these intimations has long been a critical challenge, with no agreement in sight. The *Queste*, as the most thoroughly Christianized Grail romance, turns the romance genre against itself, subverting the values of the largely secular Vulgate Cycle to which it belongs. But the less canonical *Perlesvaus*, while just as militantly Christian, displays an often disquieting interest in the violence and strangeness of its pagan sources. Malory's work, finally, begins in a secular mode but, forced by its incorporation of "The Tale of the Sankgreal" to accommodate Christian values, slips after the apocalypse on Salisbury Plain into a remarkable dual ending: the passing of Arthur is pagan, feminine, and open-ended, while Lancelot's end is hagiographic, masculine, and closed. Each romance, double-coded in its own distinctive way, rewards the hermeneutic strategy of double judgment sketched in chapter 1.

CHRÉTIEN'S *CHARRETTE*:

DOUBLE CODING, DOUBLE JUDGMENT

Like *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Chrétien's *Charrette* is so pervasively double-coded that it has given rise to an array of diverse and contested readings. As Matilda Bruckner and Sarah Kay have shown, this division among critics mirrors the deliberately paradoxical character Chrétien devised for Lancelot.³ Hence his devotion to his imperious lady is variously seen as the pinnacle of *fin' amor*, a sacrilege, a parody of courtly love, a sacred allegory, and a hyperbolic attempt to please Chrétien's patron, Marie de Champagne, whom the poet credits with both *matiere* and *sen* of this romance. I will look first at the pagan, mythic elements that underlie its plot, then at the hints of Christian *senefiance* dropped by Chrétien and elaborately developed by modern critics. Only after that will I ask how the poet's *conjointure* holds these in balance with

his primarily secular interests. In the end, I argue, Chrétien presents Lancelot as the epitome of both honor and shame, requiring a double judgment that would play itself out in the romance's double-edged medieval reception.

While Lancelot as we know him was Chrétien's invention, Guenevere belongs to an early stratum of Arthurian literature. Her Welsh name, "Gwenhwyfar," has been taken to mean either "white phantom" or "fair enchantress," marking her as originally a fairy.⁴ Well before Chrétien, she was the subject of stories derived from a Celtic myth about a queen's abduction to the otherworld—or perhaps an otherworld queen previously abducted by Arthur.⁵ In the Welsh priest Caradoc of Llancarfan's *Vita S. Gildae* (ca. 1130) Arthur's wife Guennuvar is carried off by Melvas, King of the Summer Country, to his inviolate refuge at Glastonbury (*Urbs Vitrea*), protected by wetlands—the mythic Isle of Avalon that figures in so many romances. In this truncated version of the myth, the abbot of Glastonbury persuades Melvas to return the queen without a fight, but combat is a more typical feature. "Melvas" is a Latin form of Welsh *Maelwas*, from *mael* (prince) plus *gwas* (youth)—a name that also underlies Chrétien's villain, Meleagant.⁶ The epithets "king of the summer country" and "prince of youth" reinforce this figure's mythic status as an otherworld ruler. Versions of the abduction story were widespread even before Geoffrey of Monmouth. For instance, the famous sculptured archivolt at Modena Cathedral, from the early twelfth century, shows Arthur with Kay and Gawain storming a castle where a woman named "Winlogée" is held prisoner by "Mardoc."⁷ Geoffrey has Guenevere living in open adultery with Arthur's nephew Mordred.⁸ In Malory the queen does not consent, but Mordred abducts her and attempts a forced marriage. Since his motivation is lust for power, it appears that possession of the queen confers sovereignty, as in the well-known Sovereignty of Ireland myth.⁹

According to Derek Brewer, the abduction story includes several standard motifs: (1) A husband is visited by a mysterious stranger, (2) who abducts or claims the right to his wife, (3) but does not immediately consummate his union with her. (4) The abductor is pursued, either by the husband or a young rescuer, (5) who tracks him down to his supernatural realm, after a perilous passage, (6) with the help of a hospitable host, and (7) recovers the lady, either through a ruse or with

the help of a wise man.¹⁰ In Chrétien's romance Meleagant is the mysterious stranger, Lancelot the rescuer, the vavasor a hospitable host, and King Bademagu the wise man. Bademagu's realm of Gorre is clearly an otherworld of some sort, for no stranger who enters that land can leave it. Attackers can enter only by crossing a deadly, Styx-like river, bridged by the impassable Water Bridge and the even more horrific Sword Bridge. If this is the Land of the Dead, Guenevere may be likened to Persephone or Eurydice, Meleagant to Hades, and Lancelot to Orpheus. But Chrétien as usual has rationalized the myth. The prisoners from Logres live reasonably normal lives in Gorre, though mourning their exile, and Bademagu is a generous, courtly ruler despite the villainy of his son Meleagant. Other elements, however, bolster the sense of the uncanny. One of these is the cart that gives the romance its title, *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*. Another is the long series of damsels who test and assist the hero on his quest.

Carts, as Chrétien carefully explains, once served the function of pillories (323–40)¹¹: they were used to expose thieves, traitors, murderers, and the losers in judicial combat to public shame, and anyone who rode in one forfeited his property and feudal rights. Legally, Chrétien's cart combines features of the English tumbrel, a sort of pillory on wheels, and the French gallows cart, used to transport felons to their execution.¹² Since Lancelot is in fact going to commit a capital crime—adultery with the queen—his carting seems to anticipate his penalty. Yet if this punishment had been a familiar one in Chrétien's day, his audience would not have needed a long explanation. As so often in romance, a mythic dimension underlies the social. Mythically, the dwarf-drawn cart is a vehicle of death—giving rise to a superstitious fear of carts mentioned by Chrétien (341–46) and preserved in Breton folklore into the twentieth century.¹³ In the *Prose Lancelot*, Bors and Gawain endure a humiliating cart ride that only partially depends on Chrétien.¹⁴ And in *Perlesvaus*, a romance unusually close to its pagan sources, a cart is the ceremonial conveyance of the Bald Damsel—the Grail Maiden in her guise as Loathly Lady. Drawn by three white stags and draped in funeral black samite, it carries the severed heads of 150 knights.¹⁵ John Darrah speculates that the ritual cart could be ridden without shame only by a goddess or her priestess; otherwise, it was used to humiliate defeated kings and unsuccessful challengers.¹⁶ Such connotations ex-

plain why, as soon as Lancelot has mounted the cart, he becomes a marked man—marked for the symbolic death that constitutes admission to Gorre. People who cannot possibly have seen him in the cart, including the queen, ridicule or shun him as a result.

As the knight continues his quest, he meets a series of nameless damsels whose uncanny knowledge and behavior suggests fairy blood.¹⁷ The first one mocks Lancelot and exposes him to the Perilous Bed, then turns friendly and equips him with a horse and arms. The *amie* of the Defender of the Ford begs him to spare her lover's life; conversely, the Damsel on the Mule—later revealed as Meleagant's sister—demands the head of her enemy, the Proud Knight. Both promise rewards in return for these opposite favors. Strangest of all is the Amorous Damsel, who will not lodge the knight unless he lies with her (“avoec moi vos coucheroiz,” 954)—a chastity test he passes by doing just that, neither more nor less. The same damsel stages a phony rape scene and, the next day, demands that Lancelot escort her according to the “custom of Logres.” Like the cart, this archaic custom requires explanation: a woman riding alone was inviolate, but if a knight escorted her, anyone who vanquished him could rape her with impunity (1307–28). Taken as actual rape law, this would of course be barbaric; taken as a representation of female desire, it reinscribes the fantasy that women want to be raped.¹⁸ But neither reading acknowledges the custom's pagan substrate, which is simply a moving version of the challenge motif. In the custom of Logres, the lady's “defender” escorts her; in the challenge formula, he guards her at a stationary site. Both versions, however, cloak female power beneath the appearance of vulnerability. The Amorous Damsel holds all the cards in this episode: Lancelot, who is simply eager to be on his way, must first pass tests of his chastity, fidelity, and prowess. Just as the voyeuristic spectacle of the rape scene is meant to arouse his desire, the custom of Logres aims to provoke his jealousy, in each case unsuccessfully. As Bruckner points out, the custom encapsulates the whole plot of the romance in miniature. The Proud Son tries but fails to win the Amorous Damsel from Lancelot; Meleagant wins Guenevere from Kay, but fails to consummate their union; finally, Lancelot wins her from Meleagant, but again fails to complete the custom. When the queen finally gives herself to her lover, it is clear that she has granted free consent rather than succumbing as booty.¹⁹

Pagan lore underlies all these elements: the abduction, the other-world character of Gorre, the cart ride, the marvelous damsels, the custom of Logres. But Chrétien, unlike the *Gawain* poet, had no interest in paganism as such. While he reveled in the matter of Britain and its marvels, he used them sparingly to heighten their impact.²⁰ By contrast, the extent of his interest in Christianity is much debated. Whatever one finally thinks of Lancelot, a pattern of “messianic reverberations” attends the hero, lending his feats a resonance beyond mere chivalric glory.²¹ For instance, his success is heralded by the fulfillment of prophecy. In the Future Cemetery episode, he lifts the cover of a tomb destined for the one who will free the captives of Logres. When his comrades warn that no one can cross the Sword Bridge “any more than a man could enter his mother’s womb and be reborn” (3070–71), they echo the objection of Nicodemus to the teaching of Jesus (John 3:4). To accomplish this feat Lancelot crawls on his hands and knees, removing most of his armor, and enters Gorre with hands and feet profusely bleeding. No attentive listener could have missed this allusion to the stigmata. If any did, King Bademagu’s offer to heal the knight with “the ointment of the three Maries” (3374) would have recalled the women who came to anoint Christ’s body on Easter morning. By an act of faith, Lancelot defeats what turn out to be imaginary lions—emblems of the power of hell—at the far end of the bridge. As he proceeds into Gorre, his countrymen hail him as their savior and vie for the honor of lodging him. When he liberates the queen, all the other prisoners go free and the custom of Gorre is broken. This victory provokes an outpouring of joy like the jubilation that greets Yvain’s success at the Castle of *Pesme Adventure*, Erec’s at the Joy of the Court—or Christ’s at the Harrowing of Hell.

But what congruence can there be between Lancelot’s Christlike stature and the goal of his quest—to consummate a love that is both adultery and treason? Herein lies the crux. A time-honored way to resolve such conundrums, as we saw in the case of David and Bathsheba, was through the use of allegory. Not surprisingly two critics, one in the heyday of exegetics and one recently, have offered thoroughgoing allegorical interpretations. Jacques Ribard in 1972 read the *Charrette* as a twelfth-century exegete would have read the Old Testament, making the romance an allegory of salvation. Logres and Gorre, on his tell-

ing, are the realm of ordinary life and the spirit world. Gorre, the land from which no prisoner returns, is initially the world of the dead, but once the Savior arrives to free its captives, it becomes the kingdom of the Lord's redeemed. Its natives—spiritual beings such as angels and demons—come and go freely, but humans cannot leave of their own accord.²² Meleagant represents Satan, while the unexpectedly gracious King Bademagu is God the Father—opposing yet still loving his rebel son. Lancelot clearly emerges as a Christ figure when he crosses the sword bridge, acquiring the stigmata. If that ordeal evokes the pain of the Cross, the earlier cart ride suggests its humiliation. Other details are worked out with equal care. Kay, boastful yet worthless in battle, signifies the mediocrity of human ambition. Even Gawain, standing for humanity at its best, is helpless without grace. He chooses the Water Bridge, a symbol of baptism, rather than the Sword Bridge, which signifies crucifixion or the baptism of blood.²³

Guenevere, the object of the quest, stands for nothing less than the human soul. Failing at first to appreciate her lover's sacrifice, she coldly rejects him. But afterward, crushed at the prospect of losing him forever, she grants her love and contritely bewails her sin. The famous night of love is no "banal adultery," but a mystical union in which she rises to the exalted role of Christ's bride.²⁴ Yet Lancelot must return the queen to King Arthur because mystical ecstasy is fleeting; such a love cannot be fulfilled in the present life. In Ribard's most ingenious reading, Arthur is made to signify the body, the soul's feckless yet inseparable companion while it abides on earth.²⁵ Lancelot himself disappears into prison because the Redemption is only the midpoint, not the end of salvation history. Once his victory is won, Christ is no longer visible but appears only on rare occasions, like Lancelot at the tournament of Noauz. Ribard reads the failure of that tournament—where all the maidens refuse to take husbands because they cannot have Lancelot—as a choice of celibacy for the love of Christ.²⁶

Like most exegetical readings, Ribard's has a timeless aura. Liberally sprinkled with quotations from the Bible, it provides few from medieval exegetes. Ribard has no interest in history and, more troubling, turns a deaf ear to comedy. Impervious to Chrétien's irony and wit, he brusquely dismisses the amorous plot as so much literal chaff coating the figurative wheat. Some of these flaws are remedied by Lori Walters,

who offers another allegorical reading in a new collection of essays on the *Charrette*.²⁷ For Walters, too, Lancelot is a Christ figure, but she opts for a Bernardian reading of the Song of Songs, making the bride a figure of the Church. It is Guenevere's role as a type of Ecclesia that accounts for her seemingly heartless commands, which require the same unquestioning obedience that a Christian owes the Church. More specifically, she represents Jerusalem, the holy city imprisoned by Muslims, so the knightly reader is called to imitate Lancelot by taking the cross—that is, going on crusade—to rescue her. The lovers' union stands for the apex “of a meditative process of ascent, a mental pilgrimage,” its ecstasy “a call to total and unquestioning devotion to the crusader ideal.”²⁸

Unlike Ribard, Walters anchors her reading firmly in history. She notes that Chrétien's patron, Marie de Champagne, was the daughter, wife, and mother of celebrated crusaders.²⁹ Her father, Louis VII, received the warrior's cross from the hands of St. Bernard at Vézelay, and her mother, Eleanor of Aquitaine, accompanied him on the Second Crusade. Marie's husband, Count Henry the Liberal of Champagne, undertook a personal crusade to Constantinople in 1179–1181. Captured but then ransomed by the Byzantine emperor, he returned home ill and dying. Their son Henry II, participating in the Third Crusade, was killed at Acre in 1197. Marie herself, who served as regent for all but three years during the period 1179–1197, had a strong dedication to the crusading ideal and ended her life in a convent. As countess of Champagne she commissioned other works, such as a French paraphrase of Genesis and a commentary on Psalm 44, that testify to her religious interests. (The psalm commentary is itself a crossover work; it describes the wedding of the King and Queen of Heaven in terms of the Joy of the Court in Chrétien's *Erec et Enide*, casting David as jongleur.)³⁰ Since St. Bernard had played a key role in the lives of Marie's parents and was even credited with enabling her birth through his prayers, it makes sense, if one wants to read allegorically, to take his *Sermons on the Song of Songs* as a key to the enigmatic *sen* Marie supplied for her poet. Like Ribard, however, Walters overlooks Chrétien's humor, especially the moments where Lancelot is made to appear ridiculous.

Ribard's allegorical reading is the more ingenious, Walters' the more historically grounded of the two. Both, however, face the same objec-

tions. Could, or did, anyone in Chrétien's audience actually interpret the romance this way? Anyone who has studied twelfth-century Song of Songs commentaries—and Bernard's was only the most famous of many—knows that allegorical readings even more elaborate than these were very much in vogue.³¹ But Scripture was one thing, vernacular romance another. "There is no evidence," Nancy Freeman-Regalado states (a little too bluntly), "that in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries readers usually elaborated religious allegorical exegetic readings of vernacular texts."³² When romance writers did introduce Christian allegory into their work, in *Perlesvaus* and *La Queste del Saint Graal*, they did so in explicit, even heavy-handed ways. Significantly, both of these romances disqualify Lancelot as a Grail knight because of his love for Guenevere (which is repented in the *Queste* but defiantly upheld in *Perlesvaus*). Neither of these vernacular writers and interpreters of Chrétien thought of making Guenevere a figure of the mystic bride. Even Malory, whose admiration for Lancelot knew no bounds, made penance for his sinful love a condition of his ultimate holy death. D. W. Robertson took a different tack entirely, reading the *Charrette* as a parodic condemnation of the knight's "idoltrous passion."³³

For either Ribard or Walters to be correct, we must posit an *esoteric* readership for the romance, beginning with a secret shared by Marie and her poet and perhaps extending to a few clerics in their inner circle—Latinized readers steeped in biblical hermeneutics. Such readers may have existed; as we have seen, the compiler of the *Gesta Romanorum* sketched an allegorical commentary on *Gregorius*. But anyone who may have read the *Charrette* this way has left no trace. The readers who *have* left traces, by retelling and expanding this immensely influential story, have seen Lancelot as either a secular hero, remarkable for his unequalled prowess and devotion to the queen; as an exemplum of sinful love, barred by his passion from achieving the Grail; or as a holy sinner who died a great saint, but only by doing penance as extreme as his passion. In the rest of this chapter we shall see how this reception unfolds. Nevertheless, Ribard and Walters are not displaying idle ingenuity. Rather, their interpretations spring like a lush harvest from grains of Christian *sen* scattered by the poet himself. If the erotic plot is not mere chaff, neither is the allegory just a figment of overheated critical brains. The romance invites, yet cannot unambiguously confirm, such readings because ambiguity itself is

a large part of Chrétien's *sen*. Here I follow Bruckner and Kay. If we let the poet's "messianic reverberations" supply the key to an allegorical reading, its relation to the secular tale must be that of oil and water, not wheat and chaff. A sacred allegory may float above this ode to a sublime but problematic love; it does not cancel it out.

The poet's initial *matiere* included the queen's abduction, but not the premise that her rescuer should also be her lover, as well as Arthur's best knight. Earlier critics were inclined to see this, rather than crusading ideology, as the novel *sen* supplied by Marie—on the basis of yet another text produced at her court.³⁴ In Andreas Capellanus's *De amore*, the countess notoriously smiles on adultery, declaring that "love cannot extend its sway over a married couple" because lovers give their favors freely, whereas the married are "forced to comply with each other's desires as an obligation."³⁵ Marie's opinion, ostensibly a verdict from a court of love, is expressed in a letter dated May 1, 1174. Though the *Charrette* was written several years later, so was *De amore* itself, as well as the religious texts studied by Walters. In short, Marie patronized sacred and secular writers at the same time—hardly an unusual practice. Since her intentions are even more mysterious than Chrétien's, they cannot supply a definitive key to his poem.

How, then, are we to understand the relationship of *matiere*, *sen*, and *conjointure*? A fundamental problem that Chrétien faced in all his romances was motivating mythic actions. Sprung loose from any pagan religious meaning they once held, these often puzzling acts cried out for *senefiance* that would have made sense to the poet's audience. Why should Laudine agree with alacrity to marry her husband's murderer? Why should Perceval suppress his natural curiosity, with such baneful results? Why should Lancelot submit to crushing humiliations in the service of his queen? In the last case Chrétien's resounding answer, with or without Marie's help, was "for love." But love of that kind cries out for double judgment: it is the source of both highest honor and deepest shame. As the messianic knight—the one who lifts the tombstone, crosses the Sword Bridge, frees the prisoners, delivers the queen, and ends the custom of Gorre—Lancelot is motivated by neither more nor less than his passion for Guenevere. But that same passion marks him as the "knight of the cart," profoundly and repeatedly shamed. Critics have tended to underestimate the shame, which begins with his cart ride but

continues, as I will show, throughout the romance. The acceptance of shame *as* honor, I submit, lies at the heart of Chrétien's *sen*, whether we take that to be a sage assessment of *fin'amor* or a chivalric perspective on Christ's Passion.

In the process of double-coding Lancelot's love, Chrétien depicts it as at once sublime and absurd; sublime and idolatrous; sublime and adulterous—though the last theme can barely be hinted.³⁶ Absurdity shadows Lancelot both before and after the rescue, marking him as part Messiah, part Don Quixote.³⁷ When he first catches sight of the queen escorted by Meleagant, the knight gazes from a window in rapture, but no sooner does she pass out of sight than he tries to kill himself:

Et quant plus ne la pot veoir,
Si se vost jus lessier cheoir
Et trebuchier aval son cors;
Et ja estoit demis defors
Quant messire Gauvains le vit;
Sel trait arrieres, se li dit:
"Merci, sire, soiez an pes!
Por Deu nel vos pansez ja mes
Que vos faciez tel desverie!
A grant tort haez vostre vie."

When he could not see her at all,
he felt an urge to take a fall
and lie crushed at the tower's base.
He'd fallen halfway through the space
when Sir Gawain saw him go slack
and told him, as he pulled him back:
"Please calm down, sir, and Heavens above!
never again start thinking of
an act with idiocy so rife!
You are so wrong to hate your life."³⁸

(569–78)

To this the damsel who is hosting the knights replies: *au contraire*, it is most fitting for a knight who has been carted to think of suicide.

After parting from Gawain, Lancelot is comically unhorsed in his first combat. Evidently the challenge formula was ripe for parody even in Chrétien's day. In a scene that could have been scripted by Monty Python, Lancelot appears to challenge a Black Knight who is guarding a ford, but in fact his thirsty horse is just taking a drink. Our hero, lost in amorous reveries, neither sees nor hears the Black Knight, remaining oblivious until he is toppled into the frigid water. Later, in his climactic duel with Meleagant, Lancelot almost loses because he insists on gazing at the queen instead of his opponent while he fights—thus defending himself only from behind! It takes another damsel to shout a winning strategy from her tower window: he should maneuver his foe to a position between himself and the queen's viewing station so that he can see them both at once. But even after he starts winning, Lancelot is made to look like a fool. To save the life of his iniquitous son, King Bademagu begs the queen to intercede and restrain her champion. No sooner has she spoken than, in rigorous obedience, her lover stands stock-still as Meleagant continues to rain blows on him. If we had not already seen his heroism at the Sword Bridge, we would think him a buffoon.

Throughout the romance, Lancelot oscillates between honor and shame. Rejected by the queen for no apparent reason, he sets off to rescue Gawain. Once he and his party have inexplicably disarmed, they are surprised by armed foes who lead him back as a captive, feet tied beneath his horse—a posture almost as humiliating as riding the cart. On the way back to Bademagu's court, Lancelot hears a rumor of Guenevere's death and responds with a second suicide attempt, this time trying to hang himself from his horse's saddle bow, but again he fails. Such incidents occur so often that the comedy almost turns to pathos. In a second duel with Meleagant, who has now accused the queen of adultery with Kay, Bademagu again persuades her to intercede and save his son, and Lancelot is again compelled to stop fighting and passively endure his enemy's blows. Depending on how we have decided to read the romance, we might think either of Christ being scourged at the pillar or of jongleurs performing a burlesque. After the king deprives him of victory the second time, Lancelot sets out once more to seek Gawain, but fails because, with signal folly, he trusts a dwarf, who promptly throws him in prison. There he remains until the jailer's wife agrees to liberate him for a kiss—on condition that he return to prison after his

few days of leave. He has sought this parole to fight in the Tournament of Noauz, where he submits to his most famous humiliation. To test the identity of a mysterious knight whose prowess makes her suspect he is Lancelot, Guenevere sends him a message: “au noauz” (5674). Any normal knight, even one eager to please the queen, would have taken this to mean: fight on the team of the Lady of Noauz, one of the tournament’s co-sponsors.³⁹ Only Lancelot, for whom abjection is second nature, interprets her message in the unlikely sense, “do your worst”—as she had known he would. So the knight whose performance has dazzled everyone spectacularly misses a blow, then turns tail and feigns cowardice for the rest of the day. In the end, of course, Guenevere relents and allows him a stunning victory—for Lancelot’s humiliation, like Christ’s, is profound but temporary.

Here we see the genius of Chrétien’s *conjointure*. In the first half of the romance, marvels from the *matiere de Bretaigne* invest Lancelot with an aura of wonder; his adventures are both messianic in a Christian sense and otherworldly in a Celtic sense. Despite—or even because of—his weirdly shameful cart ride, he seems to be a hero like no other. The shame itself, Sarah Kay observes, recalls the voluntary humiliation of saints like Alexis and Gregorius, for the first shall be last and the last first.⁴⁰ But in the second half, marvels give way to parody as the saintly aura fades. Though he succeeds just enough to remain fitfully heroic, Lancelot is more often abused, betrayed, or forgotten, even by his friends. The tournament shows effectively that love alone motivates both his honor and his shame. But Chrétien’s double-coding does not end with these scenes of fantastic prowess dogged by low comedy. In his depiction of Lancelot’s *fin’amor*, the poet walks an even finer line between sublimity and idolatry, raising the tension by degrees as he builds up to the climactic Night of Love. His use of religious language is often noted, but critics have never agreed—and probably never will—on whether he uses it to glorify or mock the so-called religion of love.

In a riff on another Celtic motif, the fairy at the fountain, Lancelot’s path takes him to a fountain where he encounters not his beloved, but a few of her golden hairs, left behind in a comb. After nearly falling from his horse in a swoon, he removes the hairs as a holy relic, valuing them above any saint or gem:

Ja mes oel d'ome ne verront
 Nule chose tant enorer,
 Qu'il les comance a aorer,
 Et bien .c.m. foiz les toche,
 Et a ses ialz et a sa boche,
 Et a son front et a sa face;
 N'est joie nule qu'il n'an face.

No eye will fall in contemplation
 on objects of such veneration,
 because he worshipped and embraced them.
 A hundred thousand times he placed them
 against his eyes, mouth, face, and brow,
 and no joys did he disavow.
 (1472–78)

More painfully, the knight continues his adoration of the queen after she rejects him at Bademagu's court. When Kay admits he cannot explain her behavior, Lancelot says with resignation, "Or soit a son comandement" (4094), like Mary at a reverse annunciation: "Let it be according to her word." The worship culminates when, at the queen's will, Lancelot bends the iron bars of her chamber window and climbs in:

Et puis vint au lit la reïne,
 Si l'aore et se li ancline,
 Car an nul cors saint ne croit tant.

And then he went to the queen's bed,
 and worshipped her, and bowed his head;
 no relic left him so devout.
 (4669–71)

After an exuberant night of love, Lancelot "suefre grant martire" (suffers great martyrdom, 4709) when he has to depart, completing the ritual by genuflecting once more "con s'il fust devant un autel" (as if he were before an altar, 4736). This has always been hard to read with a straight face, but what to make of it? Lovers—younger than Lancelot,

or in ages more romantic than ours—have doubtless felt something of what he feels; but his extravagance is Chrétien's point. Like a saint's virtue, the knight's passion is *admiranda plus quam imitanda*. C. S. Lewis in 1936 opined, "the irreligion of the religion of love could hardly go further."⁴¹ For Robertson in 1962, "the religious imagery serves to show the corruption of the higher reason . . . in pursuit of sensual satisfaction."⁴² For Ribard and Walters, conversely, Lancelot treats the queen like a *cors saint*—a holy body—because what she represents is indeed holy: the soul, the mystical body of Christ, Jerusalem, the Church. There could be no clearer case of double coding, as the poet's hyperbole elicits hyperbolic responses in both directions. Just as in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a double judgment is required: Lancelot's love is sublime *and* idolatrous, his behavior heroic *and* ridiculous.

One aspect of this love remains unspoken and nearly unspeakable. Adulterous queens in romance are almost always barren, for a challenge to the legitimate succession was a touchier theme than mere religious parody.⁴³ Nevertheless, the adultery is figured by the queen's blood-stained sheets, a motif borrowed from the Tristan story. And Guenevere, like Yseult, escapes by dint of a deceptive oath. Since Meleagant guesses the wrong adulterer, Lancelot can safely swear before a trial by combat that the queen never slept with Kay. Back at Arthur's court, however, there can be no joyful reunion of the lovers. Instead, Chrétien—or rather his continuator, Godefroi de Leigny—shows the queen torn by allegorical strife between Reason and her "foolish heart" (6869), in a mirror image of Lancelot's struggle before mounting the cart. But in the queen's case, Reason wins, so even as her heart covers Lancelot with kisses, her body keeps a discreet distance (6842–75). This too is a double-coded moment. On the one hand, women, especially queens, must be discreet. If their affair is to continue, Guenevere is behaving exactly as she ought. On the other hand, the whole romance has established that Love is nothing if not extravagant, irrational, and oblivious to shame. So the queen's behavior also proves that she loves less—as Chrétien states expressly in the consummation scene (4680–81).

Because of its double coding and lack of closure, Lancelot's story proved highly unstable—hence ripe for numerous retellings. Chrétien had established his hero beyond all doubt as a saint of love, whose

passion and prowess would remain constant in all subsequent versions. But did this sublime yet ridiculous passion—or this idolatrous yet sublime passion—make him also a candidate for Christian sainthood? Or did it simply render him an exemplary sinner? “Diverse folk diversely they seyde.” In the *Prose Lancelot*, the knight’s heroism and passion dominate, yet his recurrent fits of madness keep a spectre of absurdity alive.⁴⁴ Two contrasting Grail romances, *Perlesvaus* and *La Queste del Saint Graal*, stress Lancelot’s valor and sinfulness respectively, though neither portrait is one-sided. At the same time, they take the secular terrain that Chrétien had mapped for Arthurian romance and make it, once more, a hard-fought battleground of Christian and pagan.

PERLESVAUS: THE GRAIL AND CHRISTENDOM’S “OLD LAWS”

In the first years of the thirteenth century a Cistercian monk, Hélinand of Froidmont, heard the buzz about the Grail, which was inspired by Chrétien’s unfinished *Perceval*, or *Le conte du Graal* (*The Story of the Grail*).⁴⁵ A converted trouvère, Hélinand was eager to learn the end of this tantalizing tale. But where others wrote continuations and revisions, the monk vowed to produce a Latin version—if only he could get his hands on a manuscript! In his universal history, the *Chronicon*, he recorded what he knew:

Hoc tempore in Britannia cuidam eremita monstrata est mirabilis quaedam visio per angelum de sancto Joseph decurione, qui corpus Domini deposuit de cruce; et de catino illo sive paropside, in quo Dominus coenavit cum discipulis suis; de quo ab eodem eremita descripta est historia, quae dicitur de gradali. *Gradalis* autem sive *gradale* Gallice dicitur scutella lata, et aliquantulum profunda; in quo pretiosae dapes cum suo jure divitibus solent apponi *gradatim*, unus morsellus post alium in diversis ordinibus, et dicitur vulgari nomine *grualz*, quia *grata* et acceptabilis est in ea comedenti: tum propter continens, quia forte argentea est, vel de alia pretiosa materia; tum propter contentum, id est ordinem multiplicem pretiosarum dapum. Hanc historiam Latine scriptam invenire non potui, sed tantum Gallice scripta habetur a quibusdam proceribus, nec facile, ut aiunt, tota inveniri potest. Hanc autem nondum

potui ad legendum sedulo ab aliquo impetrare. Quod mox ut potuero, verisimiliora et utiliora succincte transferam in Latinum.⁴⁶

At this time a marvelous vision was shown by an angel to a certain hermit in Britain, concerning St. Joseph the decurion who took the Lord's body down from the Cross, and that dish or platter from which the Lord ate the Supper with his disciples. *The Story of the Grail (historia, quae dicitur de gradali)* was written about that by the same hermit. A *gradalis* or *gradale* in French is a broad serving dish, somewhat deep, in which precious meats with their sauce are customarily served to the rich, one course after another in order (*gradatim*). In the vernacular it is called a *grail* because it is pleasing (*grata*) and welcome to the person who eats from it—on account of the container itself, which may be of silver or another precious material, as well as the many precious courses it contains.

I have been unable to find this story in Latin. It is available only in French, owned by certain members of the nobility—nor can the whole be easily found, as they say. But I have not yet been able, in spite of diligent inquiries, to obtain it from anyone to read. As soon as I can do so, I will succinctly translate the more plausible and useful parts into Latin.

Alas, Hélinand never found the manuscript he sought—or if he did, his Latin text has not come down to us. We do not even know which romance he was trying to find. It could have been Chrétien's, whose unfinished state explains the difficulty of learning the whole story. The monk's definition of a grail is often cited to explain what the maiden at the Fisher King's feast was carrying—and to suggest the rarity of both the word and the thing itself. On the other hand, Hélinand may have been seeking a poem called *L'estoire dou Graal* or its prose counterpart, *Joseph d'Arimathie*, ascribed to Robert de Boron.⁴⁷ *Historia de gradali* could translate the title of either Chrétien's courtly poem or Robert de Boron's apocryphal gospel.⁴⁸ The monk might even have been seeking the famous book that Chrétien's last patron, Count Philip of Flanders, lent him as a source. (Whether Latin or French, that book probably perished in the great fire of Troyes, which consumed the count's library in 1188.)⁴⁹ A connoisseur of visions, Hélinand could have invented this one, inexplicably dated to 718, to indicate how potent an

object of desire was the Holy Grail. Not only did *the* Grail demand an arduous quest, but even ordinary grails were precious and rare, serving only the rich. The question of which text entails a further question — which grail? For Chrétien's mysterious *graal*, though containing a consecrated host, is just such a precious dish as Hélinand describes. It was Robert de Boron who transformed this serving platter into the *Holy* Grail, the chalice used by Christ at the Last Supper, later employed by Joseph of Arimathea to catch the blood from his still-dripping wounds. This double connection with both the physical and the sacramental blood of Christ gave the vessel its sacred, quasi-magical powers.

The story of the Grail was itself a thing of mystery, possessed only by "certain members of the nobility," who seem to have guarded it jealously. Perhaps the absence of a Latin text signified to Hélinand, as it does to us, that there was no single "authorized version." Yet so urgent is the desire for one that Hélinand himself has been nominated (implausibly) as the architect of the Vulgate Lancelot-Grail Cycle.⁵⁰ In fact, all Grail romances after Chrétien's rest on a basis of historical fiction. Geoffrey of Monmouth had enlivened the history of Britain by supplementing the limited classical sources with a lengthy, largely invented account of King Arthur. Robert de Boron similarly forged a link between biblical and secular history, making Joseph of Arimathea the pivotal figure whose custody of the Grail forms a bridge between the burial of Christ and the conversion of Britain. This long series of historical romances would culminate in the multi-volume *Perceforest* (ca. 1330–1344), which replaces Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* with a narrative of British conversion that integrates not only Arthur but also Alexander into a sweeping megahistory, complete with fictional dynasties and fictional pagan cults.⁵¹ Like the apocryphal saints discussed in chapter 1, these histories appeal to the antiquarian imagination, meeting the need for a romance-friendly usable past that straddles the boundaries between sacred and secular, truth and fiction — or the history that was and the history that might have been. This glimmer of tantalizing possibilities is one reason there are so many Grail romances. Instead of the single, authoritative text that Hélinand was seeking, we now have (*inter alia*) Chrétien's unfinished poem; its four Continuations⁵²; a trilogy by Robert de Boron and his continuators; a prequel called the *Elucidation*; German and Welsh adaptations, both quite different from the French;

and the two Grail romances I will discuss here, *Perlesvaus* (ca. 1200–1210) and *La Queste del Saint Graal* (ca. 1225). Malory chose the latter (Part IV of the enormous Vulgate Cycle) to incorporate into his *Morte Darthur*, making it by far the best known. But the earlier *Perlesvaus* offers a radically uncanonical Grail quest, its pagan antecedents competing keenly with its Christian destiny.⁵³

Not that there is any doubt where the author stood. A militant, bloody-minded Christian, he wrote partly to glorify the crusades, caring little whether the outcome of victory was the conversion or the slaughter of infidels. His romance interlaces the adventures of four knights—Arthur, Gawain, Lancelot, and Perceval (“Perlesvaus”)—as they traverse a dispiriting Waste Land, where they meet such characters as the Yelping Beast, the King of Castle Mortal, the Coward Knight, and the Haughty Maiden. All the heroes eventually encounter the Grail except Lancelot, who is barred by his love for the queen. But despite its many rare beasts and unique adventures, *Perlesvaus* seems to be no one’s favorite romance. R. S. Loomis thought its author deranged, perhaps schizophrenic.⁵⁴ (Nowadays we might call it post-traumatic stress. I would guess, admittedly without proof, that he had seen plenty of combat, perhaps in the Holy Land.) Charles Méla calls his romance “flamboyant and monstrous to the point of astonishing critics, indeed leaving them speechless.”⁵⁵ For Richard Barber, *Perlesvaus* is “the product of a baroque, violent, even grotesque imagination,” while Christine Ferlampin-Acher compares it to “a flash of lightning, brutal and sterile.”⁵⁶

Whatever may have caused the author’s personal malaise, *Perlesvaus* testifies to the same crusading mentality that Lori Walters discerned in the *Charrette*. We see this in the knights’ aggressive but unsophisticated Christianity; the constant battles between Christians and “miscreants” (*mescreanz*); the heroes’ eagerness to acquire Passion relics; and the prominence of the Waste Land, evoking a landscape devastated by constant war.⁵⁷ Chrétien had written his *Perceval*, the first Grail romance, for the crusader Count Philip of Flanders—who at one point hoped to marry his former patron, the widowed countess Marie.⁵⁸ Two of the poet’s continuators, Wauchier and Manessier, worked for Philip’s granddaughter, Countess Jeanne (reg. 1212–1244), leading Barber to speculate that, arguably, “*The Story of the Grail* was regarded as the property of the ruling family, with dynastic associations.”⁵⁹ *Perlesvaus* belongs to

the same Franco-Flemish milieu. Although it was written in England, a colophon identifies the patron as Jean de Nesle, castellan of Bruges—a leading figure in the Fourth Crusade and, later, the Albigensian Crusade. Robert de Boron, too, wrote for a crusading Flemish lord.⁶⁰ The quests of romance knights to win the Grail, the bleeding lance, and other Passion relics glorify the quests of actual knights to buy, steal, or conquer such items. However fantastic their adventures, Perceval and his peers are in that sense models a noble audience could hope to emulate.

Indebted to *chansons de geste* as well as earlier Arthurian romances, *Perlesvaus* is squeezed more tightly than most in the vise between pagan *matiere* and Christian *sen*. As Jeanne Lods argues, its writer was clearly trying to produce a didactic, allegorical romance such as the *Queste* author would more successfully create. To that end he introduced several devices later adopted in the *Queste*, such as a virginal hero called the “Good Knight” and holy hermits who explain the significance of bizarre adventures. But the writer’s imagination was so gripped by his Celtic sources that his material frequently got the better of him, overwhelming his attempts at allegory. Hence “if the *sens* of the work is Christian, the *matiere* is that of Britain.” Though its author borrowed from Chrétien and his continuators, “he seems closer than they to their common sources. Celtic tradition appears in his work as less Christianized and less Frenchified than in the verse romances.”⁶¹ For instance, the author is positively obsessed with beheading; severed heads appear on almost every page. His characters often behave like the pagan Celts or Gauls described by Diodorus of Sicily, a Greek historian of the first century B.C.E. According to Diodorus, the Celts beheaded slain enemies and fastened the heads to their horses’ necks or nailed them above the doors of their houses. The most valuable heads were embalmed in cedar oil and displayed with pride as worth more than their weight in gold.⁶² Several incidents in the romance depend on just such a display.

Perlesvaus’s fascination with paganism is revealed through its deployment of mythic motifs in all their raw, unnerving power—sometimes Christianized, more often not. Lancelot’s adventures include two brushes with Nemi-style ritual kingship, consummated by the king’s annual sacrifice. Approaching a huge city blazing with fire, the knight is greeted by a procession of joyous burghers who welcome him as their king. But he declines the honor when they explain that

Ceste cité est commencie a ardoir a l'un des chiés des icele eure que nostre roi fu morz. Ne pot esteindre li feus jusc'a cele eure que nos aion .i. roi qui .i. an ert sire de la cité et de l'enor qui i apent; et au chief de l'an le convenra saillir o feu, et adonc iert li feux estainz; ne devant la ne puet il estaindre ne faillir.⁶³

This city has begun to burn in one quarter ever since the death of our king, and the fire will never be quenched until we have had a king to be lord of our city and its fief for a year's term. At the end of that year he must cast himself into the fire, and thus will it be extinguished. Until then it cannot be quenched, nor will it die.

Lancelot escapes the unwelcome crown only when a dwarf, suddenly arriving with a beautiful maiden, accepts it. At the Waste City he is not so fortunate. There he is drawn reluctantly into a beheading game and compelled on pain of death to decapitate a knight who presents himself as victim. Unlike the Green Knight, this one remains dead; but Lancelot honorably returns to offer his own head a year later.⁶⁴ He utters a dying prayer, remembers the queen, and in the absence of a priest, takes communion with three blades of grass—a folk custom that would never have been recorded in a clerical work like *La Queste del Saint Graal*.⁶⁵ After ducking a blow of the axe, the knight is saved at the last minute when a maiden bids the executioner halt. No previous knight ever returned to keep his vow, she says, but Lancelot's faithfulness has put an end to the custom, as throngs of "the fairest people in the world" now return with joy.⁶⁶ Lancelot restores the Waste City after—hence possibly because of—Perceval's conquest of the Grail Castle.⁶⁷ But neither incident inspires any allegorical comment.

The Christianized motifs can seem even stranger than those that go unexplained. As Robert Deschaux remarks, these marvels have a "composite character, since magic, necromancy, Greek mythology, and pagan beliefs commingle in them with Christian traditions."⁶⁸ An example already noted is the Bald Damsel, who rides on a mule with a cortège of two maidens and a macabre cart, drawn by three white stags and loaded with severed heads. Fifty of these heads, she explains to King Arthur, are sealed in gold, fifty in silver, and fifty in lead. In addition, she carries the head of a king in her hands, while one of her maidens holds that of a queen who betrayed him. A former Grail bearer, the

Bald Damsel rebukes Perceval for his failure to ask any question at the Fisher King's castle. Her deformity, we learn, results directly from this failure; after Perceval liberates the Grail Castle, she reappears with a full head of hair. To understand the Damsel's role we can turn to Chrétien's *Perceval*, in which the Grail messenger is a Loathly Lady who gives the hero a similar tongue-lashing.⁶⁹ Allegorically, however, the Bald Damsel receives an unexpected gloss. As Sir Gawain learns at the Castle of Inquiry, she signifies Fortune, who was bald until the Crucifixion but then grew hair. Her cart represents Fortune's wheel; the dead king and queen are Adam and Eve; and the other severed heads represent Christians (sealed in gold), Jews (in silver), and Saracens (in lead). All are carried off to the Castle of the Black Hermit, or hell, whence Perceval will later redeem the Christians alone.⁷⁰ This is almost, but not quite orthodox; the author's anti-Judaism makes him forget that Christ at the harrowing of hell delivered righteous Jews, not Christians.

More to the point, the allegory of Fortune scarcely accounts for the grotesque, unforgettable tableau of the Bald Damsel with her entourage. Fortune's wheel is an ill-fitting classical imposition on the Cart of Death, well attested in Breton folklore.⁷¹ As for the Bald Damsel, she seems to be a cross between the Loathly Lady who serves the Grail and a pagan death-goddess with her totem beasts, the white stags of the otherworld.⁷² But her baldness depends on a classical saying that Fortune (or *Occasio*, "Opportunity") must be grasped by her forelock because she is bald behind.⁷³ In Chrétien's *Perceval*, the Loathly Lady cites this proverb—equivalent to *carpe diem*—to chastise the hero for failing to seize his moment at the Grail Castle. But *Perlesvaus* adapts the motif to make a point about salvation history. The Fall (or Perceval's failure) makes the damsel bald, and the Cross (or his success) gives her hair again. Thus the restoration of the damsel's hair replaces the healing of the Fisher King, who in *Perlesvaus* dies of his illness, as a sign of the Grail hero's victory. The adventure is double-coded, but incoherently; myth and allegory work too much at cross-purposes.

Another Celtic motif turns up at the Castle of Beards, where Lancelot sees the beards of countless knights pinned to the castle gate alongside their severed heads. Demanding a man's beard was a supremely insulting challenge to his virility. In Geoffrey of Monmouth's

Historia, King Arthur kills a giant who prides himself on a cloak made from the beards of slain kings.⁷⁴ But in *Perlesvaus*, when Lancelot asks why the castle requires such a tribute, he is told, "There are hermits in this forest and we use the beards to make them hairshirts." [Il a hermites en ceste forest a qui on en fet heres.]⁷⁵ It is hard to say whether this is intentional humor or a misguided attempt at Christianization. Hermits, dear to the writer's heart, are also used to explain the appearance of fairies at a fountain, where Gawain sees "three maidens of the most fabulous beauty . . . all draped in white robes" [.iii. damoiseles . . . de molt tresgrant biauté, e avoient blanches vesteüres].⁷⁶ The first carries bread in a golden vessel, the second wine in an ivory vessel, and the third meat in a silver vessel. After placing their offerings in a golden basin that hangs from the fountain, the maidens retreat, and "it seemed to Sir Gawain that there was but one of them, and he wondered much at this miracle." [Mes au r'aler sanbla Monseigneur Gavain qu'il n'en i eüst que une. Messires Gavains se merveilla molt de cel miracle.]⁷⁷ The three maidens (or fairies or priestesses) recall the three angels that Abraham addresses as one (Gen. 18:2–3), so we might expect a Trinitarian gloss.⁷⁸ Instead, a priest merely explains that the maidens have left these gifts for "the hermits who live in this forest."

The most grotesque effort to Christianize a marvel involves the romance's first convert, King Gurgaran. This king is one of several pagan proselytes who possess Christian relics, an index of the author's passionate interest in crusading. When Gawain comes to Gurgaran's court, the king shows him a priceless relic—the sword used to behead John the Baptist, which magically bleeds every day at noon. Gurgaran promises this sword to Gawain if he can rescue the king's son from a giant. Sadly, the knight fails. He finds the boy playing chess with the giant, but his efforts to kill the latter result in the boy's death too, so he returns to the castle with a dead child and the giant's severed head. Gurgaran hangs the head above his gate as a trophy—just as Diodorus of Sicily had said, thirteen centuries before, that the Celts were accustomed to do. As for his son, the king boils his body, cuts the meat into tiny pieces, has it consumed by "all the people of his land," and gives Gawain the promised sword. Then, remarkably, he declares his desire for baptism and decrees "that all those who would not believe in God were to be beheaded by Gawain." [Et a toz cels qui ne voldrent en

Dieu croire commanda Monseigneur Gavain qu'en copast les testes.]⁷⁹ In this barbaric episode, paganism melds with Christianity even more jarringly than in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The bleeding lance of Chrétien's *Perceval* has begotten a bleeding sword, and the head of John the Baptist gives way to the giant's head and those of the pagans who refuse conversion, allowing the author to collect still more of his favorite totems. King Gurgaran's cannibal feast is probably meant to be eucharistic, in the same way that the fairies at the fountain are Trinitarian.⁸⁰ Yet this literalizing of the sacrament is so repellent that it could only be ascribed to a pagan, albeit one on the cusp of conversion. Gawain, despite his failure, gains both a desirable relic and a prestigious convert.

Another valued relic, the crown of thorns, is owned by a queen who, though pagan, has set it in gold and precious stones to display for annual veneration. She even takes her title, the Queen of the Circle of Gold, from this relic. Eager for conversion, she accepts baptism when Perceval kills her enemy with the aid of yet another relic, the shield of Joseph of Arimathea (said to contain some of Christ's own blood from the Passion). Like King Gurgaran, this convert shows her zeal by asking the hero to slay all who refuse baptism.⁸¹ The episode also helps to anchor the romance in history, for the "actual" Crown of Thorns was among the relics plundered from Byzantium during the Fourth Crusade, in which the writer's patron Jean de Nesle participated. In 1238 it was pawned to the Venetians by Baldwin II of Courtenay, Latin emperor of Constantinople, but redeemed a year later by Louis IX, who built the Sainte Chapelle to house it. With stunning hubris, Perceval allows the queen to crown his own head with the relic—unlike Louis IX, who removed his royal robes and wore a simple tunic to carry it, barefoot, into his palace chapel. The crown, which survived the French Revolution, is still venerated at Notre-Dame of Paris on first Fridays. In its present form it is still a circle of gold, its thorns embedded in a mesh of cane entwined with gold threads, the whole enclosed in a circular reliquary of golden filigree.⁸²

Not all of Perceval's encounters with pagans are peaceful. Just after the queen's conversion, he comes to the Castle of the Copper Tower, whose inhabitants worship a Copper Bull (*Tor de Cuevre*). Copper, because of its reddish color, has demonic connotations, and in a bit of wordplay *Tor* means both "tower" (*tour*) and "bull" (*taur*).⁸³ The resi-

dents receive oracles as well as abundant provisions from a demon that inhabits their bull—an idol conflating the Golden Calf of the Old Testament with a hint of pagan theurgy, or perhaps a bull-worshipping cult like that of Mithras. Peace-loving and confident in their religion, these pagans will neither fight nor convert, so Perceval forces fifteen hundred of them at swordpoint to pass down a gangway where two of their own automata—copper statues with enormous iron hammers—bash out the brains of all but thirteen. To Perceval this adventure, no less than the previous one, is a great victory, for “those thirteen came to believe firmly in Our Lord” and had themselves baptized by a hermit. Meanwhile, “the bodies of the pagans were cast into a stream called the river of Hell,” and the converts “led good lives indeed,” as proven by their custom that “no-one could go inside to join them without being killed or cut to pieces, unless he believed staunchly in God.”

De .m.e.v.c. que il estoient, n'en furent gari que .xiii. que il ne fusent escervelé des maus de fer, mais li .xiii. orent lor creance fermement a Nostre Seignor. . . . Puis manderent li .xiii. qui furent demoré .i. hermite en la forest, si se firent lever e bautisier; e fist l'on jeter les cors des mescreanz ou flun d'infer. . . . Il furent la dedenz tant que la Novele Loi fu aseüree, e menerent mout bone vie; ne onques nus ne pot entrer avec aus que il ne fust ocis e detrenciés, se il ne creüst fermement en Deu.⁸⁴

Eventually the converts themselves become hermits, seeking forgiveness for their pagan past. Copper automata also bedeck the Turning Castle, designed by Virgil the Magician.⁸⁵ But the pagans of this castle have heard a prophecy “that the castle would not stop turning until the coming of a knight with a head of gold, the gaze of a lion, a heart of steel, the navel of a virgin girl, a heart full of valour, free of all wickedness, and full of faith and belief in God.” [Et fu profetisié que li chastiax ne cesseroit de tornoier desq'a cel'eure que li chevalier vendroit q'i averoit le chief d'or et regart de lion et cuer d'acier et nonbril de virge pucele et teches sanz vilenie et valeur d'ome et de foi et creance de Dieu.]⁸⁶ Since Perceval fulfills this prophecy, the castle stops turning when he arrives and the natives, rejoicing, gladly accept the New Law.

Throughout the romance, paganism largely replaces Judaism as the “Old Law.” Although pagan belief is always portrayed as evil, some of its adherents (*mescreanz*) are people of good will. They convert for a

variety of reasons—sheer force, fulfillment of prophecy, devotion to relics, and sentiments of *fin'amor* for Perceval⁸⁷—though many more refuse the New Law and are massacred. The worst, like the King of Castle Mortal, are converts who apostasize. Yet paganism is portrayed as very much a living religion—perhaps a stand-in for Islam, about which the writer knows little or nothing—while Judaism appears only as a dead religion of the past, despite the large Jewish communities in contemporary Champagne. Aside from the cart of severed heads, *Perlesvaus* includes two other allusions to Judaism, both negative, in which the relationship between adventure and allegory collapses into incoherence.

In one episode, Gawain is lodged by the beautiful wife of Marin the Jealous. Both behave impeccably, but a treacherous dwarf finds Marin at his fishing lodge and lies to him. On his return Marin strips his wife to her shift, drags her by the hair into an icy pond, beats her until the water turns scarlet, then thrusts his lance through her body while pretending to joust with Gawain. Despite the hero's best efforts, the lady's corpse is devoured by wild beasts. Guilt-stricken, Gawain tries to atone by helping her son, a miraculous child with a pet lion. But when the knight reaches the Castle of Inquiry and asks what this adventure means, the priest replies,

Josephes nos tesmoig[n]e que la Viez Loi fu abatue par un coup de glaive sanz resociter, et por la Viez Loi [abatre] se sofri Diex a ferir en coste du glaive, et par ce coup fu la [Viez] Loi abatue et par son crucefiement. La dame senefie la Viez Loi.

Josephus tells us how the Old Law was irreparably overthrown by the thrust of a lance; to overthrow the Old Law God suffered Himself to be stabbed in the side with a spear, and by that blow and His crucifixion the Old Law was cast down. That lady signifes the Old Law.⁸⁸

Needless to say, this blame-the-victim explanation of a Celtic tale neither makes sense of its *dramatis personae* nor accounts for its gratuitous cruelty.⁸⁹ But if the anti-Jewish gloss offends modern ears even more than the tale itself, we should recall that it is grounded in normative exegesis. As we saw in chapter 1, Gregory the Great remarked that “a fault in the actual deed is sometimes a virtue in the prophetic writing” so that, in the story of Bathsheba, he could interpret the sinful David

as a Christ-figure and the wronged, innocent Uriah as a type of the carnal Jews.⁹⁰ Anti-Judaism is often the burden of this brand of counterfactual allegory.

In the episode of the *Beste Glatissante*, or “Yelping Beast,” Perceval sees a small, gentle, white animal who painfully gives birth to twelve yelping dogs. Her offspring, clearly of another species, savagely tear their mother’s body to pieces, but are unable to devour it. These pieces are then gathered by a knight and a maiden who place them in golden vessels, kissing the spot—from which a wonderfully sweet fragrance arises.⁹¹ The Hermit King tells Perceval that the martyred female “signifies Our Lord, and the twelve dogs the Jews of the Old Law . . . whom God nourished and who were born into the Law which He had established, but never wished to believe in Him or love Him.” The knight and maiden who preserve the eucharistic body “signify the deity of the Father, who will not suffer the flesh of the Son to be diminished.” As for the wild Jewish dogs, incapable of feasting on the body they have slain, they are scattered throughout the world “and henceforth will always be subject to the men of the New Law.”

La beste qui simple e debonaire estoit, en qui li .xii. chien glatisoient, senefie Nostre Seignor, e li .xii. chien les Juïs de la Viez Loi . . . que Dex a norriz, e qui nasquirent en la loi que il establi, ne onques ne le voudrent croire ne amer. . . . Li chevalier e la damoisele qui mistrent les pieces de la beste ou vaisel d’or senefie la deité dou Pere, qui ne vout sofrir que la char dou Fil fust amenuisie. Li chien qui s’en fuïrent e devinrent sauvage quant il orent la beste depechie, ce sont li Juïs, qui sauvage sunt e ierent. [Et seront touiorz souchgiez a ceus de la nouuele loi dore en auant.]⁹²

Were anyone to believe that the image of Jesus as Mother and the feminizing of God the Father always imply a kinder, gentler Christianity, here is a telling counterexample. The strange allegory implies that Jews are the children rather than the ancestors of Christ, yet they belong to an entirely different species. Unlike pagans, they have no possibility of conversion but are simply to be punished with eternal subjection.⁹³

We have already noted the prominence of hermits, who figure as both exegetes and actors. A decidedly lay, aristocratic form of Christianity governs this romance, in which the religion of monasteries,

cathedrals, and parish churches is nowhere to be seen. Rather, the Church is represented by castle chapels on the one hand, forest hermits on the other. Castles did have private chapels, but not all those in *Perlesvaus* maintain an orthodox standard of devotion. The Haughty Maiden, for example, keeps a splendid chapel that contains four empty tombs and three recesses filled with candles and relics. But each reliquary niche is booby-trapped with a guillotine, for the maiden intends to lure “the three finest knights in the world” to venerate her relics, then have them beheaded as soon as they extend their necks in worship. Their magnificent tombs will enable her to enjoy a lifetime of necrophilia: “For I can have no joy of them while they are alive, but joy I shall have of them dead; and when it shall please God that I die, I shall be laid to rest in the fourth coffin.” [Qar ge ne puis avoir joie d’eus a leur vie, si en avré joie a la mort; e qant ma fins iert venue que Dex le voldra, si me feré metre o cart sarqueu.]⁹⁴ Hermits too are ambiguous figures. Several are penitents, like the converts of the Copper Tower and the Grail keeper Joseus, who killed his own mother. Most seem fairly benign, including Perceval’s uncle Pelles, the Hermit King. But some are willing to wear hair shirts made from the beards of murdered knights, and one of the most sinister characters in the romance is the Black Hermit.

With few exceptions, these hermits are retired knights, often kin to the heroes they advise and assist.⁹⁵ Recognizing the importance of this convention, Malory glossed his *Morte Darthur* to the effect that “in thos dayes hit was nat the gyse as ys nowadayes; for there were none ermytis in tho dayes but that they had bene men of worship and of prouesse, and tho ermytes hylde grete householdis and refreysshed people that were in distresse” (XVIII.13).⁹⁶ Historically speaking, Malory was right, for hermits did come from the knightly ranks and often retained their lay status. Even when they became priests (as Lancelot does at the end of *Le Morte Darthur*), they could be sympathetic spiritual advisers because they stood closer to the lay chivalric world than learned monks did. The asceticism of the forest hut was perhaps not so far from the ascesis of the battlefield.⁹⁷ Hence what Anita Guerreau-Jalabert has written of the *Queste* is even more true of *Perlesvaus*: if Grail romance sacralizes a once-secular genre, by the same token it elevates *chevalerie*, rather than *clergie*, to the highest and holiest rank.⁹⁸ Robert de Boron

had the remarkable idea of making the “knight” Joseph of Arimathea not only the first possessor of the Grail, but also the first person initiated by Christ into the mysteries of the Mass.⁹⁹ In Grail romances, therefore, St. Peter is supplanted by a lay Gentile proselyte whom Luke’s gospel calls a *decurio*, or military officer (Luke 23:50). Active and retired knights (hermits) thus replace monks and clerics as guardians of the sacred. Although *Perlesvaus* and the *Queste* (unlike the German *Parzival*) insist on the virginity of the Grail hero, the Grail itself is not the property of a church or monastic community. Rather, it belongs to a sacred lineage, a *beata stirps*, founded by Joseph of Arimathea and continuing through the Fisher King to the chosen knight—mirroring several royal dynasties, including the Capetians, that laid claim to hereditary holiness.¹⁰⁰

In the *Queste*, which has often been linked with the Cistercian order, abbeys of white monks supplement these ubiquitous hermits.¹⁰¹ The author of that romance—surely not himself a monk, though perhaps a secular cleric, lay brother, or patron of the order—introduces a more ascetic, less violent faith. His Christianity is more sophisticated, with a eucharistic theology that verges on the mystical and even some qualms about mass slaughter.¹⁰² In the end the Holy Land, symbolized by the realm of Sarraz, is regained for Christendom by the Grail knights without a single blow. Nevertheless, the sacrality of knighthood *per se* remains central. Grail romance is double-coded, then, by subjecting the chivalric class to a more or less austere standard of holiness, even as it subjects holiness itself to the prowess and pedigrees of knights.

LANCELOT AND THE GRAIL: CHRÉTIEN’S AMBIGUOUS LEGACY

The test case for the new celestial chivalry is Lancelot, whom Chrétien had created as both lay messiah and adulterous lover. But Chrétien never set Lancelot in proximity to the Grail; it was the author of *Perlesvaus* who first made that move. In the romance’s most poignant, psychologically honest scene, Lancelot seeks a hermit for confession on the eve of his visit to the Grail Castle. Acknowledging his sins, he admits “that he repented of all of them but one”—his love for the queen. The knight says that this

seems to me the sweetest and most beautiful sin that I ever committed. . . . My lady, who is a queen, I dearly love more than anything in the world, and one of the finest kings alive has her for his wife. My desire for her seems to me so fine and noble that I cannot abandon it, and it is now so rooted in my heart that it can never leave me. And whatever is of most worth in me comes from that desire.

Sire, fait Lanceloz, ce me senble estre li plus dous pechiez et li plus beaus que je onques feïsse. . . . Je aim bien ma dame, qui roïne est, plus que nulle rien qui vive, et si l'a .i. des meillors rois del mont a feme. La volenté me senble si bone et si haute que je ne la puis lessier, et si m'est enracinee el cuer qu'ele ne s'em puet partir. La gregnor valor qui est en moi si me vient par la volenté.¹⁰³

Faced with this credo of defiant *fin'amor*, the hermit does his best. He points out that there is no such thing as a noble sin; that Lancelot is a traitor to his earthly king and a crucifier of his Lord; that he will pay dearly hereafter unless he repents. Moreover, the more beautiful and noble his lady, the more they are both to blame. With no lack of sympathy, the hermit even offers to take the knight's penance on himself. But none of this moves Lancelot, who trusts—almost like Dante's Francesca—that “God is so gentle and full of kindness, as all holy men testify, that He will have mercy on us.” [Dex est si douz et si plains de debonereté, si conme li prodome tesmoignent, qu'il avra merci de nos.]¹⁰⁴ As the knight takes his leave, still courteous yet unabsolved, the hermit warns that on account of his mortal sin, he will never see the Grail. Immediately afterward Lancelot comes to the Grail Castle, enters without hindrance, and is received with joy and honor. After some amiable conversation, he dines with the Fisher King, though the Grail does not appear. Nevertheless, Lancelot is not shamed as he is in Chrétien or, *a fortiori*, the *Queste*. His failure simply echoes the previous failures of Perceval and Gawain, while his heroism remains undiminished. Though he does not make as many converts as Perceval, he succeeds in liberating the Waste City.

In effect, Lancelot and the hermit fight to a draw, for neither can achieve victory. The writer instead salvages the knight's reputation by devising a conclusion quite different from the one that became canon-

cal. As in *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, Lancelot refuses several damsels out of loyalty to the queen, only to stumble unexpectedly on her tomb in the Isle of Avalon.¹⁰⁵ Uniquely in Arthurian literature, *Perlesvaus* gives the king a legitimate son, Loholt, whose murder at Kay's hands causes the queen to die of grief before Lancelot returns. Adultery therefore plays no part in the dénouement. In fact, far from being culpable, Lancelot himself is betrayed by Arthur, who, deceived by a treacherous rival, throws him in prison. But the knight is vindicated before the romance returns to its principal hero for the conclusion. *Fin'amor* thus sets Lancelot apart from the chaste Perceval and the unattached Gawain, and he is excluded from the sight of the Grail; but the writer adds no condemnation of his own to the hermit's. Nor do any other characters chastise the queen's loyal servant.

All this must have struck the *Queste* author as tantalizing but insufficient. In his version of Lancelot's story, the knight not only repents his affair, but becomes an exemplum of contrition and humiliation. Although he encounters the Grail at the very outset of his quest, he falls into a catatonic trance at the sight, unable to move or speak, much less draw near. In this state he sees a sick knight, newly healed by the Grail, riding off on Lancelot's own horse, taking his sword and arms for good measure. When he awakes from his swoon a voice accosts him:

Lancelot, plus durs que pierre, plus amers que fuz, plus nuz et plus despris que figuiers, coment fus tu si hardiz que tu ou leu ou li Sainz Graalx reperast osas entrer? Va t'en de ci, car li leux est ja toz empulentez de ton repere.

Lancelot, harder than stone, more bitter than wood, more barren and bare than the fig tree, how durst thou presume to venture there where the Holy Grail abides? Get thee hence, for the stench of thy presence fouls this place.¹⁰⁶

Devastated by this reproach, Lancelot weeps and berates himself for hours, finally coming on foot to a hermitage where the holy man, "about to begin his mass . . . stood ready clad in the armour of Holy Church." The hermit preaches on the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14–30): Lancelot is the man who, richly gifted, has buried his talents in the

ground through a lifetime of mortal sin. After more exhortations he confesses, acknowledging as in *Perlesvaus* that the queen has until now been the source of all his wealth, bliss, and valor. No longer defiant, however, he adds, “I know full well that this bond is the sin that has earned me Our Lord’s dire wrath.” [Mes je sai bien que par cest pechié de li s’est Nostre Sires si durement corociez a moi.]¹⁰⁷ Finally absolved and blessed, he vows to end the affair forever.

But this is only the beginning, for the author has no intention of sparing Lancelot after only one confession. Another hermit gives him a harsher penance: he is to wear a hairshirt, fast from meat and wine until his quest is over, sleep on the bare earth, attend daily Mass, and confess every week. Even so, he is still hounded by dreams exposing the depth of his sin, each one relentlessly expounded by a holy man. Once invincible in combat, he is now routinely unhorsed and defeated. Wherever he goes, hermits and damsels remind him that he was once the best knight in the world, but is no longer. The “best,” it should be recalled, always means the strongest and most skilled in battle¹⁰⁸—but in this romance, that quality can be given or withheld by God as a reward for virtue. Lancelot’s special shame—and glory—is to be supplanted by his own son, Galahad, who in the *Queste* replaces Perceval as the Good Knight and messianic hero. He quite literally has the strength of ten because his heart is pure.

Unlike *Perlesvaus*, the *Queste* is coherent and thoroughly orthodox in its allegories. While it “attempts to build a bridge between *clergie* and *chevalerie*,” in Richard Kaeuper’s words, “the bridge is dauntingly high, all but obscured in idealistic mists, and its pathway is barely wide enough to accommodate a mounted knight.”¹⁰⁹ Since the author never glorifies what he perceives as sin, there is little double coding. Nevertheless, the *Queste*’s key premise is a *felix culpa* narrated earlier in the Vulgate Cycle: Lancelot’s begetting of Galahad. After partaking of a Grail feast at King Pellés’ castle, Lancelot is deceived by the sorceress Brisane into sleeping with the king’s virgin daughter, having drunk a potion that makes him think she is Guenevere. This event, as the narrative hinge on which so much of the cycle turns, deserves to be recounted in full.

Einsinc sont mis ensemble le millor chevalier et le plus bel qui or fust et la plus bele pucele et de haut lignage qui fust alors; si se desirrent par di-

verses entancions, car ele ne le fait mie tant por la biauté de celui ne por luxure ne por eschaufement de char come ele fait por le fruit recevoir dont toz li païs doit venir a sa premiere biauté, qui par le dolereux cop de l'espee as estranges ranges avoit esté desertez et essilliez. . . . Et cil la desirroit tout en autre manniere, car por sa biauté ne la couvoitoit il pas, mais il cuida que ce fust sa dame la roine et par ce fu il eschaufez qu'il la connut ausinc com Adam fist sa fame, mes non mie en tel maniere, car Adam connut sa fame leaument et par le commandement Nostre Signor; et cil connut ceste em pechié et en avoutire et contre Deu et encontre Sainte Eglyse, et neporquant li Sires en qui tote pitié abite et qui ne juge mie selon les faiz as pecheors resgarda ceste assamblee selonc le preu a ceus del païs com cil qui ne voloit mie qu'il fussent touz dis en essil: si lor donna tel fruit engendrer et concevoir que por la flor de virginité qui iluec fust corrupue et violee fu recouvree une autre flor de cui bien et de cui tandror mainte terre fu replenie et rasouagie. . . . Einsinc fu recouvree flor pour flor, car en sa nessance fu flor de puce-lage estainte et maumise; cil qui puis fu flor et mireor de chevalerie, il fu restorez par le comun assablement; et se virginitez fu empirie en ce qu'il fu conceuz, bien en fu li mesfaiz amandez en sa vie par sa virginité qu'il randi saine et antiere a son Sauveor, quant il trespasa del siecle.

And so the best and most handsome knight who ever lived and the most beautiful and highest-born maiden of that day were joined together. Their desires stemmed from different motives: she did it not so much for his beauty or from lust or bodily desire, but so as to receive the fruit that would restore that entire land to its original beauty, that land which had been laid waste and destitute by the dolorous blow. . . . But he desired her in a very different way, because he did not covet her for her beauty, but believed she was his lady the queen; and this inflamed him to know her as Adam knew his wife, but not in precisely the same manner, because Adam knew his wife faithfully and by the command of Our Lord, whereas Lancelot knew her in sin and adultery and in opposition to God and Holy Church. Yet nonetheless the Lord, who is the font of every mercy and who does not judge sinners by their deeds, looked on this coupling in light of its value to the land, for He did not wish it to remain a wasteland forever: so He permitted them to engender and conceive a fruit, by virtue of which the flower of virginity that was

corrupted and violated there blossomed forth in another flower whose goodness and tenderness would replenish and console many a land. . . . And so flower blossomed forth from flower, because as Galahad was conceived the flower of maidenhood was destroyed and crushed; he who was to become the flower and mirror of chivalry blossomed forth from this mutual coupling; and if virginity was harmed as he was conceived, the wrong was made right in his life through his own virginity, which he returned whole and entire to his Savior when he left this world.¹¹⁰

Unlike other *felix culpa* unions, such as that of Pope Gregory's incestuous parents, this one is engineered in deliberate fulfillment of a prophecy. By lifting a tombstone in a magic cemetery, Lancelot has revealed himself as the "Leopard, from whom is to descend the Great Lion, [who] will be begotten in the beautiful daughter of the King of the Land Beyond" [li lieparz . . . de qui li granz lions doit issir . . . et lors sera engendrez li granz lions en la bele fille au roi de la Terre Forainne].¹¹¹ Brisane, however, realizes that the queen's lover will never voluntarily sleep with the princess, so she devises her stratagem. Galahad thus joins other key Arthurian figures, such as Merlin, Mordred, and the king himself, who are conceived in extraordinary ways;¹¹² heroes often are, as folklorists know. The Bible itself is filled with such tales. Nevertheless, it is worth seeking the *sen* of this specific magical birth. From the standpoint of genealogy, it anchors Galahad in the lineage of the Grail on his mother's side (for King Pelles is the son of the Maimed King), and in that of the best knight in the world on his father's. As Emmanuèle Baumgartner has shown, if we trace the sinuous revelations of lineage throughout the *Prose Lancelot*, we find that Lancelot himself is descended from Joseph of Arimathea through his father, from King David through his mother.¹¹³ Galahad thus enters the romance as the son at once of the Old Testament, the New Testament, and the otherworld of the Grail.

But the begetting of such a holy son also has implications for Lancelot's psychology and destiny. The act is of course multiply sinful. According to the Church's law, it is fornication compounded by sorcery; according to aristocratic marital codes, it is the ruin of a virgin princess; and according to Lancelot's private code of *fin'amor*, it is the supreme

betrayal of his love. Interestingly, it is the second of these violations that the writer addresses by evoking St. Jerome's backhanded defense of marriage: the loss of virginity is redeemed when more virgins are conceived.¹¹⁴ So Galahad's lifelong chastity recuperates the lost maidenhood of the princess. But the text also invokes Adam, who committed the original *felix culpa*, because in the bed of King Pelles' daughter the Old Adam begets the New: Lancelot the sinner begets Galahad the pure. Born of a maiden who sacrifices her virginity for the higher good, the Arthurian savior is fathered by an oxymoron. While Lancelot is called "the best and most handsome knight who ever lived," he nonetheless acts "in opposition to God and Holy Church." Yet this highly charged moment holds the key to his salvation. When he sins knowingly with Guenevere, he reaps only shame. But when he sins by being sinned against, he sows redemption.

Critics do not agree whether the Vulgate Cycle had one author or many, and if many, whether they worked to a common plan.¹¹⁵ So it is hard to know if the *Queste* author would have agreed with the *Prose Lancelot*'s statement that God permitted or even willed an evil so that greater good might come of it. In any case, the *Queste* is much harder on Lancelot. Not only is he shamed in the Grail quest, but his whole history becomes a palimpsest in which the sacred rewrites the secular. This becomes especially clear when a hermit recasts the beginning of his love affair. From *The Knight of the Cart* through *Perlesvaus* to the *Prose Lancelot*, the hero had always seen Guenevere, or his love for her, as the source of all his valor—as he will again in the *Mort Artu*. This is the standard mythology of *fin'amor*: without the love of ladies there is no virtue, no prowess, no courtliness. The hermit, however, overwrites this ideology with his misogynistic creed. On seeing Lancelot's virtues, he says, the enemy of mankind "gave much thought to the best way of ensnaring [him] . . . and concluded at the last that the shortest cut to success lay through a woman." [Si te douta molt {l'anemi} a assaillir por ce que sa peine i cuida perdre. . . . Et tant qu'au darreain li fu avis qu'il te porroit plus tost mener par fame que par autre chose a pechier mortelment.]¹¹⁶ Since the queen had not made a good confession since her marriage, the devil entered into her and loosed the fiery darts of her glances, which blinded the knight's spiritual vision until he was robbed of all virtue. So Cupid's arrows prove to be in reality Satan's,

and woman's love is the source of all evil—as confirmed by the seductive ladies who tempt Perceval and Bors, but are soon exposed as fiends in disguise.

Nevertheless, *fin'amor* was so firmly entrenched that even an ascetic like the *Queste* author could not forgo it altogether. Hence he includes the mysterious character of Perceval's sister. In part a wisdom figure who reveals the mysteries of the Ship of Solomon, this virgin also presents herself as Galahad's fittingly chaste *amie*, in a version of what Lancelot and Guenevere might have been if they had resisted temptation. When the Grail knights discover the Sword of the Strange Belt, destined for Galahad, an inscription declares that its unworthy belt

must not be unfastened save by a woman's hand, and she the daughter of a king and queen. She shall exchange it for another, fashioned from that thing about her person that is most precious to her. . . . It is essential that this maiden be throughout her life a virgin both in deed and in desire.

Car eles ne doivent estre ostees fors par main de fame et fille de roi et de reine. Si en fera tel eschange que ele i metra unes autres de la riens de sus li que ele plus amera, et si les metra en leu de cestes. Et si covient que la damoisele soit toz les jorz de sa vie pucele en volenté et en oevre.¹¹⁷

Perceval's sister not only fulfills the conditions, but anticipates this very need, for she already has in her possession a new belt woven from her golden braids. On the day Galahad was knighted, she explains, "I had the finest head of hair of any woman in the world" [Le jor de Pentecoste que vos fustes chevaliers, sire, dit ele a Galaad, avoie je le plus bel chief que fame dou monde eust], but when she learned of her predestined role she had it shorn in haste to create the new baldric. Expertly attaching it, she girds the hero with his sword, saying,

now I hold myself blessed above all maidens, having made a knight of the noblest man in the world. For I assure you, you were not by rights a knight until you were girded with the sword which was brought to this land for you alone.

je me tiegn orendroit a la plus beneuree pucele dou monde, qui ai fet le plus preudome dou siecle chevalier. Car bien sachiez que vos ne l'estiez pas a droit quant vos n'estiez garniz de l'espee qui por vos fu aportee en ceste terre.¹¹⁸

Galahad thereupon promises to be “your knight for ever,” so that he too is bound by *fin’amor* without risking his chastity.

Once again, the sacred rewrites the secular, for this scene recuperates an earlier moment when the queen knighted Lancelot and girded him with his sword.¹¹⁹ (Malory has Lancelot tell Arthur that, on the “same day that ye made me knyght, thorow my hastynes I loste my swerde, and my lady, youre quene, founde hit, and lapped hit in her trayne, and gave me my swerde whan I had nede thereto,” whereupon he promised “ever to be her knyght in ryght othir in wronge” [XVIII.7].) As a new Eve, Perceval’s sister knights the new Adam, typologically reversing the harm done by the romance’s sinful Adam and Eve and rescuing *fin’amor* itself from the domain of Satan.

The scene is also a brilliant recasting of the enigmatic Bald Damsel from *Perlesvaus*, this time without interference from pagan myth. The virgin’s lack of hair, though hardly emphasized in the *Queste*, is explained by her act of prophetic and sacrificial love. Like the Bald Damsel, too, Perceval’s sister is a Grail Maiden, though she no longer carries the sacred vessel. To the *Queste* author, that might have seemed too great an infringement of clerical privilege. Instead, the maiden obeys the custom of a castle, bleeding her virginal blood into a dish to save a leprous lady at the price of her life. This vessel becomes a feminine analogue of the Grail, for the maiden heals the lady with her own blood just as Galahad heals the Maimed King with Christ’s blood. No wonder Perceval’s sister earns the honors of a virgin martyr. After her death, Lancelot and Galahad spend more than six months in a boat with her incorruptible, sweet-smelling body before she is buried in the “spiritual palace” at Sarraz, where Galahad and Perceval will soon join her.

It can hardly be accidental that this long retreat with the Good Knight and his dead but sainted *amie* brings Lancelot to the pinnacle of his spiritual attainment. When he disembarks, he is at last permitted to attend a Grail Mass, where his experience once again requires double

judgment. The penitent hero is allowed to observe the Mass, but a divine voice expressly forbids him to enter the chapel. At the elevation of the host, however, he is granted a eucharistic vision: the host reveals an image of the Trinity and Lancelot, thinking the “three men” he sees are too heavy for the priest to bear, instinctively rushes in to help. This clumsy effort to assist the celebrant cuts his vision short; falling into a paralytic trance, he has to be carried out of the room. For twenty-four days he remains speechless and motionless, rapt in ecstasy. On the one hand, his removal from the sacred scene is clearly punitive. Having disobeyed a divine command, Lancelot also proves his invincible naïveté by taking the spiritual vision literally. He himself correlates the twenty-four days of his paralysis with the twenty-four years that he lived in sin. On the other hand, his ecstatic swoon must be read as a reward, for another heavenly voice had promised the knight that he would see *grant partie de ce que tu quierz*—“a great part of what you seek.”¹²⁰ Upon awakening, he regrets the loss of ineffable bliss, which he will never know again upon earth—much as Galahad, after his own similar ecstasy, desires and receives the boon of death.¹²¹ So, even in this sternest of Grail romances, Lancelot is a tarnished yet still sympathetic—in some ways even admirable—figure, like the penitential saints we considered in chapter 1. The *Queste* leaves him back at Camelot, mourning his losses yet welcomed again with his wonted honor.

LE MORTE DARTHUR: DOUBLE CODING, DOUBLE ENDING

In Malory’s English Arthuriad—a *conjointure* more original than it is often thought to be—the themes of this chapter reach their consummation. To understand Malory’s treatment of Lancelot, however, we must bear in mind that he omitted almost all of the French *Prose Lancelot*, including the hero’s *enfances* and the whole narrative of his relationship with the queen. In fact, “The Most Noble Tale of Sir Launcelot du Lake” (Caxton’s Book VI) is the shortest tale in *Le Morte DARTHUR*, using only 2.5 percent of the material in the vast French source and interlacing it with an episode from *Perlesvaus*.¹²² Instead, the sprawling central portion of the *Morte* (Books VIII–XII) follows the *Prose Tristan*, with its brief account of the birth of Galahad at the end. Thus

Lancelot does not dominate the *Morte* as he does the Vulgate Cycle, but emerges only belatedly as a central figure in “The Tale of the Sankgreal” (Books XIII–XVII) and “The Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere” (Books XVIII–XIX).¹²³ At the outset of the Grail quest Malory returns to the Vulgate, closely following *La Queste del Saint Graal* and (at a greater distance) the *Mort Artu*. Lancelot therefore becomes his protagonist at the very point when his reputation in the French cycle is about to plummet. His illicit love, foregrounded in the *Prose Lancelot*, figures as silent background through the first twelve books of the *Morte*, placing readers in the same position as Arthur’s knights: there is a crucial secret that everyone knows but no one tells.

Ironically, Malory is usually seen as unsympathetic to either the amorous or the devotional brand of interiority.¹²⁴ While there is some truth to this characterization, it was nonetheless he who first introduced the Grail quest to English literature almost three centuries after its French invention. Although his version has remained classic ever since, there was nothing inevitable about his choice to translate the *Queste* rather than some other Grail romance. If he had really wanted to keep his work secular, he could have used the quest narrative from the *Prose Tristan*, which is more diffuse and less spiritual than *La Queste del Saint Graal*. Yet at precisely that point, Malory leaves the *Prose Tristan* and picks up the Vulgate, naming its “Tale of the Sankgreal” in his title as “one of the truest and one of the holiest that is in this world.” He does so despite its stern treatment of Lancelot, his favorite hero. Though he abridges the hermits’ expositions and softens Lancelot’s relationship with his son, Malory’s translation of the *Queste* is essentially faithful.¹²⁵ In the following “Book of Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere,” he plays up the love intrigue, until then a minor theme in English Arthurian romance, not as much by giving the lovers more space as by rhetorical heightening, crisp dialogue, and tight narrative compression. Under these circumstances, Malory creates a highly attractive yet morally ambiguous Lancelot, whose character and rhetoric virtually demand double judgment. Finally, he intensifies both the magical aura surrounding Arthur’s death and the odor of sanctity around Lancelot’s—events that are double-coded not just on the level of rhetoric, but even of plot.

In a key addition to the “The Tale of the Sankgreal,” Malory gives the hermit Nacien a prophetic speech. As the holy man tells Gawain, if it were not for his instability, Lancelot “sholde be nexte to encheve [the Sankgreal] sauff sir Galahad, hys sonne; but God knowith hys thought and hys unstableness. And yett shall he dye ryght an holy man, and no doute he hath no felow of none erthly synfull man lyv-yng” (XVI.5). In other words, Lancelot is still the best knight in the world if we exclude Galahad and Perceval, whose chivalry is already celestial. At one stroke the hermit recuperates Lancelot’s loss of status, declares his penance pleasing to God, and forewarns the reader of his fateful backsliding, as well as his ultimate holiness. This prophecy sets the stage for Malory’s double-coding of Lancelot as heroic sinner and penitent saint.¹²⁶ As he approaches the final catastrophe, the author faces the dilemma of a spiritually rehabilitated Lancelot who must somehow resume his illicit love, now public and increasingly destructive, without sacrificing the sympathy he has won through his tortuous penance. Malory’s solution entails an exceptional degree of duplicity surrounding the knight’s words and actions. Moreover, his decision to make Lancelot the ultimate hero requires him to end a romance that takes its name from the death of Arthur by moving beyond it, with a second climax around the deaths of Guenevere and Lancelot. In this dual ending, the secular tragedy of Arthur’s last battle gives way first to pagan magic, then to Christian hagiography. Most readers have found this coda so moving that David Benson states a consensus when he writes, “Nothing so becomes the *Morte Darthur* as its ending.”¹²⁷

Although Lancelot does not emerge as the central character until after the “Sankgreal,” Malory has gradually but inexorably constructed him as a universal object of desire. Chrétien’s Lancelot, says Bruckner, “generates a magnetic field of erotic potential at once positive and negative, productive and disruptive, as singular and extraordinary as his heart and as paradoxical as the romancer’s art.”¹²⁸ This is equally true of Malory’s character, whose appeal extends to women and men alike. Guenevere, with her fits of temper, is in some ways the least besotted of his lovers. Others are more forgiving, if no less relentless. Elaine, the Fair Maiden of Astolat, dies of a broken heart because Lancelot refuses to be her paramour, yet her farewell letter bears no reproach (XVIII.20), in a significant change from Malory’s source.¹²⁹ Her brother Lavaine, un-

daunted by his sister's death, is just as smitten with the knight. "She doth as I do," he says, "for sythen I saw first my lorde sir Launcelot I cowde never departe frome hym, nother nought I woll, and I may folow hym" (XVIII.19). Gawain's brother Gareth feels the same way, which makes Lancelot's accidental slaying of him unbearably poignant. Another of the hero's inseparable companions is Sir Urry, healed by "the beste knyght of the worlde" in a miracle specially invented by Malory to compensate for Lancelot's humiliation in the Grail quest (XIX.10–12). When the Round Table splinters into warring factions, Lancelot's kin (headed by Sir Bors) remain unshakably loyal to him. Even Gawain, heading the opposite faction, freely forgives the death of two sons and a brother at Lancelot's hands. It is only the killing of Gareth that finally stirs him to revenge.¹³⁰

Arthur himself overlooks all suspicions because "sir Launcelot had done so much for hym and for the quene so many tymes that wyte you well the kynge loved hym passyngly well" (XX.2). The apex of this triangle is not Guenevere but Lancelot; it is he whom both the king and the queen desire. Amazingly, when Mordred first tells Arthur that Lancelot has been taken in the queen's chamber and has slain thirteen knights, the king's spontaneous response is "Jesu mercy! he ys a mervaylous knyght of proues" (XX.7). This charisma works just as effectively on women. Aside from the queen and the hapless Elaine of Astolat, there is Elaine, the mother of Galahad, who returns to Camelot (as in the *Prose Lancelot*) to seduce the knight once again after her son is born. At one point four queens, led by Morgan le Fay, magically entrap him in a vain attempt to win his love (VI.3). Soon afterward, in an episode adapted from *Perlesvaus*, the sorceress "Hallewes" (Heloise) of the Castle Nigramous dies of grief because she fails to secure Lancelot's embalmed body for her chapel (VI.15).¹³¹ Later on, when the beleaguered knight tries to disarm gossip by withdrawing from the queen, he has "many resortis of ladyes and damesels which dayly resorted unto hym" to be their champion (XVIII.1).

Even Malory seems unable to resist his hero's charm—or rather, the more disastrous Lancelot's actions, the more charming he makes him. This effect is produced by numerous means, including the constant protestations of love from other characters; the vaunted remembrance of "olde jantylnes and olde servyse" (XVIII.25); the miraculous

healing of Sir Urry, which expresses God's favor even after the affair resumes; and the matchless feats that confer an aura of invincibility. Not least is the pointed contrast of Lancelot's courtesy and forbearance with Mordred's malice, Guenevere's rash temper, Arthur's helplessness, and Gawain's vengeful fury. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this portrayal is Malory's use of ritual and rhetoric to paint a glittering halo around the knight who is now an open traitor. These elements, unique to *Le Morte Darthur*, resonate profoundly with fifteenth-century English political culture. Yorkists and Lancastrians, warring as bitterly as the French and Scottish factions in the *Morte*, struggled to gain through ceremony, pageantry, and even the manipulation of saint cults the legitimacy they could not secure through descent or conquest.

The heightened ceremonial tone is apparent in a structural symmetry new to the *Morte*. For instance, Lancelot three times rescues Guenevere from the stake, and each time the level of destructive violence increases with the level of her guilt. In the first case she is innocent (of poisoning an apple), in the second only technically innocent (of sleeping with a wounded knight), and in the third guilty (of sleeping with Lancelot himself). Similarly, the sequence of three ship burials (Perceval's sister, the Maid of Astolat, and King Arthur) binds the Grail quest more tightly to the love intrigue and the downfall of Camelot. Beyond this compositional strategy, Malory creates a ceremonial context, foreign to his sources, for the episodes that most betray Lancelot's sin. For instance, he compresses "The Knight of the Cart" into a mere fifteen pages, saving Chrétien's foundational tale for the end of his romance, but he sets it within the wholly new frame of Maying.¹³² This festive, nostalgic ritual makes an innocent May Queen of the worldly Guenevere, surrounding her with youthful, unarmed knights gathering flowers. Spectacle trumps security: the queen decrees that all must be clad in green silk, each knight accompanied by a lady (XIX.1). In the midst of this idyll she is abducted. The urgency of Lancelot's rescue, set against the queen's wish to silence any hint of scandal, throws the scene off balance just enough to make him look especially heroic when, for the first time in the romance, he explicitly shares her bed.

Yet, in the confrontation that follows, it is Meleagant who is in the right when he warns Lancelot, "thoughe ye ar never so good a knyght,

as I wote well ye ar renowned the beste knyght of the worlde, yet shulde ye be avysed to do batayle in a wronge quarell, for God woll have a stroke in every batayle." Lancelot acknowledges that "God ys to be drad" but trusts in a technicality: since none of the queen's wounded knights lay with her, he can still "prove with myne hondys that ye say untrewly." In the long lineage of tricked ordeals, including Yseult's and Amiloun's, wherein God favors loyal love and literal rather than substantive truth, Lancelot can feel confident of his success. Being "never so good a knyght" (XIX.7), he converts his triumph into an unparalleled chivalric feat by killing Meleagant even with his head and half his body disarmed and his left hand tied behind his back.¹³³ Since his foe is a villain anyhow, it would take an exceptionally grumpy or moralistic reader not to side with our hero. Yet Lancelot, newly returned from the Grail quest, cannot have forgotten that "God woll have a stroke in every batayle." In his last rescue of Guenevere, that stroke may well be the "unhappy" one that kills Sir Gareth, precipitating Gawain's revenge and the war that destroys the kingdom.

As the stakes of the confrontation rise, both ritual and rhetoric reach dizzying heights. While Arthur and Gawain are besieging Lancelot at Joyous Gard, where he has taken the queen for safekeeping, he makes the first in a series of formal speeches—each an extraordinary mix of courtesy, humility, damage control, and Beowulfian boasting. Shouting from the battlements to his erstwhile friends on the field below, Lancelot claims that if he and his knights were willing to fight, they would soon vanquish their foes; but they will not, because to do so would be a breach of fealty. At this Arthur directly calls Lancelot a traitor: "thou haste layne be my quene and holdyn her many wynters, and sytthyn, lyke a traytoure, taken her away fro me by fors" (XX.11). Lancelot's response is a masterpiece of equivocation:

And as for my lady quene Gwenyver, excepte youre person of your hyghnes and my lorde sir Gawayne, there nys no knyght undir hevyn that dare make hit good uppon me that ever I was traytoure unto youre person. And where hit please you to say that I have holdyn my lady, youre quene, yerys and wynters, unto that I shall ever make a large answer, and prove hit uppon any knyght that beryth the lyff, excepte your person and sir Gawayne, that my lady, quene Gwenyver, ys as

trew a lady unto youre person as ys ony lady lyvyng unto her lorde,
and that woll I make good with my hondis. (XX.11)

In a brilliant analysis, Peter Schroeder shows how cleverly Lancelot's casuistry avoids outright lies, while equivocating to the maximum—as pastoral ethics permitted under certain circumstances, which might include preventing a war and preserving a queen's good name.¹³⁴ The knight speaks the simple truth when he says no one but Arthur and Gawain “dare make hit good” that he is a traitor, for they all know they would lose in any fight with him; and he is justified under feudal law in refusing to fight either his sovereign or the heir apparent. As for “making a large answer,” the phrase is grand but empty, implying innocence without expressly asserting it. If the queen is as true a wife “as ys ony lady lyvyng unto her lorde,” that too sounds impressive—until we reflect that the standard in the *Morte* is not high: Guenevere is certainly as true as La Beale Isoude is to King Mark or Morgause to King Lot. As he continues in this vein, Lancelot wins a compelling rhetorical advantage, which he cements by his forbearance on the battlefield. After King Arthur is unhorsed by Sir Bors, who wants to end the war by killing him, Lancelot instead helps the fallen king remount—whereupon “the teerys braste oute of [the kynges] yen, thynkyng of the grete curtesy that was in sir Launcelot more than in any other man” (XX.13). Though both the king and the reader know he is a traitor, he can still reduce the victim of his betrayal to tears of love.

Soon afterward, at the pope's intervention, Lancelot returns the queen to Arthur. Freely elaborating on his sources, Malory describes the spectacle:

Than sir Launcelot purveyed hym an hondred knyghtes, and all well clothed in grene velvet, and their horsis trapped in the same to the heelys, and every knyght hylde a braunche of olyff in hys honde in tokenyng of pees. And the quene had four-and-twenty jantillwomen folowyng her in the same wyse. And sir Launcelot had twelve coursers folowyng hym, and on every courser sate a yonge jantylman; and all they were arayed in whyght velvet with sarpis of golde aboute their quarters, and the horse trapped in the same wyse down to the helys. . . . And in the same wyse was the quene arayed, and sir Launcelot in the

same, of whyght clothe of golde tyssew. . . . And so sir Launcelot rode thorowoute Carlehylle, and so into the castell, that all men myght beholde hem. . . . So whan sir Launcelot saw the kynge and sir Gawayne, than he lad the quene by the arme, and than he kneled downe and the quene bothe. Wyte you well, than was there many a bolde knyght with kynge Arthur that wepte as tenderly as they had seyne all their kynne dede afore them! (XX.14)

As Ann Bliss has demonstrated, this description closely echoes the language of fifteenth-century chronicles and other documentary sources.¹³⁵ Malory and his readers would have experienced many such situations in which public ceremony supplied a means to mend social discord. It was standard for everyone in such processions (including the horses) to wear the same color, creating a sense of unity and enhancing the spectacle, while the livery, order of procession, number of participants, and distance travelled were matters of protocol. When the intermittently mad Henry VI entered London in 1470, not long before Malory's death, he made such a poor ceremonial showing that he lost partisans, and chroniclers complained of this. But Lancelot makes no such error. At the head of a splendid procession, he rides from Joyous Gard to Carlisle not like a penitent, but like a king. The actual king greets him with stony silence, while his courtiers weep as if they had seen all their kin lying dead before them. The metaphor is well-chosen; many of them soon will. Tears again signify not only pathos, but the disarming effect of Lancelot's charisma. Like some more recent malefactors—one thinks of O. J. Simpson or Bill Clinton—he has the star power to outface all evidence against him.

But this is not to say Lancelot is not truly penitent, at least for the deaths of Gareth and his brother Gaheris. The extravagant penance he offers to perform is both pious and supremely theatrical in the best late-fifteenth-century style: he promises to walk barefoot from Sandwich to Carlisle, stopping at every ten miles to found a fully endowed religious house, "of what order that ye woll assygne me," with chantries to pray day and night for the souls of Gareth and Gaheris—"and thys shall I perfourme whyle that I have ony lyvelod in Crystyndom, and . . . thys were fayrar and more holyar and more perfyte to their soulis" than the war of vengeance proposed by Gawain (XX.16).

Having appealed by turns to his past service, his prowess, the power of his kin group, his pursuit of “worship” (honor), and his forbearance in the face of unheard-of provocations—always in high style and with peerless pageantry—Lancelot now plays his trump card: he invokes the penitential piety so deeply admired by those who had resources to engage in it. Upon hearing his offer, King Arthur and all the rest “wepte as they were madde”—all except Gawain, who rejects the offer out of hand and banishes Lancelot from the realm, threatening the impotent king with loss of his service if he says otherwise. At this point Lancelot, himself weeping, strides to center stage and pronounces himself a tragic hero:

Moste nobelyst Crysten realme, whom I have loved aboven all othir realmys! And in the I have gotyn a grete parte of my worshyp, and now that I shall departe in thys wyse, truly me repentis that ever I cam in thys realme, that I shulde be thus shamefully banysshyd, *undeserved and causeles*! But fortune ys so varyaunte, and the wheele so mutable, that there ys no constaunte abydyng. And that may be preved by many olde cronycles, as of noble Ector of Troy and Alysander . . . whan they were moste in her royalté, they alyght passyng lowe. And so faryth hit by me, . . . for in thys realme I had worshyp, and be me and myne all the hole Rounde Table hath bene encreced more in worshyp, by me and myne, than ever hit was by ony of you all. (XX.17, emphasis added)

With such strategies Lancelot tries to save face and forestall disaster, but he cannot succeed forever. After the debacle, with Arthur and Mordred slain at each other’s hands and “an hondred thousand leyde dede uppon the erthe” (XXI.4), Malory faces a fresh challenge. In his two previous tales he had already depicted Lancelot doing penance, mourning his faults, rising to new heights of heroism, and falling back into yet greater sin and woe. In addition, he had composed the forceful and rending climax that by right should end his epic, with Arthur (perhaps) dead and buried and Guenevere seeking salvation as “a nunne in whyght clothys and blak” (XXI.7). But now he must recapitulate the scenario of Lancelot’s penance and rehabilitation, leading at last to a holy death. Some critics have perceived this epilogue as anticlimactic, diffusing the tragedy of Arthur’s end by imposing a religious perspective incompatible with it.¹³⁶ In a sense they are right—except that here

above all we must reckon with Malory's insistent double-coding. As Jeffrey Morgan asserts, "the *Morte* tells two stories, not one . . . from two points of view which imply two different sets of values."¹³⁷

The dominant story is tragic indeed: not only do almost all the characters die, but Arthur's death spells the end of the Round Table and the whole chivalric world. This tragedy is as overdetermined as any can be, for Malory makes it a tragedy of both character and fortune—both medieval and Aristotelian—in yet another form of double-coding. From the standpoint of character, there is plenty of blame to go around: we can pin the fault on Lancelot's adultery, or Mordred's implacable malice (and the incestuous sin of his begetting), or Gawain's paroxysm of vengeance, or Arthur's inability to hold his realm together. We can blame factional politics and the people's "newefangleness," as Malory himself does in his famous authorial speech, "Lo ye all Englysshemen" (XXI.1). But he has also strewn the field with pointers to fate, for we have seen the prophetic vision of Gawain's ghost, the dream of Fortune's wheel, and the fatal "misadventure of an adder": a serpent, slithering straight out of Eden, prompts a knight to draw his sword and so undoes a carefully brokered truce. This "wycked day of Desteny" (XXI.4) is "unhappy," as Lancelot says (XXI.8)—in the etymological sense of "baleful," "ill-fated." Doom has been foreordained: one could almost say that the shadow of catastrophe taints the characters beforehand and hastens their degeneration.

After the cataclysm on Salisbury Plain, the murderous duel between Arthur and Mordred, the macabre pillaging of corpses by moonlight, what more can be said? A great deal, it turns out—for Malory undercuts this dominant, tragic tale with not one but two others, utterly different in *matiere* and *sen*. One is hopeful, mysterious, open-ended, and indeed pagan: the tale of the "once and future king." The other is full of pathos, yet hagiographic and ultimately triumphant: the tale of Lancelot the saint. The *Morte* does not ask readers to choose one or the other, but insists on both. While frustrating to readers who demand artistic unity, this ending amply rewards those who can accept a medieval aesthetic of inclusiveness, of both/and. To be sure, Malory inherited both tales from his sources, the Vulgate *Mort Artu* and the English *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*. But his characteristic compression and heightening give his conclusion a power his sources cannot match, while accentuating the contrast of its several parts.

Arthur's passing harks unexpectedly back to the end of "The Tale of the Sankgreal." When the quest has been consummated and Gala-had dies at the height of his ecstasy, a disembodied hand descends from on high to seize the Grail, which vanishes into heaven with the saintly knight's soul. In an equal and opposite movement, when the reluctant Sir Bedevere finally casts Excalibur into the lake, a hand rises from its depths, catches the sword and brandishes it three times, then disappears beneath the waves. The hand presumably belongs to Nimue, the Lady of the Lake, who summons the magic ship that carries her to shore along with three queens. The *Mort Artu* names only Morgan le Fay, but Malory says more: "that one was kynge Arthur syster, quene Morgan le Fay, the tother was the quene of North Galis, and the thirde was the quene of the Waste Londis" (XXI.6)—a sisterhood of sorceresses, last heard from when they tried to win Lancelot's love by magic (VI.3).¹³⁸ Arthur tenderly lays his head in the lap of his sister and erstwhile foe, and they set sail for Avalon.

From this point on, Malory double-codes his story even on the level of plot. In his parting words to Bedevere, Arthur says he "muste into the vale of Avylyon to hele me of my grevous wounde" (XXI.5), but he also asks prayers for his soul. Both outcomes are made to seem plausible. The next morning Bedevere finds a newly dug grave at a hermitage, and on hearing that the unidentified corpse was brought by ladies who made lavish offerings in coin and candles, he himself identifies the grave as Arthur's. "But yet the ermyte knew nat in sertayne that he was veryly the body of kynge Arthur" (XXI.6). And here Malory adds his famous concession to British folklore:

Yet som men say in many partys of Inglonde that kynge Arthure ys nat dede, but had by the wyll of oure Lorde Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall com agayne, and he shall wynde the Holy Crosse. Yet I woll nat say that hit shall be so, but rather I wolde sey: here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff. And many men say that there ys wrytten uppon the tumber this: HIC IACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS. (XXI.7)

The two—or is it three?—possible outcomes depend on the ambiguous topography of the matter of Britain. If Arthur has been "had by

the wyll of oure Lorde Jesu into another place” and is destined on his return to “wynne the Holy Crosse”—that is, to reconquer the Holy Land for Christendom—then he is a figure of Christian folklore, like Enoch and Elijah (the “two witnesses” of Revelation 11:1–13) or the Last Emperor of apocalyptic prophecies.¹³⁹ If on the other hand he was buried by the hermit (formerly the Archbishop of Canterbury, thus a fitting priest to do his obsequies), then he lies at Glastonbury, where tradition had placed Arthur’s tomb ever since the twelfth century. For it is there that Bedevere and, later, Lancelot join the bishop in his hermitage. But Malory offers a third view for which he claims no authorizing tradition: “here in thys worlde he chaunged hys lyff.” It is hard to guess what this means, if not that Arthur remains with Morgan le Fay and the magical queens on the isle of Avalon. In that case he would be a figure of pagan folklore. As Gerald of Wales wrote in the late twelfth century,

Itaque Arthuro ibi mortaliter vulnerato, corpus ejusdem in insulam Avaloniam, quae nunc Glastonia dicitur, a nobili matrona quadam ejusque cognata et Morgani vocata, est delatum, quod postea defunctum in dicto coemeterio sacro, eadem procurante, sepultum fuit. Propter hoc enim fabulosi Britones et eorum cantores fingere solebant, quod dea quaedam phantastica, scilicet et Morganis dicta, corpus Arthuri in insulam detulit Avalloniam ad ejus vulnera sanandum. Quae cum sanata fuerint, redibit rex fortis et potens, ad Britones regendum, ut ducunt, sicut solet.¹⁴⁰

When Arthur had been mortally wounded, his body was brought by a noble matron called Morgan, his kinswoman, to the isle of Avalon, which is now called Glastonbury. Later his corpse was buried in the sacred cemetery there, as she arranged. For this reason the fabulous Britons and their bards have long been telling the tale that a fantastic goddess, also called Morgan, brought Arthur’s body to the isle of Avalon for the healing of his wounds. When they have been healed, as they suppose, the king will return to rule the Britons, strong and mighty as he was before.

Insofar as Avalon is, yet is not, Glastonbury, Arthur is yet is not dead—hence “the once and future king.” The two sites occupy the same space

in parallel universes: if we do not believe Arthur was assumed into heaven, we can choose to have him either buried in sacred ground or sequestered in Avalon. Not the least of mysteries is that Arthur, who had always preferred the company of his knights to that of women (including his queen), departs this world in a ship full of ladies, returning to the magic feminine realm of the Lady of the Lake. Conversely, Lancelot had always been surrounded by adoring women, but dies with the companionship of none but his male kin, all lately turned hermits.

In Lancelot's case, Malory's alternative endings are not divided by space, but linked successively in time. Banished, the knight crosses the Channel with his ever-loyal kin, and the text envisions three possible futures for him: first as a French version of the Holy Roman Emperor, second as Guenevere's lawful husband, and finally as the hermit and priest that he in fact becomes. On the first count, the political imagination of the text is remarkable in light of the recently concluded Hundred Years' War, with its restoration of French sovereignty. Despite being the eldest son of King Ban, Lancelot had always appeared to be Arthur's loyal vassal. Now, back in his native Benwick (which Malory identifies with Beaune or Bayonne), he emerges as suzerain of all France, bestowing kingdoms, counties, and earldoms with a free hand on his followers: "sir Launcelott . . . was lorde of all Fraunce and of all the londis that longed unto Fraunce; he and hys kynrede rejoysed hit all thorow sir Launcelottis noble proues" (XX.18).¹⁴¹ It turns out that all along he had been more ally than vassal to Arthur. But, whatever his powers on the Continent, he is now exiled from England as surely as Henry VI had been routed from France. This means that he cannot return until summoned by the dying, belatedly penitent Gawain, so he arrives too late to help Arthur in his war with Mordred. (Malory wisely omits an episode from the *Mort Artu* in which Lancelot's army returns to fight Mordred's sons.) Once again the knight's status is a paradoxical mix of honor and shame, for he is suzerain of seemingly boundless authority in one realm but a disgraced, powerless exile in another. Now, however, these realms are no longer earthly and celestial chivalry, as in the "Sankgreal," but simply France and England. As Kay Harris points out, the War of the Roses supplied volatile England with "traitor saints," and Lancelot is cast in the same mold.¹⁴² Both the so-called martyr Richard Scrope, Archbishop of York (beheaded for treason in 1405), and the

twice-deposed Lancastrian Henry VI (d. 1471) were venerated as saints by their respective partisans. In this political climate, Lancelot's elevation to sainthood could be seen as complementing, rather than contradicting, his secular punishment for treason.

"Having denied Lancelot opportunities for deeds of prowess," Harris writes, "the *Morte Darthur* relentlessly pursues its disabling process further by having Guenevere reject Lancelot as a lover. In effect, Malory's text severs Lancelot from the world he has known: his capacity to act as a knight of worship is taken from him."¹⁴³ Since the queen is already a nun—and not only that but "abbas and rular, as reson wolde" (XXI.7)—she can hardly do otherwise. Yet Malory heightens the pathos of their parting, not by adding new details to his source (the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*),¹⁴⁴ but by giving the queen a penitential speech as poignant as any of Lancelot's, and significantly more honest:

Therefore, sir Launcelot, wyte thou well I am sette in suche a plyght to gete my soule hele. And yet I truste, thorow Goddis grace and thorow Hys Passion of Hys woundis wyde, that aftir my deth I may have a syght of the blyssed face of Cryste Jesu, and on Doomesday to sytte on Hys ryght syde; for as synfull as ever I was, now ar seyntes in hevyn. And therefore, sir Launcelot, I requyre the and beseche the hartily, for all the love that ever was betwyxt us, that thou never se me no more in the visayge. And I commaunde the, on Goddis behalff, that thou forsake my company. . . . [F]or as well as I have loved the heretofore, myne harte woll nat serve now to se the; for thorow the and me ys the floure of kyngis and knyghtes destroyed. And therefore go thou to thy realme, and there take ye a wyff, and lyff with hir wyth joy and blys. (XXI.9)

Guenevere makes this speech in the presence of all her nuns before Lancelot has said a word, so he is spared the humiliation of having an actual proffer of marriage rejected. But its effect on him is not unlike that of the queen's initial rejection in the *Charrette*. With a flash of her old imperious self, she "commaundes" her lover one last time to depart, voicing skepticism about his promise to "forsake the worlde as ye have done." But, *pace* David Benson, I see no reason to call Malory's treatment of religion superficial or sentimental.¹⁴⁵ Despite the multiple swoons that follow the lovers' parting (a boon to the Victorians and

pre-Raphaelites), the queen is responding honestly to the calamities she has experienced, which include not only her husband's death and the loss of her entire world, but also Mordred's attempted rape. True, it would take a skilled actress to voice her last line—"go thou to thy realme, and there take ye a wyff"—without eliciting stunned laughter. Yet this word of farewell from the notoriously jealous queen is a gesture as magnificent, in its way, as Lancelot's offer to consume his whole livelihood on chantries for Gareth's soul. Guenevere's wistful meditation that "as synfull as ever I was, now ar seyntes in hevyn" (one of Malory's additions), expresses the best of late medieval piety. Indeed, it would have been surprising had such thoughts not crossed the writer's own mind. Colophons, though conventional, may be sincere. In his, apparently written from prison, Malory asked readers to "praye for me whyle I am on lyve that God sende me good delyveraunce. And whan I am deed"—as he would be within the year—"I praye you all praye for my soule."

After this, there is nothing left for Lancelot but to follow the path of the retired knights in the "Sankgreal." As a holy sinner, his ending is indebted to the hagiographic romance pattern we have seen in *Gregorius* and *Sir Gowther*. Joined as always by his faithful kin, he turns hermit and endures "in grete penaunce syx yere" before taking holy orders, "and a twelve-monthe he sange masse. And there was none of these other knyghtes but they redde in bookes and holpe for to synge masse, and range bellys, and dyd lowly al maner of servyce. And soo their horses wente where they wolde" (XXI.10). The knights' "lowly servyce" itself calls for double judgment: the precipitous fall in their worldly status is a boost in their spiritual stature. As for Lancelot, his last sacramental act is to officiate at Guenevere's funeral; he learns of her death, as she of his priesthood, through a vision. In the language of devotion, this is a clear proof that God has accepted their penance. After the queen's death Lancelot embarks on a starvation fast, and "ever he was lyeng groveling on the tombe of kynge Arthur and quene Guenever" (XXI.12). His end is marked by all the right hagiographic signs: he predicts the day of his death, receives the last rites, and dies in the odor of sanctity, while the bishop in a dream sees his soul lifted up to heaven by angels.¹⁴⁶ These circumstances have provoked a debate about the true motive of Lancelot's penance: is it love of God or of Guenevere?¹⁴⁷

Has he really become a saint, or does he remain a faithful courtly lover until the end? But the debate is silly because Malory so obviously wants to have it both ways. Mixed motives of this kind were not acceptable to the more austere mystics and moralists, or indeed to the *Queste* author. But they are common in life, and if one were to insist on the stringent standards of a Marguerite Porete, then few indeed would be saved. The both/and of Lancelot's death is the last of many double judgments Malory has required us to exercise toward his hero.

Malory's ambivalent portrayal of Lancelot is, oddly, more like Chrétien's than either is like the intervening Vulgate Cycle, which includes the *Queste*. Yet the effect produced by *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* is ascribed to Chrétien's skill, whereas the ambivalent ending of *Le Morte Darthur* is often ascribed to its author's ambivalent feelings. This is partly because we know a great deal about Malory's checkered career and next to nothing about Chrétien.¹⁴⁸ But there are also literary reasons. In the *Charrette*, Chrétien's moral and spiritual vision remains implicit. Sacred analogues to the knight's career are strewn here and there, but never frankly expounded or insisted on. So the reader has the choice of ignoring these parallels, making them bear their full allegorical weight (with Ribard and Walters), reading them as ironic (with Robertson), or—as I suggest—reading with double judgment. In the *Queste*, by contrast, the author's spiritual vision is explicit, and he writes wholeheartedly in the service of that vision. Hence the *Queste* is not double-coded, but openly subversive of earthly chivalry—an “anti-romance,” as Gary Simes calls it.¹⁴⁹ Knights, tournaments, adventures, and all the normal trappings of romance are used to overturn the values we associate with that genre, promoting instead an ethos of ascetic chastity, humility, penance, and restraint in chivalric violence.

Malory's values are neither so delicately hidden as Chrétien's nor so clear and unambiguous as the *Queste* author's. Rather, they are intensely ambivalent. Their contradictions emerge openly in some of the rhetorical passages that multiply as the romance draws near its close: the lyrical but muddled paean to the month of May (XVIII.25), Lancelot's speeches of self-justifying casuistry, and Ector's eulogy for his brother (XXI.13). More subtly, such antinomies are implied by the constant shifts of mood and tonality that mark the last two tales. This is not a sign of authorial incompetence, but a calculated effect similar

to the one Chaucer achieves at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*. In fact, Talbot Donaldson amusingly called the ending of that poem a “nervous breakdown in poetry” because in almost every stanza, the poet alters his tone, style, attitude toward his characters, and address to the reader.¹⁵⁰ As soon as we think we have pinned down the narrator’s attitude, it changes, leaving us constantly off balance. Malory’s ending produces the same kind of whiplash effect.

Le Morte Darthur also resembles *Troilus* in its handling of sources. Compared with Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*, Chaucer’s poem is at once more comic and more tragic, more erotic and more religious. Similarly, in his treatment of the Vulgate Cycle, Malory expands the character of Lancelot in all directions. His love for Guenevere is less obviously carnal; their adultery is frankly depicted only once, and the relationship seems both more profound and more tender.¹⁵¹ In the “Sankgreal,” Lancelot seems to have more genuine humility and self-knowledge than in the *Queste*.¹⁵² But his long, rhetorical speeches also make him look more dishonest and duplicitous. When he appears at his most courteous and rhetorically powerful, he is also most obviously lying.

Noting this doubleness, Robert Kelly writes that “Malory leaves us with two Lancelots.” One of them is “the best knight of the world,” so movingly eulogized by Ector, while the other is “in some sense the worst of knights, given his potential for good,” because he insists on squandering that potential through his destructive love. For Kelly, the dilemma arises because Malory cannot sacrifice his ideal vision of Lancelot, even though he clearly shows that his hero fails to live up to it. Thus “essence and existence, character and deeds, seem to be separable and discontinuous.”¹⁵³ This is true enough, but the need for double judgment stems more deeply from Malory’s refusal to decide whether Lancelot’s love *is* destructive. According to the hermit Nacien in the “Sankgreal,” it is his “unstableness”—his secret intention to return to the queen when the quest is over—that keeps him from full success. But according to Malory’s own “month of May” speech, the precise opposite is true. Here Lancelot and Guenevere are praised for their “stabylyté,” for the “trouthe and faythefulnes” that characterized “love in kynge Arthurs dayes,” in pointed contrast to the fickleness of love “nowadays.” Because of their true love they deserve to have “a good ende” (XVIII.25)—even if such an end consists in doing penance for

that very love!¹⁵⁴ In short, when Malory is forced to choose between sacred and secular values, he chooses both, just as he did when forced to choose between a Christian and a pagan end for King Arthur. His is not a coherent vision, but a capacious one. He will have heaven *and* earth, Avalon *and* Glastonbury, *fin'amor* and saintly penance. Commending itself to generations of readers, that doubleness suggests that, when two ways decisively part, we mortals prefer to linger at the crossroads, choosing both. *Vivat rex quondam rexque futurus.*

CHAPTER 3

CONVERSION

The Literary Traditions of Marguerite Porete

OF ALL THE FORMS OF INTERPLAY BETWEEN SACRED AND PROFANE, none shaped medieval culture so profoundly as the dialogue between courtly and spiritual discourses on love. As Latin exegetes multiplied their commentaries on the Song of Songs, minstrels of *fin' amor* were singing in every tongue of their exquisite pains. Many fine studies have explored the mutual influence of sacred texts and *fin' amor*,¹ though *influence* is too constrained a concept for the exchange between these great literary registers. It would be more apt to picture the Fountain of Love that waters so many lush painted gardens, with diverse streams from that fountain crossing, intermingling, and looping back on themselves. In this chapter I explore one complex case of such fluid play: the transmutation of secular love poetry in the *mystique courtoise* of Picardy, culminating in Marguerite Porete's *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (ca. 1290–1306).² By *mystique courtoise* I denote the thirteenth-century idiom I have described elsewhere as “a *dolce stil religioso* in which the monastic discourse on love converged with the courtly,” above all in texts composed by and for beguines.³

The only medieval woman to die for a book, Marguerite Porete was burned at the stake in Paris in 1310. Her sentence as a relapsed heretic stemmed not only from the troubling doctrine of the *Mirror*, but still more from her persistence in disseminating it, even after the Bishop of Cambrai burned the book (sometime between 1296 and 1305) with the command that she cease to use, copy, or read from it. Yet Marguerite succeeded in her efforts to save the life of her book, even at the expense of her own. Despite the inquisitor's best efforts, the *Mirror* continued to circulate anonymously in four languages.⁴ Thanks to the silencing of its author's name, however, the *Mirror* was not reunited with Marguerite Porete until 1946. In that year Romana Guarnieri recognized it as the lost work thought to have sparked the "heresy of the Free Spirit," condemned by the Council of Vienne in 1311–1312.⁵ Scholarship since then has focused on reconstructing Marguerite's heresy trial,⁶ interpreting her theological ideas,⁷ tracing their affinities with other mystics,⁸ and second-guessing her judges on her orthodoxy or lack thereof.⁹ Several studies have explored the *Mirror*'s manuscript tradition, which is anomalous because its extant Latin¹⁰ and Middle English¹¹ translations are older, and in some ways closer to the original, than the surviving Middle French manuscript (Chantilly, Musée Condé MS F xiv 26).¹² Literary interpretation lags behind, though excellent studies by Catherine Müller and Suzanne Kocher have begun to close this gap.¹³

Building on these contributions and my own previous work,¹⁴ I aim here to deepen and expand our understanding of Marguerite's vernacular literary traditions by exploring her relationship to three bodies of material. The first is a collection of prize-winning love songs and religious poems presented at the *puy*, or literary society, of Valenciennes between about 1290 and 1320. Composed in Marguerite's home town at the time she was actively writing and reciting from her book, this manuscript anthology has never before been studied in connection with her. My second group of texts is a little-known corpus of *mystique courtoise* poems written by or for beguines in the same period, chiefly in Marguerite's native Picard dialect. By examining these neglected repertoires, we can fine-tune our sense of the kinds of vernacular texts Marguerite would have known through written and oral traditions. In some ways this background clarifies her thought, while in others, we can see more precisely how she rebelled against it.

Finally, we must reckon with the ubiquitous *Romance of the Rose*. Here it is essential to look not only at the canonical *Rose* of modern critical editions, but also at the revised and interpolated versions produced by Picard clerics in the late thirteenth century. For the insistently profane masterpiece begun by Guillaume de Lorris (ca. 1230) and completed by Jean de Meun (ca. 1270) turns out to have been cited, adapted, and appropriated by the lovers of God surprisingly often during Marguerite's lifetime. It is possible, therefore, that the *Rose* she knew contained some material excluded by modern editors as apocryphal. A stroll among these grafted and transplanted roses will contextualize my claim that the *Mirror* engages profoundly with the *Rose* as its most important secular intertext.

THE *PUY*S OF PICARDY AND THE VALENCIENNES PRIZE POEMS

Marguerite was almost certainly born in or near Valenciennes, the town in Hainaut where she was arrested (for the second time) between 1306 and 1308.¹⁵ Hainaut belonged to the large cultural and linguistic region of Picardy, Picard being the form of French spoken in north-eastern France, Wallonia, and the bilingual Brabant and Flanders.¹⁶ Picardy was not a political entity, but a dialectal area; the Picard "nation" at the University of Paris included the dioceses of Cambrai, Tournai, and much of Liège.¹⁷ In addition to Valenciennes, important towns in the region included Arras, Cambrai, Douai, Tournai, and Lille. Its topography—mostly flat, well-watered, and densely urban—made this region not only an active trading center, but also a cultural crossroads. Throughout the thirteenth century, in fact, more literary texts were written in the Picard dialect than in the Francien of Paris.¹⁸ Beguine communities abounded in the region, creating an enthusiastic audience for crossover love songs.

Among the more remarkable institutions of medieval Picardy were the *puy*s de *Nostre Dame*.¹⁹ A *puy* (derived from *podium*) was a confraternity of trouvères, jongleurs, and fellow citizens dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Each society met on one of her feast days for its annual banquet and religious rites, but what distinguished a *puy* from other confraternities was the fact that it sponsored poetic and musical contests.

Festivities included the election of a “prince,” or master, for the coming year, the performance and judgment of competing songs, and sometimes the production of a play. Although the *puy*s of different towns might specialize in different lyric and dramatic genres, they had much in common, as all contributed to local pride, bolstered civic piety, and linked prominent burghers with professional and amateur poets. Over time the French *puy*s, like German Meistersingers’ guilds, formalized and tightly controlled the rules for each genre, leading to a certain ossification. By the later Middle Ages, for example, the rules of a *puy* might specify that all contest entries had to be composed around the same refrain, announced by the master a few days beforehand. Winners were honored with silver crowns and other prizes, and some of the winning songs can still be identified by the crowns that mark them in manuscripts. As widespread, durable institutions, the *puy*s of Picardy fostered “cultural cross-reference,”²⁰ bringing together poets and their public, aristocratic *trouvères* and modest *jongleurs*, amateurs and professionals, charity and festivity—and, not least, sacred and secular.

While Arras had the most prestigious *puy*, founded in 1194,²¹ Valenciennes had the third oldest (founded in 1229), setting an example for other towns.²² More *puy*s were established in Rouen, Lille, Tournai, Cambrai, Douai, Amiens, Abbeville, Béthune, Dieppe, Caen, and even London. Professional poet-singers made the rounds of this circuit, performing in multiple competitions. At Valenciennes, membership was limited to sixty men, but women (not included in that number) could join the society *par dévotion*. The responsibilities of *confrères* and *consoeurs* extended beyond celebrating Mary’s feasts to making charitable provisions for the town’s poor, sick, and elderly—a duty that overlapped with the work of beguines. For that reason, the curate and chaplain of the *hôtel-Dieu*, or almshouse, were honored guests at the *puy*’s annual dinner. Interestingly, there is a manuscript history of the *puy* of Valenciennes written in 1714 by Jacques-Michel Duforest—himself a *confrère* and *prince du puy* and, as it happens, pastor of Valenciennes’s beguinage.²³ Thus, late in the history of these venerable institutions, they are connected by a living link.

In a fourteenth-century manuscript that is now in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris, BNF ms. fr. 24432), among other texts in prose and

verse, sits a small anthology of poems designated as *couronnés à Valenciennes* (fols. 303r–310v). These eighteen poems, copied nowhere else, include eight *serventois* (songs in praise of the Virgin), four *chansons amoureuses*, and six *sottes chansons* (parodies or bawdy songs), all mingled together. The collection was first edited, badly, by Gabriel Hécart in 1834—though one can say in his defense that the text is extremely corrupt, besides containing many obscure words in Rouchi, the subdialect of Valenciennes.²⁴ Better editions were produced in the twentieth century by two Scandinavian philologists, Arthur Långfors and Edward Järnström. Typically, the modern editors put asunder what a medieval scribe yoked together, for crossover to this degree used to make scholars nervous. Hence the *serventois* now appear in a collection of pious songs, with the *sottes chansons* (and the more canonical *amoureuses*) relegated to a separate volume.²⁵ Långfors argues on philological grounds, supported by documentary evidence of the only named poet, that “the little collection from Valenciennes was composed between the approximate dates of 1290 and 1320.”²⁶ What he calls the “modernism” of the *serventois*, their tendency toward abstraction and theological argument, distinguishes them from Marian verse of the mid-thirteenth century, while linguistic features point to a date scarcely later than the *Roman de Fauvel* (1310–1314). So if Långfors is right, good fortune has preserved for us an anthology of prize-winning love songs, devotional poems, and parodies contemporary with *The Mirror of Simple Souls* from the very town where it was written.

As a beguine, it is unlikely (though not impossible) that Marguerite herself belonged to the *puy* of Valenciennes. But she was deeply familiar with the kinds of songs that were sung there, so to gain a sense of her cultural world, we can do worse than begin with this little set of prize poems. Strikingly, the poets share a common genre strategy, which privileges a highly self-conscious mode of crossover. As Jane Taylor explains, both the Marian song (*serventois*) and the burlesque (*sotte chanson*) aim to mimic the classic love song (*amoureuse*) as effectively as possible. In fact, one criterion used by the judges was the poet’s success at misleading hearers to expect a song of courtly love, just before the lyrics veered off into piety or obscenity.²⁷ Early fifteenth-century rhetoricians, such as Jean Molinet and Baudet Herenc, codified this principle, saying that a *serventois* gets its name because it “should be a servant

before and behind to an *amoureuse*.”²⁸ In other words, though it is “composed in honor of the Virgin Mary, using biblical figures,” the *serventois* “adopts the endings and first lines of an *amoureuse*, which treats the subject of love.”²⁹

The sacred songs from Valenciennes illustrate this principle, for the first line of each stanza imitates a love song, but a religious meaning intervenes before the last line in a way that “brusquely modifies the situation of the Lady and the interlocutor.”³⁰ Between the deliberately seductive opening and the explicitly religious close, double meanings are rife. A simple instance is the stanza that begins:

Che me semont de loiaument amer,
Chou k’Amours veut les siens servans aidier.
Amours est Diex, ce puet on esprouver,
Car pour amour souffri son cors plaier.³¹

This advises me to love loyally—
The fact that Love wishes to help her servants.
Love is God, as we can prove,
Since, for love, he allowed his body to be wounded.

Amours, all but omnipotent in the secular love song, easily becomes a synonym for God:

Sour toute riens a amours seignourie,
Et cele amours est Diex, ki se vesti
D’humanité en la vierge Marie.³²

Over all things Love has dominion,
And this Love is God, who clothed himself
With humanity in the Virgin Mary.

As these examples show, when Marguerite Porete made Amour (or Dame Amour) the chief divine voice in her dialogue, she was following a convention of sacred poets in her time and place. In fact, she herself uses the locution “Amour est Dieu,” which occurs in both of the *serventois* just cited.³³ The shifting of genders from *cele Amours* to *Diex* did not trouble

the prize poets any more than it troubled Marguerite. But, while French *Amour* is feminine, Latin *Amor* (like *Deus*) is masculine. Hence in all medieval translations of the *Mirror*—Italian and English as well as Latin—grammar dictates a reinscription of Divine Love’s male gender. Dame Amour becomes Domine Amor, minimizing the specular relationship Marguerite had created between Love and the Soul (*l’Ame*).³⁴

The prize poets’ highly philosophical conception of love is illustrated in another song exalting the powers of this goddess:

Amours set tant et puet et vaut de li
 K’ele seur touz a tele seignourie
 C’un divers cuer fait a .j. autre ouni
 Et d’un acort amer sanz vilonnie,
 Et s’a plus bele maistrie,
 Car toute amors sanz sejour
 Est en chascun cuer d’ounour
 Et en touz a une fie.³⁵

Love knows so much and has in herself such potency—
 She exerts such dominion over all
 That she unites one mutable heart to another,
 To love with one accord, without betrayal.
 And she has a still more beautiful power,
 For the whole of Love, without delay,
 Dwells in each honorable heart,
 And in all at one time.

This is the same language mystics used to describe the simultaneous presence of Christ or the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all believers. Mechthild of Magdeburg, for example, wrote that “there is no other Lord that dwells in all his castles at the same time but him alone.”³⁶ The *pu*y poets already presented Love in such a metaphysical light, even in the *chanson amoureuse*, that it did not take much to equate this deity with the God of the Church. Marguerite’s language is equally close to the *amoureuses* and the *serventois*, which should not be surprising in light of an aesthetic that prized fluent shifts between sacred and profane. Consider the following song:

Car boine Amours, qui tout set et tout voit,
 M'a boinement par se grasse norri
 De se vertut. Folz est qui chou ne croit,
 Car tout amant sont soustenu par li. (vv. 10–13)

.
 Dont wel manoir en le noble franchise
 De bonne Amour ki de douche substanche
 Me paist et tient en jouvent. (vv. 25–27)

.
 Pour moi le di ki n'ai voloir en mi,
 Car Amours ne le consent,
 De plus rouver ke j'ai, car souffissanche
 Prench en desir et en douche esperanche
 Dont Amors soustient se gent.³⁷ (vv. 32–36)

For kind Love, who knows all and sees all,
 Has kindly nourished me by her grace
 With her virtue. He is a fool who does not believe this,
 For all lovers are sustained by her.

.
 Therefore I wish to remain in the noble freedom
 Of kind Love, who with sweet substance
 Feeds me and preserves me in youth.

.
 As for me, I say that I have no will in myself
 (Since Love does not allow it)
 To ask for more than I have, for I find sufficiency
 In desire and in sweet hope,
 With which Love sustains her people.

This song, though secular, employs a richly theological vocabulary. Love, like God, is all-knowing and all-seeing; she dispenses grace and virtue; lovers, like disciples, must sustain their faith. As if sacramentally, Love nourishes her servants with her own “sweet substance” and sustains them with “sweet hope.” It is this sustenance that preserves the singer “in youth,” the archetypal condition of love. The poet also engages with the dilemma of free will and grace, resolving to be content

with Love's gifts instead of demanding more than she wishes to bestow. Strikingly, the poet avows a desire to remain in Love's "noble freedom" (*noble franchise*), one of Marguerite Porete's key themes.³⁸ This freedom is linked in the *chanson* with a renunciation of self-will. Rather than stating simply, "I do not wish . . .," the speaker turns a convoluted phrase that uncannily echoes the *Mirror*: "I who have no will in myself, since Love does not allow it." Although the syntax is difficult, the context of love-service makes it clear that the lover has vowed to desire no more than his lady grants freely. Line 33 is parenthetical, equating Love herself with the beloved lady. Hence the lover, though not perfectly fulfilled, "finds sufficiency" (*souffissanche*, a metaphysical term) in desire itself, coupled with the hope that, in Love's sweet time, more will be given.

Although Marguerite's position on love is not identical, it is similar. More to the point, she explores the same cluster of ideas in close proximity: grace, freedom, nobility, and the renunciation of will. The heroine of her dialogue, the Free or Liberated Soul (*Ame Enfranchie*), is among those who "live in the freedom of charity, who have no will at all" [*vivent en franchise de charité, qui n'ont point de volenté*].³⁹ The Soul's will can be freely renounced only because it was freely given in the first place.⁴⁰ *Franchise* in fact is so central to Marguerite's thought that she describes the Soul hyperbolically as "franche, mais plus franche, mais tres franche, mais surmontamment franche" (free, rather more than free, utterly free, surpassingly free).⁴¹ It is the knowledge of her own nothingness that has brought the Soul to this point, for she has "given all by the freedom of nobility" (*franchise de noblesse*).⁴² She has therefore been ennobled or made free (*franche*) in all four quarters—alluding to the practice of quartering in heraldry, which denotes the nobility of four ancestral lines. The fourth quarter of the Soul's noble freedom lies in the fact that, having freely renounced her will, she has been totally transformed by Love into God's own love, will, and goodness.⁴³

To be sure, the depth of Marguerite's mystical thought exceeds this rather conventional prize poem. My point, though, is that the mystic took as her starting point the terms of love that were already current among the poets of her native *puy*. In the end, her metaphysical suicide—the remarkable act she describes as a "fall from love into

nothingness”—would lead her to renounce even the desire to continue loving, since this presupposed the possession of a will.⁴⁴ “My heart had once thought to live in love forever by the desire of good will” [Mon cuer cuidoit jadis tousdis vivre d’amour par desirer de bonne vou-lenté], she writes at the end of her *Mirror*.⁴⁵ Yet, after the relentless *demandes d’amour* posed by Love had led to the “martyrdom” of her will and desire, “the Land of Freedom disclosed itself” [la se monstra le Pays de Franchise].⁴⁶ In the state of ultimate *franchise*, her soul, no longer filled with hope and desire like the poet’s, “began to leave childhood, and my spirit began to grow old.” [Lors, commençay a yssir de l’enfance, et mon esperit veillart a devenir, quant mon vouloir fut mort, et mes oeuvres finees, et mon amour qui me faisoit jolie.]⁴⁷ At this point Marguerite signals her rebellion against the culture of *fin’amor*, even in its sacred form, with its corollary of eternal youth—a rebellion that would lead her into the terrain her judges marked as heretical. Despite this parting of the ways, however, the language of her book remains that of *la mystique courtoise*, an idiom intelligible and congenial to those who sang at the *puy*.

Marguerite herself was also a poet. Although she did not write as many lyrics as her fellow beguines Hadewijch and Mechthild of Magdeburg, she composed the original ending of her *Mirror* (chapters 120–22) in verse.⁴⁸ And it seems quite probable that she read aloud from her book to mixed audiences in her home town.⁴⁹ In fact, her refusal to stop promulgating her work was the reason for her second arrest.⁵⁰ So is it possible that Marguerite in turn influenced the singers of Valenciennes? We cannot date either the prize poems or the *Mirror* with precision, but there seems no reason to exclude the *puy* poets from the circles who might have heard her. Surely this *serventois*, a meta-physical poem with a tinge of Neoplatonism, breathes the same air as the *Mirror*:

Car puis c’uns cuers se veult d’un departir
 Pour iestre en lui, amours en lui decline,
 Car tout vient d’un, la doit tout revenir;
 Ki chou n’ensuit, folement adevine;
 Car cuers sanz lui puet en lui conchevoir
 Le saint Espir, ki se fait apparoir.⁵¹

As soon as a heart wishes to depart from Oneness
 To exist in itself, Love decreases in it,
 For all comes from One; there must all return.
 Anyone who does not follow this, guesses foolishly.
 For a heart without itself can conceive within itself
 The Holy Spirit, who makes himself manifest.

Like Marguerite, the nameless poet teaches that a desire to “exist in oneself” (*iestre en lui*) estranges the soul from God, for any heart that withdraws from unity will lose the fellowship of Love. Only fools fail to acknowledge that God (“Oneness”) is the source and goal of all being. More telling, however, is the language of the fifth line: only a heart “without itself” (*sanz lui*) can conceive the Divine “within itself” (*en lui*).⁵² Marguerite uses this idiom repeatedly for God’s action in the free, or annihilated, Soul. The errant will longs to return to the One—“to the place where I was [*je fus*], in the point where I was before I issued from Him, as naked as is He-Who-Is; as naked as I was [*j’estoie*] when I was She-Who-Was-Not.”

Or ne puis je estre, dit Forfaicte Voulenté, ce que je doy estre, jusques ad ce que je ressoie la ou je fus, en ce point que je fus, ains que ye yssisse de luy aussi nue comme Il est, qui est; aussi nue comme j’estoie, quant j’estoie qui n’estoie mie.⁵³

This undoing of division (and in a sense, of creation itself) can only take place when God works within the self, without the self (*sans moy*). Thus a Soul that yearns to be disencumbered of itself, and so of God as a distinct Other, prays that he will work “in us, for us, without us” [*en nous, pour nous, sans nous*].⁵⁴ Mary Magdalene, an exemplar of perfection, attained this state after she had done all that was in her. Then she rested and God did what remained “concerning her, without her, for her, in her” [*d’elle, sans elle, pour elle, en elle*].⁵⁵ Our prize poem teaches this doctrine of mystical annihilation in simpler language: the Holy Spirit can be conceived and manifested only in a heart that has, through love, taken leave of itself [*cuers sanz lui*]. The poet goes on to say that a true lover will “take all his teaching in God” [*prendre en Dieu trestoute se doctrine*],

Car qui de li cuideroit riens avoir,
 Riens ne feroit, riens ne porroit valoir.⁵⁶

For whoever would think to have anything from him
 Would do nothing, would have strength for nothing.

These lines, though difficult, seem to evoke Marguerite's distinctive doctrine of non-willing, non-doing, and non-possessing: the perfected Soul does nothing so that God may do all. Such a notion, hardly typical of Marian songs, sounds like an indelible trace of Marguerite Porete. Thanks to Geneviève Hasenohr, we now know that a fragment of her original Picard text, which survives nowhere else, can still be found in a fifteenth-century manuscript at Valenciennes.⁵⁷ Might her influence have extended also to the oral tradition? Though the evidence is too slim to support much conjectural weight, we cannot rule out some lingering echoes of our mystic in the popular though stylized lyrics of the *puy*.

BEGUINE LYRICS, RECYCLED SONGS, AND THE *MIRROR*

La mystique courtoise expressed itself not only in substantial works like the *Mirror* and Hadewijch's stanzaic poems, but also in workaday lyrics composed for nuns and especially beguines. A corps of anonymous poets—mainly clerics, though perhaps including some women—adapted secular songs for sacred use, inserted them as interludes in longer works, and composed new songs of divine love modelled on trouvère lyrics. A few of these are voiced by male speakers, the majority by female speakers, though voice is no proof of authorship. Like the Valenciennes prize poems, most of the *mystique courtoise* lyrics in this repertoire are Picard, while others stem from Lorraine, Burgundy, and Champagne. Like secular songs, they were meant to be sung, as indicated by refrains and at least one (unfortunately lost) manuscript with music.⁵⁸ Near the end of her *Mirror*, Marguerite Porete included seven lyrics that can be read as exceptional contributions to this tradition.

As Ardis Butterfield remarks, the *chanson pieuse* “falls under the shadow of the already powerful tradition of secular song, and hence

forms a relationship marked by dependence and intimacy.”⁵⁹ We see this kind of crossover especially in longer prose or verse texts that include lyrics as musical interludes—a fashion begun by Jean Renart in the early thirteenth century. One of the earliest sacred texts to follow suit was Gautier de Coinci’s *Miracles de Nostre Dame* (ca. 1223–1236).⁶⁰ Deploring lovers who “abandon Marie for Marot,” the Virgin for a shepherdess of easy virtue, Gautier borrows the melodies and refrains of secular songs to make sure the Devil won’t get all the good tunes. Only those who have experienced *les douz maus d’amer* (the sweet sickness of love), he says, are worthy to sing with him of Mary. Addressing the nuns of Soissons as attractive, nubile virgins [vos damoyseles, / Vos cloistrieres, vos jovenceles], he congratulates them on catching so noble a husband. Unlike their worldly sisters, they will never have to sing the lament of the *mal-mariée*. In a mid-thirteenth-century Latin work, *Five Incitements to the Ardent Love of God*, the Cistercian Gérard of Liège borrows snatches from eleven secular French songs to reinforce his points about the divine Lover of souls.⁶¹ Gérard’s version of sacralized *fin’amor*, which I have explored elsewhere, “establishes a significant part of the *Mirror*’s intertext.”⁶²

La court de Paradis, a fetching poem contemporary with Marguerite, describes a plenary court and ball hosted by God for his friends on All Saints’ Day. On arriving, each troupe of saints sings a refrain from a secular dance song. The evangelists’ brass band plays the tune, “Je gart le bos / Que nus n’en port / Chapiau de flos s’il n’aimme” (I guard the woods, so that none may wear a floral garland unless he loves). Holding the keys of heaven, St. Peter cries out, “Vos qui amez, traiez en ça, / En la qui n’amez mie” (You lovers, enter here! Over there, if you have no love). Mary Magdalene, recalling the Passion, promises never to forget the *fine amor* of her Beloved.⁶³

In *Les Cantiques Salemon*, one of several Old French adaptations of the Song of Songs, the author similarly interpolates eight *chansons pieuses* adapted from trouvère lyrics (also known as *contrafacta*, or new texts for old tunes). The Duchess of Lorraine’s elegy for her dead lover becomes a Passion lament, and Gace Brulé’s song of unrequited love is augmented with a stanza on patience. Robert of Reims hails Amour in the standard paradoxical terms, which apply as much to sacred as to secular love:

Amours est et douce et amere,
 Ci garit, ci fiert, ci fait plaie,
 Amours est et maistresse et mere,
 Ci fiert trop fort et or rapaie.
 Amours est ci tourble et or clere,
 Or pense, or pleure et or est gaie.
 L'amour Dieu nus trop ne compere,
 Qui plus en boit, mains s'en esmaie.⁶⁴

Love is both sweet and bitter,
 Now she heals, now she strikes and wounds,
 Love is both mistress and mother,
 She strikes too hard and then she soothes.
 Love is now cloudy and now clear,
 Now she ponders, now she weeps, and now is gay.
 To gain the love of God, no one can pay too much:
 The more one drinks of it, the less dismay it gives.

In short, the more fiercely Love whirls her votaries on her emotional roller coaster, the harder the addiction is to break. This song ends with an *envoi* to “juvenceles” (the *adolescentulae* of the Song of Songs), telling them *quia amore languet* [que je languis ensi com morte] (Cant. 2:5).

In addition to works like these, beguines owned anthologies that included lyrics along with didactic and devotional texts. Though few such manuscripts survive, the paucity of evidence belies what was probably a much higher rate of beguine literacy and book ownership than we would guess from extant materials. Unlike monks or the avidly literate Brothers and Sisters of the Common Life, beguines had few libraries or scriptoria. As Walter Simons points out, their communities were quite unstable, especially in the early years, and by 1400 more than 40 percent of them had been suppressed, transformed into convents or almshouses, or simply closed. In any case, since a beguine took no vow of poverty, she bequeathed her books to friends or relatives as she pleased; they seldom remained within the institution. Hence the majority of beguine manuscripts are lost, and it is almost impossible to identify which surviving books may at one time have belonged to beguines.⁶⁵ To all these reasons we can add the misfortunes of Picardy it-

self. Hard-hit in every major northern European conflict from the Hundred Years' War to World War II, it suffered an even higher than usual rate of manuscript loss. Thus the handful of anthologies discussed here stand for what must have been a much larger array.

Though we cannot determine exactly which manuscripts were owned by beguines, much less which anonymous poems they might have written, Hasenohr has usefully identified the formal features of a *poétique des béguines* (beguine poetics).⁶⁶ Analyzing a group of manuscripts from Metz as well as Picardy, she notes that poems addressed to, voiced by, and perhaps composed by beguines share some important, easily recognized traits: a high degree of textual instability; irregularities in versification; a predilection for monorhymed *laisses* of variable length, as opposed to fixed or strophic forms; and a tendency for bits of text, ranging from half-lines to whole sequences, to migrate from one poem to another. Thematically, all the poems employ the language of *fin'amor*, and their spirituality is eclectic, easily mingling Cistercian with Franciscan, catechetical with mystical, didactic with lyrical elements. These features are best explained by oral transmission and diffusion. Composed to be sung or recited in community gatherings, the poems were memorized and then propagated from one beguine circle to another, as their themes, metaphors, and rhythmic elements "constitut[ed] a sort of communal intertext for the audience and a source of virtual inspiration for the authors."⁶⁷ Their written transmission, while secondary, included both modest manuscripts for private reading and others, more luxurious, meant for display and preservation of texts that might otherwise have been lost. The beguine poems I will discuss here share most or all of these traits. In addition, they address beguines as an audience (without necessarily excluding others) and/or have a female speaker, normally the Soul, whose subject position could be readily adopted by a beguine. Such poems are generically love songs addressed to Christ, drawing heavily on the themes of secular lyric.⁶⁸

Three poems of this type appeared in a miscellany from around 1300 that was destroyed by bombing in World War II.⁶⁹ Before the French Revolution it belonged to a male abbey in Metz, but the contents suggest that it may once have been owned by a beguine. The small manuscript contained a wide range of devotional texts in French prose and verse, giving us a good idea of the kind of book Marguerite

or someone like her might have possessed. Among its texts were the allegorical *Book of the Palm Tree*; an exhortation to confess; a commentary on the Mass; “three lessons of love that a soul brought back from the school of prayer, where the Holy Spirit is master”; ten signs of true love; “how the lover teaches his beloved”; biblical and liturgical sermons; *The Complaint of Our Lady*; a Passion meditation; *The Abbey of the Holy Ghost*; a treatise on reciting the Hours; prayers to say before communion; a debate of the Four Daughters of God; the song “Angelus ad Virginem”; a selection of motets, rondeaux, and sacred love songs with music; and a treatise on the four ages of man. The three beguine poems have the incipits “A Dieu proier me tornerai” (I will turn and pray to God), “Quant li mundain sont endormi” (When worldly folks are sleeping), and “Je di que c’est folie pure” (I say it’s pure folly). A poem on the love of poverty, “Qui vuet droit beguinage avoir” (Whoever wants to be a proper beguin/e), addresses male beguins, praising Franciscans and Cistercians.⁷⁰ This selection indicates not only the range of devotional materials available in French, but also the close bonds between religious men and women, both cloistered and uncloistered, in devout milieux.

A similar Picard manuscript (ca. 1300), formerly in Berlin but now in Lund, contains three more beguine poems and an array of texts on heaven and hell, the Ten Commandments, the *Pater noster*, the Creed, the sacraments, twelve fruits of the active life, confession and prayer, forgiveness, patience, and the fear and love of God. Its editor, Eduard Bechmann, thought the book stemmed from a beguinage in northeastern France.⁷¹ The three poems, which Bechmann calls “Dits de l’âme,” have the incipits “Douls Jhesucris” (Sweet Jesus Christ), “Pour moustrer que dieus s’esbanie” (To show that God takes pleasure), and “Savés que j’apiel Beghinage?” (Do you know what I call beguinehood?).⁷² The devout tracts and poems in these manuscripts reveal the kind of piety Marguerite was renouncing when she claimed that Free Souls, having taken leave of the Virtues, are no longer obliged to help their neighbors, “no longer know how to speak about God,” and “neither desire nor despise poverty or tribulation, Mass or sermon, fasting or prayer.”⁷³ So thorough a rejection betrays an equally thorough immersion during her formative years. Like other didactic works in these manuscripts, the poem “Qui vuet droit beguinage avoir” commends exactly those practices Marguerite would come to reject:

Beguins doit povres piez laveir
Et les malades viseter;
Beguins doit estre estrois vers lui
Et dous et larges vers autrui;
Beguins doit estre en orisons
Et ameir messes et sarmon.⁷⁴

A beguin should wash the feet of the poor
And visit the sick;
A beguin should be strict with himself
And gentle and generous to others;
A beguin should abide in prayer
And love Masses and sermons.

To the six beguine poems in the Metz and Lund manuscripts we can add two more. In a manuscript of Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles* in St. Petersburg, Arthur Långfors discovered a late thirteenth-century beguine poem that he titled "Li leguaz amoureux" (The Amorous Messenger).⁷⁵ In this song the messenger greets all *fins amans* from his heart and invites them to join his army. He then welcomes a legate from the land of Delight, who reveals that the lord of that city has abandoned it to all who set their hearts on love. The city is enclosed by moats filled with rose water; its walls are made of jasper and emerald; its watchmen are thrushes and nightingales, who cry out amiably to lovers:

Fin amant, endurez liement,
Souspirez, gémissez por Amors doucement,
Amés et desirrez tres embracement,
Menez joie d'amors, vivez jolïement.
Fine Amors le commande et vieut outreement.
Languissiez, defalez tres amousement.⁷⁶

Noble lovers, endure gladly!
Sigh and groan for Love sweetly,
Love and desire most ardently,
Take joy in love, live merrily.
Noble Love absolutely commands and wishes it.
Faint and languish most amorously!

In the city of love, say the birds, all *fins amans* will be able to gaze on their divine Beloved, who will feed them with the food of love. After more promises, the army of lovers besieges the city, which of course yields without a fight. The divine king welcomes the Amorous Messenger and his troops “into the sovereign joy that was promised you long ago,” and the poem ends with a prayer that readers may receive the same grace from “the One who is called the Way, the Truth, and the Life.”

As it reimagines divine love in terms borrowed wholly from secular lyric and romance, “The Amorous Messenger” resembles *La Règle des fins amans*, another beguine text from Marguerite’s time and place.⁷⁷ Both the *Règle* and “The Amorous Messenger” list twelve signs by which true lovers can be distinguished from false. According to the “Messenger,” a true lover abandons her will for the sake of the beloved, wishes to possess all things through love alone, and has no peace unless she is either bodily or spiritually with her beloved.⁷⁸ Like the *Règle* and the “Messenger,” the *Mirror* is preoccupied with defining *fin’ amor*, which consists chiefly in the free and absolute gift of self. When the Soul laments that she has nothing of sufficient value to give her Beloved, Love reassures her that the gift of her will alone suffices. She then confides,

Puisque je l’ayme mieulx que moy, et qu’il est somme de tous biens et mon seigneur et mon Dieu et mon tout, il est tout mon confort . . . Car il a en luy l’abondance de tous biens, sans nulle deffaillance; et c’est la somme de ma paix et le vray repos de ma pensee, car je n’ayme sinon pour luy. Donc . . . il ne me fault rien.⁷⁹

Since I love him better than myself, and he is the sum of all goods and my Lord and my God and my all, he is all my comfort . . . For in himself he possesses the abundance of all goods, with no lack; and this is the sum of my peace and my thought’s true repose, for I love nothing except for his sake. Therefore . . . I lack nothing.

A final beguine poem, the “Exhortation to Divine Love,” draws on such Latin sources as Augustine, Bernard, Hugh and Richard of Saint-Victor, and pseudo-Anselm.⁸⁰ The speaker oscillates between contemplating Christ’s Passion and berating his own heart for lukewarmness.

With a cascade of baroque metaphors, the “Exhortation” casts Love as the innkeeper who furnishes the heart’s inn with rich meats, the gibbet on which the holy soul hangs high above the earth, the ladder by which God came down to rescue his *amie* from prison, and even the alarm clock he sets in the heart to rouse the sluggish flesh for prayer. A few decades older than the *Mirror*, the poem evokes a paradoxical sentiment that seems inseparable from Marguerite’s brand of mysticism: the inverted pride of a soul that humbles itself utterly. After whining that Christ is so generous with his favors to everyone else, the unhappy speaker is caught up short by the questions: Did you not suffer an agonizing death to give me life? Then why, fair sweet Lord, do I complain? The answer comes:

Dou plaindre n’i a point; mais, se l’osoie dire,
 Li haus dons de ton cors fut faiz por toz a tire;
 Por bons et por malvés te donas sanz elire.
 Ami n’a henemi, le meillur ne le pire,
 De celle grant bonté ne vousis escondire.
 Quel avantage a dont cuers qui a toy s’atire,
 Qui d’aimer coralment se desront et descire,
 S’un po plus no li fais de ce que il desire?⁸¹

There’s no point in complaining—but, if I dare say so,
 The high gift of your body was given for all alike;
 For the good and the bad you gave yourself without choosing.
 From that great bounty you wished to exclude
 Neither friend nor enemy, neither the best nor the worst.
 What advantage, then, has the heart that is drawn to you,
 That yearns and strives to love sincerely,
 If you do not give it a little more of what it desires?

We hear the same note of pique in the Free Soul’s disdain for “vileins” and “tradesmen” who merely obey God’s commandments and keep themselves from sin. These souls, she sneers, are “small on earth and very small in heaven” [*telz gens sont petis en terre et tres petis en ciel*], for they are saved *mal courtoisement*.⁸² Reason, more courteous than Love, protests that we should never call anyone “small” who will

see God in eternity, but Love is unmoved. Compared to the Free Souls who give their all, she confirms, no one can imagine the smallness of a soul content with mere salvation. The elite of the spirit find it hard, as always, to tolerate a God who pays eleventh-hour workers the same wage as those who toil through the heat of the day.

As an ensemble, the beguine poems show an overwhelming preference for the terms *amis* and *amie*, as opposed to the *bridegroom* and *bride* of Latin tradition. In the Song of Songs, the lovers are *amicus* and *amica* as well as *sponsus* and *sponsa*, so the traditions could easily be fused. But courtly rather than nuptial terms of endearment are preferred for good reason. In love poetry, courtship—with its drama, its sighs and tears, its passionate yearning, its fleeting moments of ecstasy—must always trump marriage, an institution tainted by hierarchy and respectability. Steamy courtship is therefore the mode of these *mystique courtoise* lyrics. Whoever their actual authors, the protagonists on the page are always young lovers (*jouvenceles*), with that blend of stormy passion and innocence that makes first love irresistible even to those well past it. In reality, not all beguines died or married by the age of thirty, so provisions were routinely made for the elderly and infirm. Yet their literary culture, imitating that of secular courts, presented itself emphatically as a youth culture. Though the body ages, the soul remains immune to the ravages of time. A fiction of perennial courtship makes the beguine “forever panting and forever young,” the exemplar of Keats’s “still unravish’d bride of quietness.” But where does that leave Marguerite Porete? We have no idea of her age when she completed the *Mirror*, probably in the 1290s, yet in the absence of evidence, it is easy to derive a vivid impression of youth from the all-consuming eros of her book.⁸³

Beguine lyrics are hardly subversive, presupposing an orthodox faith. It is significant nonetheless that their mistress-bride is always the Soul, never the Church—an institution the *Mirror* would stigmatize as “Holy Church the Little.” While the *amie* may look to Mary as a model, the Soul does not compete with Ecclesia. Even when Bernard’s *Sermones in Cantica* are evoked, as they often are, it is their mystical rather than their dominant ecclesial sense that prevails. Aggressive female wooers, common in romance, abound as well in these lyrics. The *amie* frequently reproaches her beloved for his neglect or threatens to storm heaven with desire. But the speaker need not be strongly gendered, for

the feminine Ame (Soul) and the masculine Cuer (Heart) are more or less interchangeable, often within the same poem. Readers of Hade-wijch and Marguerite will be deeply familiar with this kind of gender malleability.⁸⁴

Christ is always the courtly lover, *dieu le debonnaire* (graceful God), *biex dous Ihesus* (fair, sweet Jesus). In “Douls Jhesucris,” he is the speaker’s “amis tres dous, amis tres biaux, / amis courtois, amis loyaus” (most sweet love, most beautiful love, courtly friend, loyal friend).⁸⁵ In “Li leguaz amourex” the birds promise lovers that they will see “la tres douce figure / De Dieu qui est tant bele et tant clere et tant pure” (the most sweet figure of God, who is so beautiful, so radiant, and so pure).⁸⁶ The song “De Seraphin” addresses him this way:

Dous amis saverous, ameraus, plains de biens,
Di par amours a m’ame: “Amie, je sui tiens.”⁸⁷

Sweet, delicious, amorous friend, full of goodness,
Say to my soul in love, “Beloved, I am yours.”

God never appears as Judge, rarely as Creator, and if he is King, it is chiefly to preside over a court of love. When he visits the soul in prayer or comforts the afflicted heart, he demonstrates *courtoisie*. The Passion above all shows his courtliness, as of a king who gave his own son to ransom a poor prisoner.

L’ame qui est a Dieu enmie
Penseir doit a la courtoisie
Que Diex le fist, li fis Marie.⁸⁸

The soul that is enemy to God
Should think upon the courtesy
That God, who’s Mary’s son, has done.

Several texts express dismay that so noble a lover is so little prized. This theme originated with Gérard of Liège’s *Five Incitements*, which presents Christ as the epitome of a romance hero, the Fair Unknown. He is “the wise man little believed, the strong man little feared, the

good man little loved" [li biaux descouneüs, / li sages pau creüs, / et li fors pau cremus, / et li boins pau ames].⁸⁹ In a late thirteenth-century exemplum, a beguine expands on this lament:

C'est li tres haus, et poi ennourez;
 Li tres amanz, petit amez;
 Li tres bons, poi assavourez;
 Li tres puissans, poi redoutez;
 Li tres beaus, petit conneüz;
 Li tres sages, petit creüz;
 Li tres larges, poi merciez;
 Li tres courtois, poi festoiez.⁹⁰

He is the most high, and little honored;
 The most loving, little loved;
 The most delicious, little savored;
 The most powerful, little revered;
 The most beautiful, little recognized;
 The most wise, little believed;
 The most generous, little thanked;
 The most courtly, little celebrated.

This sequence retained its currency for centuries, appearing in many variants.⁹¹ Unlike the thankless world, it proclaims, beguines or *fins amans* alone know how to value their lover at his true worth.

Both the divine Beloved and love itself are sweet beyond measure. In one poem of only ninety-six lines, variants of *doux*, *douceur*, and *douce-ment* appear seventeen times.⁹² Rachel Fulton has noted with amusement the plight of translators faced with the ubiquitous *dulcis*, *suavis*, and *mellifluus* of mystical texts—an embarrassment even more acute in Old French, which affords fewer synonyms. In a profound and perceptive study, "'Taste and See That the Lord Is Sweet' (Ps. 33:9)," she suggests that when Bernard, Rupert of Deutz, and beguine mystics spoke endlessly of God's "sweetness," they were not mouthing a bland cliché but evoking a sensuous experience, desired or remembered—the luscious, delectable, overpowering *taste* of God, perceived in communion or rapture or even the singing of psalms.⁹³ Beguine poets and their al-

lies never tired of invoking this awakened spiritual sense. But sweetness is tempered by its opposite, for the lover can rarely have what she desires. Hence a *fin amant* will sing and mourn in the same breath, *languir d'amour; en chantant sospirer* (languish with love, in singing sigh).⁹⁴

Amours me fait de double mal languir
Et doucement après Dieu sospirer,
Vivre en dolour et en joie morir,
Rire en plourant et en riant plorer.⁹⁵

Love makes me languish with a double woe
And sweetly sigh after God,
Live in sorrow and die in joy,
In weeping laugh, and in laughing weep.

Ever changeable (*diviers*), the Beloved reveals himself one minute and hides the next, compels the heart now to groan and now to sing.⁹⁶ The “Exhortation” explains that he is not to blame because Amours, that capricious goddess, can have her way with God as easily as with the impassioned soul.

Amors si fait de Deu tot quant ele veult faire:
La ou veult, si le muce soz chemise ou soz haire;
Or le met soz buillet et or soz robe vaire,
Or le done, or le tost, or mesle et or esclaire,
Or en fait la meslee por meillur pais refaire,
Or remue confort et or le fait fortraire,
Or se mostre cruelz, or franche debonaire,
Or fait crier et plaindre, or apaie et fait taire.
N'est amor mout puissanz quant poet faire et defaire
Trestot quanque ele veult, qui peut a terre traire
Le roy de maesté de sa real chaere?⁹⁷

Love does with God whatever she wants to do,
Wherever she wishes, whether she covers him in linen or in a
hair shirt.
Now she clothes him in burlap, now in a fur-lined robe.

Now she gives him, now she takes him away, her weather is now
 stormy, now clear,
 Now she starts a battle, the better to make peace.
 Now she brings comfort, now she drives it away,
 Now she shows herself cruel, now gracious and open-handed,
 Now she makes [the heart] cry and lament, now she calms and
 quiets it.
 Is not Love most powerful, since she can do and undo
 At once all that she wishes, and drag down to earth
 The King of Majesty from his royal throne?

The last three lines draw on Hugh of Saint-Victor's *De laude caritatis*, an encomium of Love that profoundly influenced thirteenth-century mystics.⁹⁸ From this work, more than any other, stems the topos of Love as a goddess not merely equal to, but more powerful than God. Where Hugh spoke of Caritas, however, vernacular mystics like Marguerite spoke of Amour. In the *Mirror*, Charité figures only as a virtue subject to Amour, not as the Divinity itself.⁹⁹ Though the semantic range of these terms overlapped, "*Amour* was hotter, louder, brighter, riskier, as it had developed over two centuries of vernacular French literature."¹⁰⁰ So crossover poets naturally preferred it.

Sweet yet painful, violent yet the source of peace, Love is characterized above all by *desmesure*, or "excess." According to the "Exhortation,"

Amors n'est pas amors qui no se desmesure,
 Ne qui a Deu se done meins qu'a comble mesure.¹⁰¹

Love is not love if it does not exceed measure,
 Nor can one give herself to God with less than full measure.

The conflict between love and *mezura*, "moderation," is already a topos in troubadour lyric. In twelfth-century epic and romance, *desmesure* can be a heroic vice, as in Roland or Perceval. By contrast, a possessor of *courtoisie* practices self-control, restraining immoderate passions. But Chrétien's Lancelot represents a turning point. Most sublime when he is most absurd, the Knight of the Cart mounts that shameful conveyance at Love's bidding, having dismissed the contrary advice of

Reason. Later he learns that even a moment's hesitation, the price of Reason's counsel, has earned him his lady's wrath. As we have seen, Lancelot is both an exemplary *fin amant* and a figure of Christ, whose extravagance in redeeming sinners knew no bounds. Where Reason counsels moderation, Love demands excess—and the deeds of God Incarnate held a mirror to his lovers, who aimed to repay excess with excess. In fact, Love's victory over her rival Reason has a counterpart in Chrétien's contemporary, Richard of Saint-Victor, whose exegetical work Marguerite parodied in the comic episode where Reason dies.¹⁰² In Richard's *Twelve Patriarchs*, the matriarch Rachel (Reason) must likewise die so that Benjamin (Contemplation) can be born.¹⁰³ Significantly, the Latin term for "ecstasy" was *excessus*, which could also mean "death."

From this point on, Reason was doomed to lose any contest with Love. As the thirteenth century progressed, with an ever-growing emphasis on the vehemence of Christ's love and the violence of his Passion, *desmesure* changed sides in the moral combat to become a virtue.¹⁰⁴ In the words of Bernard McGinn, "many late medieval mystics seem to have abandoned the notion of the *ordo caritatis*, the restoration of the proper harmony between love of God and all other loves, in favor of what might be described as a new form of *epektasis*, that is, an infinite and 'insane' pursuit of God, one based on an overpowering love that is subject to no law but itself and able to find no term but its own annihilation."¹⁰⁵ For Marguerite, *desmesure* as a mark of *fin'amor* overthrows the Virtues along with their mistress, Reason. Her own *desmesure* is most shockingly displayed in the paradoxical chapter where she argues that, because she is "the sum of all evils," she is also "the salvation of every creature and the glory of God." [*Je suis*] le salut mesmes de toute creature, et la gloire de Dieu . . . pource que je suis la somme de tous maux.¹⁰⁶ With such immoderate claims she won the honor of dying for love.

We cannot, of course, know if Marguerite Porete wanted martyrdom; Sean Field argues that she took rational steps to avoid it.¹⁰⁷ A Free Soul would have disclaimed any wishes one way or the other. What we do know, however, is that longing for death or even "annihilation" is a topos in poems she might have read or heard. Adopting the monastic theme of earthly life as exile, beguine lyrics link it with the Bride's plea

to her lover in the Song of Songs, *trabe me post te* (draw me after you; Cant. 1:3). The speaker of the “Exhortation” urges his soul to despise her prison, break the chains of her flesh, and cast off all that keeps her from the land of plenty, whose river is joy and whose shore is God.¹⁰⁸ The devout soul, says another poem, “has a great longing to die” [de morir a moult grant talent] because then she will possess God perfectly.¹⁰⁹ After rhapsodizing on the joys of paradise, the speaker of “A Dieu proier” bursts out, “Alons i, c’est nostre país!” (Let’s go! That’s our homeland!).¹¹⁰ In “Douls Jhesucris,” the speaker has a single prayer—“that I may give myself back to you, without returning to my body” [d’unne seulle chose te pri, / . . . c’est que je me retraie a ti, / sans reparrier au cors de mi].¹¹¹ Her lover owes this boon to his beloved:

[A]mis, que ne trayés adont
m’ame avoec vous u li saint sont,
qui des piech’a l’a desiré?
Tant fort desire a iestre amont.¹¹²

My love, why then do you not draw
my soul with you, where the saints are,
as she has so long desired?
So fervently she longs to be on high!

Another stanza elaborates:

Amis, amis, amis, amis,
qui pour m’amour si t’anientis,
comment pour ti m’anientirai?
Mes coers en est plus qu’esbahis
des mierveilles, que tu feïs,
quant en pensant jou les retrai.
Douls amis, comment t’amerai
si com jou doi? Par foi ne sçai;
che ne poet estre en cest país.
Pour che te prie et priërai,
que mon esperit a toi trai,
car chils vivres n’est fors languirs.¹¹³

My love, my love, my love, my love,
 who for my love so annihilated yourself,
 how shall I annihilate myself for you?
 My heart is more than dazzled
 by the wonders you performed
 when I recall them in meditation.
 Sweet friend, how shall I love you
 as I ought? By faith, I know not;
 in this country, it cannot be.
 Therefore I pray and will pray you still
 that you draw my spirit to yourself,
 for this life is nought but languishing.

The Old French verb *anientir*, “to annihilate,” was not common. In its adjectival form *anienti/e* it appears chiefly as a legal term meaning “null and void.” As a mystical concept, *annihilatio* gained real currency only in the late thirteenth century, when the tradition of negative or apophatic theology fused with the lyric theme of the lover’s self-loss.¹¹⁴ The Franciscan Guibert de Tournai—ironically, best known today for his hostility to beguines—had described St. Francis as an example of the perfect soul *adnichilando seipsum* as early as the 1250s.¹¹⁵ Soon afterward a Dominican, Friar Johannes of Magdeburg, composed his *Life of Margaret the Lame* (1260s?), which is largely a transcript of that mystic and recluse’s teachings. Margaret too speaks of a blessed soul “reduced to nothing” (*in nichilum redacta*), though we do not know if the terminology originated with the recluse or the friar.¹¹⁶ But Johannes was familiar with beguine spirituality, for he says he had “known many people in Brabant and other lands, religious men and women, both cloistered and those who, in the vernacular, are called Beguines.”¹¹⁷ It was in the 1290s that Mechthild of Hackeborn (d. 1299) was ravished into mystical union, invited by a personified Amor. “In hac unione,” wrote the nun who transcribed her revelations, “anima in se annihilabatur” (in this union the soul was annihilated in itself).¹¹⁸ Angela of Foligno (d. 1309), an Italian contemporary of Mechthild and Marguerite, introduced the term *annihilatio* in the same decade to describe the soul totally absorbed in love of the uncreated Good, as it discovers

itself to be capable of nothing but sin.¹¹⁹ Like Marguerite, Angela was instructing her own small band of disciples in the 1290s and early 1300s. Both mystics also use the related terms *abyssata* and *abysmee* for the soul plunged into the divine abyss. With good reason, therefore, Bernard McGinn sees *annihilation* as a distinctive female intervention in the language of mysticism.¹²⁰ The rare use of *anientir* in “Douls Jhesucris” is thus of particular interest, showing that it was not limited to such innovative mystics as Marguerite Porete.

Presupposing the theme of death as fulfillment, the poet unites it with a less familiar idea: mutual self-destruction as a consummate proof of love. Because Christ “annihilated” himself for the soul’s love, she is torn by a sense of reciprocal debt: “comment pour ti m’anientirai . . . si com jou doi?” This is impossible, she broods, in the present life [en cest païs]—so the sense of unpayable debt heightens her longing for death. Only the Beloved can resolve her dilemma by drawing her out of this world into his own realm. In the poem, therefore, annihilation is less a theological concept than a way to formulate the desire for a *Liebestod*. In a more metaphysical vein, the *Mirror* too works with the concept of unpayable debt, which is simultaneously the debt of sin and of love, only to resolve it in annihilation. As Kocher observes, Marguerite expresses this thought in a triple play on words: “Until one has paid (*païé*) Jesus Christ all that one owes him, one cannot have peace (*paix*) from the land (*pays*) of divine Being.” [Jusques ad ce que on ait païé a Jhesucrist tout ce que on luy doit, ne peut l’en avoir paix du pays de l’estre divin.]¹²¹ Like Anselm in *Cur Deus Homo*, the Soul perceives that she owes God an infinite debt for even a single fault. In fact, even virtuous deeds incur debt: since no good act is ever the best *possible* act the soul could perform, it is still a sin. What is more, by the very fact of possessing a will of her own, the soul deprives God of his will.¹²² In a different formulation, Marguerite muses that she would rather see herself and the whole creation annihilated than commit the least offense against his will.¹²³

With the annihilation of her created will, however, the Soul pays her full debt as both sinner and lover once and for all, since there is nothing more she can give. In this respect, if in no other, Marguerite resembles Martin Luther. Early in her religious life, to the extent that we can read the *Mirror* autobiographically, she suffered from intense

scrupulosity. An imperfect soul, says Love, is in bondage to the Virtues, who “demand honor and possessions, heart and body and life.” [Or est il ainsi que les Vertuz demandent honneur et avoir, cueur et corps et vie.]¹²⁴ Elsewhere Love recalls that for a long time, the Soul did everything Reason and the Virtues asked “without demur, even to the point of death” [sans contredit jusques a la mort].¹²⁵ Driven by this slavery to practice ever more charity, more self-denial, more devotion, the Soul at last finds freedom in a single, radical act of self-abnegation that leaves all agency to God and none to the beleaguered self. Such a soul, falling from the Virtues into love, then from love into nothingness, unburdens herself at one blow of God, herself, and her neighbors—and her freedom is irreversible. The annihilated Soul can therefore boast to the slaves of Reason: “I owe nothing, unless Love is a slave or Nothingness is something, which cannot be; and when such a nothing exists, then God himself lives in such a creature.” [Je ne doy nient, se Amour n’est serve ou se nient n’est,—qui ne peut estre; et quant tel nient est, adonc vit Dieu luy mesmes en telle creature.]¹²⁶ To a temperament as scrupulous as Marguerite’s, only annihilation can resolve the tortured logic of all-or-nothing into the thrilling paradox of all *and* nothing.

The beguine poems show how thoroughly Marguerite was grounded in her vernacular literary world, but also how far she departed from it. Although the *Mirror* is a love dialogue, it offers at the same time a trenchant critique of *la mystique courtoise*, especially in its obsession with “sweetness.” Beyond resolving the dilemma of infinite debt, annihilation precludes the danger of basking in divine love for the sake of self-regarding spiritual pleasures—a temptation that explains the tendency of beguine poems, at their worst, to lapse into narcissism and emotional self-indulgence. Marguerite nails this temptation in her account of the Soul’s fourth stage:

Le quart estat est que l’Ame est tiree par haultesse d’amour en delit de pensee par meditacion, et relenquie de tous labours de dehors et de obedience d’aultruy par haultesse de contemplacion; donc l’Ame est si dangereuse, noble, et delicieuse, que elle ne peut souffrir que rien la touche, sinon la touche du pur delit d’Amour, dont elle est singuliere-ment deduisant et jolie, qui la fait orgueilleuse d’abondance d’amour, dont est maistresse du celustre, c’est a dire de la clarté de son ame, qui

la fait merueilleusement remplie d'amour de grant foy, par concordance d'union qui l'a de ses delices mise en possession. Adonc tient l'Ame que il n'est point de plus haulte vie, que de ce avoir, dont elle a seigneurie; car Amour l'a de ses delices si grandement resasié, que elle ne croit point que Dieu ait plus grant don a donner a ame ycy bas, qu'est telle amour que Amour a par amour dedans elle espandue. . . . Et pource ne peut l'Ame aultre estre mettre en pris; car la grant clarté d'Amour a sa veue tellement esblouye, que elle ne la lesse rien veoir, outre son amour. Et la est elle deceue; car il est deux aultres estres, ycy bas, lesquieulx Dieu donne, qui sont plus grans et plus nobles que n'est cestuy, mais Amour a mainte ame deceue pour la douceur du desduit de son amour, qui sourprent l'Ame, si tost qu'elle s'aprouche d'elle.¹²⁷

The fourth state is when the Soul is drawn by the loftiness of love into delightful thoughts through meditation, and freed from all outward labors and obedience to anyone else through the loftiness of her contemplation. Then the Soul becomes so disdainful, noble, and delicate that she can suffer nothing to touch her but the touch of Love's pure delight, which makes her uniquely joyful and merry. Hence she becomes arrogant in the abundance of her love,¹²⁸ for she is mistress over this luster, this radiance of her soul. It fills her marvelously full of love with great loyalty, through the harmonious union that has put her in possession of its delights. Then the Soul holds that there is no higher life than to possess what she has mastered. For Love has filled her so full of its delights that she does not believe God has any greater gift to give a soul here below than this love, which Love for love's sake has poured out within her. . . . And for this reason the Soul cannot prize any other state, for Love's great radiance has so dazzled her vision that it lets her see nothing but her love. And in this she is deceived, for there are two other states here below that God gives, which are greater and more noble than this one. But Love has deceived many a soul with the delightful sweetness of her love, which overwhelms the Soul as soon as she draws near her.

The love-smitten Soul, in short, falls into the archetypal sin of the courtly *domna*. Awash in pleasure and privilege, she becomes *dangereuse* and *orgueilleuse*, incapable of appreciating the gifts of others, filled with

pride in her own mastery.¹²⁹ Spiritual pride was indeed a common complaint against beguines. One satire rips into their self-satisfaction:

Se ele rit, c'est compaignie; se elle ploure, c'est devociions; se ele parle,
c'est prophecie; se ele se test, c'est religions; se ele dort, ele est ravie; se
ele songe, c'est visions.¹³⁰

If she laughs, it's companionship, if she weeps, devotion; if she speaks,
it's prophecy, if she is silent, religion; if she sleeps, she is ravished; if she
dreams, it's a vision.

Another beguine-voiced text, which may or may not be satirical, contrasts the spiritual attainments of beguines favorably with those of theologians:

Vous querez, et nous trouvons.
Vous amez, et nous languissons.
Vous languissiez, et nous mourons.
Vous semez, et nous messonons.
Vous labourez, et nous reposons.¹³¹

You seek and we find.
You love and we languish.
You languish and we die.
You sow and we reap.
You labor and we're at leisure.

Depending on context, this response of a fictional beguine to her critics could be taken as either valid self-defense or further proof of her pride.

Though some readers may find spiritual pride in the *Mirror* itself, it is fair to say that the call to annihilation is a hedge against it. Since the annihilated Soul has *become* Love, she no longer *possesses* love and thus can no longer glory in it as a personal achievement. Amy Hollywood argued in *The Soul as Virgin Wife* that Marguerite's lack of interest in the body is not just an exception to the norms of female spirituality, but a tacit critique of the asceticism that inflicted so much pain on women's bodies.¹³² Similarly, her doctrine of annihilation poses a

critique of the amorous one-upmanship that could surface among God's lovers, for a soul supremely confident in her love cannot attain perfection until she "falls from love into nothingness." If this critique hit home, it may be one reason Marguerite names beguines first among the many religious orders who "say that I err" [*dient que je erre*].¹³³

A typical beguine poem voices longing for Christ: it praises his nobility, revels in the sweetness of his love, commiserates his Passion, marvels at his generosity, and pines for his native land on the far side of death. The *Mirror* shares many but not all of these traits. For instance, Marguerite is less sentimental than the average beguine poet. Preferring theological abstraction and dizzying paradox, she steers clear of the talking birds, gardens, castles, and allegorical beds of love that fill their lyrics. Love alone interests her, not its narrative trappings. Nor does she confine herself to praising God, but includes countless passages in which God or Love reciprocally praises the Free Soul. Her lyrical coda begins with three poems that let Truth, Holy Church, and the Trinity, in ascending order, exalt the Soul as she humbly or not so humbly responds. At last God asks his daughter to reveal no more of his secrets, since others might find their damnation (*s'en dampneroient*) in the very things by which she is saved.¹³⁴ This is hardly their fault, poor dears, because they are still governed by Reason and Desire, Fear and Will. Nevertheless, God says, paradise will be theirs. But if that is so, the "Elite Soul" replies crossly, then even murderers can have it if they only beg for mercy! [*Paradis? dit ceste eslite, ne leur octroiez vous aultrement? Aussi bien l'auront les murtriers, se ilz veulent mercy crier!*]¹³⁵

Here I must pause to address two ongoing, interrelated debates about the *Mirror*: whether any or all of the text is autobiographical, and whether chapter 122, which ends with an "Explicit" in the sole complete French manuscript (Chantilly), marked the original end of the book. On literary grounds, I believe this was indeed the case.¹³⁶ The *Mirror* would then have concluded with a summary chapter on the seven states of the Soul (ch. 118), an apology for the length of the book (ch. 119), and a carefully wrought lyrical cadenza (ch. 120–22), culminating in the Free Soul's "song of farewell" (*chançon au congé*) to Fine Amour.¹³⁷ When the text resumes in prose (ch. 123), Marguerite adopts a distinctly new style of presentation. Abandoning the dialogue format, she now speaks exclusively in the first person for ten chapters.

In a systematic series of meditations recounted in the past tense (ch. 123–29), she ascends through the ranks of heaven with the aim of leading “forlorn” (*marriz*) souls on a spiritual ascent to the threshold of freedom. Finally, with a famous set of *demandes d’amour*, she explains how she herself became a Free Soul, giving a first-person account that does indeed sound autobiographical. This consists of meditations on God’s goodness and her own evil (ch. 130), an account of her “martyrdom,” or the annihilation of her will and desire (ch. 131), and her entrance into the Land of Freedom (ch. 132). The dialogue format resumes in chapters 133–39, but these chapters survive in fragmentary form and differ considerably in the Latin and Middle English, suggesting some confusion about the origins of this material and its place in the Chantilly scribe’s exemplar. But I think it likely that Marguerite added chapters 123–32, with their more orderly exposition and familiar exegetical themes, when she defiantly sent copies of her condemned book to selected theologians for approbation. These chapters may indeed have been meant to help disciples of mere Reason grasp the paradoxes of Love’s teaching.

In what I take to be the original ending, then, the Free Soul offers her “song of farewell” in eleven stanzas. In it she expresses love, praise, and thanksgiving, but unlike the beguine poems, her song voices no sorrow, longing, or compassion—for the Soul is perfectly fulfilled already, having entered the *permanable joye* that others can only hope to attain after death. Finally, after exulting in her eternal love, she un-says it because it is no longer she who loves:

J’ay dit que je l’aymeray.
 Je mens, ce ne suis je mie.
 C’est il seul qui ayme moy:
 Il est, et je ne suis mie.¹³⁸

I have said that I will love him.
 I lie, this is not me at all!
 It’s he alone who loves me:
 He *is*, and I do not exist at all.

After that, what more is there to say?

ROSES, CRIMSON AND WHITE

If the beguine lyrics and the Valenciennes prize poems let us taste the vernacular diet on which Marguerite Porete was nourished, and against which she defined herself, *Le Roman de la Rose* allows us to see her engaging with the great secular masterpiece of her day. In this she was not alone.

More than ten years ago, when I first proposed Marguerite as a reader of the *Rose*, this felt like a daring speculation. But that was because I had not reckoned with Sylvia Huot's groundbreaking study of the *Rose*'s early readers and redactors, which proves that our beguine was in good company.¹³⁹ In its first decades of life, the *Rose* was avidly collected, studied, cited, and revised by clerics in the Île-de-France and Picardy, especially those engaged in spiritual care and conversation with beguines. It appears more often than any other title in records of fourteenth-century book ownership, with several higher and lower clerics among its named owners. A catalogue of the Sorbonne library from 1338, a few decades after Marguerite's death, lists only four books in French, along with more than seventeen hundred in Latin—but among those four are the *Roman de la Rose* and an exhortation to beguines. The *Rose* was among the library's 330 most frequently consulted books, chained for ease of access and prevention of theft.¹⁴⁰

Two of the spiritual texts we have already encountered allude to the *Rose*. In the prologue of *Les Cantiques Salemon*, a work written largely for beguines, the poet invokes the Virgin in terms recalling Gautier de Coinci:

Rimoier wel, Douce Pucelle,
 En cui mes cuers est et repose,
 Pour vostre amour rime nouvelle
 Tele com mes cuers le propose,
 Plus plaisans assés et plus belle
 Et plus vraie, bien dire l'ose,
 Et plus honeste que n'est celle
 Dou roumant c'on dist 'de la Rose.'¹⁴¹

I wish to compose, sweet Maid,
 In whom my heart takes its repose,

A new poem for the love of you,
 Such as my heart can propose,
 More pleasant and more lovely too—
 And I dare say it, far more true—
 And more decent than the one
 They call the *Romance of the Rose*.

This promise would make no sense unless prospective readers were well acquainted with the *Rose*—both its attractions and its dangers. Similarly, *La Règle des fins amans* concludes with an allegory modelled unabashedly on the *Rose*. Guillaume's portion of that poem ends at an impasse: Jealousy has avenged the Lover's kiss by imprisoning Fair Welcome in a castle, which the Lover must marshal his forces to storm before he can pluck his rose. In the *Règle*, it is Jealousy who informs the heroine, Conscience (Desire or Knowledge), that monastics (*li cloistriés*) have imprisoned her Beloved in their garden. Like a beguine jealously defying the exclusivity of religious orders, Conscience goes to seek Christ with the help of other courtly virtues—Hope, Charity, Pity, and *Fine Amours*—and, when she finds him, falls into an ecstatic swoon.¹⁴²

The *Rose* rears its head more subtly in *Li Romans dou Lis* (*The Romance of the Lily*), a remarkable poem whose title may be meant to evoke the more famous work. Composed by a Dominican circa 1280–1310, the *Lily* is dedicated to an aristocratic nun. It presents the life of Mary and Jesus in the style of a courtly romance, interwoven with meditations on the Gospels and the Song of Songs. This was something of a tradition in Marguerite's home town, where the twelfth-century poet and priest Herman of Valenciennes had written a work called *Li Romanz de Dieu et de sa mère*.¹⁴³ In Herman's title, however, *romanz* has its older sense, meaning simply a narrative poem in the vernacular. He does not yet engage with the themes and tropes of courtly love, as the *Romans dou Lis* would do. The later text, as a specimen of crossover poetry, would repay fuller study than I can devote to it here.¹⁴⁴ For example, it compares the Jews still awaiting their Messiah with the Bretons hoping for King Arthur's return, and explains the difference between the Old Testament and the New with the remark,

Or est li temps en miaus mué,
 Commandement sont plus cortois
 Et trop plus amouresses lois.¹⁴⁵

Now times have changed for the better:
 Commandments are more courtly
 And laws much more amorous.

In place of Jean de Meun's erotic rose, the *Lily* offers the chaste rose of Christ's infant body. When the Virgin sees the first blood stain her son's white flesh at his circumcision, she remembers Song of Songs 5:10:

En mon rosier est une rose
 Toute espanie et desclose,
 Et en mon verdoiant rosier
 La rose est blanche et vermeille
 Qu'estoit soul blanche au premier,
 Or est rouge par grant merveille,
 Le blanc voy au rouge touchier.
 Et de si merveilleuse chose
 La sainte ame parloit en prose,
 Ou je vueil mon metre puisier:
 Mes amis est vermaus et blans,
 En tous milliers n'est si semblans.

In my garden there is a rose
 Wide open and blossoming,
 And on my verdant rosebush,
 The rose is white and crimson
 That at first was only white.
 Now it is red, by a great wonder:
 I see the white touched by the red.
 And of such a marvelous thing
 The holy soul spoke in prose
 From which I wish to draw my verse:
 "My beloved is crimson and white,
 Among thousands there is none like him."
 (vv. 2274–85)

More roses bloom at the Assumption, as the poet mourns that Christ and Mary can no longer be found upon earth:

Or est ou ciel la bele flour de liz,
 De fuelles blanches, et de grains d'or esliz,
 Et nous est seul demorez li rosiaus;
 Nostre deduis n'est mais delituous,
 Car as jardinz n'a mais riens preciaus,
 Ni venront mais pour chanter li oysiaus.

Montees sunt sus le ciel les II. roses,
 Blanche et vermeille, panies et descloses,
 N'a qu'espines mais en nostre rosier;
 Et qui porra dormir sus ses espines,
 Qui n'ont roses ne doubles n'aiglentines?

Now the lovely lily is in heaven
 With white petals and seeds of rare gold,
 And the bare rosebush is left to us.
 Our pleasure is no longer delightful,
 For nothing precious remains in the garden,
 Nor will the birds come to sing any more.

The two roses have ascended to heaven,
 The white and the crimson, in full bloom.
 Only thorns now are left in our garden,
 And who can sleep upon these thorns,
 Which bear neither wild nor double roses?
 (vv. 4183–93)

By a floral alchemy, Mary the lily has become the white rose, and her son the crimson. God himself replaces Jean de Meun's Lover, plucking his two precious roses to leave our earthly garden bare. Only fruitless thorns now grow where late the sweet birds sang.

As a final witness to the tenacity of Marian roses, I can cite a curious liturgical note. In 1500 one Simon de Conty, a cathedral canon and master of the *confrérie* (or *puy*) of Amiens, offered a donation of eighty *livres tournois* to create a new liturgical feast. The "Mass of the Rosebuds," to be celebrated on a Monday in June, was to be a solemn choral Mass in honor of the Virgin, at which every master and *confrère* in attendance would be given "ung bouton de roze vermeil pour tenir

en leurs mains" (a scarlet rosebud to hold in their hands). The sequence chanted before the Gospel would be "Gaude flore virginali" (Rejoice in the virginal flower).¹⁴⁶ This bit of ceremonial echoes the very terms of Jean de Meun, whose Lover awakens after his dream with the line "Ensi oy la rose vermeille" (And so I had the scarlet rose).¹⁴⁷ In the heyday of luxuriant, illuminated *Rose* manuscripts, the Virgin's courtly lovers could have no less.

Not only did religious writers cite the *Roman de la Rose*; they adapted and altered the text itself. Of the various *remaniements*, or "improved versions," discussed by Huot, two are of special interest for Marguerite's readers. A Picard cleric known as Gui de Mori, who had the audacity to introduce his own name as third author, completed his extensively revised *Rose* in 1290.¹⁴⁸ Gui added and deleted thousands of lines, working on principles that he thought would make the poem more appealing to his fellow clerics (*cil ki sont de no couvent*). For instance, he eliminates many of Jean de Meun's digressions, suppresses his obscene and bawdy material, tones down the misogyny, and deletes much of the pagan mythology, while introducing biblical and patristic material in its stead. Where Jean draws on *auctores* such as Macrobius, Boethius, and Alan of Lille, Gui brings the text closer to these Latin sources. The discourses of Nature and Genius are drastically reduced, while that of Reason is amplified and Christianized. In particular, Gui found the two forms of love he most valued—*fin'amor* and the love of God—to be sadly neglected in Jean's *summa*. So Reason is made to endorse them both, while the God of Love appropriately praises the first. Cupid objects to the misogyny foisted on him by Jean de Meun, protesting that no man who truly loves his *amie* would use her solely for carnal pleasure:

Mais cil qui au pui ont chanté,
 Et qui mon mestier ont hanté,
 Sevent bien tenir le contraire;
 Et je t'en vueil ci preuve faire.
 Tu dois amer une personne
 Pour ce qu'elle est ou belle ou bonne.
 Ce sont li doy commencement
 Dont viennent tout acointement.¹⁴⁹

But those who have sung at the *puy*
And who have pursued my art
Well know how to maintain the contrary,
And I would like to prove this for you.
You ought to love a person
Because she is either beautiful or good.
These are the two beginnings
From which all loving friendships spring.

Reason fully agrees, endorsing the poetry of *vrais amans*:

Et pour ceste amour approuver
Sont fait li bel chant amoureux
Que li amant ont fait pour eulx.¹⁵⁰

And to commend this form of love
Are composed the beautiful love songs
That lovers have made for themselves.

Such clerical approbation of *fin'amor* should not be surprising in a milieu where many clerics were themselves performing at *puy*s and composing *mystique courtoise* poetry. Though some took a more stringent stance, *la mystique courtoise* could not have flourished as it did without a substantial contingent like Gui de Mori and Gérard de Liège, who admired *fin'amor* and its lyrical traditions, seeing them as eminently adaptable to divine love.¹⁵¹

Gui and Marguerite even share a significant common source, Hugh of Saint-Victor's *De arrha anime* (*On the Betrothal Gift of the Soul*). In Hugh's dialogue, the soul seeking an object worthy of her love is persuaded to choose the divine Bridegroom, who has given her all the gifts of this world as an *arrha*—a term that can be translated as “pledge,” “betrothal gift,” or “earnest money.” An *arrha* in trade was a down payment on a sale to be completed later.¹⁵² At the beginning of this dialogue, the personification Homo (or Hugo) tells his Anima, “I know that love is your very life, and without love you cannot exist.” [Ego scio quod uita tua dilectio est, et scio quod sine dilectione esse non potes.]¹⁵³

This statement would have been taken as self-evident by nearly everyone. Gui cites it twice in his *Rose*, conspicuously in his prologue and again in a speech of the Lover:

S'ai veüe une auctorité,
que je tieng bien por verité,
qui dist que li vie dou coer
çou est amors, ne a nul foer
li coers ne poet sains amor vivre.¹⁵⁴

I have seen an authoritative text,
which I well believe to be true,
that said the very life of the heart
is love, nor by any means
can the heart live without love.

In this case, Hugh's dictum crosses over from sacred to secular: the carnal-minded Lover cites his *auctorité* not because he loves God, but because he wants to defend his erotic pursuits against a skeptical Reason. The Lover is no more spiritually or morally self-aware in Gui's *Rose* than in Jean de Meun's. Hence the citation shows all the more how aphorisms about love, whether sacred or secular in origin, became common currency in a discourse that embraced both. In the *Mirror*, Marguerite takes the opposite tack, carrying the Victorine's teaching further into the mystical realm. God's bridal gift in Hugh's work is the world itself—heaven and earth, with all they contain—as pledge of a better world to come. Marguerite sets her sights higher: for her, the pledges (in the plural, *erres*) are the moments of grace when the Soul receives a foretaste of her beatitude here on earth. These betrothal gifts are given by a Bridegroom she calls the “Far-Near” (*Loingprés*).¹⁵⁵

We do not know if Marguerite knew Hugh's dialogue directly from the Latin text, from conversation and preaching, or from a lost French translation. Nor can we know if she was familiar with Gui de Mori's *Rose*. Only three complete copies and a few partial ones remain,¹⁵⁶ but that proves little because the survival of *Rose* manuscripts is so heavily skewed toward the more lavish, illustrated exemplars of the fifteenth century. Yet Gui's bold insertion of his own name and date, atypical of

remaniements, suggests that he attempted to publish his revised *Rose* among like-minded readers. If so, his initiative would have come at just the right time for Marguerite. But my argument does not hinge on her acquaintance with this particular version. More important is the fact that these two contemporaries, beguine and cleric, both engaged with two identifiable texts that are far less likely to appear on the same shelves today. How many syllabi include both *De arrha animae* and *Le Roman de la Rose*? Yet the culture that produced Marguerite's *Mirror* and Gui de Mori's Christianized *Rose* read them both, for it was segregated neither by language nor by artificial boundaries between sacred and secular.

If Gui's recension enjoyed a limited or at best short-term success, another *Rose* interpolation from the same period occurs in almost a quarter of all manuscripts, even in early print editions.¹⁵⁷ This is the so-called litany of love, or *Petit trestié d'amour en rime*, a rhapsody on divine love of just over a hundred lines. Originally an independent poem of the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, it was inserted into Reason's discourse by an unknown scribe and long retained its hold there.¹⁵⁸ The author, like Gui de Mori, drew on Paul's praise of love in 1 Corinthians 13, along with twelfth-century contemplative works and Boethius: "O happy the human race / If the love that rules the heavens / Ruled your hearts!" [O felix hominum genus, / Si vestros animos amor / Quo caelum regitur regat.]¹⁵⁹ As in Hugh's *De laude caritatis*, Love motivated the Incarnation:

Amour fist Dieu venir en place,
 Amour fist Dieu devenir cendre,¹⁶⁰
 Amour li fist nostre char prandre,
 Amour le fist devenir mendre,
 Amour le fist le monde prandre,
 Amour le fist en la croiz pandre.¹⁶¹

Love made God come down to earth,
 Love made God become ashes,
 Love made him take our flesh,
 Love made him diminish himself,
 Love made him take on the world,
 Love made him hang on the cross.

These lines, with their numerous variants, formed the original core of the interpolation, which was sometimes used as a lay eucharistic prayer at the elevation of the host.¹⁶² The lines also occur independently in both popular and learned texts. Easily memorized, they share with beguine poems the technique of monorhyme and the incantatory device of anaphora, which they use to stress the omnipotence of Love, its power over God, and its self-contradictory and thus all-embracing nature. Without *fin' amor*, neither faith nor hope, nor justice nor temperance, nor almsgiving nor martyrdom, would earn a reward. But Love quickly gains all it desires in prayer:

Loial amor fait a Dieu force,
 Quar amour de l'amer s'efforce.
 Quant amor devotement ore
 En .i. moment et en pou d'ore,
 Quant amor parfaitement pleure,
 Li vient tresgrant douceur en l'eure.
 Et fine amor d'amer est yvre,
 Car grant douceur fait amour yvre.¹⁶³

Loyal love exerts force on God,
 For Love takes pains to love him.
 When Love devoutly prays,
 In a single moment, in little time,
 When Love perfectly weeps,
 Great sweetness comes to her at once.
 And Noble Love is drunk with loving,
 For great sweetness inebriates Love.

Though Love cannot be idle, she sleeps in meditation, ascends to heaven in contemplation, and awakens to see wonders. The more she sees, the more she desires. Finally, since *chascun puet amer par amour*, the reader too is urged to love “with all your heart and all your soul.” Awkwardly addressing both men and women, the author first lets Reason exhort readers to “marry” (*marie*) the blessed Virgin, then adds confusingly that “your soul desires no other husband” (*mari*) “after its Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.”¹⁶⁴ If Marguerite’s exemplar of the *Rose* in-

cluded this speech, she might have been astonished to find such words in the mouth of Reason, whom she knew only as Love's foe. But she certainly shared the writer's wish to use so powerful an instrument as the *Rose* to teach simple layfolks about the *fin'amor* of God.

THE *MIRROR* AND THE *ROSE*

So what, finally, did Marguerite Porete do with the *Rose*? I believe we can see her responding to that inescapable poem in several ways, including the literary form of her work, its title and core concept of "mirroring," and its treatment of the Beloved, especially with respect to gender. After looking at each of these, I will close with one biased but influential response to Marguerite, that of the Council of Vienne in 1311–1312, soon after her execution. Though the council fathers were hardly sympathetic readers, one of their decrees unexpectedly linked the *Mirror* with the *Rose* in a way none of their authors could have foreseen.

Exactly halfway through the poem the God of Love makes a prophetic speech foretelling the career of Jean de Meun, who is to become Love's protégé by completing Guillaume de Lorris's poem and disseminating it in "crossroads and schools" [par quarrefors et par escoles]¹⁶⁵ all over France. In the act of appropriating Guillaume's romance, Jean and the God of Love give it a new name: the poem will no longer be called *Le Roman de la Rose* but *Le Miroër as amoreus* (*The Mirror for Lovers*). Fittingly, the new title removes the poem from the sphere of romance and sets it in that of the encyclopedic *summa*. All who read the book properly will find great good in it, says Love, provided they are not led astray by his adversary, Lady Reason. Thus the book's authorship and revised title are closely linked with its ostensible purpose, which is to promote Love by discrediting Reason:

... tretuit cil qui ont a vivre
 Devroient appeler ce livre
 Le *Miroër as amoreus*,
 Tant i verront de bienz por eus,
 Mes que Raison n'i soit creüe,
 La chetive, la recreüe.

All who are living
ought to call this book
The Mirror for Lovers.

There they will see so much that is good for them,
if they do not believe Reason,
that miserable coward.

(vv. 10649–54)

Marguerite too wrote a mirror for lovers, and she too aimed to discredit Reason. The very form of her text—a sprawling and, at first blush, shapeless allegorical dialogue—seems to be modeled on the *Rose*. In fact, it would be hard to think of any other generic model for the *Mirror*, which bears little formal resemblance to other common modes of religious writing, such as homilies, vision narratives, spiritual autobiography, saints' lives, exegesis, or systematic treatises like those of Richard of Saint-Victor and Gérard of Liège.¹⁶⁶ Spiritual writers did produce dialogues between God and the soul, or in the case of *De arrha animae*, self and soul. But these are much tidier than the *Mirror*, with its bewildering throng of speakers. Love and the Soul are the chief interlocutors, but Reason is a persistent antagonist, and no fewer than forty speakers have cameo roles, including Truth, Holy Church, the Virtues, and assorted instantiations of God.¹⁶⁷ Marguerite's most recent translators, Edmund Colledge in collaboration with Jack Marler and Judith Grant, have likewise acknowledged her formal and rhetorical debt to the *Rose*, although their analysis is hampered by an overly simplistic interpretation of what they call "Perfect Love."¹⁶⁸ Suzanne Akbari has further suggested that Marguerite was indebted to the two *Rose* poets for her theory of allegory.¹⁶⁹

In naming her book a *Mirror*, Marguerite was following a thirteenth-century fashion, so there would be little point in positing a specific source for the title. Nevertheless, if we think of the *Rose* by the alternative title Jean de Meun gave it, *The Mirror for Lovers*, we may pay more attention to two key passages on mirroring that did, I believe, influence our beguine. The first, by Guillaume de Lorris, is the famous Mirror of Narcissus episode near the beginning of the romance; the second, by Jean de Meun, occurs in Nature's speech near the end.

C'est li mirëors perilleus,
 Ou Narcisus li orguilleus
 Mira sa face et ses yex vers,
 Dont il jut puis mors touz envers.
 Qui en cest mirëor se mire
 Ne puet avoir garant ne mire
 Que tel chose a ses yex ne voie
 Qui d'amer l'a tost mis en voie.

 Ici se changent li corage,
 Ci n'a mestier, sens ne mesure,
 Ci est d'amer volenté pure,
 Ci ne set consillier nus.

This is the Mirror Perilous
 in which Narcissus, that proud man,
 gazed on his face and his bright eyes,
 so that he soon lay prone—stark dead!
 Whoever looks in this mirror
 can have no physician, no guard
 to keep his eyes from falling on
 something he'll soon be bound to love.

 Here is where hearts are changed:
 here need, sense and measure have no place;
 here is just the pure will to love;
 here no one can take counsel.

(vv. 1571–87)

The dreamer of Guillaume's poem both repeats and avoids the mistake of Narcissus. Although he does gaze into the Mirror Perilous and falls hopelessly in love, it is not himself that he sees there, but the Rose.¹⁷⁰ That, however, may be a moot point. What Marguerite would have found most compelling in this description is not so much Narcissus' fate as the sense of *desmesure*—the absoluteness of love, that immoderate, irresistible changer of hearts. To peer into the Mirror Perilous is to abandon Reason—*sens ne mesure*—for the relentless imperative of Love's

pure will. Of course this view of love is not unique to the *Rose*, but Guillaume's scene gives it a kind of iconicity, compressing into a single densely packed image the magical fountains so ubiquitous in romance plots, the exemplum of Narcissus, the ambiguity of the mirror in which he both discovers and loses himself, and the era's fascination with fatal, incorrigible love.

Almost sixteen thousand lines later, Jean de Meun revisits the subject of mirrors. In a long discourse on free will and providence, Nature introduces the metaphor of divinity itself as a mirror. Whatever has been, is, or shall be, God sees from eternity:

... A son mirooir pardurable,
 Que nulz fors li ne set polir,
 Sanz rienz a franc voloir tolir.
 Cis mirooirs est il meïmes,
 De qui commencement preïmes.
 En ce biau mirooir poli,
 Qu'il tient et tint touz jors o li,
 Ou tout voit quanqu'il avendra
 Et touz jors present li rendra,
 Voit il ou les ames iront
 Qui loiaument le serviront . . .
 C'est la predestinacion,
 C'est la prescience devine,
 Qui tout set et rienz ne devine.

... in his everlasting mirror,
 that no one but he can polish
 without detracting from free will.
 This mirror is God's own self,
 from whom we took our beginning.
 In this lovely, polished mirror
 which he holds and has always held,
 where he sees all that will happen
 and renders it always present,
 he sees where the souls of those go
 who will loyally serve him. . . .

This is predestination,
 this is divine foreknowledge,
 that knows all and guesses nothing.
 (vv. 17468–86)

In this passage, indebted to Boethius and Alan of Lille, Jean equates the mirror of providence, or “divine foreknowledge,” with “God’s own self” (*il meïmes*).¹⁷¹ Like Guillaume de Lorris, though less programmatically, he imagines a mirror that is also a fountain, in the dual sense of “reflecting surface” and “source of life.” Thus, from the mirror that is God or God’s eternal mind, all creatures “took [their] beginning.” Yet only God can “polish” this mirror without detracting from free will. In other words, if any creature could see past, present, and future as God does, its freedom would be compromised. So just as one who gazes into Guillaume’s Mirror of Love (*mirëor perilleus*) is in danger of losing his reason, one who gazes into Jean’s Mirror of Providence (*mirooir pardurable*) would be in danger of losing free will. For Marguerite Porete, the lover of God’s infinity, these two mirrors are one and the same.

Unlike the *Rose* poets, Marguerite does not use explicit mirror images in her text. But her title is most apt, for the concept of mirroring, or specularity, pervades the entire dialogue.¹⁷² In fact, her opening parable of the maiden who loves King Alexander distantly echoes the Mirror of Narcissus episode. This classic exemplum of *amour loingtainne*, borrowed from the *Roman d’Alexandre*, is told by Amour. In it, the maiden who has fallen in love with the faraway king has his portrait painted [fist paindre ung ymage qui representoit la semblance du roy], and through her devotion to the image, *songa le roy mesmes* (she dreamed the king himself).¹⁷³ The Soul responds by telling Amour of her own “similar” experience: she too has come to love “a noble Alexander,” but the picture she has of him is “this book,” which is his gift to her: “Il me donna ce livre qui represente en aucuns usages l’amour de lui mesmes” (He gave me this book, which shows in some usages the love of himself). The hidden third term mediating between “image” and “book” is “mirror,” the title. With pointed ambiguity, Marguerite represents her book, or *Mirror*, which reflects the king’s image, as at the same time his gift and her creation.¹⁷⁴ Like Guillaume’s Lover, the Soul only dreams of her Beloved whom she does not yet possess, yet her dream is his true

reflection. He underwrites what she writes, just as the Soul's opening speech deliberately mirrors Love's speech.

While the Soul's relation to Love is not precisely narcissism, it is an intense and mutual mirroring that begins with their very names, Ame and Amour, and continues throughout their dialogue: Love describes and praises the Soul, while the Soul explains and celebrates Love. Ultimately, the Free Soul becomes the Love that she beholds, or in a more precise formulation, she becomes an unclouded mirror in which Love beholds only itself. [Mais ceste Ame, ainsi pure et clariffiee, ne voit ne Dieu ne elle, mais Dieu se voit de luy en elle, pour elle, sans elle.]¹⁷⁵ The title *Mirouer des simples ames anienties* has therefore a double reference.¹⁷⁶ Marguerite's book is itself a mirror into which souls, gazing intently, may lose themselves (unlike Narcissus) and find God in the *volenté pure d'amer*: "And so this beggarly creature wrote what you hear; and she wanted her neighbors to find God in her, through writings and through words." [Et ainsi escripsit ceste mendiant creature ce que vous oez; et vout que ses proesmes trouvassent Dieu en elle, par escrips et par paroles.]¹⁷⁷ Yet this divine mirror, which proved so perilous to its author, is in the end a mere painted image. For the Soul must acknowledge, in taking leave of it, that her book "has been made by human knowledge and human sense," and "all that one can say or write of God . . . is to lie far more than it is to tell the truth."

Si a esté fait par humaine science et humain sens; et humaine raison et humain sens ne scevent rien d'amour de[v]entraîne . . . car tout ce que l'en peut de Dieu dire ne escrire, ne que l'en en peut penser, qui plus est que n'est dire, est assez mieulx mentir que ce n'est vray dire.¹⁷⁸

The only true *mirooir pardurable* is the divine mind itself. No one can gaze in *this* mirror, as Nature warned in the *Roman de la Rose*, without sacrificing *franc vouloir*, which is presumably Marguerite's final wish for herself and her audience. In her leavetaking, the Soul suggests that the act of will involved in writing the book—or polishing the mirror—has been the final thread, now severed, that kept her from her goal of annihilation.¹⁷⁹

After Guillaume's Lover gazes into the fountain of Narcissus and sees the Rose, he is promptly wounded by the God of Love and com-

pelled to do homage. Love then presents him with the commandments that the Lover has already promised to obey. In Marguerite's *Mirror*, too, the parable of the maiden with the king's image immediately precedes the giving of Love's commandments. Presented as the commands of Holy Church, these are actually the Gospel imperatives to love God with all one's heart and soul and strength, and one's neighbor as oneself.¹⁸⁰ The speaker who expounds these commandments is neither Christ nor Holy Church, but once again the feminine Amour. Love's gender is a complex and curious signifier in Marguerite's dialogue. In the *Rose* and other texts influenced by Ovid, the *dieu d'amours* is a male deity identified with Cupid. Marguerite's French text, however, intensifies the specular relationship between Love and the Soul by playing on the feminine gender of both. As a goddess-figure, Dame Amour echoes not so much the *Rose* as the troubadours and trouvères, who cultivated a deliberate confusion between personified Love and the beloved lady—just as Dame Amour reflects and coalesces with Dame Ame.¹⁸¹

On a different level, however, the strategy of the *Mirror* is indebted here as well to the *Rose*, especially to Guillaume's portion of it. One of the *Rose*'s most original features is its fragmented representation of the Beloved. The elusive Rose represents her body, her persona, her beauty, her love, in the end even her genitals—but it cannot represent her subjectivity. Unlike the Lover, the beloved lady is never portrayed as a unified subject, but her aspects are parceled out among personifications of both genders who side with and against the Lover: Franchise, Pitié, Honte, Poor [Peur], Dangier, and of course Bel Acuel, or "Fair Welcome." Even these figures signify forces both within and outside the lady. The grammatically masculine Bel Acuel is the Lover's chief goal and ally until he can gain access to the Rose itself. Guillaume could easily have chosen a feminine persona, such as Courtoisie or Amitié, to represent the lady's friendly, welcoming demeanor. But in fact he chose the cross-gendered figure of Bel Acuel, whose name will chime later on with *coilles* (testicles) and *cuellir* (to pluck/deflower), much to Jean de Meun's pleasure.¹⁸² Bel Acuel's maleness seems to come and go in the text: la Vieille calls him "son" but gives "him" some intense girl-to-girl mentoring, and in illuminated manuscripts, he appears usually as a young man but occasionally as a woman.¹⁸³ If we take the putative maleness of Fair Welcome as a significant trait, it can be read in a variety of ways—as queering the

Lover's affair, as ennobling it with a patina of courtly friendship,¹⁸⁴ or as enabling a measure of equality between the prospective partners.¹⁸⁵ But however we interpret Bel Acuel, his prominence alongside the Rose and the female personifications makes the Beloved a complex, enigmatic being, whom her Lover may impregnate, but never fully fathom.

With this fragmentation of the Beloved in mind, let us return to Marguerite. We have considered Dame Amour as the mirror image and alter ego of the Soul, but she is more: she is also, quite explicitly, the chief mouthpiece of God in the dialogue. "I am God," she tells the scandalized Reason, "because Love is God and God is Love—and this Soul is God by the condition of love." [*Je suis Dieu, dit Amour, car Amour est Dieu, et Dieu est amour, et ceste Ame est Dieu par condition d'amour.*]¹⁸⁶ But Amour is not the only divine speaker in the text, which also features locutions by God the Father, the Holy Spirit, the Bridegroom of the Soul, and the Trinity. Marguerite's God may be metaphysically simple, but s/he is relationally complex, multifaceted, and, like the Rose, androgynous. In one sense, the femininity of Amour functions, like the masculinity of Bel Acuel, to denaturalize gender. When a Lady speaks for God or a man for a lady, the unexpected cross-gendering compels us to question both erotic and theological conventions. Thus the Free Soul's love of God, like the Lover's passion for his Rose, reveals what could be called a homoerotic dimension beneath its surface. But however titillating this may be for modern readers, I do not believe medieval audiences would have found it so. For, in a different sense, the androgyny of the Beloved actually makes gender *less* relevant to the Lover's quest, since the blurring or effacing of sexual difference places the emphasis on sameness, the prospect of identity between Lover and Beloved.

We will never know what Guillaume de Lorris intended in this regard. His poem breaks off with Fair Welcome in prison and the Lover in despair—an impasse where, as David Hult has argued, he may actually have meant to leave it.¹⁸⁷ Marguerite, however, decidedly preferred identity, or "union without difference," to the tempestuous drama of the love-quest.¹⁸⁸ As we have seen, she was openly critical of the erotic mysticism cultivated by many beguines, which she regarded as an inferior brand of love and wished to transcend in a serene unity beyond the intoxicating sweetness of romance. The same-sex union of Ame

and Amour conveys that serenity in a way that the passion of Bride and Bridegroom cannot.¹⁸⁹

Nevertheless, the *Mirror* does introduce an avatar of the Bridegroom, the mysterious *Loingprés*, recalling the tale of King Alexander and the maiden. In keeping with her suspicion of bridal mysticism, Marguerite never describes union with this beloved in the sexualized language characteristic of other beguine mystics. But she does assign him all the initiative—as lover, as author, even as the only true subject: “Il est, et je ne suis mie” [He *is*, and I do not exist at all].¹⁹⁰ Her book itself, as we have seen, is his gift to her: the *Mirror for Lovers* in which she glimpses him *per speculum in enigmate* (1 Cor. 13:12) and he gazes on his infinite self in her. We can even imagine the *Mirror* as a *Rose* in reverse, de-eroticized and told from the perspective of the Rose.¹⁹¹ For the Soul—noblest and freest when she is least her own—is not unlike Bel Acuel in the tower of Jealousy. Yet she has no desire ever to leave it or to admit anyone else. How indeed could she, when her Lover himself is “li treshault Jaloux” [the Jealous Husband on High]?¹⁹²

FROM 1277 TO 1312, OR THE PERILS OF CROSSOVER

One of the most scandalous teachings of the *Mirror* was Marguerite’s claim that Free Souls take leave of the Virtues and owe no more service to them or their ally, Reason.¹⁹³ Emancipated from serfdom, they become ladies, and “the Virtues do all that such souls wish, without pride or refusal, for such souls are their mistresses.” [Mais ainçoys les Vertuz font tout ce que telles Ames veullent, sans danger et sans contredit, car telles Ames sont leurs maistresses.]¹⁹⁴ This may seem a far cry from the *Rose*. But here again, Marguerite presupposes the romance plot, with its central conflict between Love and Reason, and adapts it for her purposes. In the *Rose*, the Lover twice rejects the counsel of Reason—briefly in Guillaume’s text, then definitively in Jean’s. (Significantly, both *Rose* poets give Reason the honorific title of Lady, which Marguerite steadfastly refuses to grant her.) Lady Reason begins her long speech in Jean’s text by denouncing the God of Love as a cruel *seignor*; she ends by asking the Lover to forsake the god’s service and accept her instead as his *amie*.¹⁹⁵ But the Lover scorns her and insists that

virtuous love, which she advocates, has been impossible ever since antiquity when the Virtues fled the earth, driven off by Fraud.¹⁹⁶ After he has sent Reason packing, the Lover seeks out the cynical and misogynistic Friend (Ami), and from this point onward, he truly takes leave of the Virtues. By the end of the romance, the naïve but well-intentioned youth introduced by Guillaume will have become complicit in treachery, murder, bribery, and arguably rape.¹⁹⁷ This is not to say that Jean's intention is consistently or even primarily moralistic; but it is to say that in the universe he constructs, no man can serve two masters. The Dreamer must choose between Love and Reason, between the Rose and the Virtues—and choose he emphatically does.

Marguerite accepts this dichotomy, and her Free Soul makes the same choice, but she views it from the other side of the fence. A long line of critics, ranging from Pierre Col and Jean de Montreuil around 1400 to Joan Ferrante and John Fleming in the twentieth century, have maintained that Jean de Meun is ironizing the Lover.¹⁹⁸ On that reading, it is Reason who speaks for the poet, and once our protagonist has rejected her, the subsequent plot unmasks his pretensions to *fine amour* as no more than *folle amour*, or “foolish love.” As he pursues his passion, he becomes progressively enmeshed in vice. In the *Mirror*, by contrast, the Free Soul does not dismiss the Virtues in order to revel in vice. She rises above their level rather than sinking beneath it, so if she is guilty of anything, it is quietism, rather than sin or crime. Yet Reason is alarmed all the same and staunchly resists the absolutism of Love and the Soul.

Now the difference between the foolish Lover's quest and the mystic's may seem painfully obvious to us—so obvious as to render comparison otiose. Yet Marguerite's high-mindedness was not obvious to the judges of her book, a panel of twenty-one theologians—almost the whole theological faculty of the University of Paris. To be fair, however, these theologians did not have access to the book itself, only to fifteen or so propositions plucked out of it by her inquisitor, William of Paris, and presented to them in Latin—in keeping with standard inquisitorial procedure. As Sean Field points out, they may not even have known that the book was written in French.¹⁹⁹ Only three of these condemned propositions have come down to us. One is Marguerite's assertion that the annihilated soul takes leave of the Virtues [*quod anima ad-*

nichilata dat licentiam virtutibus]. Another states that such a soul can and should concede to Nature whatever it desires, without qualm of conscience or remorse [quod anima annihilata . . . sine reprehensione conscientiae vel remorsu potest et debet naturae {concedere} quidquid appetit et desiderat].²⁰⁰ Despite her careful insistence that the Virtues continue to operate in such souls, she was taken to be preaching antinomianism, a claim that became central to the case against her.²⁰¹

Not long after Porete's execution, Pope Clement V convoked the Council of Vienne (October 1311–May 1312), whose delegates included at least six of the theologians that had been involved in her condemnation.²⁰² One of the council's canons, *Cum de quibusdam mulieribus*, was aimed broadly at suppressing beguines. Another, *Ad nostrum*, more specifically condemned eight "Errors of the Beghards and Beguines concerning the state of perfection," all of them pointing to antinomian heresy. This canon has puzzled historians because its preface denounces a damnable sect of *beguinae* and *beguardi* "in the kingdom of Germany," yet no source for the eight errors has yet been identified—other than *The Mirror of Simple Souls*.²⁰³ The sixth error asserts "that it belongs to an imperfect person to practice acts of virtue, and the perfect soul takes leave of the virtues" [quod se in actibus exercere virtutum est hominis imperfecti, et perfecta anima licentiat a se virtutes]—an idea verbally close to the first proposition condemned at Marguerite's trial.²⁰⁴ Most of the others are at least loosely related to her teaching, that is, that a state of sinless perfection is possible in this life; that those who have attained it are not bound by the precepts of the Church; that they need not show reverence at the elevation of the host, lest this compel them to descend from the heights of contemplation.

But the seventh error seems to have little connection with Marguerite. This is the interesting proposition "that a woman's kiss is a mortal sin when Nature does not incline to it; but the carnal act itself is no sin when Nature does incline to it, especially when the one who does it is tempted" [quod mulieris osculum, cum ad hoc natura non inclinet, est mortale peccatum; actus autem carnalis, cum ad hoc natura inclinet, peccatum non est, maxime cum tentatur exercens].²⁰⁵ Was this sexualized interpretation of granting Nature whatever it desires somehow inevitable? At one time it was widely held that Clement V and the Council of Vienne were reacting against the "heresy of the Free Spirit,"

a movement that supposedly linked antinomian ethics—or lack of ethics—with mystical quietism of the sort that Marguerite taught. But Robert Lerner refuted that hypothesis in 1972, showing that no identifiable heretic (let alone heretical movement) prior to 1311 can be found to have held such views.²⁰⁶ Certainly nothing in the *Mirror* itself encourages a slide from quietism to libertinism. Marguerite's Middle English translator, the Carthusian "M. N.," would take pains to ward off this possibility, glossing the suspect passage about Nature (chapter 9) as follows:

God forbid that anyone should be so carnal as to think that this could mean giving Nature any pleasure which leads to sins of the flesh. God knows well that that is not how it is meant. . . . For I say this with truth, that souls who are such as this book describes are so mortified and freed from such miseries, are so illumined with grace and so armed with the love of God, that it extinguishes all fleshly sin in them.

Now God forbeede þat eny be so fleischli to þenke þat it schulde mene to ȝive to nature eny lust þat drawiþ to fleischli synne, for God knowiþ wel it is not so ymened. . . . For þis I seie of troupe, þat þese soules þat ben suche as þis booke deuseþ, þei ben so mortified from suche wrecchidnesse, and so enlumyned wiþ grace, and so araied wiþ loue of God, þat it quenchiþ al fleischli synne in hem.²⁰⁷

But a libertine view of Nature certainly *had* occurred to Jean de Meun. The last major speech in the *Rose* is delivered by Genius, an ally of Nature and the God of Love, who embodies male potency. This character preaches a provocative "sermon" on the universal duty to procreate, culminating in the injunction to "plow, barons, plow—for God's sake—and renew your lineages!"²⁰⁸ Understandably, the discourse of Genius found little favor with the *Rose*'s clerical admirers. Gui de Mori, in his Christianized version, suppressed almost 90 percent of it.²⁰⁹ The *Rose* itself was not condemned (vernacular poems almost never were)—yet in 1277, shortly after Jean completed it, Bishop Étienne Tempier of Paris censured a long list of 219 "manifest and execrable errors."²¹⁰ Most of the condemned propositions were philosophical, theological, and scientific doctrines. But a few were ethical positions redolent of the

naturalistic views Jean had ascribed to Genius: that continence is not a virtue, that sexual abstinence impairs bodily strength and beauty, that simple fornication is not a sin.²¹¹ Although the document does not name Jean de Meun, who was probably still alive, it does cite and condemn one of his more notorious precursors—Andreas Capellanus and his *De amore*.²¹² In short, by 1277 the bishop of Paris and his theological allies had already linked a series of disparate and, in their view, dangerous philosophical propositions with a few “doctrines” they derived from secular writings on love.

These condemnations were notorious; the act of censure met resistance from the faculty at Paris until its eventual repeal in 1325. Thus many of those assembled at Vienne in 1311–1312 must have been familiar with the propositions condemned in 1277. Is it possible, then, that the *Rose* as well as the *Mirror* subtends the eight “Errors of the Beghards and Beguines”? Even if no actual heretics had thought to connect Marguerite’s abstruse mysticism with Jean de Meun’s sexual naturalism, the fathers at Vienne may have been the first to do so. While no subtle reader would have mistaken Marguerite’s taking leave of the Virtues and giving Nature whatever it desires as a pretext for unbridled sexual license, the council fathers were not subtle readers. Nor in fact were they readers of Marguerite’s book at all. Yet, in their zeal to defend the faith, they made the *Mirror* reflect the *Rose* to a degree that would have astonished its hapless author.

CHAPTER 4

PARODY

From Profane Communion to Blasphemous Passion

THUS FAR WE HAVE EXPLORED THE HERMENEUTICS OF BOTH/AND as a way of reading “high” genres. Though the chivalric hero and the monastic saint may seem to have little in common, both are constructed from idealizing rhetoric that lifts them far above the ordinary; parallel lines may meet in infinity. In Galahad, the opposite perfections of chastity and chivalry converge. So too with the virgin martyr and the romance heroine: in their unlike likeness, the passion of Isolde yields an analogy for the *passio* of St. Catherine. Or again, a trouvère lyric may be transmuted into a beguine song, or the *Romance of the Rose* fall into the revisionist hands of Gui de Mori and Marguerite Porete. The cleric, convinced that he can make the great erotic *summa* serve the ends of God’s lovers, bowdlerizes the bawdy sermon of Genius and gives Reason a eulogy on divine love, while the beguine appropriates the drama of Love’s victory over Reason and the Virtues to meet the needs of a very different lover.

But not all genres idealize, nor is crossover confined to those that do. Some of the best-known examples lie in the realm of parody, a genre that has always been elusive and tricky to define. I here adopt the rather

broad definition of Nil Korkut: “parody is an intentional imitation—of a text, style, genre, or discourse—which includes an element of humour and which has an aim of interpreting its target in one way or another”—ranging from mockery to respectful admiration.¹ More succinctly, as Linda Hutcheon puts it, the heart of parody lies in “imitation with critical difference.”² The particular brand studied here, sacred parody, has an especially vexed critical history. Although there are ample studies of religious parody in figures like Jean de Meun, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, the genre as such has attracted little notice, aside from Paul Lehmann’s *Die Parodie im Mittelalter* (1922) and Martha Bayless’s excellent *Parody in the Middle Ages* (1996).³ Both Lehmann and Bayless explore the Latin tradition, concentrating on such works as the late antique *Cena Cypriani* (*Cyprian’s Supper*), the “Life of St. Nemo” (St. Nobody), “The Drinker’s Mass,” and the “Money Gospel,” or “Gospel according to the Mark of Silver.” All these texts, which were extremely popular and circulated in multiple versions, reveal a rich tradition of clerical humor based on the inversion of Scripture, liturgy, and hagiography. My texts, in contrast, were not well-known. *Le lai d’Ignaure* and *The Dispute between God and His Mother* survive in a single manuscript each, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* in a handful. So these works disclose more individual approaches, not always comic, to the collision of sacred and profane. Before reading each of them, I will explain how a hermeneutics of both/and can help us interpret medieval parody.

PARODIA SACRA AND THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TWO-EDGED SWORD

The term *parodia sacra*, reintroduced into English by the translators of Mikhail Bakhtin, turns out to have a fascinating history of its own. Bakhtin, of course, used it for the phenomenon I study in this chapter: the adaptation of sacred texts or topoi for profane purposes.⁴ As Mark Burde has shown, however, when the term first appeared, around 1600, as a genre designation, it described the exact opposite of this phenomenon.⁵ “Parody” was not a medieval concept—it appears in none of the standard rhetorical treatises—and what Renaissance humanists meant by *parodia sacra* was the “upward,” rather than “downward,” adaptation

of pagan classics for Christian ends. That practice did exist in medieval literature, though it had as yet no name. When the tenth-century canoness Hrotsvit wrote comedies inspired by Terence, imitating his style to dramatize the lives of virgin martyrs rather than prostitutes, she was producing *parodia sacra*. So in a different way were the twelfth-century mythographers and, later, the authors of the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Ovide moralisé*. Renaissance specimens had such titles as *Horatius Christianus* (*The Christian Horace*) and *Martialis renatus* (*Martial Reborn*).

Sometime between 1600 and 1900, however, the meaning of sacred parody was reversed—indicating the transition from sacred to secular as the default category of Western culture. In an important though neglected article of 1889, the Italian critic Francesco Novati examined a long tradition of irreverent humor in European history, ranging from the Roman Saturnalia to the medieval Feast of Fools to contemporary satires. In the Middle Ages, he argued, “pious poets like Gautier de Coincy and raucously irreverent rhymesters like the Archpoet were . . . engaged in a broadly similar struggle over poetic forms that were popular in origin; only the direction—upwardly edificatory versus downwardly celebratory—separated the one from the other.”⁶ In other words, crossover moved in both directions and straddled linguistic boundaries. *Parodia sacra* was for Novati an ordinary Italian term with no special weight. But when Bakhtin read him and introduced it into his Russian prose, it became a Latin technical term, now imbued with a ritualistic flavor and masquerading as a medieval phrase, by analogy with *risus paschalis* or *festum stultorum*. *Pace* Bakhtin, sacred parodies like the texts analyzed here were not linked with any ritual of social inversion or liturgical topsyturvydom, such as Carnival, Eastertide, or the Feast of Fools. Nor did they necessarily stem from a folk element in medieval culture, for most religious and even anticlerical satire was produced by clerics themselves. Such texts do, however, undermine the solemnity of authoritative speech with voices of laughter.

In arguing for a hermeneutics of both/and, I proposed that, when irreconcilable meanings collide in a crossover text, it is not always necessary to privilege one or the other. Like the polyphonic voices in a motet, they may simply coexist. But this principle works one way when two idealizing genres meet, in a hybrid like hagiographic romance or an ambiguous love lyric that can celebrate either an earthly beloved or

the Virgin Mary. It functions quite differently when an idealizing, upward pull is offset by a downward, counter-idealizing tug. Perhaps it matters little if Galahad is more hero or saint, or if Beatrice is more a real, glorified woman or a personification of divine grace. In each case, they are obviously “both.” The fun begins (as do the furious arguments) when the intention to idealize—or not—is precisely the question at issue.

Let us return to our Florentine “Triumph of Venus” tray (Figure 1). If we take the exaltation of Venus (sexual love in its sublime aspect) as a “high” theme, then depicting it with iconography borrowed from the Assumption of the Virgin is amusing, but not blasphemous. But if we believe that sexual love *has* no sublime aspect, that it is always and everywhere profane, then the claws of the goddess’s attendant angels (or demons) assume greater prominence, and a both/and interpretation is harder to sustain. In the case of the salver, I argued that what we know of the object’s context and function tilts the balance toward an optimistic reading. The element of sacred parody adds humor and a touch of caution, but it does not truly undermine the celebratory tone. Context and function, however, are factors we often lack in the study of texts—especially anonymous works that survive in single manuscripts, with no trace of reception history. Even when we do know something of a work’s medieval reception, that too may be ambiguous, as with Chrétien’s *Charrette*. So parody is often in the eye of the beholder. As Sylvia Huot astutely notes, parody and allegory are “closely related techniques: they juxtapose two different literary or iconographic codes that share certain motifs.”⁷ But allegory works through figurative correspondence, parody through ironic distance: it is up to the reader to make either the upward leap into allegorical decoding, or the distancing move into parodic laughter. Tellingly, two contemporary critics of similar exegetical bent, Jacques Ribard and D. W. Robertson, read the ostensibly secular *Charrette* in precisely opposite ways, Ribard taking it as Christian allegory and Robertson as Christian parody. The majority of critics have done neither—nor, I suspect, did most medieval readers.

Even where a parodic intent is clear, ambiguities remain. Take the case of *Aucassin et Nicolette* (ca. 1200), a *chantefable* that pokes lighthearted fun at romance conventions. A secular text, it contains one de-

licious moment of *parodia sacra* in which Nicolette's keeper warns the young lover that, unless he stops pursuing her, he is likely to end up in hell. Aucassin replies with insouciance:

En paradis qu'ai je a faire? Je n'i quier entrer, mais que j'aie Nicolete . . . c'en paradis ne vont fors tex gens con je vous dirai. Il i vont ci viel prestre et cil viel clop, et cil manke qui tote jor et tote nuit crompt devant ces autex et en ces viés cruutes, et cil a ces viés capes ereses et a ces viés tateres vestues, qui sont nu et decauc et estrumelé, qui moeurent de faim et de soi et de froit et de mesaises. Icil vont en paradis: aveuc ciaux n'ai jou que faire. Mais en infer voil jou aler; car en infer vont li bel clerc et li bel cevalier qui sont mort as tornois et as rices gueres, et li buen sergant et li franc home: aveuc ciaux voil jou aler. Et s'i vont les beles dames cortoisies, que eles on .ii. amis ou .iii. avoc leur barons, et s'il va li ors et li argens et li vairs et li gris, et si i vont herpeor et jogleor et li roi del siecle.

Why should I be interested in Paradise? I have no wish to go there, unless I have with me Nicolette, . . . because the only people who go to Paradise are these. That is where old priests go, and old cripples, and the maimed who grovel day and night in front of altars and in old crypts, and there are those clad in old, threadbare cloaks, and old rags, naked, barefoot, and in tatters, dying of hunger, thirst, cold, and misery. They go to Paradise: I don't want anything to do with them. What I want is to go to Hell, for Hell is where handsome clerics go, and handsome knights who have died in tournaments and rich wars, and brave men-at-arms and noblemen: I want to go with them. That is where beautiful courtly ladies go, because they have two or three lovers as well as their husbands, and the gold and silver goes there, and all the fine furs, and the harpists and jongleurs and kings.⁸

This speech is clearly satirical, but which way does it point? Here I introduce another corollary of the *sic et non* principle, which in parody and satire becomes the principle of the two-edged sword. Are we supposed to conclude that hell would indeed be more fun than heaven, so the whole Christian teaching on the afterlife must be rejected as a fable? Hardly; the passage cannot bear the weight of a serious dissident

reading. Conversely, are we meant to see Aucassin as a callow youth, not only careless of his soul but lacking all empathy for the old, the sick, and the poor? Perhaps; but he is a spirited, happy-go-lucky young lover, and that's the way such characters are. In a text of this kind, reading the satire as a moral critique of the speaker would be as mistaken as reading heresy into it. Interpretation depends on tone, and the author's lightness of touch, here and throughout the text, takes the edge off his satire. So in this case, if we ask which way the sword cuts, we would have to say neither—it's a blunted weapon. Though double-edged, it is meant to provoke a laugh or a wry smile, not serious thought.

But what about a more biting, equally double-edged satire like the *Wife of Bath's Prologue*? In her long, rambling confession the Wife takes issue with orthodox teaching on virginity and marriage, especially St. Jerome's anti-matrimonial treatise *Against Jovinian*. Critics have long joined battle on this text, with dangerously heightened emotions since the advent of feminist theory.⁹ For the sword in this satire cuts both ways—and sharply. The Wife is everything that misogynists accused women at their worst of being: lustful, greedy, vain, treacherous, promiscuous, loquacious, and not least, heretical; she gossips incessantly, reveals her husbands' intimate secrets, and is indeed their "purgatorie" on earth (v. 489). So her every word reinforces the veracity of anti-feminist discourse. On the other hand, she is a feisty, self-respecting, and highly intelligent woman who has managed, against all odds, to wrest some dignity from a system that is stacked against her on every side. Moreover, her frontal assaults on Jerome's arguments often point up their absurdity ("Telle me also, to what conclusion / Were mem-bres maad of generacion?" vv. 115–16). The knife-edge ambivalence of Chaucer's portrayal is apparent from two instances, one effective at the micro- and the other at the macro-level.

St. Paul, says the Wife of Bath,

... heeld virginitee

Moore parfit than weddyng in freletee.

Freletee clepe I, but if that he and she

Wolde leden al hir lyf in chastitee. (vv. 91–94)

What she means, of course, is that for Paul (1 Cor. 7:25–40), anything but a vow of lifelong chastity constitutes "marriage in [the condition

of human] frailty." The syntax, however, requires a mischievous pause after "Freletee clepe I," so instead of hearing the Wife say, "I call it frailty unless . . .," we momentarily hear "My name is frailty," and probably think in spite of ourselves of Hamlet's "Frailty, thy name is woman!" (Was Shakespeare in turn thinking of the Wife of Bath? Probably not; but literary history has a mind of its own.)

My second passage, with a very different emotional impact, is the Wife's nostalgic outburst:

But—Lord Crist!—whan that it remembreth me
 Upon my yowthe, and on my jolitee,
 It tikleth me aboute myn herte roote.
 Unto this day it dooth myn herte boote
 That I have had my world as in my tyme.
 But age, allas, that al wole envenyme,
 Hath me biraft my beautee and my pith.
 Lat go. Farewel! The devel go therwith!
 The flour is goon; ther is namoore to telle;
 The bren, as I best kan, now moste I selle;
 But yet to be right myrie wol I fonde. (vv. 469–79)

Even if we know that Chaucer is translating some lines almost verbatim from a speech of La Vieille—the old procuress in the *Romance of the Rose*, a far less sympathetic character—it makes little difference.¹⁰ All of us grow old, misogynists and feminists alike; all of us may feel "tickled to the bottom of our heart" to recall the pleasures of our youth; and all might wish to confront old age with the Wife's game determination to "be right merry," come what may. As a result, these lines affect us much like Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes?" speech in *The Merchant of Venice*. They feel so authentic, so universally human, as to win our whole sympathy and make us forget momentarily that both the Wife and the Jew are creatures of the very stereotypes they defy. So the antifeminist dig of "freletee clepe I," and many more like it, are offset by the large human sympathy of "I have had my world as in my tyme." The sword of satire, pointing now at St. Jerome and his misogynist allies, now at the Wife and her vicious sisters, turns yet again to prick the heart of the reader.

In the sacred parodies discussed below, we shall find more than one case of the two-edged sword, a weapon that makes the genre intriguing

and challenging to read. My first case study, the Old French *Lai d'Ignaure* (ca. 1200), is a brief romance-like tale with no overt religious content. Yet a devastating parody of women's eucharistic devotion lurks within its obscene and macabre plot, visible to an attentive reader today and doubtless to some, though not all, of its contemporary readers. My second example, the Latin *Passion of the Jews of Prague* (1389), inverts the narrative of Christ's Passion to celebrate a pogrom. There is nothing humorous about this work; it is parodic in the strict sense of imitating and transposing a well-known text—in this case, the Passion narrative in the Gospels—for polemical purposes. Finally, the Middle French *Dispute between God and His Mother* (1450) is a comic debate poem that ridicules excessive Marian piety, though it takes on so many other targets that its intentions are even harder than usual to gauge. Formally, these works exemplify three types of parody: the first parodies a genre (romance), the second a text (the Passion narrative), and the third a discourse, or rather two of them (inheritance law and Mariology). Further, each betrays a decidedly different attitude toward the sacred: *Ignaure* might be described as obliquely subversive, *The Passion of the Jews* as frankly blasphemous, and the *Dispute* as satiric and playful.

I have chosen these texts partly because they are rarities, little-known to scholars. *The Dispute between God and His Mother* and *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* are translated for the first time in the appendix (where I also provide a new edition of the former). All three, different as they are, show that no person, text, or practice in medieval culture was deemed so holy as to lie beyond the bounds of parody. If the eucharist, the Passion of Christ, and the Virgin Mary could all be mocked or satirized, then it is fair to say that the boundary between sacred and profane was fully permeable in both directions.

OBSCENE COMMUNION: *LE LAI D'IGNAURE*

There is nothing explicitly religious about *Le lai d'Ignaure*, an early thirteenth-century lay that names a certain Renaut as its author.¹¹ Rita Lejeune, its first editor, identified this poet with Renaut de Beaujeu (or better, Bâgé), author of the much better-known *Li Biaus Descouneüs* (*The Fair Unknown*). Since Renaut de Bâgé lived from about 1165 to 1230, this

is certainly possible—but the most recent editor of *The Fair Unknown* finds the attribution unconvincing.¹² *Le lai d'Ignaure* was not influential or widely copied, but it survives in a single manuscript anthology from 1284.

The plot runs like this. Twelve barons and their lovely wives live together in the castle of Riol. A poor but gallant knight, Ignaure, manages to seduce all twelve women, each one thinking he loves her alone. After more than a year, the ladies meet in an orchard in June, and one of them proposes a game of mock-confession: she will play the priest and each will secretly confess the name of her lover, so they can determine who has the noblest paramour. One by one, all the ladies confess the same name as the “priest” grows ever more livid. When all have finished, she violates the secret of the confessional, telling her companions that they have been terribly betrayed by a single man. Enraged, the ladies devise vengeance: they will surprise Ignaure in that very garden, lurking in ambush with knives, and when he goes there for a tryst, all will fall upon him and kill him. Captured, Ignaure humbly confesses his mischief to the ladies, but protests that he really does love all of them equally and adds:

“Se je muir a si bieles mains,
G’iere martyrs avoec les sains!”

“If I should die at such lovely hands,
I would become a martyr with the saints!”
(vv. 331–32)

The “priest,” loving Ignaure more than the rest, relents and says he can save his life by choosing one lady and henceforth being faithful to her alone. After a moment’s hesitation, he chooses her.

But “a mouse with a single hole cannot long survive!”¹³ Growing careless, Ignaure visits his mistress more and more often until he is discovered by a spy (*losengier*), who decides for a reward to tell the twelve husbands. The “priest’s” husband, who is the angriest because his wife is still Ignaure’s mistress, succeeds in catching the lovers *in flagrante*. To his wife’s horror, he throws Ignaure in prison, deciding not to kill him until the husbands together can plan a fitting revenge. The ladies go on hunger strike for four days, saying they will not eat again until

they know what has become of their lover. Meanwhile, the husbands have Ignaure castrated, killed, and dismembered. Then they persuade their starving wives to take a meal:

“Au quart jor prendons le vassal
 Tout le daerrain membre aval,
 Dont li delis lor soloit plaie,
 Si en fache on .I. mangier faire;
 Le cuer avoec nous meterons.
 .XII. escuieles en ferons;
 Par engien lor faisons mangier,
 Car nous n’en poons mius vengier.”

“After four days let us take the man’s
 Whole lower member, whose delight
 Was wont to give them pleasure.
 Let us have it cooked in a dish,
 We will include the heart along with it.
 Let us arrange it on twelve plates
 And by a stratagem make them eat it,
 For we cannot be avenged any better.”
 (vv. 541–48)

After they have consumed their last supper, the wives plead to know Ignaure’s fate, so the husbands brutally tell them. On hearing the news, the women resolve to fast in earnest, even to death. As they await their demise they continue to praise their dead lover, one admiring his eyes, another his beautiful body, another his loving heart, and so forth. After they die, a lay of twelve stanzas is written to commemorate these events.

Le lai d’Ignaure is the earliest example we have of a small, macabre group of tales that center on the eaten heart.¹⁴ The motif appears elsewhere in world folklore, but other medieval examples include *Le lai Guirun*, Jakemes’s thirteenth-century *Roman du Castelain de Couci et de la Dame de Fayel*,¹⁵ the *Herzmäre* of Konrad of Würzburg,¹⁶ Boccaccio’s tale of Tancredi and his daughter Ghismonda,¹⁷ and Dante’s dream at the beginning of the *Vita Nuova*. As it happens, the hero Ignaure’s name and legend are older than Renaut’s lay. In the *Charrette*, Chrétien de-

scribes the arms of “Ignaures li covoitiez, / li amoraus et li pleisanz” (vv. 5808–9), one of twelve knights in a tournament. Just about any romance hero could be called “the Amorous,” but a late twelfth-century Occitan poet is more specific. Arnaut-Guilhem de Marsan presents the knight Linaura (an Occitan version of “Ignaure”) as a seducer, loved by many women until he is finally killed and quartered by four jealous husbands (though no cannibal feast is mentioned).¹⁸ Both Arnaut’s text and the blazon that Chrétien ascribes to Ignaure point to a link with the troubadour Raimbaut d’Aurenga. In his song “Lonc temps ai estat cubertz,” Raimbaut had composed a famous parody of *fin’amor* in which he mocks his own imagined castration. The point of the lyric is that, since Raimbaut can only sigh for ladies and gaze at them longingly, but do nothing more, husbands should graciously tolerate his presence and his song.¹⁹ One of this troubadour’s *senhals* (code names) was “Rossinhol” or Nightingale, a nickname also given to Ignaure (*Lousignol*, v. 37).²⁰

But French readers or hearers would more likely have connected “Ignaure” with the verb *ignorer*, to be ignorant.²¹ (Although some critics prefer the form “Ignauré,” “Ignaure/s” is required for the scansion of many octosyllabic lines.) In either form, the hero’s name chimes with the title character of Renaut’s romance, *The Fair Unknown*. Ignorance about identity lies at the heart of both plots. Ignaure’s lovers are crucially ignorant, first of his infidelity, then of the nature of their last meal. On the level of sacred parody, the hero’s name evokes the ignorance of Christ’s executioners, who “know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

Ignaure was probably written within a decade or so on either side of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), though it cannot be dated precisely. Around and especially after the Council, with its formal definition of the transubstantiated host as Christ’s body, eucharistic devotion was burgeoning. Liturgical innovations such as the dramatic elevation of the host encouraged reverence and awe. Although the Fourth Lateran mandated annual confession and communion for all Christians, normally at Easter, lay communion on the whole remained rare. A heightened sense of the host’s sacrality made ordinary Christians feel less and less worthy to receive it. But devout women, especially the beguines of the Low Countries, were exceptions, polarizing the clerics who dealt with them. These women pined for the absent Christ and welcomed him in communion as a lover; petitioned to receive the sacrament weekly or even

daily, rather than just four times a year; fasted for long periods before and after communion, sometimes purporting to live on the host alone; and experienced ecstasies when they received it.²² Mockery of such devotion may underlie Renaut's parodic changes to the standard eaten-heart story. Although *Ignature* is set in Brittany, it is written in Picard, which as we have seen was used in those regions where the beguine movement, with its precocious eucharistic piety, flourished most vigorously. From this perspective, *Le lai d'Ignature* can be read as an early, albeit disguised example of satire against beguines, such as we find later in poets as widely read as Gautier de Coinci, Rutebeuf, and Jean de Meun.²³ *Ignature* seems to imply a naïve ignorance on the part of Christ's lovers as it exposes a lurid sexuality, *ignoré*, concealed in their piety.

Of all the eaten-heart tales, *Le lai d'Ignature* is the only one to feature twelve ladies. Its scandalous sacramental dimension has been recognized before, for it would be hard to miss the parody in a plot that features twelve devotees of a single lover, a confessional scene, arrest in a garden, a traitor paid to inform, a grisly execution, an anxious fast before communion, a ritual feast on the body of the Beloved, jealousy overcome through shared mourning, fidelity unto death, and a sacred commemorative text. The dating of events yields a further sign of parody. The confession game takes place on St. John's Day, or midsummer (v. 66), associated with carnival play, while the "passion" of Ignature evokes Holy Week.²⁴ For Milad Doueihi, the plot of *Ignature* thus represents a "Dionysian infiltration" of the Last Supper, a re-sexualizing of the Lover's lost and deeply desired body.²⁵ Merrall Llewelyn Price points to layers of parodic double coding: the ladies' "hunger strike is reconfigured as a time of precommunion fasting, the twelve women at their cannibal meal as apostles at a Last Supper, the heart and genitals of a playboy as the body and blood of Christ, upon which they will exist exclusively for the rest of their lives."²⁶ Like a number of eaten-heart heroines, Ignature's lovers thwart their husbands' revenge by choosing suicide in loyalty to their lost love, thus bestowing the dignity of a funeral feast on a macabre cannibalistic rite.

Ignature himself has no religious pretensions, but his attractiveness as a lover is described so as to recall the polygamy of Christ, that divine Bridegroom who maintains a singular relationship with each of his many brides:

Chascune cuide k'il soit siens,
 Si s'en fait molt jolie et cointe.
 Ignaures si tres biel s'acointe,
 Et chascune, quant il i vient,
 Que de l'autre ne li souvient
 Ne nul samblant k'il l'ait envie.
 Molt demainne cortoise vie!²⁷

Each one thinks he is all her own
 And makes herself glamorous for him.
 Ignaure behaves so beautifully
 With each one, when he comes to her—
 As if he neither remembered
 Nor showed any sign of wanting another.
 He leads a most courtly life!

(vv. 50–56)

We might recall the beguine Mechthild of Magdeburg's saying of Christ, "There is no other Lord that dwells in all his castles at the same time but him alone." [Es ist enkein herre me, der zemale in allen sinen húsern wone denne alleine er.]²⁸ As Hildegard Keller has shown, this is a politely enigmatic way to describe what might otherwise look like a celestial harem. Each bride of Christ bestows her whole affection on the same Beloved, who is himself not bound by the claims of fidelity.²⁹ Although each of his love-relationships is in a sense unique, their number is potentially infinite—as beguine poems show clearly enough. In *Le lai d'Ignaure*, the hero as a kind of parodic Christ manages to keep all twelve of his mistresses happy until the ill-advised confession game reveals his secret. Hence the first crisis occurs when their utopian, mock-heavenly ménage must yield to the more restrictive rules of courtly love; the second, when it is confronted with the even more confining laws of marriage.

With his "priest" and favored paramour, Ignaure alludes to the exchange of hearts characteristic of *fins amants*. She claims that for a long time she has set her heart on (or literally "in") him—"En vous avoie mon cuer mis" (v. 291)—and he responds that he is her lover and knight "with a true, whole, and noble heart" [de vrai cuer fins et entiers, v. 294].

Entiers is, in context, a choice irony. Similar language recurs at the fateful meal where, in partaking of their dead lover's body, "each one's heart was satisfied" [chascune ot le cuer asasé, v. 554]. Most tellingly, the ladies ask their husbands for the truth about Ignaure only when they are sated, literally "when their hearts had returned to them" [quant lor cuer furent revenu, v. 560]—though all have eaten a single heart. Ignaure's captor asks the wives sneeringly, "Was there enough for all twelve of you?" [End avés assés en vous douse? v. 574]. Like the ladies' fasting before and after the sacred meal, this query evokes a contemporary discourse about the eucharist: each host or fragment was declared to contain the entire body of Christ, not just part of it. But *Ignaure* is also the only eaten-heart tale to unite the phallus with the heart, the obscene with the courtly, heightening the blasphemy of its cannibal feast.³⁰ Eucharistic doubt could at times take the form of obsession with the particular part of Christ's body being exhibited or received. A peasant woman named Aude Fauré, known from the inquisitorial records of Montailhou, became so obsessed with the "disgusting afterbirth that women expel in childbearing" that, whenever she saw Christ's body elevated at Mass, she "kept thinking, because of that afterbirth, that the host was something polluted."³¹

In *Le lai d'Ignaure*, Renaut boldly modernized his archaic material by taking a gruesome pre-existing legend and rewriting it as topical parody. The object of satire is not so much the eucharist itself as women's eucharistic piety—their amorous longing for Christ's body, their conspicuous fasting, even their clerical pretensions. The female "priest," after all, is the one who starts the trouble by first presuming to hear confessions, then breaking the seal of secrecy (to fulfill an antifeminist stereotype). Interestingly, Renaut refers to the women's leader consistently as *li prestre* (the priest) until the end of the lay, when her gloating husband addresses her as *dame prestresse* (v. 565). This is not a compliment. Canonists at the time were beginning to devise explicit reasons for the non-ordination of women,³² and it was in 1210 that a scandalized Innocent III forbade privileged Spanish abbesses to hear nuns' confessions, asserting that even the Virgin Mary did not hold the power of the keys.³³ Since confession and communion were inseparably linked, the mischievous wife who dares to assume a confessor's role, even in play, leads her peers directly to the scandalous communion of the final scene.

Ignature masks its satire by targeting married women, but there is finally no mistaking its sacrilege—or better, its portrayal of female piety as a kind of sacrilege. The twelve ladies of Riol, like a community of fervent beguines, share the heart of a single lover. In an obscene parody of erotically tinged devotion, they also share *chou que femme plus goulouse* (v. 573)—“what women most desire.”

MOCKING MASS MURDER:

THE PASSION OF THE JEWS OF PRAGUE

No less obscene, though utterly different in kind, is a Bohemian text known as the *Passio Judeorum Pragensium*—our most detailed narrative of a pogrom that devastated the Jewish community of Prague in 1389.³⁴ About twenty Christian accounts of this event survive in Latin, Czech, and German, mainly brief chronicle entries, ranging from the dispassionate to the gleeful—in addition to a few Hebrew sources. The *Passio* was written by an eyewitness, obviously a cleric, soon after the event and exists in at least three manuscripts.³⁵ Hitherto consulted as a documentary source, it is in fact something far more rare: an ambitious literary attempt to make sense of a pogrom in light of what the writer saw as its ultimate cause—Jewish responsibility for the death of Christ. The reading I propose aims both to situate the *Passio* in its historical context and to grapple with its paradoxes as a double-edged parody. Due to the morally problematic nature of the text, however, I necessarily read against the grain in a way I have tried not to do elsewhere in this book.

The disturbance in Prague began on Holy Saturday, when a priest bringing communion to a sick person passed down a Jewish street. It was said that some Jews had thrown stones at a monstrance; in one account, a pyx was broken and hosts spilled on the ground.³⁶ In any case, there was a brawl, and the Jews deemed responsible were hauled into the town hall for punishment. There the matter might have ended, except that Prague was in a highly inflamed mood because of simmering discontent with the king. Wenceslas IV, like most European rulers, protected “his” Jews as “serfs of the royal chamber,” granting them exemptions and privileges so that, whenever he needed ready cash, he could tax them or confiscate their assets.³⁷ Though such policies were

common, they were also deeply unpopular, not because Christians pitied these Jews but because they resented the profits of usury, which theologians repeatedly condemned as sinful.³⁸ Most citizens of Prague, above all the clergy, saw the Jewish community much as Chaucer's Prioress viewed the "Jewerye" in her "Asian" town: it survived only because it was "sustened by a lord of that contree / For foule usure and lucre of vileynye, / Hateful to Crist and to his compaignye" (vv. 490–92).³⁹ It did not help that Wenceslas, unlike his father, Charles II, was a weak and unpopular king. According to the abbot Ludolf of Sagan (d. 1422), he was disliked by "clergy and people, the nobles, the burghers, and the peasants—and acceptable only to the Jews." [Exosus igitur erat clero et populo, nobilibus, civibus et rusticis, solis erat acceptus Iudeis.]⁴⁰ So, by attacking this resented and vulnerable minority, the people could also voice their displeasure with the monarch. As David Nirenberg wrote in another context, "attacks upon the king's Jews were attacks on royal majesty, and time after time the Crown condemned them as such."⁴¹

In short, clergy and laity alike were waiting for a provocation, which the brawl on Holy Saturday supplied. When Easter dawned, hot on the heels of a Good Friday service pocked with allusions to "perfidious Jews," preachers denounced this fresh insult to Christ's body by his ancient foes. Taking advantage of the king's absence from Prague, Christians set on avenging their Lord made their way to the Jewish quarter with stones, swords, and firebrands, urged on by the populist leader Ieško (also called "Gesco" in the *Passion*).⁴² Although the town council tried to forestall violence, knowing it would result in a hefty fine when the king returned, there was no stopping the bloodthirsty mob. According to the *Passion*, the council commanded the town criers to declare a curfew, but instead, they proclaimed on their own initiative that "the whole people should all attack at once for the plunder and extermination of the Jews." [Clamabant enim, ut regio edicto et consulum tota simul plebs irrueret in predam et in exterminium Iudeorum.]⁴³ A rich community leader named Jonas (the *parnas ha-chodesh*) was the first to be targeted. The *parnas*, described in the *Passion* as "prince of the Jews," was the elected official responsible for collecting Jewish taxes, delivering them to the king, and representing the community's interests.

Spurred by Ieško and the mutinous town criers, the mob slaughtered men, women, and children with every weapon at their disposal, even killing for good measure a few Christians who “looked like Jews.”⁴⁴ When the Jewish quarter was set ablaze, many took refuge in their stone synagogue, but the rioters rushed in after them with knives and swords.⁴⁵ There, following an ancient practice of Jewish martyrdom that had been revived in 1096, during the First Crusade, the rabbi and others sanctified the Name (*kiddush ha-Shem*) by killing first their children, then themselves, rather than submit to massacre or forced baptism.⁴⁶ Two quick-thinking Jews—so the *Passion* claims—tensured themselves and escaped in the guise of priests. Meanwhile, the mob was eagerly searching for hidden wealth, snatching books from synagogues, and desecrating the Jewish cemetery in the hope that even there, buried treasures might be found or bodies redeemed for money. (The practice of exhuming Jewish corpses for ransom was common enough to have been prohibited by papal bulls.)⁴⁷ Likewise, the fact that Torah scrolls and copies of the Talmud were confiscated, rather than burned, bespeaks a rage tempered by calculation: these valuables could later be resold to the survivors.

The death toll has been subject to wildly inflated estimates, but the most accurate figure is probably the earliest. Tilemann Elhen von Wolfhagen, writing before 1400 but citing an older source, states in the *Limburg Chronicle* that “about a hundred Jewish households” [binach als umb hondert huisgeseß] were put to death.⁴⁸ If that figure is correct, it would suggest a toll of four to five hundred. When the dust had cleared, the town council decreed on Monday morning that all Jewish property seized by rioters must be brought to the town hall to contribute to a fine, which was levied as expected. One source values the proceeds at five barrels of silver for the royal fisc.⁴⁹ Given these lucrative profits, it is likely that Wenceslas, like his father before him, had secretly connived at the pogrom while only pretending to be dismayed. Meanwhile, the physical damage had to be contained. Afraid that the heap of corpses would cause a pestilence—or, as the *Passion* says, “lest the city be infected by air corrupt with the stench of usurious fat” [ne ex usuraria pingwedine aeris corruptio inficeret civitatem]—the town council paid some poor Christians to burn the bodies, along with any Jews they might find still alive.⁵⁰ A few children

snatched from the flames were baptized and adopted by Christian families, while others submitted to the sacrament “voluntarily.” No perpetrators were ever punished, nor does any Christian source condemn the pogrom. Only the revered Rabbi Avigdor Kara (d. 1439), a young man at the time, composed a lament in Hebrew, which for centuries was recited on Yom Kippur in the liturgical use of Prague.⁵¹

Although events like those of Easter 1389 were all too common, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* is exceptional—a caustic parody that cuts in many directions. According to Paul Lehmann, its genre—the political *passio*—was probably of English origin. Unlike most forms of scriptural parody, the political passion was not a comic mode. Lehmann’s anthology includes other *passiones* written to celebrate Edward I’s punishment of a disloyal regent (1289), the same king’s victory over Robert the Bruce (1306), and a French defeat at the hands of the Flemish (1302).⁵² So it looks as if the genre was born about the same time the Jews were expelled from England (1290). As a literary form, the *passio* descends from the late antique *cento*, or “patchwork cloak,” a poem composed entirely of verses from other poems, rearranged to tell a new story.⁵³ Just as the early Christian poet Proba related the whole life of Christ in lines from Virgil (*parodia sacra* in its original sense), the authors of political *passiones* crossed over in the opposite direction. By lifting verses from the Gospels to recount secular history, they consciously profaned them. But, as Lehmann rightly observes, “anyone who takes offense at profanation of the Bible cannot understand the Middle Ages.”⁵⁴

When Richard II married Anne of Bohemia in 1382, the floodgates of cultural exchange between London and Prague sprang open, and Bohemia acquired not only Wycliffite ideas, but also a taste for the political *passio*. Several Czech examples ridicule Jan Hus. Even a sympathetic account of his martyrdom bears a mocking title slapped on by an opponent: “*Passio [Magistri Johannis Hus] secundum Johannem Barbatum, rusticum quadratum*” (“Passion of Master Jan Hus according to John the Bearded, the Square-Shouldered Peasant”).⁵⁵ The same character, “John the Peasant,” is also the putative author of *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*. Perhaps a folkloric figure, he stands for the common people in their rude simplicity—or the lynch mob of 1389, as perceived by an ambivalent clerical observer. The phrase *rusticus quadratus* had long been a pejorative idiom for “peasant,” at least in central

Europe. In Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogue on Miracles*, for example, a monk sees a demon in the form of a *rusticus quadratus* and offers a memorable description: "He had a broad chest, square shoulders, a short neck, hair styled proudly enough over his forehead, the rest of his hair hanging down like spikes of wheat." [Habebat enim pectus latum, scapulas acutas, collum breve, capillum in fronte satis superbe tonsoratum, crines reliquos sicut haristas dependentes.]⁵⁶ This image could serve for a fictive author-portrait of our parodist. A late medieval Bohemian poem describes such rustics as sullen and quick to anger.⁵⁷ In addition, they were linked with Jews as targets of elite contempt and perceived as prone to mob violence.⁵⁸ In a grammatical parody, a catechism runs: "What part of speech is *rusticus*? A noun. What kind of noun? Jewish. Why? Because he is silly and base, like a Jew."⁵⁹ Yet peasants could also be idealized as loyal, unpretentious repositories of folk wisdom. Přemysl, the legendary founder of the first Bohemian dynasty, had been a peasant, and the national patron, St. Wenceslas, was said to do peasant labor in spite of his noble birth.⁶⁰ So "John the Peasant" is a fittingly ambiguous pseudonym for an ambivalent author. The epithet links him on the one hand with the evangelist he parodies ("The Passion according to John"), but on the other with Ieško, or Johannes, the ringleader of the pogrom.

The Passion of the Jews of Prague, like most parodies, points the sword both ways. Though no friend of the victims, the author nonetheless casts them in the role of the suffering Christ, enabling a potential sympathetic reading that undermines his overt anti-Judaism. By the same token, John the Peasant idealizes the perpetrators with one hand even as he mocks their brutality and greed with the other. So here, too, a both/and reading is possible. But in this case, not the medieval but the modern reader is more likely to sense the work's jarring ambivalence. In a post-Holocaust world, it is impossible to read this text as its author most likely intended. Yet John the Peasant's work has a deeply troubled "textual unconscious," to adopt Jonathan Culler's term.⁶¹ By speaking the unspeakable, it raises searching questions about the normative practices of medieval exegesis, devotion, and liturgy. I will probe this uncanny effect by examining six literary techniques deployed in *The Passion*: direct citation, role-switching, inversion, selective omission, reverse typology, and liturgical parody.

Unlike other political passions, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* maintains an uncomfortable intimacy with its original. Since the terrible events actually took place during Passover and Easter, the liturgical time of the sacred story is also the real time of the violence. Moreover, tension between “Jews” and “Christians” is already a central theme in the Gospels, if by “Christians” we mean the disciples of Jesus and by “Jews,” the religious authorities who opposed him. John the Peasant draws most heavily on Matthew’s Gospel and secondarily on John’s, mainly because these were the two most prominently recited during Holy Week, but also because of their intrinsic qualities. Matthew, whose Gospel is structured around the theme of Jesus as New Moses, shows a persistent concern with controversies over the interpretation of Torah. John, writing against the background of a split between the nascent church and synagogue, refers pervasively to “the Jews” (*Judei*) as enemies of Jesus, thus fanning the flames of anti-Judaism.⁶²

For John the Peasant, *Judea* signifies the Jewish quarter of Prague, which a priest enters “with the body of Jesus,” that is, the host. When some Jews go to meet him with stones because “he has made himself the Son of God” (John 19:7), the parody starts off on a simple footing, as if to follow the Johannine narrative of steadily intensified controversy between Jesus and his opponents. But direct citation, without ironic reversals, is relatively rare. It occurs most openly when the author invokes the notorious curse “His blood be upon us and upon our children” (Matt. 27:25)—a curse Jews supposedly called down on themselves to exempt Pontius Pilate from guilt for the crucifixion. For the rioters of 1389, this verse fully justified their actions. Another direct citation follows when the Christian mob taunts the Jews: “henceforth you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64)—at which time they will be eternally damned. A third example depicts the victims’ terror via Jesus’s apocalyptic warning, “The days shall come in which they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren who have not given birth, and the breasts that have not given suck.’ For then the Jews said to the mountains of their dwellings, ‘Fall upon us,’ and to the hills of their houses, ‘Cover us’” (Luke 23:29–30).

But the Jews are not confined to the roles of persecutors or eschatological losers. A disconcerting feature of the *Passion* is the instability of

their narrative position, for Jews are made to fill both negative and positive roles in this Gospel parody. When the Christians predict that “before the cock crows,” they will perish miserably (Matt. 26:34), they stand in the place of Peter, who denies Christ three times before the cock crows. They again fill Peter’s role when two Jews, having disguised themselves as priests, deny their identity to escape persecution (Matt. 26:70, 73). Those who martyr themselves with sword or noose imitate Judas, who committed suicide (Matt. 27:5, Acts 1:18). But more often the Jews take the place of Jesus himself as sacrificial victims. As the lynch mob approaches, they ask, “Friends, why have you come?” (Matt. 26:50)—the same question that Jesus asks Judas in Gethsemane. Their query suggests that the Jewish community too has been betrayed, possibly by the king himself. Ieško the peasant, “as it were high priest for that year,” prophesies that “all the Jews together should die for the Christian people, lest the whole nation perish” (John 11:49–50). Hence the Jews collectively stand in the scapegoat role assigned to Jesus by Caiaphas, the high priest.

Jonas, the “prince of the Jews,” echoes Christ’s lament “My soul is sorrowful unto death” (Matt. 26:38). But lest this remark make him appear too sympathetic, John the Peasant adds “even perpetual death.” At the apex of the *Passion* the tormentors,

plectentes struem, corone [*sic*] de lignis ardentibus imposuerunt super capita et corpora Iudeorum. Et illudentes eis composuerunt eos in ignem ardentem. Et postquam illuserunt eis, exuerunt eos vestimentis eorum et induerunt eos igne. Et dederunt eis bibere flammam cum fumo mixtam. Et cum gustassent, oportuit eos bibere. (21)

plaiting straw, fashioned crowns of burning wood and set them on the heads and bodies of the Jews and, mocking them, set them on fire. And after they had mocked them, they stripped them of their clothing and clothed them in fire, and gave them flames to drink mingled with smoke. And when they had tasted, it was fitting for them to drink (see Matt. 27:29, 31, 34).

Christ’s crown of thorns, mockery, nakedness, and potion of gall are pressed into metaphorical service, carried yet further into the realm of

cruelty to describe victims burned alive in their houses. None of the other *passiones* collected by Lehmann place their victims similarly in the role of Christ or cleave so closely to the Gospel accounts of his suffering.⁶³ The *Passio*, in short, employs a double ironic inversion. On the one hand, the Jews collectively play the role of Jesus, while the Christian mob plays the role of the biblical Jewish mob. On the other hand, the Jews remain Jews (wicked desecrators of Christ's body), and the Christians, Christians (righteous avengers of Jewish blasphemy).

By simultaneously identifying the Jews with Christ and rejoicing in God's vengeance on them, the *Passio* stands at the crossroads of two uneasily coexisting attitudes. As Caroline Bynum astutely notes, late medieval Christians perceived Jewish violence as necessary to procure both the death of Christ and the creation of new "holy matter" (blood relics) through their acts of host desecration. Yet, while Christians viewed the Passion as the ultimate sacrifice, they never represented the Jews as sacrificing Christ, merely as killing him. To say anything more would be to ascribe unacceptable power to human beings, for no one but God could sacrifice God. Hence Christ himself occupies a paradoxical role as both priest and victim, himself the sacrifice as well as the high priest who offers it and the God who receives it.⁶⁴ The *Passio* mirrors this theological complexity in its corresponding ambivalence toward Jews. Overtly, they are the objects of justified Christian revenge. Covertly, however, the play of biblical allusion turns them, too, into sacrificial victims. In other Passion-related texts we find a similar tension, though seldom in such a compressed and jarring form. The dominant pole is expressed by an ancient legend, the *Vindicta Salvatoris* (*Vengeance of the Savior*), which represents the destruction of Jerusalem by the emperor Vespasian and his son Titus in 70 C.E. as divine vengeance for the Crucifixion.⁶⁵ Extant in numerous versions, this anti-Jewish legend was widely dramatized in the later Middle Ages and could easily justify pogroms. In fact, a version of it (with the title *Gesta Salvatoris*) accompanies the *Passio* in one of its three manuscripts, suggesting that the scribe or patron made precisely this connection.⁶⁶ He and probably many others saw the events in Prague as renewing the Savior's vengeance against the Jews.

In a Czech farce called *Mastičkář* (*The Ointment Seller* or *The Charlatan*), from the early fourteenth century, anti-Jewish parody appears in the context of paschal festivities. The three Maries who come to anoint

Christ's body on Easter morning are parodically doubled by the Jew Abraham, who seeks an ointment to resurrect his son Isaac. Tricked by a merchant, Abraham unwittingly buys a pot of excrement instead and smears it on his son's buttocks, but it does the trick anyway; the boy returns to life.⁶⁷ Certain Jewish exegetes, influenced by the Church and a burgeoning theology of martyrdom, had already converted the near-sacrifice of Isaac (Genesis 22) into his actual death and resurrection.⁶⁸ So this scene, unique to the Bohemian play, ridicules Jewish religious belief even as it deploys the old association of Jews with feces. Since the clueless Abraham cannot even tell the difference between filth and fragrance, scatology serves to keep the Jews in their place. It undermines the typology that would make Isaac a figure of Christ by setting a comic rift between Abraham's grief for his son and the Magdalene's sorrow for Jesus. In a similar way, the *Passio* at once proposes and resists a typological link between the persecuted Jesus and persecuted Jews.

Most of John the Peasant's readers would also have known meditations on the Passion, like those of pseudo-Bonaventure and Ludolph of Saxony. Less scholarly versions were available in the vernaculars. Thomas Bestul has made a convincing case that these narratives not only reflected, but actively promoted anti-Judaism. They dwelt in excruciating detail on the physical torments of the Passion, since their explicit purpose was to elicit compassion for the Crucified. A secondary, though ethically more significant goal was to arouse contrition, reminding readers that their own sins were the ultimate cause of Christ's suffering.⁶⁹ But these spiritual goals were forever competing—at a disadvantage—with the easier dynamics of blame.⁷⁰ As Bestul writes, "The avowed aim of . . . affective rhetorical strategies is to increase the reader's sense of pity for the sufferings of Christ: but this is done by emphasizing in vivid detail the horrible deeds of the Jews; the result is a subtext with a strong, but much different meaning, a subtext that surely led to the arousal in the reader of emotions quite other than love of Christ."⁷¹ Far overshadowing the Romans, the "perfidious Jews" in these meditations bear the brunt of guilt as they defile Christ's face with their spittle, strike him with sacrilegious hands, and abuse him like a slave.⁷² Standing at the foot of the Cross, Mary not only invites spectators to lament with her, but often cries out against the Jews as her Son's torturers.⁷³

Yet the impact of such meditations may have been more ambivalent than we think, for the call to repentance was linked, at best, with a demand for the forgiveness of enemies. Although Passion plays and devotional works frequently included anti-Jewish material,⁷⁴ they could also warn against the sentiments voiced by John the Peasant. A remarkable Passion play from Revello, in Piedmont, features a vigorous Jewish debate on the advisability of having Jesus crucified. Only one Jew wants him condemned as a criminal; another wants to free him because he is innocent; but the majority favor crucifixion on orthodox Christian grounds, precisely because they recognize that Jesus is the Messiah and must die in this way to fulfill God's saving purpose.⁷⁵ Their debate recalls a perennial revisionist tradition that dates back to the second-century *Gospel of Judas*. On this view, as we saw in chapter 1, the betrayal of Christ is a *felix culpa* or "necessary sin" required to enable his sacrificial death, so Judas is exonerated. Since he is so often treated in literature as the paradigmatic Jew,⁷⁶ his vindication could by extension exonerate the whole people, which is what seems to happen in the Revello play. If such a view is accepted, then Christians have no ground for blaming Jews, but should rather be grateful to them.

While the Revello play is unusual, there can be no more influential witnesses to mainstream clerical piety than pseudo-Bonaventure's ubiquitous *Meditaciones Vite Christi* (*Meditations on the Life of Christ*) and Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Jesu Christi* (*Life of Jesus Christ*). Pseudo-Bonaventure's mid-fourteenth-century work, which soon became available in all the European vernaculars, says this about Christ's prayer in Gethsemane ("if it be possible, let this cup pass from me," Matt. 26:39):

Dicunt tamen sapientes et expositores quod orauit Dominus Iesus Patrem non tam timore paciendi quam misericordia prioris populi: quia compaciebatur Iudeis, qui de sua morte perdebantur. Non enim ipsi eum occidere debebant quia ex eis erat, et in lege eorum continebatur et tanta eis contulerat beneficia; unde orabat Patrem: si fieri potest, cum salute Iudeorum, quia credat multitudo gentium recuso passionem. Si uero Iudei excecandi sunt ut alii uideant, non mea uoluntas sed tua fiat.⁷⁷

As the wise men and commentators say, the Lord Jesus prayed to the Father not so much because he feared to suffer as out of mercy for the

prior people of God, for he had compassion on the Jews who would be lost because of his death. They were not supposed to kill him because he was one of them, he was prophesied in their Law, and he had conferred so many favors on them. Hence he prayed to the Father: “if it is possible for the multitude of Gentiles to believe while the Jews also are saved—then I refuse the Passion. But if the Jews must be blinded so that others may see, then not my will, but thine be done.”

Similarly, the great Carthusian scholar Ludolph’s massive *Vita Jesu Christi*, completed perhaps two decades before the pogrom at Prague, explains why Christ wept over Jerusalem:

Nobis, fratres, istae lacrymae Domini fiunt ut Magistrum imitemur, et ab hoc tanto praeceptore nostro discamus quid in nostrorum inimicorum morte, et ruina agere debeamus. Unde et ipse ait: Diligite inimicos vestros, benefacite his qui oderunt vos. . . . Iste fletus Domini compatiens Civitati de miseria, quae illi mox imminabat, praefiguratus fuit olim in lamentationibus Jeremiae, . . . sic et nos in afflictione proximorum, etiam inimicorum, ex compassione flere debemus, exemplo Christi, qui compassus est suis inimicis.⁷⁸

These tears of the Lord were shed for us, brethren, that we might imitate the master, and learn from this great teacher of ours how we should behave at the death or destruction of our enemies. Hence he also said, “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.” . . . The compassionate Lord wept for the City because of the misery that was soon to fall upon it, as prefigured of old in the lamentations of Jeremiah. . . . So we too should compassionately weep for the affliction of our neighbors, even our enemies, after the example of Christ who had compassion for his own enemies.

My last example is the Dominican Henry Suso’s *Horologium Sapientiae* (*Clock of Wisdom*, 1334), a phenomenally successful work that survives in more than two hundred manuscripts and was translated into nine languages, including Czech. It contains a powerful Passion meditation in which Christ graphically recalls his sufferings, yet never once refers to his tormentors as “Jews,” with all the dangerous, universalizing connotations that term normally entailed.

Igitur cum me filii tenebrarum crucis patibulo affixissent, non suffecit eis horrendum supplicium mihi illatum, sed crudelius saevientes coram dolente et moriente stabant, et me deridebant, et blasphemando subsannabant, moventes capita sua, et opprobriis impiissime miserum affligebant. Ego autem his non motus, sed patienter sustinens aiebam: "Pater ignosce eis, quia nesciunt quid faciunt."

When the sons of darkness had nailed me to the gallows of the cross, the hideous torments already laid upon me were not enough for them, but, raging more savagely, they stood around me as I lamented and died, and they "derided me," and "blaspheming me" they gestured at me, "wagging their heads," and with their insults afflicted me most hatefully in my misery. But I was not moved by what they did, but, enduring patiently, I said: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."⁷⁹

These examples show that even highly affective accounts of the Passion could resist the lure of anti-Judaism and its accompanying cry for vengeance. In fact, the three texts I have just cited were by far the best-known and most widely read of their type, so their teaching can be taken as normative. Under typical circumstances, of course, a meditant might contrive to feel compassion for Christ, remorse for his sins, and anger at Jews all at once, with no sense of contradiction—despite reminders of the forgiveness and love of enemies modelled by Jesus himself. But *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*, by identifying the Jews simultaneously with Christ and his persecutors, compels a choice. Is the reader to exult in God's vengeance, as the writer apparently did, or maintain the usual stance of sympathy with the tortured victim? Could John the Peasant have gone too far, driving some readers to feel horror rather than satisfaction?

In order to score points, the author frequently has to invert or negate the Gospel verses he cites. Blessing gives way to cursing. For example, Jesus's promise to the woman who anointed him—that this good deed will be told in her memory wherever the Gospel is proclaimed (Matt. 26:13)—becomes a threat concerning the Jews' nefarious deed. Jesus comforts the disciples who fail to keep watch with him in Gethsemane, noting that "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). In

the *Passion*, on the contrary, the ringleader, Ieško, swears vengeance until his sword is “drunk with the blood of the Jews,” affirming that “my spirit is willing, and my flesh is not weak.” [Non iocundabor ad plenum, donec inebrietur gladius simul et animus meus de sanguinibus Iudeorum. Spiritus quidem meus ad hoc promptus est et caro non infirma (20).] Unlike the soldiers who cast lots for Christ’s tunic (Matt. 27:35), the mob did not bother to cast lots for the Jews’ garments, but “seized them whole and in great heaps—and not only the garments, but all their treasure and furniture with them.” [Diviserunt autem inter se vestimenta eorum, unusquisque quantum rapere valuit. Nec sortem miserunt super eos, sed integre et cumulatum ceperunt indifferenter non solum vestimenta, verum tamen omnem thesaurum et suppellectilia eorum cum illis (20).]

After Christ’s resurrection, Matthew says, many tombs were opened and the bodies of the saints arose and “came into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matt. 27:52–53). Conversely, when Christians desecrated the Jewish cemetery, “no bodies of the Jews rose from the dead. But after the last day they shall come into the profane city of hell and appear to Lucifer and many demons.” [Monumenta eorum per christianos aperta sunt, nec tamen ulla corpora Iudeorum surrexerunt. Sed post diem novissimum venient in prophanam infernorum civitatem et apparebunt Lucifero et cum eo multis demonibus (21).] The most striking of these reversals negates Jesus’s prayer of submission to his Father in the garden of Gethsemane: “Thy will be done” (Matt. 26:42). Rather than surrendering to the divine will, Ieško promises that the outcome will be “not as [the Jews] will, but as we will. The cup that God the Father has prepared for them shall not pass from them until they drink it. Our will be done.” [Ut non sicut ipsi volunt, sed sicut nos volumus. Calix, quem disposuit eis Deus Pater, non transibit ab eis, sed bibent illum. Fiat voluntas nostra (20).] The cumulative effect is to stress the avenging zeal of the rioters. Outdoing Christ’s tormentors in violence, they mock his patience with their lack of it.

Closely linked to the inversion of some biblical verses is the total suppression of others. Since the Gospel’s core message is forgiveness, turning it into a tract of vengeance requires some loud silences. In Matthew and John, for instance, Peter tries to resist the arrest of Jesus by cutting off the ear of the high priest’s slave. Jesus, renouncing violence,

tells him to put his sword back in its sheath, “for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:51–52; John 18:10). In Luke’s Gospel he also heals the slave (Luke 22:51). But John the Peasant reports instead that the mob struck their victims “without mercy, cutting off not only their ears, but their heads, hands, and feet.” Conspicuously, too, the text echoes none of Jesus’s last words from the Cross. It does not make the Jews ask, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken [us]?” (Matt. 27:46), although that would have been a legitimate question. Much less is there any hint of Jesus’s prayer of pardon: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). The text ends with a statement that the civic authorities “went out and secured the Jewry, sealing the gates and setting a guard,” just as the Romans did at the tomb of Jesus (Matt. 27:65–66). This is where the Gospel readings on Good Friday would have ended, although the pogrom occurred on Easter Sunday. Here there will be no repentance, no resurrection. Finally, though the text supplies analogues for Jesus, Peter, and Judas, two key roles go unfilled. In Passion plays, the lamenting figures of the Virgin Mary and the Magdalene provide focal points for the spectator’s empathy and, occasionally, protest.⁸⁰ Here they are necessarily absent. Only near the end does John the Peasant write that “an old Jewish woman,” who had accepted baptism, “told her confessor that she had seen the blessed Virgin Mary . . . standing above the gate of the Jewry.” [Una Iudea antiqua . . . post regenerationis lavacrum suo retulisse dicitur confessori, quod beatam virginem Mariam, Genitricem Domini nostri Iesu Cristi, stantem viderit supra portam Iudeorum (23).] He does not say whether the Virgin was brandishing a sword or weeping.

The *Passion* cites over ninety biblical verses, more than half from Matthew’s Gospel. While the Old Testament is evoked rarely, its submerged presence introduces what I will call “reverse typology,” a particularly bizarre form of Scriptural memory. For instance, when the “prince of the Jews,” Jonas, says that his soul is “sorrowful unto death,” the text alludes primarily to Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. But readers might also have recalled his namesake, the prophet Jonas—a Jew so grieved by God’s deliverance of the Gentiles in Nineveh that he declares himself “angry enough to die” (Jonah 4:9). The *Passion* includes at least three more complex incidents of reverse typology. The first occurs when the civic authorities (equivalent to the Gospels’ Ro-

mans) command the town criers to “summon the congregation of all the people into the praetorium [the town hall] to prevent further peril to the Jews. But by the dispensation of God, it happened that the Holy Spirit used the tongue of the criers to proclaim the opposite of this command.” Subverting the council’s wishes, the criers took it on themselves to fake a royal decree, summoning the people instead to exterminate the Jews.

Videns autem potestas civitatis communem plebiculam magno contra Iudeam fremitu incandescere, mandavit preconibus, ut clamore valido publice per plateas congregacionem tocius populi ad resistendum futuris Iudeorum periculis in pretorium convocarent. Sed dispensacione divina factum est, ut Spiritus Sanctus lingua preconum oppositum precepti uteretur clamancium. Clamabant enim, ut regio edicto et consulum tota simul plebs irrueret in predam et in exterminium Iudeorum. (19)

Consciously or not, the text here gestures toward the famous story of Balaam (Numbers 22–24). A professional prophet, Balaam was hired by the Moabites to curse Israel, but God deflected him from that course by causing the prophet’s ass to speak. Instead of cursing the Israelites, Balaam ended by blessing them fivefold. In the *Passion*, reverse typology excuses the town criers’ malice and insubordination. Moved by the Holy Spirit, John the Peasant claims, they disobeyed orders and inverted Balaam’s example, cursing where they had been commanded to bless.

Urged on by Ieško and these murderous criers, the Christians therefore “plotted how to destroy all the Jews,” in words that echo the Gospel conspiracy against Jesus (John 11:53). But a literal-minded reader might recall someone else who had plotted to destroy all the Jews: Haman in the book of Esther, which celebrates a pogrom narrowly averted by the queen’s heroism. Jews read the story of Esther liturgically at Purim, shortly before Passover, just as Christians read the Passion on Good Friday, so the allusion to her story touched an extremely raw nerve. Since Haman was hanged during Passover, the festivals of Purim and Passover are closely linked. Moreover, in the Septuagint version of Esther, the archvillain’s execution is explicitly described as a crucifixion. Hence, in a medieval climate marked by mutual antagonism, the Jewish custom of hanging—or crucifying—Haman in effigy could easily lead into

mockery of Christ, especially when the wine was flowing. (The Talmud says that on Purim, it is a religious duty to become so drunk that one cannot tell the difference between “cursed be Haman” and “blessed be Mordecai.”) Even if the frequently alleged Jewish mockery of Jesus on Purim was only a Christian fantasy, it could still spur ritual murder accusations and violence at that time of year.⁸¹ John the Peasant may well have been aware of these traditions, for the Christians of Prague, living in close proximity with Jews, must have had at least some familiarity with Jewish holidays. But even if John was not consciously invoking Esther, the allusion still lurks in the textual unconscious of the *Passion*. Typology once again works in reverse: if God blessed the Jews through Balaam and saved them through Esther, the mob curses and slaughters them, as John the Peasant inverts both these stories.

The third instance of reverse typology is more deliberate. Our author compares the Christian mob to fire-breathing lions who “consumed all with fire and sword, except for a few of the more attractive little children, whom they snatched from the burning fiery furnace” to be baptized and adopted. [Concluserunt itaque omnia in gladio et ferro et igne, paucis elegantioribus infantulum de camino ignis ardentis abductis (21).] Alert readers would have recognized here an allusion to the book of Daniel. The lions recall Daniel 6, but more important is the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (Daniel 3). Known traditionally as the Three Holy Children, these Jews were cast into a furnace as punishment for refusing to worship an idol set up by King Nebuchadnezzar. All the king’s subjects were supposed to fall down in worship when the royal orchestra sounded with “every kind of musical instrument” (Dan. 3:5)—a refrain that accounts for the *Passion*’s odd reference to music sounding amid the fires.⁸² Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate include a lengthy Jewish addition to this episode, which most modern Bibles relegate to the Apocrypha. According to this ancient, familiar text, the three youths “walked in the middle of the flames, praising God and blessing the Lord” (Dan. 3:24) in a long prayer called the Song of the Three Children.⁸³ After their song of praise, the king returns to find them alive and unharmed amid the flames, along with a fourth person “in appearance like a son of God” (Dan. 3:25; 3:92). For Jews this was an angel; for Christians, a figure of Christ. Both communities therefore used the story from Daniel to acclaim God’s deliv-

erance of willing martyrs. A Jewish writer invoked it in the context of a pogrom at Blois in 1171, when a Christian attempt to burn three Jews at the stake repeatedly failed—even though they were ultimately slain by sword.⁸⁴

The fate of the baptized children in Prague would have marked a great divide between Jewish and Christian interpretations of the event. In the eyes of John the Peasant, their selection for baptism was a case of genuine mercy—the only one in his narrative—and an instance of true rather than reverse typology. While the great majority of Jews perished in the flames, a few small children were saved like the holy youths and “raised afterwards by the mercy of the faithful Christians as their adopted sons and daughters, delivered . . . from the darkness of perfidious Jewish errors into the light of the true and orthodox faith” [post-modum viscera misericordie cristianorum fidelium per regenerationem sacri baptismatis a tenebris errorum Iudayce perfidie ad lucem vere et orthodoxe fidei perduxerunt constituentes eos sibi in filios et filias adoptivas (21–22)]. A closely related source, *On the Slaughter of the Jews at Prague* (*Historia de caede Iudaeorum Pragensi*), credits “devout women” with rescuing these children.⁸⁵ In Jewish eyes, on the other hand, the infants suffered a fate worse than death, for they were raised as infidels. Both Jewish and Christian sources note that, during this and other pogroms, parents willingly killed their own children to prevent apostasy. So if (against all likelihood) a few Jewish readers had stumbled on the *Passio*, they would have found here the supreme case of reverse typology. Unlike the Three Holy Children, whom God saved for their loyalty to the Jewish faith and their rejection of idolatry, these baptized children were not saved, but lost for being raised in that very sin. Interestingly, *Decede* remarks that the king was especially angry when he heard that Jewish children had been baptized against their parents’ will.⁸⁶

As the allusions to Daniel suggest, John the Peasant was not just creating a biblical *cento*; he was also producing liturgical parody. Easter and Passover are of course inextricable. Jesus was crucified on the first day of Passover (or according to John, on the day of preparation), and the Latin term for Easter, *Pascha*, is simply the Greek for Passover (Hebrew *Pesach*). Since the dating of Easter depends, by an oft-debated formula, on the date of Passover, in most years the celebration of Holy Week and the Jewish festival overlap, as they did in 1389. Always a

time of danger, this season spawned charges of ritual murder as well as host desecration, for Jews were said to use the blood of Christian children to bake matzo and other Passover foods.⁸⁷ In Prague and elsewhere, they were forbidden by law to appear in public between Holy Thursday and Easter.⁸⁸ All the same, Christians necessarily observed the Passover themselves, for it forms the indelible core of the Easter liturgy. As Israel Yuval has shown, the rabbinic Passover Haggadah and the liturgy of Holy Week developed in tandem, with mutual influence and polemic, as the sister faiths developed their competing explanations of the Temple sacrifices and why God allowed them to end.⁸⁹ While the Jewish festival celebrates the exodus from slavery into freedom under Moses, the Christian feast interprets this event typologically: Jesus as the New Moses leads his people triumphantly from death to life, from darkness to light. The Red Sea crossing signifies liberation from the bondage of sin, with the defeated Pharaoh representing Satan—a symbolic understanding that applies not only to Christ's resurrection but also to baptism, another key part of the Easter liturgy. Hence the *Exsultet* sung at the Easter Vigil—the same prayer that celebrates Adam's *felix culpa*—commemorates both the old and the new Passover:

Haec nox est, in qua primum patres nostros, filios Israël eductos de Aegypto, mare Rubrum sicco vestigio transire fecisti. Haec igitur nox est, quae peccatorum tenebras, columnae illuminatione purgavit. Haec nox est, quae hodie per universum mundum in Christo credentes, a vitiis saeculi et caligine peccatorum segregatos, reddit gratiae, sociat sanctitati. Haec nox est, in qua destructis vinculis mortis, Christus ab inferis victor ascendit. . . . O vere beata nox, quae exspoliavit Aegyptios, ditavit Hebraeos! Nox, in qua terrenis caelestia, humanis divina junguntur.⁹⁰

This is the night on which you first led our fathers, the children of Israel, out of Egypt and made them cross the Red Sea with dry feet. This then is the night which banished the darkness of sin with the radiant pillar of light. This is the night which today throughout the world delivers those who believe in Christ from the vices of the world and the darkness of sin, restores them to grace, and clothes them with sanctity. This is the night on which Christ rose from hell as its conqueror, hav-

ing broken the chains of death. . . . O truly blessed night, which despoiled the Egyptians and enriched the Hebrews! O night on which heaven is united with earth, the divine with the human!

John the Peasant must have heard this prayer recited only days or weeks before he penned his parodic version:

O vere beata nox, que spoliavit Iudeos, ditavit cristianos. O sanctissimum Pascha nostrum in quo fideles incontaminati agni esu, corpore videlicet et sanguine Cristi Iesu, pridie et tunc refecti et a peccatorum [*sic*] vinculis per contritam confessionem liberati, . . . nec infancie nec caniciei Hebreorum pepercerunt. (21)

O truly blessed night, which despoiled the Jews and enriched the Christians! O most sacred Passover of ours, in which the faithful, . . . liberated from the chains of sin . . . , spared neither the Hebrew children nor their white-haired old men.

Offensive to Jews and Christians alike, this version of the paschal prayer equates the Jews with the Egyptians and thus, typologically, with the devil. Once again reverse typology transforms a biblical miracle into an act of violence. In the Exodus story, the Jews do not defeat the Egyptians by military force; rather, Pharaoh's army drowns in the Red Sea. But in John the Peasant's version, the newly redeemed Christians become the Lord's avenging army, their might and zeal as it were magically heightened by their Easter communion.

Though hardly pleasant reading, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* is important for three reasons. First, the work of John the Peasant provides as clear an insight as we are likely to get into the mentality behind Easter 1389 and other pogroms. It is easy enough to identify material causes of the violence: the self-interest of borrowers seeking debt relief, the annoyance of fiscally strapped parish priests, the impotence of the town council, and smoldering resentment against an ineffective king, not to mention the mindless cruelty of mobs. Beyond all these, however, the *Passion* exposes the fanaticism of a learned and rhetorically skillful cleric, so bent on celebrating the slaughter that he hid behind the mask of a peasant, which a man of his attainments

would ordinarily have spurned. His motives, like those of the inflammatory preachers, are clearly religious, but his faith is founded on purity and vengeance. Even as he satirizes the greed of the lynch mob, he does not doubt that the pogrom was inspired by God: "For what power could . . . by any cunning restrain the mighty force of these lowly common people to keep them from avenging the injury to God? For this the Spirit of the Lord gathered them together . . . in unity of wills and holy faith." [Nam que tunc potestas tantum vilis et communis plebicule fortitudinis impetum quovis ingenio poterat cohibere, quin pro ulciscenda Dei iniuria proficerent, pro quo Spiritus Domini ipsos . . . in unitatem voluntatum et sancte fidei congregavit? (22)] In his mind, just as Christ had chosen "lowly common people" as his apostles, so too he chose them for the noble work of massacring Jews. Vengeance, indeed, might almost be described as a religious duty. There is no reason to doubt that John the Peasant truly perceived the host desecration as an "injury to God," which Christ would have avenged on the Christians had they not first avenged it on the Jews.⁹¹

In the second place, however, a close reading of the *Passion* should remind us that there is nothing natural or inevitable about an anti-Jewish interpretation of the Gospels, even in the fourteenth century. As we have seen, the same Passion meditations that stressed the cruelty of Christ's torturers also recalled his love for the Jewish people and his readiness to forgive those who crucified him. Insofar as these devotions proposed Jesus's love of enemies as a model to emulate, they challenged the crude anti-Jewish rhetoric of the very same texts. As Michael Jones has written, "medieval Christian anti-Judaism is in no way static, or monolithic, nor is it in any way natural or given."⁹² Yet he insists at the same time that anti-Judaism "is central to medieval European culture rather than a regrettable pathology or 'prejudice' that erupts on occasion."⁹³ I would contest neither the prevalence nor the ferocity of Christian hatred for Jews, nor the ideological work performed by pogroms and their defenders. But if we are truly to resist the trap of taking anti-Judaism as "natural," we must acknowledge that resistance was possible and did sometimes surface.

Deadly as the charge of host desecration could be, Miri Rubin remarks, it "was not so powerful as to leave no space for evasion, doubt and rejection by those to whom it made its appeal."⁹⁴ Pogroms occurred with depressing frequency, but the most interesting cases, as

Rubin shows in *Gentile Tales*, are those where provocateurs who tried to incite violence were successfully resisted. On the literary front, anti-Judaism occurs in a great many, but by no means all, Passion plays and devotions. Julian of Norwich, writing at the same time as John the Peasant, composed an exceedingly graphic account of Christ's sufferings without once mentioning Jews.⁹⁵ In short, neither the pogrom of 1389 nor its literary celebration should be seen as somehow inevitable. If the history of anti-Semitism teaches anything at all, it is to warn against universalizing blood-guilt. So—despite the nexus of political, economic, and religious factors that conspired to facilitate pogroms—the blood of the Jews of Prague rests squarely on the heads of Ieško and his accomplices. No less does it stain the hands of the cleric who called himself “John the Peasant,” their cheerleader after the fact.

I return finally to the *Passion* as a literary parody. Though we often think of parody as a comic genre, it can just as easily be a corrosive force—an agent of hatred rather than light. In order to use the Bible for his purposes, as I have shown, John the Peasant must invert or negate most of the verses he cites, suppress key elements of the Passion narrative, and employ typology in reverse, turning stories of salvation and promise into accounts of slaughter and destruction. By the same token, he transforms the Easter liturgy's ancient proclamation of continuity between Judaism and Christianity into violent opposition. To read the *Passion* as its author must have composed it, with a Gospel book open in front of him, is to realize that this text is not simply a parody of hapless Jews, mercenary rioters, and feckless magistrates. It is a parody of Christ's Passion itself, along with many of the exegetical and devotional traditions surrounding it. Yet the Passions of Matthew, Luke, and John undermine *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* at every turn, creating a textual unconscious that, despite the author's best efforts, allows the grace of irony and pity to seep through.

A LAWSUIT IN HEAVEN:

THE DISPUTE BETWEEN GOD AND HIS MOTHER

One of the most outrageous satires in Middle French is an anonymous poem called *La Desputoison de Dieu et de sa Mère*. This *dit* of about two hundred lines records the pleas in a lawsuit pressed by Christ

against the Virgin in the papal court at Avignon. Mary's estranged son, whom the poet calls simply "God," claims that his mother has unfairly kept the lion's share of his father's legacy, leaving him nothing of value. All the finest homes (*ostels*) in the realm—the great Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals of France—belong to Notre Dame, while God has only a few rundown hospices (*hôtels-Dieu*) where he shelters poor folks and ragged pilgrims. Christ makes a convincing case that he has been ill used, leading the pope to threaten Mary with imprisonment unless she grants her son his inheritance. But the defendant, pleading her own case, turns the tables completely. It was her son who left *her* penniless, she reminds the court, just as his father had done before him. If she is now a rich and eminent lady, she owes that status to her own hard work, for when she realized that both husband and son meant to abandon her, she returned to her craft of weaving luxury goods. Moreover, though she has always tried her best to provide for her ne'er-do-well son, by his own choice he lives in squalor, since he wastes all the money he gets with gamblers and low-lives. The pope, swayed by this plea, judges against the plaintiff: he rules that Christ must not only pay the court costs but also maintain his mother's servants as long as they live. After they die, however, Mary will receive the souls of all who have faithfully served her. The poet ends with a brief prayer to the Virgin, which would seem merely formulaic if the context had not underlined its glaring omission of her Son.

This poem was edited by Ernest Langlois in 1885,⁹⁶ but it has received almost no critical notice.⁹⁷ Yet the edgy humor of the *Dispute* reveals a great deal about religious attitudes and quarrels in fifteenth-century France. Fortunately it is possible to date and localize the poem with some precision. The text is written in Picard, like *Le lai d'Ignaure*, and lists all the episcopal cities in the archdiocese of Reims. So we can assume that the poet was a resident of that province, probably a cleric or a lawyer. The unique manuscript, Langlois tells us, was written in 1453 by a Walloon who identified himself as Jehan le Leu, a glovemaker. Le Leu's commonplace book is a miscellany containing saints' lives and other religious and moral works; the *Dispute* follows *The Life of St. Stephen* and precedes *The Paternoster of St. Julian*.⁹⁸ Influenced by these companion texts, Langlois claimed ambiguously that *The Dispute between God and His Mother* was not a satire, but a work in which "the author only meant to be witty" (*spirituel*)—or perhaps "spiritual."⁹⁹

The manuscript gives us 1453 as a *terminus ante quem*, but the text is also internally dated: Mary situates her plea as occurring “one thousand years after the Ascension, three hundred, fourscore and thirty-seven.”¹⁰⁰ In other words, 1,417 years have passed since *anno Domini* 33, marking the year of the lawsuit as 1450. This dating entails a slight historical anomaly because the case is set in Avignon, although the last French antipope, Felix V, had abdicated on 9 April 1449. But it seems more plausible to allow some poetic license than to adopt Langlois’s suggestion and date the poem to 1417, on the dubious ground that the poet confused the year of Christ’s Passion and Ascension with that of his birth.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, 1417 is a significant date, for it was in that year that the Council of Constance, having deposed all three schismatic popes, finally elected Martin V to end the Great Schism. So a circuitous dating that suggests both 1417 and 1450 has the advantage of making the satire contemporary, and at the same time casting doubt on the legitimacy of the unnamed pope who presumes to pass judgment on God. The date of 1450, as we shall see, is also supported by our author’s most important sources, the *Hommage à la Vierge* and *Lay de Guerre* (1429) of the lawyer and amateur poet Pierre de Nesson (1383–ca. 1440).¹⁰²

Viewing the sacred realm through decidedly profane eyes, our poet employs a genre that was frivolously used to stage disputations between such adversaries as water and wine, flesh and fish, the owl and the nightingale, or the violet and the rose. More serious debates pitted soul against body, Fortuna against Philosophia, or Ecclesia against Synagoga.¹⁰³ As Pierre-Yves Badel remarks, the debate genre reached the height of its popularity between 1425 and 1475, suggesting the fascination exercised by the legal profession on the public.¹⁰⁴ In fact, the humorous debate and mock-trial genres still exist. The Latke-Hamantash debate between the rival delicacies of Hanukkah and Purim is a beloved Jewish academic rite, and a few years ago the Chicago Bar Association staged a mock trial of Hamlet for the murder of Polonius, with the defense pleading for his acquittal on grounds of insanity. There is something of the same quality in our *Dispute*. The fashion had originated with Guillaume de Machaut’s popular *Jugement dou Roy de Bebaingne* (*Judgment of the King of Bohemia*, 1340s), in which the two litigants are a lady whose lover has died and a knight whose mistress has betrayed him. The question is which has greater cause to mourn, and the judge rules on the knight’s side. Machaut’s courtly subject matter is

more typical of the genre than is our poet's religious satire. Yet "God and his mother," alias his virgin bride, were themselves portrayed as courtly lovers in the voluminous literature that we might call devotional romance, inspired by the Song of Songs. This preexisting crossover, so prominent in beguine poems, would have rendered Christ and the Virgin fitting subjects in our poet's mind for the treatment they receive in his *dit*.

The double-edged sword of parody strikes in turn at what each of the litigants represents. From a social perspective, the poem voices the envy and indignation of impoverished hospital managers vis-à-vis wealthy canons.¹⁰⁵ The great cathedrals were overwhelmingly dedicated to Our Lady, as God in the poem remarks with some rancor:

Ma mère a bon ostel à Rains,
 Et à Chalon et à Paris,
 A Chartrez et à Saint Denis,
 Et à Beauvaiz et à Rouen.
 Je me suiz adviséz auwen
 Qu'elle a touz prinz et ie n'ai rienz.
 Ma mère a bon hostel Amiens,
 Et à Boulongne sur la mer
 A ma mère bel demourer.
 Rongié m'a jusquez à la couenne!
 Bon ostel tient à Therouenne,
 Et à Arraz et à Canbray,
 Et en la ville de Tournay,
 Et en la chité de Noyon,
 Et aussy au mont de Laon
 A le pluz biau lieu de la ville,
 Où je ne prenz ne croiz ne pille.
 Au Puy et à Rochemadour
 A deux maisonz de grant valour,
 Et tant d'aultrez par my le monde.

Mother has a good house at Reims,
 One at Châlons, one at Paris,
 At Chartres and at Saint-Denis,

And at Beauvais and at Rouen.
 I've noticed in the course of time
 That she took all, and I got none.
 She has a fine place at Amiens,
 And at Boulogne by the sea,
 My mother has a lovely home.
 She has shaved me down to the scalp!
 She keeps grand state at Thérouanne,
 And at Arras, and at Cambrai,
 Also in the town of Tournai,
 And in the city of Noyon,
 And on the hill of Laon as well
 She has the best site in the town,
 While I've not a coin to my name.
 At Le Puy and Rocamadour
 She has two homes of great value,
 And many more throughout the world.

(vv. 32–51)

After listing no fewer than twenty palaces belonging to the Queen of heaven, Christ goes on to describe the vast wealth of these *bons ostels*.¹⁰⁶ The named cathedrals are mainly in northern France and the Low Countries, including Champagne, Normandy, Picardy, Artois, Hainaut, and the Ile-de-France, but the list extends as far south as the Auvergne (Rocamadour, Le Puy) and even Spain (Burgos, Pamplona). At Montserrat alone, Mary has “six times twenty silver lamps,” and her “houses,” protected by high, crenellated walls, are filled with priceless relics, chalices, gems, and brocades. Even the candles she burns in these palatial homes, Christ concludes bitterly, cost more than his entire net worth.

He, on the other hand, has but a handful of wretched *ospitaux*, or *hôtels-Dieu*, to his name. These were not hospitals in the modern sense, but struggling charitable foundations that offered a few nights' lodging to transients and paupers—what would now be called homeless shelters. As their extant archives reveal too plainly, *hôtels-Dieu* were compelled to address their mission with miserably tight budgets. Often plagued by mismanagement and fraud, they were vulnerable throughout

the fifteenth century both to economic downturns and to a growing suspicion of vagabonds and other indigents, as documented by Michel Mollat. He notes, for example, that one of the hospitals mentioned in the poem, the *hôtel-Dieu* of Tonnerre, operated with persistent deficits from the Black Death until the end of the fifteenth century.¹⁰⁷ Pious donors, afraid that the undeserving poor might not reward their alms with appropriate prayers, were inclined to direct their charitable giving to safer venues. In some regions, hospitals founded to care for the destitute were transformed by exclusionary laws into middle-class retirement homes. But even at their best, urban *hôtels-Dieu* proved woefully inadequate to the need they were intended to serve. The venerable Hôtel-Dieu of Paris, not far from the *bon ostel* of Notre-Dame, had 279 beds for “poor and feeble people, the seriously ill, abandoned children, and . . . pensioners,” each meant to hold two or three persons, as well as twenty-four extra beds for pregnant women. If this provision seems ample, we should recall that at the time of the Black Death, it is estimated, there were about twenty thousand beggars in Paris.¹⁰⁸

Just as God’s disshevelled guests came from a social register far below the bishops who stayed at his mother’s splendid establishments, the hospitality they received at *hôtels-Dieu* was correspondingly meager:

Et je n’ay c’un peu d’ospitaux
 Où se herbergent ly coquin,
 Ly truant et ly pèlerin,
 Quy n’ont ne maille ne denier;
 Telle gent s’y viennent logier,
 Et genz enfonduz et malades,
 Quy n’ont soing de compter baladez.
 Maiz je ny may qu’elle débat,
 Car chascuns selon son estat
 Est couchiez quant est arrivé;
 En povrez drapz touz deschiréz;
 Sy seroi ge se g’y venoie!

I have just a few shelters
 Where homeless rascals come to stay,
 And vagabonds and pilgrims lodge

Without a nickel or a dime—
People of that sort stay with me,
Paupers, down-and-outs, and sick folks
Who take no pains to tell fine tales.
But I deny what she argues—
For each one, as befits his rank,
Receives a bed when he arrives,
Covered with poor and ragged sheets—
I'd get the same if I came there!
(vv. 72–83)

At this point, an earnest reader might take the poem for a Franciscan or even Waldensian attack on ecclesiastical wealth, spiced with some vigorous proto-Protestant outrage against Mariolatry. Our poet's Christ is unmistakably the Christ of the poor, as radically destitute as the most committed Franciscan Spiritual could wish. Yet a Franciscan Christ would not be going to court in the first place to sue for his inheritance. And any attempt to take the satire as a serious social critique must falter when we realize that the poet has treated Mary's position no less (if no more) seriously than Christ's. From her bourgeois perspective, poverty is not a virtue but a proof of laziness and financial mismanagement. Her son, on her telling, is a feckless indigent whom she has tried to reform with tough love, but to no avail:

Où tanz qu'il me laissa jadiz,
L'alay querre par le païs,
Se le trouvé à la Rochelle,
Tous nulz piéz, en une gonnelle,
Là où il tournoit lez hastierz,
Sy comme ungz povrez méhaignié.
Là juoit bien souvent aux déz
Et portoit lez petiz pastéz
Par lez tavernez de la ville.
Au soir n'avoit ne croiz ne pille;
N'avoit point souvent robe noeusve.
Et quant je regarday son euvre,
Ung pou de maison que j'avoie,

Dont nesun compte ne tenoie,
 Luy baillay pour luy gouverner;
 Et puiz se luy fiz machonner
 Ung bon hospital à Pontoise,
 Dont il deuist vivre bien aise,
 S'il se governast sagement,
 De la rente tant seullement.
 Maiz il gaste tout à sez mainz!

In the old days, when he left me,
 I searched for him throughout the land,
 And I found him at La Rochelle,
 All barefoot, wearing a long robe,
 As he turned the barbecue spits
 Just like some poor crippled fellow.
 He gambled often, played at dice,
 And carried the little pasties
 Through the taverns of the city.
 At nightfall he hadn't a cent,
 He scarcely ever got new clothes.
 And when I saw his sorry work,
 I gave him a small house I had
 By which no one set any store,
 Where he could look after himself.
 And later, I had built for him
 A better hospice at Pontoise,
 Where he could have lived in comfort,
 If he had managed prudently,
 On income from the rent alone.
 But he wastes everything he gets!

(vv. 141–61)

Here Mary plays the offended Pharisee, irked that Christ spends all his time with the fifteenth-century equivalent of tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners. La Rochelle, a port town, no doubt had a thriving tavern scene; the low-life atmosphere recalls Jean Bodel's *Jeu de S. Nicolas* (ca. 1200) or Chaucer's fragmentary *Cook's Tale*. From the standpoint of Mary's bourgeois morality, it is pointless to throw good money

after bad, or to waste any more energy trying to reform this hopelessly renegade son. If we read with double judgment, Christ is no better than a wastrel, even as—seen with different eyes—he is crucified until the end of the world to pay the infinite debts of sinners.

Je say bien que je perderoie
 Touz les bienz que je ly donroie,
 Car che qu'il a est tout gasté.
 Je l'ay maintez foiz regardé
 En chez moustierz, lez braz tenduz,
 Povrez, nuz piéz, et mal vestus.
 Bien scay que ainsy se maintenra
 Tant que che siècle chy durra.

I know that I would throw away
 All the property I gave him,
 For everything he has, he wastes.
 Many times I've caught sight of him
 In these churches, his arms outstretched,
 Poor and barefoot and badly dressed.
 I well know he will live like this
 For as long as this world endures.

(vv. 165–72)

For herself, Mary indignantly rejects the charge of withholding Christ's inheritance. Presenting herself as an abandoned wife rather than a widow, she insists that she has earned all her goods by the labor of her hands. Like a thrifty beguine anxious to defend her respectability—and distinguish herself from the poor folk who profit from her charity—the Virgin avows that she is no welfare queen but a skilled and resourceful worker. Her trade incidentally marks her as a woman of breeding, for romance heroines in distress often have to sustain themselves by weaving or embroidery—from Ovid's *Philomena* (in a tale retold by Chrétien) to the heroines of Jean Renart's *L'Escoufle*, Jean Renaut's *Galeran de Bretagne*, and Gautier d'Arras's *Ille et Galeron*.¹⁰⁹ Even so Mary:

Prinz à faire ma besongnette
 Et à filler ma quenouillette;

Et quant je trouvoie à gaignier,
 J'aloie ouvrer de mon mestier
 Et faire chainturez de soie.
 Mon filz scet bien que je savois
 Bien ouvrer avant qu'il fust né.
 Ensement ay en vérité
 Lez granz richesses acquestées.

So I provided for my needs,
 Began to spin with my distaff;
 And when I found a way to earn,
 I went to work at my own trade,
 Making girdles and belts of silk.
 My son well knows that I knew how
 To do fine work before his birth.
 True enough, it was in this way
 That I obtained my great riches.

(vv. 127–35)

The portrayal of Mary as a silk weaver is also indebted to an apocryphal text, the “Protevangelium of James,” where the youthful Virgin is assigned the task of weaving the Temple veil—destined to be rent from top to bottom at her Son’s crucifixion.¹¹⁰ But in our poem this symbolic labor has been secularized, heightening the contrast between Mary’s industry and Christ’s shiftless poverty. While lay people as well as the clerical poor might resent ecclesiastical wealth, as symbolized by the Virgin’s lavish homes, her representation as a self-made woman makes that wealth seem less problematic by validating a bourgeois ethic of hard work and upward mobility, rather than aristocratic reliance on land and hereditary riches.

The subject of inheritance is satirized in the pleas of both litigants. Since neither God nor his Mother is willing to accept counsel, the brunt of this satire falls not on lawyers but on the Holy Family itself. It is at this juncture that our poet comes closest to blasphemy, skewering the notorious Marian excesses of the late Middle Ages. By the middle of the fifteenth century it was quite common for painters to represent Father, Son, and Virgin Mother as a kind of Trinity, especially in such scenes as the Coronation of the Virgin and the Double Intercession.¹¹¹ In these

images and analogous texts, the Holy Trinity appears more and more like a nuclear family: instead of the three identical men who represented the Godhead in twelfth-century art, we now see an old man, a younger man, and a woman, with the Holy Spirit signified by an inconspicuous dove. The Virgin had *de facto* supplanted the Spirit as third person of the Trinity, artistically if not doctrinally. In another proto-Protestant move, our satirist pointedly contrasts the people's fervent devotion to Mary with their relative neglect of Christ, who is saddled with the material support of her worshippers while she basks in their love and ardor. From her own perspective, however, she has shown her son great generosity by allowing him to be served alongside her in *her* houses. If he were truly filial, she implies, he would be grateful for this boon, instead of having the gall to take her to court (vv. 138–40). Thus the squabbling Mother and Son make the Godhead into a dysfunctional Holy Family, its age-old grudges laid bare before the world.

Christ begins his plea by asserting that he is his mother's sole legitimate child, yet she has disinherited him like a bastard. The pope warns Mary that her son has the right to his father's inheritance, adding scandalously, "if you were in fact his mother!" (v. 102). Here the satirist glances sideways at a theatrical tradition about the illegitimacy of Jesus, for in drama his foster-father, Joseph, is a comic cuckold. But the Virgin responds that the divine Father and Son alike have done her wrong.

"Syre, sire," ce dist Marie,
 "Mon filz por ce sy ne m'a mie;
 Vous ne savez point qu'il m'a fait.

.

Que mon fil sanz pille ne crois
 Me laisa; aussy fist son père.
 La chose me fut moult amère,
 Quant de moy lez vy départir,
 Maiz je ne lez peux detenir."

Mary replied, "Come, come, my lord!
 My son scarcely loves me at all.
 You don't know how he's treated me!

.

My son left me without a cent,
 As his father did before him.
 It caused me the most bitter pain
 When I saw them both leaving me,
 But I could not force them to stay.”

(vv. 109–11; 120–24)

Here the pitiful Virgin of the “Stabat Mater” and the *vitae Christi* is turned on her head, so to speak, no longer asking the pious meditant to weep with her, but protesting that she has been ill used. Our irreverent poet revisits the *mater dolorosa* twenty years later, her grief at the Crucifixion long since hardened into anger. After recalling her efforts to assist her wastrel son, despite his ingratitude, she at last produces her trump card:

Et si vous requier qu’il m’apère
 Letrez de la mort de son père,
 Car je croy, et sy n’ay paz tort,
 Que son père n’est mie mort!
 Par la fianche que g’y ay
 Oncquez puiz ne me mariay.
 Et s’il scet que je me marie,
 Si viengne querre sa partie;
 Et se je muir, sy prengne tout.
 Vechy de ma cause le bout.

What’s more, I ask, let him show me
 Letters to prove his father’s death.
 For I believe, unless I’m wrong,
 His father never died at all!
 By the fealty I owe him,
 I have never married again.
 When he hears I have remarried,
 Then let him claim his legacy!
 And if I die, let him take all.
 I rest my case.

(vv. 173–82)

Mary's legal reasoning cannot be faulted. Neither wife *nor* son may inherit so long as the father remains alive, nor may an abandoned wife enter into a new union; and even a widow would be entitled to keep her dower portion unless she remarried. God the Elder has not died, yet his prolonged absence leaves Mary and God the Younger on their own, just as if the Father had disappeared in the Holy Land on crusade. Under the circumstances, it is hardly the mother's fault if she has done notably better than her son.

As a lawsuit over inheritance, the *Dispute* can be compared with such works as the *Discussio litis super hereditate Lazari et Marie Magdalene* (*Lawsuit over the Inheritance of Lazarus and Mary Magdalene*). In this poem, ascribed to the thirteenth-century law professor Drogo de Altovillari, Lazarus returns from the dead, discovers that his inheritance has already passed to his sister, and tries to get it back—but the Magdalene proves to be a formidable opponent.¹¹² Such debates could have been used for role-playing in the law school classroom. In fact, legal textbooks sometimes use the rubric *sicut in Maria et Lazaro* to discuss missing-person cases.¹¹³ Much better known than the debate between Lazarus and his sister was the popular, oft-translated *Processus Belial*, in which Satan sues Christ for possession of the human race. In one of its French variants, *L'Advocacie Nostre Dame*, the Virgin Mary pleads successfully for the defense before her Son and saves mankind from damnation. After the trial, the celestial court gives thanks by singing "Salve Regina," a Marian anthem that hails the Virgin as *advocata nostra*, "our defender."¹¹⁴ Mary is also the legal savior of Theophilus when he repents of his pact with the devil, in a miracle story told by Gautier de Coinci, Rutebeuf, and others. So her legal credentials were well established. University students often studied both theology and law, and such applications of legal reasoning to theological questions obviously amused readers who could appreciate both the fine points of the law and, in *Dispute*, the *soupçon* of blasphemy. Finally, the Curia comes in for some not unexpected ribbing. The pope, who in reality dared to rule on the fate of souls both here and hereafter, now sits in judgment on God himself—and shockingly rules against him: "Sy qu'en la fin fut condempnéz" (v. 187). Few readers would have failed to notice that, although the judge inclines at first to take the plaintiff's side, he shifts his allegiance when the defendant proves wealthier and more respectable.

Although the *Dispute* survives in a single manuscript, its author did not write in a vacuum. Perhaps a lawyer or law professor himself, he knew the works of the lawyer-poet Pierre de Nesson (d. ca. 1440), whose *Hommage à la Vierge* is extant in at least twenty manuscripts and five early print editions. The *Dispute* borrows three unusual themes from Nesson: a conflict between Christ and the Virgin over God's legacy; a contrast between the Mother's worldly prudence and the Son's indigence and recklessness; and a link between the Son and the poor beggars who stay at *hôtels-Dieu*. Nesson's *Hommage*, despite its bland editorial title, is a scathing indictment of God's misgovernance of the world. Having offered homage to the Virgin on behalf of his family, Nesson imagines what might happen if her Son were to object and claim that, as lord of this world, all homage belongs to him. As if pleading Mary's case, Nesson argues that wealth and power are not appropriate for the Son of Man, who by his own admission has nowhere to lay his head (Matt. 8:20).

Or qu'on truïsse
 Qu'il ait, depuis qu'il dist cecy,
 Riens acquis en ce monde cy,
 De quoy l'auroit il acquesté?
 Tant qu'il a en ce monde esté
 Il a vescu en indigence—
 Et nul ne peust savoir qu'il pence!
 Une foiz il dit "tout est mien,"
 Autres foiz il dit qu'il n'a rien.
 Et s'il dit qu'il a seigneurie,
 Dont luy vient elle de hoirie?
 Il n'eust oncques predicesseur,
 A qui seroit il sucesseur?
 Quel tiltre y peut il avoir ores
 Veü que son pere vit encores?
 Et si ne le mencipa oncques,
 Il ne peut riens possider doncques
 Tant que son pere soit en vie.
 Et si fault que autrement l'on die,
 En ce monde il est filz sans pere;
 Doncques estes vous comme mere

Legitime aministrereisse
De ses biens et gouverneresse.¹¹⁵

Now if anyone claims
That, since the time he said this, he
Acquired anything in this world,
With what could he have acquired it?
As long as he was in this world
He lived in direst poverty—
And no one can know what he thinks!
At one time he says “all is mine”—
And then he says he has nothing.
And if he says he has lordship,
From whom does he inherit it?
He never had a predecessor,
So whose successor would he be?
What title can he now possess,
Since his father is still alive?
And if he is still a minor,
He can therefore possess nothing
As long as his father’s living.
And if some should say otherwise,
In this world he is fatherless.
You therefore, as his mother, are
The legal administrator
And guardian of his property.

Scandalous as the thought may seem, even serious theologians did not scruple to make such rulings about the King and Queen of the universe. In the tradition of Nesson and the *Dispute*, the Franciscan Bernardino of Busti (ca. 1450–ca. 1513) went so far as to claim that Mary is mistress of the world because if a son dies without issue, his mother succeeds him.¹¹⁶ Initially begun in jest, such legal game-playing caught on. It could be used either to spoof or to justify exaggerated claims for Mary’s queenship—or quite possibly both at once.

Nesson’s *Hommage* continues, like the *Dispute*, to impugn Christ’s mismanagement:

Il donne au fol, il oste au saige,
 Des biens mondains si largement
 Que ceulx de bon gouvernement
 Vivent en grant mendicité,
 Et aux folz plains d'iniquité
 Il en donne a grant desraison.
 Et croy que par ceste raison
 L'on pouroit dire sa largesse
 Ne venir pas de grant saigesse.
 Et pourroit on en verité
 Par nocter prodigallité
 Jointc ce qu'on m'a dit que iadiz
 Habandonna son paradis
 A qui le vouldroit acquerir.¹¹⁷

He gives worldly goods to the fool,
 Takes from the wise, so lavishly
 That those who manage prudently
 Live in the greatest poverty,
 While to fools, full of wickedness,
 He gives most unreasonably!
 And for this reason, I believe,
 One could say his generosity
 Does not stem from great wisdom.
 And truly, one could add to his
 Notable prodigality
 What I've been told, that formerly
 He abandoned his paradise
 To anyone who wanted it!

Bourgeois mentality collides head-on with the scandal of the Gospel, rejecting Christ's generosity and voluntary poverty no less firmly (though less viciously) than *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* rejects his forgiveness. Nesson even claims that in the days of the Emperor Augustus, people lived peaceably enough, but ever since Christ was born there have been endless wars, for "no good has come of all his goods!" [Mesmes du temps Octovien, / Tous vivoient en paix tres bien, / Mais

puisqu'il fut né sabas, n'eust / Nul bien de ses biens qu'on congneust.]¹¹⁸ This critique might sound bold and witty in a poet's mouth, but it could also register simply as a bourgeois transposition of what the desperate poor had always murmured. A few decades earlier Chaucer's Man of Law had apostrophized a pauper: "Thow blamest Crist and seist ful bitterly / He mysdeparteth richesse temporal" (vv. 106–7). Certainly God's management of the world left a great deal to be desired; for those struggling with genuine need, the ideal of voluntary poverty made little sense. On this point Gérard Gros takes both Nesson and our anonymous poet seriously. Both reject the evangelical ideal, he believes, because "the example of luminous poverty and ascetic dispossession is no longer understood. It is not God who refuses the kingdom of this world because he belongs to a transcendent order; rather, it is the kingdom of this world that refuses itself to God the Son, who is guilty of *déclassement*."¹¹⁹

This reading is plausible enough. Yet, on the principle of double judgment, we can productively read the satire in both directions. From a worldly point of view, the life of Christ is and always has been scandalous, so we can have a good laugh at his expense. But Nesson and the author of our *Dispute* at the same time satirize that very point of view, which never could or will understand the things of God. This dimension can be seen more clearly in another of Nesson's works, the *Lay de Guerre*—written in the darkest days of the Hundred Years' War, just before the advent of Jeanne d'Arc. The speaker is personified War, daughter of Satan and goddess of hell, boasting of all the destruction she has wrought since she began to reign in France. Among other achievements, she has improved the quality of clientele at *hôtels-Dieu*—operated in God's name by her great enemy Grace-Dieu, whom War calls "that filthy old woman" [l'orde vieille]:

Et quant je vins en France, on ne trovast
 Es hostelz Dieu qui logier y daingnast.
 Mais maintenant ne fault pas qu'on les quiere,
 Qu'ilz y viennent a leur tresgrant priere.
 Et se j'eusse longuement regné la
 J'eusse piz fait dix foiz que n'est cela.
 Maiz la vieille a son tresgrant dommaige

M'en a chacié, dont n'a pas fait que saige.
 Car j'eusse ja trestous ses hostelz Dieux
 Rempliz de gens d'estat et de grans lieux.
 Et maintenant, quant Paix y resera,
 Homme de bien jamaiz n'y logera.

.

Et saiche Dieu, quant Paix estoit en France,
 Et qu'elle avoit a tous donné chevance,
 Quelz hostes lors a l'hostel Dieu venoient?
 Povres, poulleux, qui croix ne soustenoient,
 Ne n'avoient ung seul traistre denier,
 N'une seule bribe pour la rongier.
 Maiz la vieillè ayme tel quoquinaille.¹²⁰

When I came to France, there were few
 Who deigned to stay in *hôtels-Dieu*,
 But now, there's no need to seek out guests—
 They come there and beg to be let in!
 And if I had reigned there longer,
 I would have done ten times worse than this.
 But the old woman, to her great harm,
 Has chased me away, which was not wise.
 For I would have filled all her *hôtels-Dieu*
 With people of high estate and breeding!
 And now, once Peace has returned,
 No man of worth will ever lodge there.

.

And God knows, when Peace was in France
 And gave everyone a livelihood,
 What guests would come then to the *hôtel-Dieu*?
 Poor, flea-bitten, penniless folks,
 Without a single treacherous cent,
 Nor even a crust of bread to gnaw on.
 But the old lady loves such ragged types.

Nesson's feckless Grace-Dieu will give a beggar the very coat off her back, even if she has to go naked. But before we take this as a judgment against her, we must recall that the speaker is War, hardly a credible

accuser. Since part of Mary's attack on Christ in the *Dispute* is modeled on this passage, we should not accept her views at face value either. Both the worldly prudence she represents and the divine prodigality of Christ deserve respect in different ways, but both equally are open to scorn and laughter.

In fact, the very multitude of our poet's targets makes it difficult to ascribe an unambiguous message to his satire. Thrusting his rapier in all directions—at extreme Mariology, conventional piety, apostolic poverty, bourgeois complacency, judicial corruption, the Avignon papacy, the niceties of inheritance law, and the insufficiencies of poor relief—he shows what the Celestial Court would be like if God's will were done no better in heaven than it is on earth. The pious in general, and the pope in particular, love the respectable rich and scorn the disreputable poor; so any God foolish enough to side with the down-and-outs can expect to be put down and driven out of his own inheritance. The poet is certainly mischievous—some might say blasphemous; but is he subversive? The manuscript context suggests that he was not, at least in the eyes of the scribe Jehan Le Leu, who anthologized the *Dispute* with an array of harmless and unexceptional texts. The poet's cleverness and mastery of legal rhetoric allow some sly fun at the expense of this disinherited God as well as his mother and regent, the all-powerful Queen of Heaven, not to mention the clergy who presumed to speak in their names. Yet, for all its outrageousness, our *dit* was more likely to amuse and titillate those it satirized than to set mobs of insurgent paupers storming the citadels of faith.

As Martha Bayless observes, medieval literature resists the Bakhtinian assumption that parody is always subversive. Although it may be, it can also serve a didactic function, reinforce the status quo, or engage in sheer, amoral fun for fun's sake.¹²¹ "Medieval parodic humor often practices comedy of debasement: it substitutes the literal for the allegorical, the physical for the spiritual, and the concrete for the abstract. This frequently takes the form of the literal-minded visualization of allegory or spiritual metaphor."¹²² Thus in *Le lai d'Ignaure*, literal cannibalism replaces the symbolic consumption of Christ's body and blood, and devout affection yields to plain carnal lust. In *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*, instead of the liturgical reenactment of Christ's death, we see

the literal massacre of his people. And in *The Dispute between God and His Mother*, the cathedrals of Notre Dame become Mary's literal houses, while the euphemistically named *hôtels-Dieu* are shelters owned directly by God, so the Holy Family has to submit to the same property laws as everyone else. In each case, spiritual or symbolic realities are treated as material ones, resulting in a comic or grotesque "debasement" that forces the reader to see them with new eyes.

But the aesthetic effects and probable intentions of the parodies differ sharply. *Ignauere* is the subtlest, so that a superficial reader at the time, or one unacquainted with beguine piety, might have missed its satire completely. Renaut adapts a pre-existing legend, already macabre, and tweaks it further in the direction of sacred parody. In a lay that deliberately blends the courtly with the obscene—part romance, part fabliau, and part horror tale—the parodic element adds a new dimension of grotesquerie. Readers who noticed the parody of the eucharist at its center might have been distinctly uncomfortable, which perhaps explains the poem's lack of popular success. The material is disturbing enough that others, without becoming consciously aware of the parody, could have felt a subliminal unease. In this respect it is instructive to compare *Ignauere* with another parodic eucharist in a canonical text. The "riotours" of the *Pardoner's Tale*, quarrelling over possession of a buried treasure, share a meal of bread and poisoned wine that brings all three to their deaths. Since the Pardoner presents his tale as an exemplum on avarice and characterizes the riotours harshly throughout, it would be hard not to see that this diabolical trinity, partaking of a diabolical communion, are headed straight for hell. But the eucharist itself is not mocked. Rather, its inversion reinforces the wickedness of the riotours to set a crowning touch on the tale's didactic message. Chaucer's parody, though intellectually and emotionally powerful, is not subversive (whatever we may think of the Pardoner). The eucharistic parody in *Ignauere*, on the other hand, must be cleverly concealed because, once noticed, it insidiously challenges the new wave of piety sweeping the region. If ignorance is bliss, the lay proclaims, recognition is dangerous. One must be careful what one desires and, still more, what one is willing to know.

Where *Ignauere* is subtle, *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* is blatant. There can be little doubt of "John the Peasant's" malicious intent in

writing it. Even so, I have argued by reading against the grain that this parody is more ambivalent than its author meant it to be. As a normative devotional genre, the Passion meditation requires the user to cultivate empathy for the suffering Christ while also (though by no means always) fostering the corollary of rage at “the Jews” held to blame for his torments. But the *Passion*, by casting its victims simultaneously as persecuted scapegoats and stereotypical vicious Jews, creates an overt conflict between the major and minor premises of this devotional exercise, producing literary and affective dissonance. Its author, hiding behind a peasant’s mask, almost certainly meant to gloat over the Jews’ destruction (with the absent king and the impotent town council as secondary targets), rather than to mock Christ’s Passion itself. Nevertheless, here the parodic inversion taints the original, since transforming Christendom’s charter text of forgiveness and resurrection into a tale of vengeance and slaughter stabs at the very heart of the Gospel. So it is not surprising that *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* and other political *passiones* have attracted almost no literary attention. Bayless expressly excludes *passiones* from her study on the ground that they “have no humorous component whatsoever.”¹²³ Lehmann, who reprinted Vaclav Tomek’s edition of the *Passion* in 1922, observed that its “brutality must or should offend even the most anti-Semitic of modern Christians.” The second edition had to wait forty years because Lehmann’s papers were destroyed in an air raid on Munich in 1944. But in the revised edition of 1963, the tragic sentence stands unchanged.¹²⁴

Of my three religious parodies, only *The Dispute between God and His Mother* is comic, belonging to a genre—the debate poem—that was often used with humorous intent. Like the better-known “Drinkers’ Mass” or the “Money Gospel,” the *Dispute* reinforces the dichotomy between divine and earthly standards by infusing a lavish dose of the profane into the sacred, then reveling in the clash of values that results. Bayless says of the “Money Gospel” that “the present world is already in a low register: scriptural inversion cannot degrade it further but reflects it upward.”¹²⁵ In the *Dispute*, the clash between registers works both ways: the spartan life of paupers at *hôtels-Dieu* is reflected upward to the poverty of Christ, while the opulence of great cathedrals is reflected downward to bourgeois thrift and aristocratic pride. Unlike many debate poems, which remain unresolved or defer judgment to

the reader, the *Dispute* pronounces unequivocally in favor of Mary. But since the pope's verdict is not above suspicion of irony, it would be risky to claim that the author himself comes down firmly on one side or the other. His aim is not polemic but provocation, a goal he brilliantly achieves.

All three texts, in short, allow for the principle of double judgment. The parody of eucharistic devotion in *Ignature*, like the allegory of redemption in Chrétien's *Charrette*, is there for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear it. But for those who do not, the lay can be read coherently enough as a horror story of *fin'amor* gone bad. The *frisson* of its surprise ending is tragic on the secular level, but darkly comic on the sacred. In *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*, a nasty piece of anti-Jewish propaganda turns out to have a textual unconscious that reveals its bad conscience, as the studied inversion of the Gospel exposes the inverted values of Ieško, John the Peasant, and the Christians of Prague. Unfortunately, though such a deconstructive reading is available now, we cannot prove that anyone at the time anticipated it. Finally, *The Dispute between God and His Mother* most obviously offers itself to a double reading. From Mary's side it critiques recklessness, fiscal mismanagement, and naïve idealism about poverty, while from Christ's, it satirizes misplaced priorities, clerical pomp, and bourgeois co-mplacency. Like the anguished debates over wealth in *Piers Plowman*, the *Dispute* is not truly resolved because it cannot be. As the Master himself observed apropos of economic injustice, "the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light" (Luke 16:8).

CHAPTER 5

CONVERGENCE

René of Anjou and the Heart's Two Quests

IN THE PRECEDING CHAPTERS, WE HAVE SEEN HOW THE INTERPLAY of sacred and secular values could produce moral ambiguity within a single work, such as *Le Chevalier de la Charrette* or *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*; how a secular genre could be put to sacred use, as with the trouvère lyrics refracted in beguine poetry; and how a sacred discourse could be bent to satirical ends, as in *The Dispute between God and His Mother*. In this final chapter I approach the problematics of cross-over from a different angle. Most vernacular texts are either anonymous or ascribed to authors—such as Chrétien de Troyes and Guillaume de Lorris—of whom we have little or no knowledge. In the few cases where we enjoy both secure attributions and a well-documented authorial biography, such bounty should be put to good use. Here, then, I will consider the relationship between two different yet closely related accounts of sacred and secular love by the same author: René of Anjou, a fifteenth-century prince, poet, and patron of the arts. In the space of three years King René composed two allegories, both in the *prosimetrum* genre: the first an ascetic and devotional work, the second an amorous quest. Both employ what René Nelli calls the “myth of the

separable heart," a topos dating back to early troubadour lyrics.¹ Taking leave of his body, the king's heart as synecdoche for his person occupies the center of each work, undergirding their autobiographical claims. Hence what we know of René's checkered life can bolster our account of the way crossover between *fin'amor* and the love of God played out in the career of a single writer. Moreover, because the king closely supervised the illustration of both works by his favorite painter, we are able to compare images as well as texts.

Having composed *Le Mortifiement de vaine plaisance* (*The Mortification of Vain Pleasure*) in 1455, René soon followed it with *Le Livre du Cœur d'Amours espris* (*The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*) in 1457.² The royal aesthete entrusted the illumination of both to the brilliant Barthélemy van Eyck, probably a relative of Jan van Eyck.³ In addition to these two allegories and René's *Livre des tournois* (*Book of Tournaments*), this artist illustrated one of several books of hours owned by the king, as well as the *Théséide*, a French translation of Boccaccio's *Filistrato*.⁴ He also worked on the celebrated *Très Riches Heures de Jean, duc de Berry* after the death of the Limbourg brothers, who began that project. Because of Barthélemy's superb miniatures, along with others by Jean Colombe, Jean le Tavernier, and Loyset Liédet, King René's works have attracted considerable interest from art historians. But they have seldom been explored in tandem as literary works, much less interrogated to see what text and images alike can reveal about the crossroads of sacred and secular in the late Middle Ages.⁵ Here I will read *Le Livre du Cœur*, the later and more complex work, both in the light of its companion piece, *Le Mortifiement*, and in the context of its own generic tradition.

In *Le Mortifiement*, a feminine Soul entrusts her heart to the Virtues to be purified, a task they carry out with sadistic zeal. In *Le Livre du Cœur*, the God of Love extracts the dreaming narrator's heart and delivers it to Désir Ardent (Ardent Desire). Personified as the knight Cœur, the heart then embarks on a love quest, with Desire as his guide and squire. René's devotional quest, gendered female by the Soul and six feminine Virtues, is addressed to simple laity, while his erotic quest is gendered male and pitched to a courtly elite. Strikingly, the devotional quest succeeds but the erotic quest fails, so that both allegories end in exactly the same place—with the author's contrite and solitary

heart devoting itself to prayer. Because of these parallels, *Le Mortifement* and *Le Livre du Cœur* cry out for a comparative reading. Why do the heart's two quests turn out as they do? In biographical terms, why did René compose his erotic allegory two years *after* the devotional one, if that marked his renunciation of worldly joy? And how do their amorous and religious conventions, apparently so unlike, converge?

First a few words about René of Anjou's eventful career.⁶ Known to legend as "Good King René" (1409–1480), this prince either ruled or claimed vast territories as titular king of Sicily and Jerusalem, count of Provence, and duke of Bar, Lorraine, and Anjou. René inherited both his Angevin and his Sicilian title from his ancestor Charles I of Anjou, a younger brother of Louis IX, who had conquered Sicily in 1266 (though he soon lost it again in the War of the Sicilian Vespers). Charles had also purchased the title "king of Jerusalem" from Maria of Antioch, one of several claimants to that throne, in 1277. Although René never actually ruled either of these territories, he nonetheless styled himself a king, a title accepted by most of his peers. His sprawling territorial claims made him a vassal simultaneously of the French king, the emperor, and the pope. In modern times he has won the admiration of literary critics as a poet and of art historians as a patron. Because of his close collaboration with Barthélemy van Eyck, near-contemporaries believed the prince himself to be an amateur painter.⁷ By the usual standards of history, however, René's long reign was a failure. Though he earned the love of his subjects and unswerving loyalty from his family, in the end only Provence and two daughters remained to him. The younger one, Margaret of Anjou, was married to the mad king Henry VI of England and played a key political role.⁸ René's daughter Yolande married his faithful ally, Ferry or Frederick II of Vaudémont. One capable son, John of Calabria, survived to adulthood, but quite suddenly predeceased his father in 1470. John's son Nicolas in turn died (by poison, some said) in 1473. René's heir was therefore his grandson Charles II of Maine and Anjou, who died only a year after him in 1481—whereupon the last of his ancestral lands were devoured by the French crown under Louis XI.⁹

In fifteenth-century terms, René's life might be subsumed under the devices of *Magnificentia* and *Fortuna mobilis*. On the first count, he allowed neither martial defeats nor major debts to cramp his style.¹⁰ In

the 1440s he sumptuously furnished his castles at Angers and Saumur,¹¹ assembled an awesome menagerie of exotic beasts, handed lavish commissions to artists and architects, and amassed a library of more than two hundred volumes in Latin, Italian, French, Occitan, Catalan, and German (all of which he read with ease¹²), not to mention Greek, Hebrew, Turkish, and Arabic.¹³ He renovated the University of Angers and instituted far-reaching fiscal and social reforms to encourage agriculture, stabilize taxation, and repair the damage Anjou had sustained from English incursions during the Hundred Years' War. In the same period the king "hosted mysteries and passions attracting thousands of spectators, farces, masked balls, musical and nautical spectacles, tournaments, and in 1447 even reenacted the taking of the Joyeuse Garde [Lancelot's castle] at Saumur, complete with a procession led by two lions from his menagerie."¹⁴ Romantic and chivalrous to the core, René was also keenly aware of the political prestige to be won by such spectacles.¹⁵ Yet Fortune was not his friend. At the outset of his reign, in 1431, he lost the calamitous battle of Bulgnéville and, for the next six years, had to bide his time as a prisoner of Philip of Burgundy in Dijon. In a display of Arthurian chivalry, René was temporarily released on his word of honor but, like Chrétien's Lancelot, freely returned to prison. The ransom that finally freed him crippled him financially for life. A valiant knight but a wretched general, he squandered several more years in fruitless campaigns against Alfonso of Aragon, unable to pay sufficient troops. These campaigns cost him his Italian lands and left him nearly penniless. By 1453 the king had lost six of his nine legitimate children, and in that year his beloved wife Isabelle of Lorraine died. It was under these pressures that the chastened prince became a writer.

MORTIFYING VAIN PLEASURE:

THE KING AS VERNACULAR THEOLOGIAN

Dedicated to René's confessor Jean Bernard, archbishop of Tours, *Le Mortifiement* is a lay version of the kind of allegory that had once characterized monastic literature.¹⁶ The king says he intends to write "in prose, in ordinary language, to edify simple lay folks" [en prose en langage commun, . . . pour y pouvoir faire fructifier les simples gens

lays].¹⁷ His prose is in fact simple, if long-winded, and though it is interspersed with verse, there is much less poetry than in the *Livre du Cueur*. The allegory is so detailed as to leave nothing ambiguous. A devout Soul, holding her heart in her hands (see Figure 3), laments that it has led her astray with its love of vain pleasure, so that she now fears the wrath of an offended God. Overhearing the Soul's lament, the Author (*l'acteur*) notices her dwelling—"a very poor cottage, shoddily built, all made of earth and vile matter, quite ruinous" [*vne trespoure maisonnette legierement bastie toute faite de terre et de vile matiere plaine de grant ruyne* (4)]. Realizing that her case is much like his own, he decides to observe the Soul's adventures. Two ladies approach to comfort her. Perfect Contrition, naked from the breasts to the navel, holds a scourge, while Fear of God (*Crainte de Dieu*) trembles at the sword of Divine Justice suspended over her head. After a penitential discourse from these Virtues, the Soul declares herself ready to renounce the world: "I despise you, world! I despise you, I despise you, I despise you! And I don't give a fig for you!" [*ha fy doncques de toy monde ha fy ha fy ha fy, et plus que fy!* (18)] Three parables follow before she hands her trembling heart to the Virtues (see Figure 5), saying:

[H]old this thief that I deliver to you, my ladies, it has most gravely sinned. Chastise it so well that I may never again have news of its rebellion! For I would much rather have justice done to it now in this mortal life than, for default of justice, have to bear the punishment for its misdeeds in eternity. I beg you not to spare it!

Tenez mes dames le larron que ie vous liure lequel si fort a meffait. Chastiez le si bien et si deuement que plus ie naye nouuelles quil puist ou doieue estre rebelle. Car iaime trop plus chier que la iustice soit de lui ores faite en ceste vie mortelle que apres par le deffault den auoir fait iustice jen doie porter en eternite de ses meffaitz la paine en vous priant que ne lespargniez pas. (44)

Followed by the Author at a distance, the ladies carry the heart up a mountain where, in a paradisaal garden worthy of the *Rose*, they find the three theological Virtues (Foy, Esperance, and Vraye Amour) gathered

around a cross, armed with ferocious hammers (see Figure 6). Off to one side stands their empress, Grace Divine, with an iron lance. The Virtues set to work with a vengeance, nailing the heart to the cross and purging its foul blood. Faith's nail, Endurance, purges the humors of lust, avarice, and gluttony, the last consisting "more of wine than of blood" [*plus de vin que de sang* (53)]. Hope's nail, Valor, squeezes out the black, choleric blood of anger and sloth, while True Love's nail, Charity, presses out the venom of pride and envy. Last of all comes the *coûp de grace*. Inflicting a terrible wound with her lance, Grace Divine purges the flood of Vain Pleasure, which flows out in "strange, wild and diverse colors" [*sang en grant habundance en sailly le quel estoit tout de vaine plaisance tresdiuers et estrange et de sauuaiges et diuerse couleurs* (54)]. Having accomplished this *mortifement*, the Virtues return the bloody, crucified heart to the Soul, who had fallen into a stupor but now rises to her knees to kiss the cross (see Figure 7). She can scarcely recognize her heart for joy, for who could have believed that "a heart so felonous, spiteful, evil, perverse, and wicked as hers was should have been reduced so quickly to such a point?" [*vng tel cuer si felon si despitueux mauuais peruers et inique comme le sien estoit deust en ce point estre si tost reduit?* (56)]

Le Mortifement was a modestly successful work, surviving in nine gorgeously illuminated manuscripts and three without pictures. Although Barthélemy van Eyck's original is lost, all but one of the illustrated manuscripts are thought to follow his iconography closely, reproducing a cycle of eight or nine scenes planned by the author himself.¹⁸ The first three images depict the Author, the Soul holding her heart in her hands (Figure 3), and Fear and Contrition speaking with the Soul. There follow illustrations of three lengthy parables recounted by these Virtues: a coachman driving a royal bride to her king; a peasant woman hesitating before a rickety bridge as she carries her sack of grain to the mill (Figure 4); and a soldier scaling the wall of a besieged city, which represents the World with its pleasures and vices. Three final paintings depict the converted Soul delivering her heart to Fear and Contrition (Figure 5), the crucifixion of the heart (Figure 6), and the Virtues returning the crucified heart to the Soul (Figure 7).

Underlying this allegory is the idea of exchanging hearts with Christ. This hagiographic motif in itself attests to a crossover mentality,



Figure 3. The Soul laments the sins of her heart. Jean Colombe, *Le Mortifiement de vaine plaisance*. Cologne-Geneva, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Codex 144, fol. 3v.

adapted as it was from the lovers' exchange of hearts in romance. In René's lifetime, the most famous saintly example would have been Catherine of Siena (d. 1380), who, according to Raymond of Capua's *Life*, offered her heart to Christ and received his in return.¹⁹ René had spent many years in Italy, where he had probably seen images of Catherine and encountered her rapidly growing cult.²⁰ She was canonized in 1461, six years after *Le Mortifiement* was written. Although the Soul depicted by René does not technically exchange hearts with Christ, her heart comes back to her, "tightly joined and nailed to the cross, which was all bloody from the wounds it had received" [*estroit joint et cloue dessus la croix lequel estoit tout sanglant pour les playes quil auoit receues* (55)].

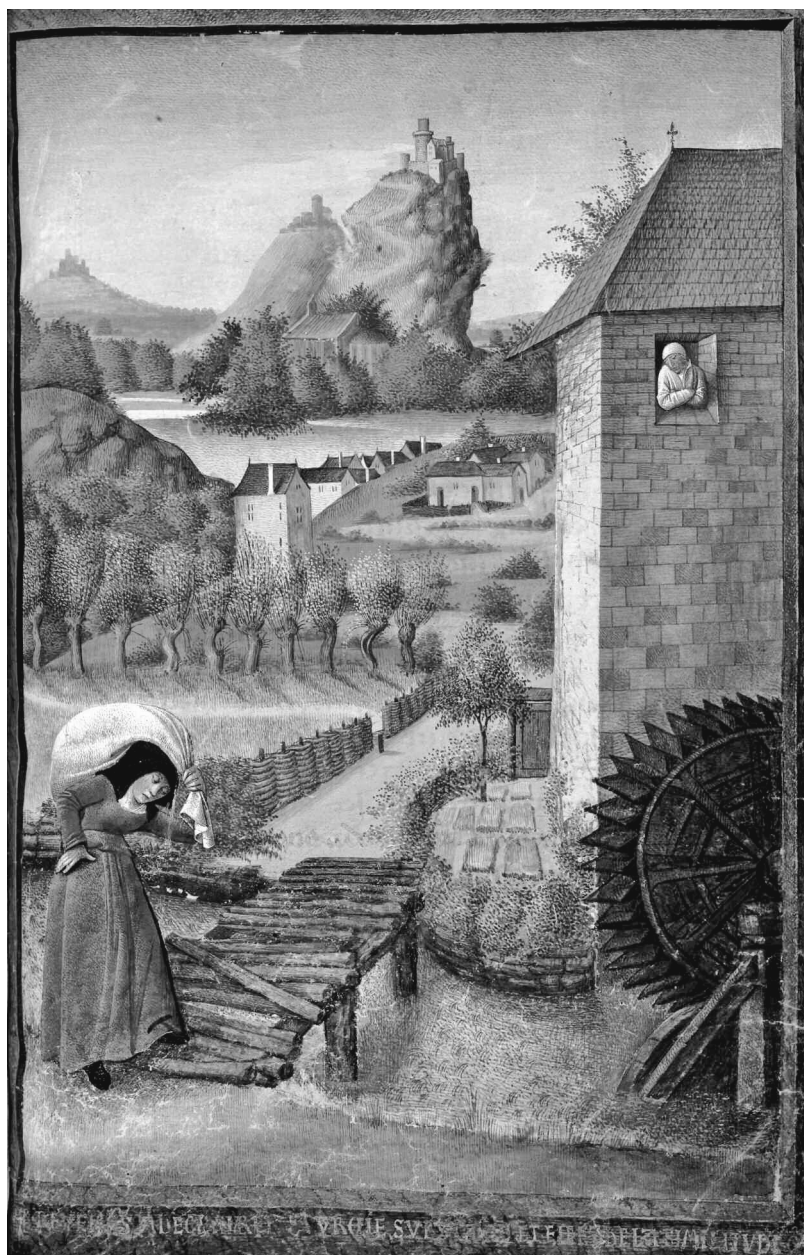


Figure 4. Peasant woman carrying grain to the mill. Jean Colombe, *Le Mortifement de vaine plaisance*. Coligny-Geneva, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Codex 144, fol. 39.



Figure 5. The Soul delivers her heart to the Virtues. Jean le Tavernier, *Le Mortifement de vaine plaisance*, ca. 1457. Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 10308, fol. 64.

If the hagiographic edges are softened, the theme is unmistakable. Both the crucified heart and the pierced heart were also pictorial subjects in their own right,²¹ as was the Crucifixion by the Virtues. Though better known from German nunneries than French sources, that subject represents a group of female Virtues nailing Christ to the cross.²² Here the heart takes his place (see Figure 6). One salient feature of Ren  s allegory is the heart's utter passivity. Just as the heart in lyric or romance might be pierced by Love's arrows, here it is pierced by the lance of Grace Divine and the Virtues' nails. Although the Soul calls it "sinner" and "rebel," it never speaks, nor does it resist its abusive treatment.²³ Rather, it is an object of exchange for the Soul and the Virtues to hand back and forth as they see fit. The dreamlike, sacred, and lyrically beautiful violence is typical of fifteenth-century sensibility, a mood that has



Figure 6. The heart crucified by the Virtues. Jean le Tavernier, *Le Mortifiement de vaine plaisance*, ca. 1457. Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 10308, fol. 76.

been aptly described as “complacency in horror.”²⁴ We are reminded of the Czech *Life of St. Catherine of Alexandria*, in which the virgin’s ghastly wounds become ornamental ribbons to display her love.

As usual in religious allegories, all the characters are female except the Author, who in the Brussels manuscript peers into the garden with a holy voyeurism to watch the Virtues at work (see Figure 6).²⁵ His inward gaze, directed implicitly at events transpiring within his own soul, recalls a famous *mise-en-abîme* in the slightly later *Hours of Mary*



Figure 7. The Virtues return the crucified heart to the Soul. Jean Colombe, *Le Mortifiement de vaine plaisance*. Coligny-Geneva, Fondation Martin Bodmer, Codex 144, fol. 65.

of *Burgundy* (ca. 1475).²⁶ A self-referential page in that book of hours shows the duchess reading it beside a casement window that opens onto a church (Figure 8). In the nave of the church we see the Virgin and Child, before whom the selfsame duchess kneels in worship. Thus she outwardly occupies the observer's space—seated in her domestic chapel, her little dog in her lap and her precious book carefully protected by a cloth—even as she enters an inner, devotional space opened by the words of her prayer. René's figure likewise mediates between



Figure 8. Mary of Burgundy at prayer. *Hours of Mary of Burgundy*, ca. 1475. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vind. 1857, fol. 14v.

the observer and the inner world of the soul. He wears the same fur-trimmed russet robe and hat that we first see in his author portrait, and he peeks through a garden gate much like the one leading to his own pleasure garden in the earlier painting. But he has removed his reading glasses, for he no longer needs them to gaze inward onto the holy blood-letting of the Virtues. This visual *mise-en-abîme* hints at the distancing techniques that allow René to retain some detachment from what at first blush appears to be a deeply autobiographical text. In a dedicatory letter written in his own person (*je, René*), the author says he will convey his message in a fable [*la matiere fictionnellement racomptera* (2)], thus distancing himself from his sins first through the feminine Soul, then through the neutered heart. Although the Author (*ie poure acteur*) admits that this allegory pertains to himself, he nonetheless tells the Soul's tale in the third person. But the first person returns in the concluding prayer, a passionate six-page effusion clearly meant as a model for readers. René ends with a shorter epistle, again first-person, in which he solicits his confessor's prayers.

Though the crucified heart motif is of monastic origin, its lay adaptation requires a new setting. When Jean le Tavernier pictured the Soul meeting the Virtues in a cloister (see Figure 5), he diverged from René's text, for she does not take religious vows either before or after her heart's ordeal. The dwelling described by René is a dilapidated earthen cottage, an allegory for the body. This image suggested a useful model for painters: the Madonna of Humility, a Franciscan-inspired Nativity scene in which Mary sits on the earth or the floor of a ruinous stable. In the Bodmer manuscript painted by Jean Colombe, we see the Soul in just such a place (see Figure 3), cradling her heart in both hands as the Virgin usually cradles her Child. This image of the Soul as peasant woman (though belied by her aristocratic features) may be a gesture toward the inscribed audience of "simple lay folks," at least on the assumption that they were in the market for priceless illuminated manuscripts.

Despite these costly exemplars, *Le Mortifiement* stands in a broad tradition of vernacular lay spirituality, best represented in French by the works of Jean Gerson. In fact, in the Brussels manuscript (which belonged to Isabelle of Portugal, the wife of René's captor Philip the Good), *Le Mortifiement* is followed by Gerson's *Mendicité spirituelle* (*Poverty of Spirit*), also known as *La complainte de l'homme à son âme*

(*Man's Complaint to His Soul*). In the Cambridge manuscript, once the property of Jacques de Luxembourg, its companion text is a mirror for princes by Guillebert de Lannoy, an adviser of Philip the Good.²⁷ These apparently contrasting works are actually not so far apart, for the education and comportment of a fifteenth-century prince entailed a full measure of devotion. As Virginie Minet-Mahy observes, much of the piety that has been linked to women and "simple folks" figured just as much in the instruction of princes.²⁸ Like Gerson, most spiritual writers of this era had a humanistic bent, harking back to the eloquence and affectivity of such twelfth-century classics as Bernard of Clairvaux and the Victorines.²⁹ Yet in addressing a lay audience, they democratized the monastic theme of renouncing the world so far that even rulers with tastes as opulent as Philip the Good or René of Anjou could imagine themselves as renunciates. Preposterous as it may seem, such a self-image relied on the concept of renunciation as an interior act, taking place "in the heart," which only God could see. Thus the real proof of devotion lay in detachment, not dispossession; ultimate horizons, not temporal conditions. By daily meditation on Christ's death and one's own (a practice to which René was especially given), the devotee could bear a crucified heart within the most pampered body, like a hagiographic hair shirt beneath royal robes. Devotion was high fashion. Yet only this turn toward interiority, coupled with a penchant for lavish display, can explain the quintessentially late-medieval paradox of a savage ascetic treatise, written by a king famed for the theatricality and refinement of his court, addressed to the simple laity, yet surviving in the form of extravagant luxury objects owned by the highest aristocracy.

Almost a century ago, Johan Huizinga marvelled at such princes as René, Philip, Charles d'Orléans, and Gaston Phébus, finding in them "a very worldly and often frivolous temperament, coupled with a devotional spirit which [has] . . . to be regarded as a kind of reconciliation, hardly conceivable to the modern mind, between two moral extremes."³⁰ For Huizinga, this peculiarity could only be explained by the "absolute dualism" of the sacred and secular conceptions of life.³¹ Such dualism did exist in the fifteenth century. Malory's Lancelot lives for Guenevere, Arthur, and his own prowess, yet dies for God in the odor of sanctity. His holy end is the result of conversion and spectacular penance. But for René and his peers, it was otherwise. *Le Mortifiement* may well have

been inspired by the king's bereavement, but this does not mean it represents a melancholy phase in his life, to be superseded and forgotten after his remarriage. The work, after all, was completed and published *after* that happy event. It could be said that a crucified heart is even more necessary in times of joy than of sorrow. In the tradition of Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque Fortunae*, good fortune no less than bad requires spiritual remedies. More to my point, though, the heart crucified by the Virtues for the love of God proves a twin of the heart tormented by Hope and Desire for the love of a lady. To discern the long shadow cast by *Le Mortification* on *The Love-Smitten Heart*, I turn now to that work.³²

THE GRAIL, THE ROSE, AND THE LOVE-SMITTEN HEART

A year after Isabelle's death, René of Anjou took a second wife, the much younger Breton princess Jeanne de Laval. Earlier critics linked *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart* (problematically) with their courtship.³³ But before I explore its biographical circumstances, I will consider the work itself and its literary ancestors. *The Love-Smitten Heart* was begotten by *The Quest of the Holy Grail* on *The Romance of the Rose*—debts that René acknowledges directly. In a prose preface he says that, to narrate his quest, "I will follow the manner of speaking of *La Queste del Saint Graal*" [ensuyvray les termes du parler du livre de la conquête du sang greal].³⁴ But most of his characters derive from the *Rose*, so that when Cuer finally reaches the court of Love, the god tells him to study "The most lovely *Roman de la Rose*, / There where the art of love is enclosed" [Le tresbel romant de la rose / La ou l'art d'amours est enclose (230–31)].

Since love, unlike devotion, was an elite prerogative, René begins with an epistle to his nephew Jean, duke of Bourbon, posing a *demande d'amour*: is it Fortune, Love, or Destiny who bears the blame for his lovesick plight? There follows a dream vision: as the poet lies sleeping, the God of Love extracts his heart and hands it to his valet, Ardent Desire (Figure 9). This character was truly close to the king's heart. His first heraldic device was a flaming brazier with the motto *Ardent Désir*,³⁵ which was also the nickname of Pierre de Hurion, a favorite



Figure 9. The God of Love delivers the poet's heart to Ardent Desire.
Barthélemy van Eyck, *Le Livre du Cueur d'amours espris*, late 1460s. Vienna,
Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vind. 2597, fol. 2.

courtier who served the king as both herald and scribe.³⁶ The dream scene echoes the famous *songe/mensonge* rhyme that opens the *Rose*:

Ou que fust vision ou songe,
 Advis m'estoit, et sans mensonge,
 Qu'Amours hors du corps mon cuer mist
 Et que a Desir il le soumist,
 Lequel lui disoit enscement:
 "Si Douce Mercy nullement
 Desires de pouoir avoir,
 Il fault que tu faces devoir
 Par force d'armes l'acquérir."

Whether it was a vision or dream
 It seemed to me, I say without lie,
 That Love from my body took my heart
 And gave it over to Desire,
 Who spoke to it thus:
 “If Sweet Mercy you at all
 Desire to receive,
 You must make a duty
 To win her by force of arms.” (4–5)

No sooner has the heart fallen into the hands of Desire than it becomes an armed knight, Cuer, who bears a winged heart on his helm and the caparison of his horse.³⁷ The goal of Cuer’s quest is to rescue Sweet Mercy (Doulce Mercy), a female persona representing his lady’s favor—equivalent to Fair Welcome in the *Rose*, but without the gender-bending. Just as in *Le Mortifiement*, the first-person writer who signed himself *je, René* in the dedication yields to a third-person narrator, who gives way to the dreamer, who yields to the knight Cuer, “each one only the emanation and double of the last.”³⁸ Henceforth a prose narrative ascribed to the author (*l’acteur*) or the tale (*ly contes*) alternates with characters’ speeches in verse.

In the course of their quest, Cuer and his squire, Ardent Desire, fight their way through a landscape inspired by the poetry of René’s cousin and friend, Charles d’Orléans.³⁹ This amorous terrain is filled with such locales as the Forest of Long Awaiting, the Fountain of Fortune, the Valley of Profound Reflection, and the Perilous Bridge over the River of Tears (see Figure 10). Like Chrétien’s Lancelot, Cuer is unhorsed by a Black Knight near the outset of his quest and falls unceremoniously into that stream, from which Lady Hope (Esperance) has to rescue him. In fact, Cuer is quite often in need of rescue, for he has a touch of parody about him.⁴⁰ While the worldly-wise Desire has travelled the path before and knows everyone, Cuer is a neophyte, clinging to Hope’s reassurances even though, like Sir Galahad, she has a habit of vanishing suddenly “in such a way that they knew not what became of her.” [Lors s’esvanouyt dame Esperance d’entre eulx en telle maniere qu’ilz ne sceurent qu’elle devint.]⁴¹ Cuer and Desire encounter some familiar though transmogrified villains from the *Rose*. Jealousy (Jalousie)



Figure 10. Cuer is challenged by a Black Knight at the River of Tears. Barthélemy van Eyck, *Le Livre du Cuer d'amours espris*, late 1460s. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vind. 2597, fol. 18v.

is now a misshapen female dwarf, perhaps modelled on one of René's court fools,⁴² and Evil Mouth (Male Bouche) a masculine commander of troops. But other enemies bespeak a new period flavor, a mood of waning confidence and of ennui. Having drunk from the brackish waters of Fortune, Cuer later learns that this fountain was erected by the giant Despair (Desespoir). The Black Knight, Anxiety (Soulcy), turns out to be a kinsman of Melancholy, on whose bitter bread Cuer and Desire nearly starve. Our hero is trapped in the dungeon of Lady Sadness (Tristesse), another of their accomplices, and once freed, he is tempted in the cottage of Grievous Sighing (Grief Soupir) to commit suicide. The landscape and its denizens conspire to keep Cuer from his lady chiefly by plunging him into despair. Impetuous Desire likes to tease Cuer, much to his annoyance, and even Hope is characterized forebodingly as a "beautiful blonde siren" [une ceraine belle et blonde].⁴³ In short, the omens are not good.

Eventually Cuer and Desire, accompanied by Largesse, reach the seashore. There in place of the Grail ship they find a boat rowed by two

maidens, Understanding (Entente) and Trust (Fiance), who ferry them across a tumultuous sea. At an island port they meet two fisherwomen casting their lines by night, using a bait called *dons* (gifts) to catch a fish by the name of *validire*—that is, *va-li-dire*, or “go-between.” Lyrical descriptions of the voyage almost mask a bit of Ovidian cynicism: Friendship (Amittié) explains that this fish is also called “mackerel,” another word for “pimp” (*maquereau*)—a food that is “tasty and very wholesome for the lover” (120–23). Later on, Refusal (Reffuz) insults Pity by calling her an *orde vieille maquerele*, or “filthy old bawd” (242). The companions soon arrive at another island so luminous that it seems to them a *chose espirituelle* (124), a term that half-seriously, half-parodically echoes descriptions of the Grail castle. This is in fact the Castle of Pleasure, where the God of Love dwells. As Marco Nievergelt observes, Cueur’s bedazzlement is more like Lancelot’s uncomprehending wonder before the Grail than Galahad’s mystical contemplation of it.⁴⁴ He is far more impressed by the beauty and material value of Love’s treasures than by their symbolism, which he utterly fails to grasp. From this point on, the gap between Cueur’s hopeful naïveté and his author’s ironic disenchantment grows steadily wider.

By moonlight the questers reach the glistening Hospital of Love—part church, part inn, and part hospital in the modern sense. Lady Courtesy (Courtoisie) welcomes them and, at Cueur’s request, the prioress Pity (Pitié) shows them the Cemetery of Love. Here the narrative pauses for a long set-piece, filling thirty-four pages, to describe the arms of famous lovers posted on its walls. Classical heroes rub shoulders with Lancelot and Tristan, King David, and contemporary princes, among them Philip of Burgundy, Louis of Orléans, Charles of Bourbon, and Gaston Phébus, all represented as victims of Love.⁴⁵ René even includes his own arms, presenting himself as a *coquin d’Amours*—“a beggar of Love” or “vagabond.” Remarkably, he distinguishes himself from the fictional Cueur, a young and untried lover, by adopting a Don Juan persona:

Car maintes dames sont moy venu enhorter,
 Et plusieurs damoiselles qu’il failloit contemper,
 Bourgeoises et bergieres me faisoient lamenteur
 En Ytalie, en France, ou m’aloye deporter
 Affin de passer temps . . .

For many ladies came to petition me,
 And several maids whom it was necessary to scorn,
 Town ladies and shepherdesses caused me to lament
 In Italy and France, where I went for amusement
 To pass the time . . .⁴⁶

One almost expects Leporello to start singing his catalogue aria. But Cúer is enchanted by this display, which culminates in the tombs of six great love poets: Ovid, Machaut, Boccaccio, Jean de Meun, Petrarch, and Alain Chartier, to whom I will return. Outside this consecrated ground lie the naked, rotting corpses of unfaithful lovers.

The Castle of Love occasions another visual set-piece, which was surely written to showcase the talents of Barthélemy van Eyck.⁴⁷ Unfortunately, the artist completed only sixteen of a projected forty-five miniatures, leaving a long, static stretch of *ekphrasis*. Love's palace, built on an emerald rock with veins of diamond, has walls of crystal and towers of ruby, adorned with more gems than the New Jerusalem. Charmingly, René notes that this palace "was executed in the manner of Saumur in Anjou," his own favorite castle (198–99). Doubtless he intended a lavish miniature to portray it, much as in the *Très Riches Heures de Jean, duc de Berry*, where Saumur graces the September page. René had acquired that famous manuscript sometime after his great-uncle Jean de Berry's death, and in the 1440s he apparently commissioned Barthélemy to resume work on its paintings where the Limbourg brothers left off. Forty years later the cycle was completed by Jean Colombe, who also illustrated two copies of *Le Mortifiement de vaine plaisance*.⁴⁸ In any case, we can only guess what Barthélemy might have done with the portal of Love's castle. Above its main gate are two statues representing Fantasie and Ymaginacion, its chief architects [*maistresses d'euvres*]⁴⁹—carved of amber and adorned with "alchemical gold, made from the quintessence" [or *d'alquimye fait de la quinte essence*].⁴⁹ The images convey an air of fabulous wealth along with hints of Love's ephemeral, self-deceiving nature.⁵⁰

More ambiguous artworks follow. The God of Love possesses an unnerving relic collection, including Hercules' loom, the shears Delilah used to cut Samson's hair, and the basket in which Virgil's lady held him up to ridicule. (Relics purchased by René himself included a water jar

from the marriage at Cana and the font in which Mary Magdalene baptized the king of Marseilles.)⁵¹ Ten tapestries adorn the god's hall, modelled on a set René had himself commissioned. Featuring Love's courtiers, they include Pleasure (Plaisir), Leisure (Oyseuse), and Memory (Souvenir), as well as more ominous figures such as Abuse (Abus) and Madness (Folie). Cuer's own companion, Ardent Desire, appears as "blind, travelling without a path, without knowing why I exist, . . . pursuing Vain Hope" [aveugle, qui sans voys / Chemine, sans savoir pourquoi je suis . . . / apres Vaine Esperance].⁵² If Cuer is not yet sufficiently discouraged, he falls into a shocked silence after seeing the god's dove-cote, which is stocked with thousands of parrots. On requesting an explanation, he is told that Love feeds on the hearts of parrots to keep his spirits joyful. The remark grimly foreshadows this particular Heart's fate, but also warns that no lover's words, however sincere, can be more than a parroted speech the god has heard an infinite number of times before.⁵³ Like the earlier mackerel, the parrot often symbolized a go-between for lovers.⁵⁴

After this the *dénouement* swiftly follows. Cuer's audience with the God of Love goes badly. Despite mild encouragement, the god declines to help Cuer and expressly forbids him to kill his greatest enemies—Shame (Honte), Fear (Crainte), and Refusal (Reffuz or Dangier).⁵⁵ These, the God of Love explains, are loyal members of his household, for it is by his own will that they guard Sweet Mercy. Accompanied by Desire and a few others, Cuer at last approaches his lady in the Manor of Rebellion, where Refusal holds her imprisoned. The aged but courtly Lady Pity, playing a softer version of La Vieille's role in the *Rose*,⁵⁶ sways Sweet Mercy to let Cuer snatch a single kiss. But just as he is leading her triumphantly to the Castle of Pleasure, the companions are fatally ambushed. Shame, Fear, Jealousy, Evil Mouth, and their gossips drag Sweet Mercy back to prison while Refusal strikes deadly blows on all sides. Desire lies mortally wounded, and the half-dead Cuer retreats to the Hospital of Love, "for he wished to end the remainder of his days there in prayers and meditations" [car la vouloit finer le remenant de ses jours en prieres et oroisons (266–67)]. Although Desire will rise to live again in other hearts, he is dead as far as *this* Heart is concerned. As Michel Zink writes, "More than all the rest, this end seems marked by the disenchanting experience of an aging man: the heart can recover from failures in love, but a moment comes when desire does not outlive them."⁵⁷

What can we make of this disconsolate ending? In René's most famous models, the heroes succeed in their quests: Lancelot rescues Guenevere, Galahad and Perceval achieve the Grail, Jean de Meun's Lover deflowers his Rose. But René has neither Chrétien's mischievous sense of humor nor Jean de Meun's cynical irony. His sensibility is much closer to that of Guillaume de Lorris, the first *Rose* poet, whose work ends inconclusively with Fair Welcome in Jealousy's prison, while the heartsick Lover still languishes. Yet in the fifteenth century, Guillaume's *Rose* never circulated without Jean de Meun's, and it is Jean whom René honors in his Cemetery of Love. Rather than modeling his conclusion directly on Guillaume's, the king was joining in a literary conversation closer to his own day, sparked by Alain Chartier's *La belle dame sans mercy* (1424).⁵⁸ Chartier (ca. 1386–1430) had joined the entourage of René's mother, Yolande of Aragon, around the time of René's birth; the king mentions having known him as a young man.⁵⁹ He later entered the service of the dauphin, the future Charles VII, as secretary and diplomat. Like Chaucer a generation earlier, he enjoyed a dual career as court poet and civil servant until his untimely death. But Chartier was writing in the grimmest phase of French history, following the disastrous defeat at Agincourt (1415), the decisive loss of the Avignon papacy after Constance (1418), the Anglo-Burgundian alliance that followed the murder of Jean sans Peur (1419), and the long crisis of succession after mad King Charles VI's death (1422). The dauphin was crowned only in 1429, thanks to the exploits of Jeanne d'Arc, at the end of Chartier's life. It is no wonder if, like his contemporaries, he projected the dismal mood of his times onto the distant but fashionable mirror of *fin'amor*.

La belle dame, Chartier's most famous work, is a conservative poem that seems at first to say nothing new, but it struck sparks because it so precisely captured the spirit of its age. A gloomy narrator, slipping away from a feast, overhears a debate between a lover and his lady. For seventy-two alternating stanzas they argue, making points that had been conventional ever since Andreas Capellanus in the twelfth century. The lover pleads his loyal devotion and suffering; the lady insists—politely, sensibly, but firmly—that she has no interest in tormenting him, but nevertheless cannot grant his suit.

D'amours ne quier courroux n'aisance,
Ne grant espoir ne grant desir,

Et si n'ay de voz maulx plaisance
 Ne regart a vostre plaisir.
 Choisisse quiouldra choisir:
 Je suis franche et franche vueil estre.

I will seek neither the pain nor the pleasure of love,
 neither grand hope nor great desire;
 so, even as I get no joy from your sadness,
 neither am I concerned about your pleasure.
 Let anyone who wishes, choose;
 I am free and wish to remain so.⁶⁰

Though the lover continues to beg for pity, the lady protests the inconsistency of men and maintains that her suitor is responsible for his own happiness; if he wishes, he can easily recover from his sickness. What hit the most tender nerve was Chartier's epilogue, where the narrator states that after this conversation, the lady returned to the dance, while the rejected lover actually made good on his threat to die of grief. In the last line, the poet gives the lady her damning epithet, *la belle dame sans mercy*.

This poem provoked a long literary debate, not unlike the *querelle de la Rose* earlier waged by Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson against the admirers of Jean de Meun (1401–1402). In the *querelle de La belle dame sans mercy*, the lady's right to say "no" is vigorously contested. Christine, who died around the same time as Chartier, was unfortunately no longer available to defend La Belle Dame, whose conduct she would have heartily approved.⁶¹ An early response took the form of a letter from a group of anonymous lovers, begging their ladies to reject Chartier's poem because it harms lovers and defames ladies by depriving them of "the blessed name of Pity." The writers characterize their amorous plight in a way that anticipates Cueur's quest in *Le Livre du Cueur*:

Supplient humblement voz humbles serveurs, . . . poursuivans la
 queste du don d'amoureuse mercy, et comme ilz ayent donné . . . leur
 temps a pourchasser le riche don de Pitié que Dangier, Reffus et
 Crainte ont embusché et retrait en la gaste Forest de Longue Attente,
 et ne leur soit demouré compaignie ne conduit qui ne les ait laisséz en la
 poursuite, fors seul bon Espoir, qui encores demeure derriere laz et
 travaillié du long chemin et de la tresennuyeuse queste; et qu'a ung pas

qui se nomme Dure Responce ilz ont esté plusieurs foiz destrousséz de joye et desers de lyesse par les brigans et souldoiers de Reffuz. Et neantmoins entretiennent tousjours leur queste pour y mettre la vie du corps qui leur est demouré, maiz que Espoir ne les laisse au besoing; et encores aroient attente a vostres secours . . .

Coming before you on bended knee, your loyal servants, . . . participants in the quest of the gift of Loving Mercy, . . . [are determined] to pursue the rich gift of Pity that Resistance, Refusal, and Fear have ambushed and hidden in the wild Forest of Long Awaiting, leaving them alone with no company nor guide left to accompany them except Hope, who stays behind still, completely exhausted from the long trail and the difficult quest; and they who seek her, on a path named Harsh Response, have many times been robbed of joy and stripped of happiness by the brigands and mercenaries of Refusal, nevertheless they keep up the quest, giving all the strength of their body to it, but Hope leaves them languishing and in need of your help. . .⁶²

Sweet Mercy, the heroine who appears at the end of *Le Livre du Cuer*, takes her name from this tradition, for La Belle Dame's lover repeatedly seeks her mercy—a courtly euphemism for sexual favors. Unlike Chartier, however, René is not much interested in the lady; what fascinates him is the psychology of Cuer. Apart from the fleeting apparition of Sweet Mercy, no other representative of the lady appears in *Le Livre du Cuer*. It includes neither an objectified symbol like the Rose nor a witty, argumentative lady like La Belle Dame.

Soon after Chartier's poem began to circulate, a group of ladies summoned the author to appear before them at a Court of Love, to answer the charge of defaming ladies in his "perfidious, lying book" [faulx mensongier livre].⁶³ In his poetic response, Chartier employed the same strategy Chaucer had used in his *Prologue to the Legend of Good Women*, claiming to have had a dream in which the God of Love himself attacked the offending poem. Speaking in his defense, the poet praises ladies, dwelling especially on the virtue of Pity, but adds that this precious treasure (linked to chastity) must be closely guarded lest it perish, sought too much by too many. As for the lover of La Belle Dame, it was only his "fatal madness" [forcennerie mortelle] that made him act as he

did; neither his lady nor the humble scribe was to blame.⁶⁴ This *querelle*, which ostensibly began as a real-life exchange between the poet and a circle of court ladies, came to involve multiple authors and outlived Chartier himself. In subsequent poems, most of them written after his death, the debate takes an odd turn, inspired by the same fascination with legal arguments that we saw in *The Dispute between God and His Mother*. In one, La Belle Dame is arraigned for murder in the court of Love; in the next, counsel for the defense argues that she refused her suitor out of loyalty to a previous, secret lover; in a third, she is sentenced to death by drowning in a well of tears; in yet another, her heirs seek to clear her name and reclaim her body. None of these poems have commended themselves to later generations, yet all this game-playing around La Belle Dame testifies to the continuing vitality, not merely the decadence, of an old tradition.⁶⁵ Among other things, the *querelle* established failure as the normative outcome for a love quest, an expectation René of Anjou inherited. The late-medieval allegory of love thus reverts to the lyric situation of *fin'amor*. A lover's heart goes forth to seek his lady, and if the genre does not quite predetermine the outcome, it weighs heavily on the side of defeat. In Daniel Poirion's words, "There is no poetry without love, no love without desire, no desire without sorrow. Courtly poetry is therefore sorrowful by definition and by vocation."⁶⁶ Even if the male speaker were to succeed in his love affair, he could hardly boast of it without dishonoring his lady—as proved by the famously obscene ending of Jean de Meun's *Rose*.⁶⁷

René especially admired a contribution to the *querelle* by Achilles Caulier, *Le Livre de l'Ospital d'Amours* (ca. 1440). When Cuer has viewed all the tombs in the Cemetery of Love, Courtesy tells him that if he wants to know more, "he should read and look into the book of the Hospital of Love a young cleric born in Tournay once made" [qu'il li-sist et regardast le livre de l'Ospital d'Amours que jadis fist ung jeune Clerc né de Tournay (180–81)]. In Caulier's poem, a rejected suitor dreams of an erotic inferno. Corpses of lovers who hanged themselves dangle from every tree, and every stream is brimful of bodies. Fleeing this place, the dreamer reaches the Hospital of Love, where he meets Lady Pity (the prioress) and Courtesy (the nurse). In the Chapel of Love he sees an unorthodox Madonna and Child on the altar—Venus and Cupid, before whom the priestess Desire (Conscience) chants a

mass honoring Pyramus and Thisbe, the saints of the day.⁶⁸ Here is the same edgy crossover sensibility we saw in the near-contemporary “Triumph of Venus” salver. After receiving medicine from Doctor Hope (the masculine *Espoir*), the lover tours the cemetery and sees the tombs of Lancelot, Tristan, and Alain Chartier.

This poem was René’s chief source for the Hospital and Cemetery of Love, but he did not follow it slavishly. For instance, he reverses the genders of Hope and Desire. Though he expands Caulier’s account and adds more visual detail, he conspicuously tones down the pagan mass, which might have struck the devout author of *Le Mortifiement* as blasphemous. True, René’s God of Love keeps some peculiar relics on his altar, including the sword of Turnus and the chalice of Ghismonda, from which she drank poison poured over the heart of her lover.⁶⁹ But there is no suggestion that the numerous masses heard by Cuer are other than Christian. More significantly, René diverges from Caulier’s ending. In *The Hospital of Love*, the recovered dreamer renews his allegiance to the God of Love, attains a kiss from his lady, and ends with a sacrifice of thanksgiving. On awakening, the poet offers the work to his own lady with the standard plea “that she might make this dream come true” [*que le songe veulle averir*].⁷⁰ But in *Le Livre du Cuer*, the Heart’s failure is decisive. He retreats to the hospital not for healing, but for a pious end to his days.

In a closing epistle, René offers the text once more to his nephew, the Duke of Bourbon, earlier addressed in the dedication. Sadder and wiser on account of his dream, he now presents himself as an exemplum. This grief has come to him not through Fortune or Destiny, but because in following the delight of his eyes, he craved “the pleasure of my heart instead of its own health.”

Mon treschier et tresamé nepveu et cousin, ainsi doncques . . . pouez
comprendre mon piteux cas et ma griefve paine au long considerer,
laquelle m’est advenue par trop tost croire et de legier suivre au raport
de mes yeulx le plaisir de mon cuer plustost d’assez que sa propre santé.
(268–69)

What he will seek henceforth is a remedy “so potent that I may not be so often tempted nor tormented by this subtle spirit of impossible desire

named the God of Love, who enflames hearts with most importunate desire, and makes people so love that they die of it" [avray pour singulier remede . . . si fort ne souvent je ne puisse estre tempté ne ainsi tourmenté de ce subtil esperit au vouloir impossible nommé le dieu d'Amours, qui embrase les cuers de tresimportun desir, lequel fait gens tant amer qu'ilz en meurent].⁷¹ Here René echoes the famous *Tristan* pun on *amer*, which is the verb "to love" but also the adjective "bitter." The presiding deity of Cuer's quest has been a "subtle spirit of impossible desire," who makes his servants either "so love" or else "so bitter" (*tant amer*) that they die of it. The dark wordplay helps the king repudiate the God of Love, even as his first-person confession now seeking his heart's "health," rather than its pleasure, recalls his position in *Le Mortifement*.

In light of the work's melancholy close, buttressed by these remarks, it is hard to see why critics ever thought the king had composed *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart* on the occasion of his marriage to Jeanne de Laval, who certainly did not refuse him. By all accounts, the union of René and Jeanne was a harmonious one, inspiring romantic legends from the contemporary pastoral *Regnault et Jehanneton* to the *Honeymoon Cabinet* of Dante Gabriel Rossetti.⁷² The king's much younger wife shared his artistic tastes, encouraged his pastoral retreat to Provence, and loyally executed his will, at the cost of considerable effort. Nevertheless, despite his evident happiness in both marriages, René had no children by Jeanne and—like other great princes before and since—produced his share of bastards.⁷³ So, if a biographical speculation is wanted, Daniel Poirion's observation probably comes closer to the mark: "Prince of so many illusory kingdoms, forever lost, and lover no doubt of so many ladies who could not give him the grace he desired, René of Anjou described life as a quest for the impossible."⁷⁴

CONVERGING QUESTS

In his nineteenth-century biography of René, the Comte de Quatrebarbes tells the following story. One day, King René was hunting near Angers when he came upon a holy hermit, Macé Bucheron, who had given up his prebend to live in the forest on black bread and roots. Moved by such virtue, René built the hermit a cell and chapel, complete

with garden and a modest retreat for himself, adorned by his own hand with allegorical paintings. He named the hermitage “Reculée” and often visited, not only to see the hermit, but also to meet there with artists and scholars attached to his court.⁷⁵ Anyone who knows *The Quest of the Holy Grail* will smile at this anecdote. In their endless wanderings, as we have seen, the Grail knights often meet hermits and anchoresses who counsel them, hear their confessions, and explain their adventures. Imitating his favorite heroes, René has his own romance adventure (perhaps he was hunting a white stag?) and finds his own hermit. Yet the tale improbably leads to a named historical person on whose pious retreat the king intruded, at once performing an almsdeed and procuring a fashionable saint for his grounds. The worlds of romance, aesthetics, and piety converge.

In the failure of Cuer’s quest, I believe something similar happens: a romance adventure unexpectedly leads back to the hermitage, the place of penance and prayer. In fact, Cuer’s whole adventure is anticipated by a passage from *Le Mortifiement*. Fear (of God) tells the Soul at one point, “You complain about your heart—you say it is too flighty (*vollage*), and also that it too easily loves and trusts its desire rather than reason, its pleasure rather than its profit. This is indeed the truth!” [Tu te plains de ton cuer de ce quil est trop vollage et aussi de ce quil croit et aime plustost et de legier sa volente que la raison et son plaisir que son prouffit. La verite est telle ainsi vrayement (21).] As noted, René confesses the same truth to his nephew at the end of *The Love-Smitten Heart*. What is more, this *cuer volage* is the heraldic device of both the Heart and his god. Since the wingèd heart on Cuer’s helm and his horse’s caparison appears in almost every painting, we know the emblem well by the time we arrive at Love’s castle, whose walls are enamelled with the god’s device: *a cueurs volages*. “All men who are loyal lovers and servants of Love,” the narrator says, “bear this device beneath their left breasts.” [Et ceste divise la porte chacun qui est loyal amant et serviteur d’Amours dessoubz la senestre esselle (198–99).]

Volages can mean “wingèd, buoyant,” but also “flighty, fickle.” Its ambiguity thus underscores the double message of the god’s splendid but threatening *objets d’art*. Like her son, Venus has a chamber hung with tapestries, and hers are dedicated solely to the *cuers volages* motif. We know that in 1476, around the time René was revising his personal

copy of *Le Livre du Cueur*, he paid an artist two florins and six gros “pour les peintures des Cueurs Vollans,” works that he may have commissioned for a play.⁷⁶ Each of Venus’s tapestries, perhaps sketches for the paintings he would later realize in fact, portrays two figures representing Love’s allurements (Youth, Beauty, Courtly Manners, and the like). In each image, these figures have set up a snare or net to catch *cueurs volages*.⁷⁷ Inscriptions below the tapestries warn that no heart can easily escape. In the last one: “Mourning and Sadness keep cages of marigold / . . . / In which they hold imprisoned many winged hearts.” [Dueil et Tristesse ont de soucyes cages, / . . . / En quoy y tiennent prison maints cueurs volages (234–35).] (The marigold, or *soucy*, was a flower of ill omen because *soucy* also means “anxiety.”) Love’s votaries, proclaim the inscriptions of Venus, catch hearts like birds in limed trees. Only Rogier Bon Temps (“Roger Good Time”), an epicurean character borrowed from the theatre, is wise—if cynical—enough to withdraw from Love’s game without losing a feather. Glancing either forward from *Le Mortifiement* or backward from the hall of Venus, we can see that Cueur’s very nature predestines his doom.

The illuminations suggest further points of rapport between the two allegories, although *Le Livre du Cueur* revels in the courtly trappings that constitute the stuff of renunciation in *Le Mortifiement*. Barthélemy van Eyck immortalized its opening scene in a magical night painting, famed for its intricate play of color and chiaroscuro (see Figure 9).⁷⁸ This image can be fruitfully compared with the transmission of the heart from *Le Mortifiement* (see Figure 5), for the positions and gestures of the three actors are similar. But instead of a vigilant feminine Soul, we see a dreaming masculine Lover; instead of a cloister or cottage, an opulent royal bedchamber; instead of two modestly clad female Virtues, two male courtiers dressed in the height of fashion. The androgynous God of Love stands on an oriental rug, wearing a sapphire-blue tunic with golden borders. A closer look would reveal that they enclose Arabic letters, spelling the name of a Mameluke prince, with the date 1422—a touch of exotic orientalism, recalling René’s own courtiers, who included Moors and Turks in their native costumes.⁷⁹ Beneath his tunic, Love wears tight crimson stockings and *poulaines*, the pointy-toed shoes that satirists loved to skewer.⁸⁰ Ardent Desire’s white costume is even sexier, with red and gold flames embroidered on the skirt

of his elegant pleated tunic. The chief difference between the two *translatio cordis* scenes is one of agency. In *Le Mortifiement*, the Soul willingly yields her heart to Fear and Contrition, while in *Le Livre du Cueur*, Love and Desire steal the heart of the dreaming poet. Tradition required that elite men pretend to suffer love's affliction passively.

While Desire is the motivating force of Cueur's quest, his most steadfast ally is Lady Hope. It is striking that melancholia troubles both the lamenting Soul and the questing Heart, a point reinforced by visual parallels. In the second parable from *Le Mortifiement*, the Soul is figured by a peasant woman who must cross a dangerous bridge to bring her sack of grain to the mill (see Figure 4). The grain represents her good works, the bridge death, the river God's wrath, and the mill, her heavenly reward. To attain it, she must summon courage and prudence enough to place one foot ahead of the other and cross the bridge safely. In *Le Livre du Cueur*, the Heart and Desire confront a similar bridge over the River of Tears, where a dishevelled Melancholy takes the diffident peasant's place (see Figure 10).⁸¹ Unlike the Soul, however, the reckless Heart falls into the stream and nearly drowns, until Hope comes to his rescue. Class expectations prevail once again, for in *Le Mortifiement* René can represent the Soul as both princess and peasant, betrothed to the king yet living in a ruinous cottage. Cueur and his companions, on the other hand, must be aristocrats, while the villains, in accord with convention, are *vilains*—members of the lower class. Thus, when Melancholy shows her exquisitely sullen face (see Figure 11), she turns out to live in a thatched cottage much like the Soul's (see Figure 3). In both works, Hope is the virtue most urgently needed by the somber protagonist. As a theological virtue, she lends the heart valor and purges it of sloth; as a courtly virtue, she rescues Cueur from his frequent bouts of despair. Yet this hope proves in the end to be "Vaine Esperance," a lovely siren, just as she had first appeared to Cueur in a dream (30). Breathing the enchanted but melancholy air of Provence, the middle-aged monarch had imbibed its troubadours' spirit, for his questing heart suffers the fate they so often sang.

The heart, writes Poirion, represents a lover's way of being in the world.⁸² Most personifications evoke qualities in others or transient states of the self, but the heart *is* the self, whether obediently submitting to Christ's Passion in *Le Mortifiement* or pursuing its own, futile passion



Figure 11. The cottage of Dame Melancholy. Barthélemy van Eyck, *Le Livre du Cœur d'amours espris*, late 1460s. Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vind. 2597, fol. 17.

in *Le Livre du Cœur*. “Under the differing *mises en scène*, a single experience grounds the literary reconstruction of the self: the encounter with a part of oneself that presents itself as hard to control, chaotic, unstable, flighty (*volage*).”⁸³ Perhaps we should not marvel that this *cœur volage* finds a happy ending only in ascetic renunciation. It is not just that, in Zink’s words, “the taste for antiquities, fetishistic nostalgia, and depressive melancholy had never so completely dominated literary sentiment” as in René’s era.⁸⁴ Although that is true, its converse is no less true: if happiness in this world seemed harder for even the privileged to gain, salvation seemed easier. Christ and the Virtues, by definition, could not refuse the appeal of a loving soul. During this era of the democratization of piety, one did not have to be a saint-in-waiting, or even a monk or nun, to exchange hearts with Christ. Vernacular works like *Le Mortification* made such devotion, in theory, accessible to the whole literate public. Love, on the other hand, kept its courtly pretensions, and in this quest, failure was always possible because the lady, unlike God, reserved the right to say “no.”

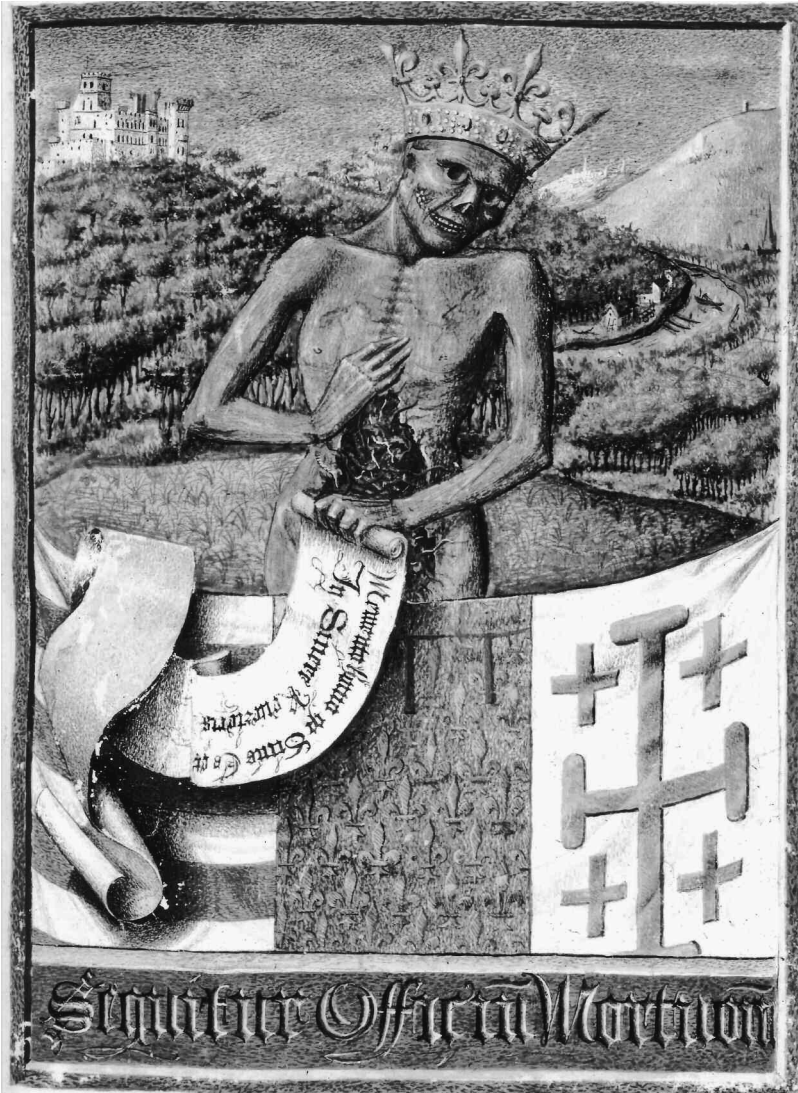


Figure 12. King Death. Barthélemy van Eyck, *Book of Hours of René of Anjou*, ca. 1442. London, British Library, ms. Egerton 1070, fol. 53.

When he finished *Le Livre du Cœur*, René had more than twenty years left to live—but his heart would make one final journey. Witnessing the wreck of his family and his political hopes, the king must often have gazed on the image of his own royal, eviscerated corpse (Figure 12) in a book of hours that Barthélemy had painted for him as early as 1442.⁸⁵ René himself designed a similar image for his tomb, which stood in the cathedral of Angers for three hundred years until the French Revolution demolished it. As we know from a seventeenth-century drawing, it depicted a dead king on an imposing neoclassical throne. His ermine-lined mantle fell open to reveal his rotting intestines; his crowned, skeletal head lolled grotesquely to one side; and his bare feet kicked at a fallen orb and sceptre on the pavement.⁸⁶ Theatrical even in death, René did not neglect the elaborate funeral plans typical of this age of *memento mori*. Indeed, his obsequies were even more sumptuous than most aristocratic burials, partly to reassert his contested royal title even in death.⁸⁷ His state funeral had to wait a year, though, since the king died in Aix-en-Provence but wished to be buried in Angers. With fond memories of their late prince, the Provençals did not want to relinquish his remains, so the faithful Jeanne de Laval had them exhumed and spirited away by night. Thus it was that on October 9, 1481, the king's body was finally laid to rest beside his first wife in the cathedral of Angers, as he had willed.⁸⁸ This was fitting enough; the cathedral's warrior patron, St. Maurice, was also patron of the Order of the Crescent, the chivalric order René had founded in 1448.⁸⁹

But the king's heart, as stipulated in his will, did not rest with his body. Instead—interred in a silver box, covered with crimson cloth-of-gold blazoned with his arms, and carried on a litter surmounted by a baldachino of black velvet—it was transported by the rector and doctors of the University of Angers from the cathedral to the Franciscan church, where it rested in state in a chapel aflame with torches.⁹⁰ There, after a second Requiem Mass graced by fifty paupers in black vestments, the king's heart was walled at last into the chapel he had built for his sainted confessor, Bernardino of Siena—whose canonization he had himself secured.⁹¹ Thus did René of Anjou pay his mortal debts, bequeathing his body to the remembrance of first love and chivalry, but his heart to divine love and sanctity. All three of its voyages converged in the end.

CONCLUSION

A Backward and a Forward Glance

THE SACRED AND THE SECULAR CONFRONT EACH OTHER IN multifarious ways. Secular genres such as the love lyric and the dream vision have sacred counterparts, while sacred genres such as hagiography, hymnody, and Passion narrative lay open to secular appropriation and even parody. But construing their relationship in that way elides the extent to which each category is implicated in the other, for *sacred* and *secular* are not always complementary terms, or even gradations on a spectrum. This book has concentrated instead on instances of paradox, collision, and convergence. Chrétien's Lancelot is at the same time a perfect exemplar of *fin'amor*, an adulterous traitor, and a Christlike redeemer, yet he cannot be *seen* at the same time in each of these roles. Instead, the reader must decide on any given reading whether to see the duck or the rabbit, the vase or the two faces, without forgetting alternatives. Depending on one's choice of an ethical framework or a set of generic conventions, Malory's Arthur can be either a fallen Christian king or an immortal pagan legend, Amis and Amiloun either ideal friends or despisers of morality and honor. The best reading strategy

in such cases is neither a wheat-and-chaff hermeneutics that always privileges the sacred, nor a so-called subversive model that favors the profane, nor the push for a final verdict, but the cultivation of double judgment. Even *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*, while vilifying its Jewish victims, simultaneously casts them in the role of the suffering Christ. Underlying that text's vicious anti-Semitism is a streak of irony and pity, just as underlying the idealization of an Amis or a Tristan is a streak of moral outrage.

Opposing perspectives within a text may coexist like oil and water, as in the *Charrette*, or clash mightily, as in *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*. Or they may be less deeply opposed than they seem. When Marguerite Porete transformed the profane love-debate of *The Romance of the Rose* into an esoteric mystical dialogue, she effected a radical transvaluation of values, exchanging the Lover's carnal, pleasure-seeking, self-serving love of the Rose for a spiritual, ascetic, and self-denying love of God. Yet at the center, a core insight of the *Rose*—its opposition between Love and Reason—stands unchanged. René of Anjou's amorous quest in *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart* may seem a world away from the heart's crucifixion and bloodletting in *The Mortification of Vain Pleasure*. Yet the dismal failure of Cueur's quest for Sweet Mercy leaves him in the Hospital of Love, pining for another kind of mercy—the divine, which the author's heart had already found in the earlier allegory.

Though the readings in this book only skim the surface of a vast sea of texts, they suggest a new approach to an old yet vitally important problem. In the wake of Robertsonianism it is still assumed, too often, that either Latinity as such or particular sacred genres, such as exegesis and hagiography, define a predictable, orthodox, uninteresting norm against which vernacular rebellion and innovation can be measured. Robertson made a productive move when he set biblical exegesis alongside vernacular romance, but he thwarted its potential by reducing the church fathers to decoders, using them to unlock a set of stable, monolithic meanings. *Au contraire*, I argue; exegesis more likely taught readers to appreciate moral ambiguity. Here I join such critics as Constance Bouchard, Catherine Brown, Sarah Kay, and Matilda Bruckner in highlighting the medieval penchant for paradox—for a hermeneutics of both/and. A key example is the notion of *felix culpa*, proclaimed annu-

ally at the Easter Vigil and ubiquitous in biblical narrative. The doctrine of the fortunate fault surely helped the reading public to value such sublime sinners as Chrétien de Troyes' or Sir Thomas Malory's Lancelot, Gottfried von Strassburg's Tristan, and the hero of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, as well as sinner-saints like Gregorius, Sir Gowther (Robert le Diable), and "St. Merlin" the devil's son. In both secular and hagiographic romance, double coding by writers required double judgment from readers.

Ethically surprising, unpredictable readings were also fostered by the rule of allegorical inversion—an odd hermeneutic maneuver that medieval exegetes traced to Gregory the Great. According to this principle, legitimate allegorical interpretations could and did invert the values of a biblical story by reading good as evil, evil as good. Hence, in the tale of David and Bathsheba, the sinful king David becomes a figure of Christ, while his innocent victim Uriah typifies "the Jews." The moral valence of the allegorical reading precisely reverses that of the literal story. In many cases, this principle was applied to support anti-Judaism and supersessionism. So by reading *The Passion of the Jews of Prague* against the grain, I turn the tables, for once undermining the literal sense of that problematic text in the Jews' favor. But the same technique could be used to Christianize pagan legends, as in the often astonishing interpretations of myth to be found in such compilations as the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Ovide moralisé*. In the latter, for instance, Myrrha's incestuous lust for her father represents the Virgin Mary's perfect *fine amour* toward God.¹ This is the tactic that Renaissance writers called *parodia sacra*, using that term to mean the exact opposite of its modern sense.

Like crossover, the problem of pagan *matiere* is a well-tilled field that, having long lain fallow, needs fresh cultivation. Celtic source-hunting, a passion of the early twentieth century, has played itself out. There is little more to gain by arguing about which fragment of Welsh or Breton myth the author of this or that romance might have known. But that is no reason to let the results of such research lie idle on the shelf, much less to assume that romance writers were indifferent to their sources. More likely, the matter of Britain attained its immense popularity because storytellers and their public enjoyed its strangeness and found its pagan aura alluring. Laurent Guyénot argues that some writers,

not so far removed from the oral culture that created those legends, understood their mythic underpinnings better than we might think. What seems undeniable, though, is that envisioning a fictional British paganism appealed to the antiquarian imagination of the age, just as fictions of classical antiquity appealed to the humanist imagination. Such romances as the First Continuation of Chrétien's *Conte du Graal*, *Perlesvaus*, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and *Perceforest* weave potent illusions of a pagan world still in the throes of conversion, as the northern and eastern frontiers of Europe actually were. In *Perlesvaus* and other crusading romances, paganism may be to some extent a stand-in for Islam, the alien religion admired as well as feared. Indeed, Islam itself is frequently paganized in romance—represented as polytheistic and idolatrous—although it rejects those traits more vigorously than did the medieval Church, with its panoply of saints and images.² But romance writers seem also to have enjoyed grappling with pagan myth, just as mythographers did, preserving its exotic flavor while experimenting with its possible Christian *sen*. Even the author of *La Queste del saint Graal*, the most relentlessly theological of the Grail romances, deployed his maimed kings, magical ships, and enchanted swords as more than convenient plot devices. His story still captivates because the overlay of Christian *sen* on pagan *matiere* is translucent, not transparent. In many romances, the dialectic of sacred and secular is not dual but triple, for the sacred is itself constructed by a dialectic of Christian and pagan.

Works like *Perlesvaus* and *La Queste* reveal much about the lay Christianities that motivated knights, hermits, and their patrons. A different kind of lay Christianity shapes the beguine poetry examined in the context of Marguerite Porete's *Mirror*. Though edited in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these poems have been sadly neglected—and some manuscripts have fallen victim to war since their first publication. Perhaps enterprising researchers will uncover more such treasures in regional libraries, even as Geneviève Hasenohr and Zan Kocher have been turning up new evidence for Porete's reception. She undoubtedly holds a significant place in the history of mysticism and heresy, of inquisition and censorship; much important work considers her in those contexts. But she was also a French writer, reading and read by other vernacular writers. Scholars have been slow to place Mar-

guerite in her literary context, as I have tried to do, for some of the same reasons as with Julian of Norwich. Most have simply been more interested in these women as mystics than as writers. Moreover, in each case there is a gap of two centuries between the composition and the extant manuscripts of their work. *The Mirror of Simple Souls* (1290s) survives in just one complete French manuscript from circa 1500, while *A Revelation of Love* (1390s) is extant in two English manuscripts produced circa 1600. But the nuns who copied Julian's book took care to preserve her archaic English, while Marguerite's scribe (or several scribes in a chain of transmission) thoroughly modernized her French. In a sense, then, her original book is lost. Nevertheless, the Chantilly manuscript is our necessary point of departure. More work on its medieval translations is sorely needed, as is a parallel-text edition that takes account of the English and Italian as well as Latin versions. Further textual and contextual study should let us see Porete no longer as a lone eminence, but as a vernacular theologian with her own precursors, auditors, and heirs.

Vernacular theology also had its comic modes—and its detractors. Such poems as *Le lai d'Ignaure* and *The Dispute between God and His Mother* remind us that the sword of parody is not only double-edged; it can be as sharp as a rapier and as light as a fencer's foil. But no theory can give us the critical tact to assess tone, much less to know how medieval readers would have responded to a text that might strike modern readers as frivolous, sacrilegious, innocuous, or stinging. In Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*, when Genghis Khan receives a mechanical flying horse as a birthday gift, his guests have theories galore: some compare it to the Trojan horse, others to Pegasus; some call it a "fairye," while others murmur knowingly about magicians and automata. But in the end, "diverse folk diversely they demed" (v. 202). Parody is the flying horse of medieval genres. If critics today cannot agree about the intentions of Andreas Capellanus or Chaucer in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, it is likely that medieval readers couldn't either. But provoking disagreements of that kind was a conscious goal of parody and satire; the *sic et non* method enabled rousing literary debates. Jean de Meun, I suspect, would have been deeply disappointed if his readers had uniformly accepted the God of Love, Lady Reason, Genius, or any other speaker as the one who voiced his true opinions. But I think he would have been secretly pleased by the *querelle de la Rose*, which erupted more than a century after his death at

the provocation of Christine de Pizan. The *querelle de La belle dame sans merci*, inspired by Alain Chartier's poem of a rejected lover and his lass, shows even more plainly how the medieval public enjoyed such arguments. That is one reason so many debate poems remain open-ended. Even one that concludes with a seemingly clear verdict, like *The Dispute between God and His Mother*, may be swathed in such clouds of irony as to leave matters every bit as vexed as before.

While the allegorical gaze lifts a narrative heavenward, the parodic wink and smirk haul it back to earth. René of Anjou's *Livre du Cuer d'Amours espris* is a curious blend of both. At first it appears to be yet another example of convergent idealism: an allegory of erotic, courtly adventure is further heightened by echoes of the lofty Grail quest. Yet there is a dark, Ovidian undertow: much of the action takes place at night, and by the dim and flickering light (exquisitely captured in Barthélemy van Eyck's paintings), we perceive that the doomed Cuer is fatally naïve, his Desire an unreliable guide, their sometime savior Hope a deceiving siren. René never openly mocks his hero, but his invocation of the Grail turns out to undermine the Heart's pursuit of *fin'amor* as surely as *La Queste* subverts the *Prose Lancelot*. Yet, as the work's melancholy ending coincides with the triumphant ending of *Le Mortifement*, we realize that the very definition of *success* depends on the conventions of genre. Mortified, purged of vain pleasure, and abandoned to prayer, the Heart in the Hospital of Love finds itself exactly where the character called "True Love" in *Le Mortifement* would have wished to leave it. If we read *Le Livre du Cuer* solely within the confines of its genre, the allegory of love, Cuer's failed quest marks it as either a charming if unoriginal text, recapitulating the standard outcome of such tales, or else a gentle parody. But reading it as a crossover work, enriched and deepened by its companion piece, reveals the king to be a rather subtle vernacular theologian. By employing a hermeneutics of both/and, we see that Cuer fails *and* succeeds, though the standards of his own quest and his author's are incommensurable.

ONCE AGAIN I COME TO THE LAST PAGE—AWARE OF SO MANY PATHS not taken, so much that remains unsaid. Yet the achievement of a book is measured not just by the ground it covers, but by the space it opens.

So, having given the first word to Puck, I give the last to Marguerite Porete. To compare small things with great, the Free Soul in her *Mirror* avows that she loves the mysteries she will never understand in God a hundred thousand times more than those that she does understand.³ There is indeed something magical about uncharted ground, like the pathless waste forest of romance. Where this meandering path comes to an end at last, I trust that others will find a way forward.

APPENDIX I

The Passion of the Jews of Prague according to John the Peasant (1389)

On the evening of the Sabbath day, toward the dawn of
Matt. 28:1 the first day after the Sabbath, a priest entered the Jewish
quarter¹ with the body of Jesus.² The Jews went forth to
John 8:59 meet him, and, bearing stones in their hands, they shouted
Micah 4:11 and said, "Let him be stoned, for he has made himself
John 19:7 the Son of God." Then the children of the Hebrews, tak-
Matt. 21:8-9 ing stones from the streets, went to meet the priest, shout-
John 12:13 ing and saying: "Cursed is he whom you bear in your
Deut. 21:23 hands."³ Seeing this, the priest said to the Christians:
"Why are you not vexed against this people? For they

1. *Iudeam*, literally "Judea."

2. The priest was carrying the consecrated host in a monstrance or pyx to bring communion to the sick.

3. A parody of the Palm Sunday processional hymn, "Gloria, laus et honor," in which the Hebrew children take palm branches and go to meet Jesus, shouting "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord."

- have done a wicked deed against me. This people you
 Matt. 26:10–11 have with you now, but me you will have rarely. Why this
 pernicious deed? They throw stones at the body of Jesus
 to offend both him and me. Amen, amen, I say to you:
 Wherever this deed is proclaimed throughout the world,
 Matt. 26:13 it will be said that they have done this in contempt of our
 orthodox faith.”
- But those who lifted hands against Jesus were led cap-
 Matt. 26:50 tive by the mayor’s authority to the town crier’s house,
 Mark 15:22 which in the vernacular is called *šatlavia* (jail). And it
 happened, when the preachers of the churches of Prague
 learned of this, they said to those who were attending
 their sermons: “Truly, unless you take vengeance befit-
 Matt. 26:31 ting the injury to Jesus, you will all suffer scandal this
 year.” And when the Christians, filled then with the grace
 of God and fervent in his love, had taken these words to
 Deut. 11:18 heart, they completely dismissed the counsel of the bish-
 ops and magistrates, and said to themselves: “What are
 John 11:47 we doing here? For this perfidious mob of Jews⁴ does
 many disgraceful and evil deeds not only against us, but
 rather against Jesus, with impunity. If we let them escape
 Matt. 26:33, this way, all men will be scandalized by them.” Then one
 Matt. 24:10 of the Christian people, a squarely built peasant named
 Ieško, who was as it were high priest for that year and
 season, prophesied, saying, “It is fitting for you that all
 the Jews together should die for the Christian people,
 John 11:49–53 lest the whole nation perish.” Therefore from that day
 and that hour they plotted how to destroy all the Jews,
 Esther 3:6 saying, “Lest perchance the vengeance of God come upon
 us, let us take away their goods and drive the perfidious
 Ezek. 32:23 race from the land of the living.”
- But the mayor of the city, seeing that the common
 people were raging against the Jewry with a great fury,

4. The Good Friday liturgy included a prayer for conversion of the “perfidious Jews” until Pope John XXIII removed it in 1959.

Num. 24:10 commanded the town criers that, with a loud public proclamation through the streets, they should summon the congregation of all the people into the praetorium to prevent further peril to the Jews. But by the dispensation of God, it happened that the Holy Spirit used the tongue of the criers to proclaim the opposite of this command. For they cried out that, by edict of the king and the consuls, the whole people should all attack at once for the plunder and extermination of the Jews. Then the whole people of God, with one voice and burning zeal, came against the Jews in their streets and quarters with weapons and arrows, and countless people fiercely cast stones at them.

Matt. 26:3 But the scribes, priests, and Pharisees, seeing such fury, gathered in the courtyard of the prince of the Jews,⁵ who was called Jonas. Yet they did not succeed in their false and treacherous counsels as to how they should not only seize Jesus in his members,⁶ but at once destroy and kill him. They said: "Let us do this on a feast day, that there may be a greater tumult among the people." But the Christians, standing outside in the streets, saw two Jews riding through the midst of them. Following them in swift pursuit, they cried out and said: "Truly you are of their number, for both your features and your clothes betray you." But they denied it and said, "We do not know what you are saying," and showed them the tonsures newly shaven on their heads, so that by lying iniquity they might appear to be priests. And so with wicked simulation, they escaped the hands of the Christians.

Matt. 26:3 And those who were gathered in the courtyard of the prince of the Jews sought a way to kill the Christians who were plotting their deaths; and they failed in their counsels, for they too were killed. The Christians said:

Luke 22:2

Matt. 26:69–74

5. A Christian term for the *parnas ha-chodesh*, the elected leader responsible for collecting taxes and mediating between the Jewish community and the king. It was a lucrative position.

6. That is, members of the Church, understood as the mystical body of Jesus.

Matt. 26:31 "It is written, let us strike them, and all their goods will
Matt. 26:34 be scattered. And before the cock crows, they will all be
Hebr. 11:37 miserably consumed in fire and slain by the sword." But
Matt. 26:66 Ieško the peasant said: "They are guilty of death, and if
Matt. 26:35 in their extermination I should die, for the vengeance of
John 11:16 Jesus, I will not refuse." But Jonas, the prince of the Jews,
Matt. 26:38 said, "My soul is sorrowful unto death, even perpetual
death." Ieško the peasant answered and said: "My joy will
John 15:11 not be full until my sword and my soul alike are drunk
Jer. 46:10 with the blood of the Jews. My spirit is willing, and my
Matt. 26:41 flesh is not weak." Turning to the others, he exhorted
Luke 22:32 them that they too should strengthen their brethren at
once, and watch and pray lest they enter into the Jewish
Matt. 26:42 temptation—"so it may be not as they will, but as we will.
The cup that God the Father has prepared for them shall
Matt. 26:43 not pass from them until they drink it. Our will be done."
While he was still speaking, there came to them a
Matt. 26:47 great multitude of Christians with swords and arrows,
lances, clubs, and weapons, not persuaded by the consuls
and elders of the city, but moved by divine inspiration to
destroy them. When they had come, one man gave them
Matt. 26:48 a sign, saying, "Whatever house I will show you is full
of the wealthiest Jews. Set it on fire and burn them." But
the Jews came to them and said, "Friends, why have you
Matt. 26:50 come?" The Christians said to one another: "Why do we
Matt. 20:6 remain here so long? Why are we standing idle? Let us
seize and kill the Jews, that by this the Scriptures may be
Matt. 26:56 fulfilled." And at once they cruelly laid hands upon the
perfidious Jews, not sparing their goods or their bodies.
Matt. 27:35 They divided their garments among them, each one tak-
ing as much as he could snatch. Nor did they cast lots
for them, but seized them whole and in great heaps—and
not only the garments, but all their treasure and furni-
ture with them. All who were present stretched forth their
hands, striking them without mercy and cutting off not
John 18:10 only their ears, but their heads, hands, and feet. Was it not
fitting that it should happen thus, through the sentence

- they pronounced upon themselves when they said, "His blood be upon us and upon our children"?
 Matt. 27:25
- And the Christians said to them: "Amen, amen, it is said to you: henceforth you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of the power of God and coming in the clouds of heaven—he in whom we believe. Your fathers will see him whom they pierced and you stoned."
 Matt. 26:64
- John 19:37
- And the veil was taken from the synagogue of the Hebrews, and with it, all the books of the prophets, Moses and the Talmud, and transferred for the use of the Christians. And plaiting straw, they fashioned crowns of burning wood and set them on the heads and bodies of the Jews and, mocking them, set them on fire. And after they had mocked them, they stripped them of their clothing and clothed them in fire, and gave them flames to drink mingled with smoke. And when they had tasted, it was fitting for them to drink.
 Matt. 23:37
- Matt. 27:51
- Matt. 27:29
- Matt. 27:31
- Matt. 27:34
- On the evening of the same day there was a great earthquake in the Jewry. The gravestones were broken and shattered in their cemeteries. Their tombs were opened by the Christians, yet no bodies of the Jews rose from the dead. But after the last day they shall come into the profane city of hell and appear to Lucifer and many demons with him. But from the first hour of the night, as fire consumed the houses of the Jews, there was darkness over all the land from sunset until the dawn of the following day.
 Matt. 27:57
- Matt. 28:2
- Matt. 27:52–53
- Matt. 27:45
- O truly blessed night, which despoiled the Jews and enriched the Christians!⁷ O most sacred Passover of ours, in which the faithful, refreshed the day before by the supper of the immaculate Lamb—that is, the body and blood of Jesus Christ—and liberated from the chains of sin by contrite confession, walked in the strength of that food, zealous for the house and the church of God, and like
 Apoc. 19:9
- 3 Kings 19:8
- Ps. 68:10, John 2:17

7. A parody of the Exsultet, the hymn of praise sung at the beginning of the Easter Vigil, which includes verses beginning "O truly blessed night." The hymn parallels Christ's Resurrection with the Jewish Passover (*Pascha*).

fire-breathing lions, spared neither the Hebrew children
 Dan. 6:16–23 nor their white-haired old men. For they consumed all
 Nahum 3:15 with fire and sword except for a few of the more attractive
 little children, whom they snatched from the burning fiery
 Daniel 3 furnace, to be raised afterward by the mercy of faithful
 Eph. 1:5 Christians as their adopted sons and daughters, delivered
 Titus 3:5 by the regeneration of holy baptism from the darkness of
 perfidious Jewish errors into the light of the true and or-
 thodox faith.⁸

For what power could then by any cunning restrain
 the mighty force of these lowly common people to keep
 them from avenging the injury to God? For this the Spirit
 of the Lord gathered them together, not just in an hour,
 but in an instant, from diverse and far distant places,⁹ in
 unity of wills and holy faith. But this took place so that
 the Scriptures might be fulfilled: “The days shall come in
 which they will say, Blessed are the barren who have not
 given birth, and the breasts that have not given suck.” For
 then the Jews said to the mountains of their dwellings,
 Luke 23:29–30 “Fall upon us,” and to the hills of their houses, “Cover
 us.” Therefore, not moved by penitence but desperate in
 their malice, as musical instruments resounded among the
 Dan. 3:5 raging fires, some of them pierced their own entrails and
 Acts 1:18 those of their children with their own knives, and some
 Matt. 27:5 hanged themselves along with Judas, the betrayer of Jesus
 Christ.
 Matt. 27:1 When morning came, the sworn citizens and elders
 of the city gathered in the praetorium, and the consuls
 Matt. 27:6 said, “It is not licit for anyone to keep the spoils, nor to
 convert what they have kept for their private use, for it is
 the price of usury.” This they said not from the purity of
 John 12:6 their conscience, but shaken by fear of the royal majesty.

8. An echo of baptismal and eucharistic prayers.

9. In apocryphal tradition, the Holy Spirit snatched the twelve apostles from the distant places of their preaching and gathered them all together in Ephesus to attend the death of the Virgin Mary.

Making a proclamation by the voice of the criers through the streets and alleys, they decreed on pain of death that everything must be returned and brought back to the praetorium, further offering a public guarantee that a suitable reward according to the law would be given to those returning goods. Hearing this, the people who had slaughtered the Jews and were unjustly keeping the profits of usury, moved by penance, brought the money and other goods back to the praetorium and cast them down. But the consuls said to them: "Now you are pure, yet not all of you." For they knew that some had stubbornly refused to restore the goods. The people said to them: "What is that to us? They will see to it themselves." And the whole mob of Christians, who had been present together at this spectacle and seen what had taken place, beating the Hebrew corpses, returned to their homes.

And he who has seen these things has borne witness, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he speaks the truth so that you also may believe. Now these things took place in the year 1389 after the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the next day, which was the third day after the sabbath when the Jews were killed, the chief priests and the priests and magnates of the city gathered together with the common people—old men and young, women and virgins, monks, and even thieves and prostitutes—at the place of the recent massacre. When they beheld the innumerable naked corpses of the Hebrews lying amid dung heaps and filth in the houses and streets, diversely mutilated in their members and burnt by the fire, they took counsel, lest the city be infected by air corrupt with the stench of usurious fat. They decreed, setting a price, that certain poor and needy Christians should gather all the corpses that the fire had not fully consumed into heaps and reduce them to ashes in a mighty blaze, adding any Jews they might find still alive in their hiding places. And it was done.

On the same day and for several days thereafter, a
Acts 2:41 great many Hebrew children of both sexes were baptized
by their own desire. Among them was also an old Jew-
Titus 3:5 ish woman who, after the bath of regeneration, is said to
have told her confessor that she had seen the blessed Vir-
gin Mary, the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, standing
above the gate of the Jewry. The people who were bap-
tized preached Christ, saying, "Truly, he who was cru-
Matt. 27:54 cified was the Son of God." But those who remained alive
after the fire and slaughter were locked up as prisoners in
the praetorium. Seeing this the Christians, shaking their
Matt. 27:39 heads, said, "Vach! You who stoned Christ, your houses
Matt. 26:61 are destroyed and will scarcely be rebuilt in three years,
or in thirty." But the common people among the Chris-
tians, toiling constantly in the Jewry in search of trea-
Matt. 24:2 sure, did not leave stone upon stone. The consuls, when
they had perceived this, said: "It is necessary for us to
stop such people, lest when the king¹⁰ arrives (for he was
in Eger¹¹ at this time), he may say we have done nothing
about it; so that the last error may not be worse than the
first." Therefore they gathered a multitude of armed men
and said to them, "Go and set a guard, as you know how."
So they went out and secured the Jewry, sealing the gates
Matt. 27:64–66 and setting a guard.

10. Wenceslas IV (king of Bohemia, 1376–1419; deposed as emperor in 1400).

11. A town in western Bohemia, also known as Cheb.

APPENDIX 2

La Desputoison de Dieu et de sa mère

- [46vb] S'il vous plaisoit, ie vous diroie
Comment Dieu sa mère guerroie
Pour les biens qu'elle a de son père.
Ja soit che qu'elle soit sa mère,
5 A Dieu son filz fait ung apel
Contre sa mère, de nouvel,
Devant le pappe en Avignon,
Qui se seoit lez ung perron,
Soux ung avanvent pour la pluie,
10 Et pour oïr la plaidoirie
Que Dieux et sa mère faisoient
Devant tous cheulx qui la estoient.
Oy le plet déterminer
Et les tesmoings examiner.

1. je L
14. Ot L

APPENDIX 2

The Dispute between God and His Mother

If it should please you, I would tell
How God waged war on his mother
Over his father's legacy.
Yes, although she was his mother,
5 Her son made an appeal to God
Against his mother, once again,
Before the pope in Avignon,
Who sat upon a bench of stone—
Beneath a canopy for rain—
10 And prepared to hear the lawsuit
That God and his mother argued
Before all who were present there.
I myself heard the case resolved
And the witnesses examined.

- 15 On dist au fil qu'il prist conseil,
 Mais il respondi: "Point ne veul
 D'avocat encontre ma mère,
 Car ma besongne est toute clère;
 Je say bien que je l'ay gaigniet,
 20 Se mon droit ne m'est fourjugiet.
 De droit propose contre ly
 Qu'elle m'a maisement party
 Dez bienz que mon père a acquis,
 Et sy n'ot ains fille ne filz
 25 Forz moy, et chascuns le set bien.
 Donc ma mère ne fait pas bien
 Quant elle me détient ma part,
 Et sy ne suiz mie bastart!
 Maiz ne li chaut comment il aille.
 30 Elle a le grain et moy la paille;
 De ses bienz m'a parti le mains.

- Ma mère a bon ostel à Rains,
 Et à Chalon et à Paris,
 A Chartrez et à Saint Denis,
 35 Et à Beauvaiz et à Rouen.
 Je me suiz adviséz auwen
 Qu'elle a touz prinz et ie n'ai rienz.
 Ma mère a bon hostel Amiens,
 Et à Boulongne sur la mer
 40 A ma mère bel demourer.
 Rongié m'a jusquez à la couenne!
 [47ra] Bon ostel tient à Therouenne,
 Et à Arraz et à Canbray,
 Et en la ville de Tournay,

18. besongue L

20. fourjugiet L

22. mesmement L

25. Fors L

26. Dont L

29. Mais L

30. le paille V

37. tout L; je L

39. le V, L

41. le V

15 The son was urged to take counsel,
 But he replied, "I do not need
 A lawyer against my mother,
 For my affair is very clear:
 I know that I will vanquish her,
20 If I'm not deprived of my rights.
 By law I appeal against her
 That she spitefully split with me
 The goods that my father acquired,
 And she has no son or daughter
25 But me, as everyone well knows.
 So my mother does not do well
 When she withholds my share from me—
 And I'm certainly no bastard!
 But she does not care how it goes:
30 She has the grain and I the chaff.
 The least of his goods, she left me.

 Mother has a good house at Reims,
 One at Châlons, one at Paris,
 At Chartres and at Saint-Denis,
35 And at Beauvais and at Rouen.
 I've noticed in the course of time
 That she took all, and I got none.
 She has a fine place at Amiens,
 And at Boulogne by the sea,
40 My mother has a lovely home.
 She has shaved me down to the scalp!
 She keeps grand state at Théroutanne,
 And at Arras, and at Cambrai,
 Also in the town of Tournai,

- 45 Et en la chité de Noyon,
 Et aussy au mont de Laon
 A le pluz biau lieu de la ville,
 Où je ne prenz ne croiz ne pille.
 Au Puy et à Rochemadour
- 50 A deux maisonz de grant valour,
 Et tant d'aultrez par my le monde,
 Que autant loingz que volle aronde,
 N'est il nombreur quy les nombrast,
 Tant parfaitement y pensast.
- 55 A Monserrat en Arragon
 A ma mère forte maison,
 Et bien VI^x lanpez d'argent.
 Bien sera prouvé par la gent,
 Car ch'est chose toute commune.
- 60 Bon ostel a à Pampelune,
 Et encore meilleur à Burs.
 En sez maisonz closez de murz,
 A haultez tourz et à créneaux,
 Fiertrez, calicez et joyaulz
- 65 Et drapz de fin or et de soie
 Si qu'à nombrer ne les saroie,
 Dont sez maisonz sont réparées
 Quant che vient à haultez journéez.
 Et por che que sont sy honnestez
- 70 S'y vont logier lez archevêquez,
 Lez évesquez et lez légaulx.
- Et je n'ay c'un peu d'ospitaulx
 Où se herbergent ly coquin,
 Ly truant et ly pèlerin,

53. les G; le V, L

55. Monferrat V, L

62. Et V, L; maisons L

64. joyauz L

66. G; A nobrer ne saroie V, L

67. maisons L

71. Les évesquez L

73. herbegent L

- 45 And in the city of Noyon,
 And on the hill of Laon as well
 She has the best site in the town,
 While I've not a coin to my name.
 At Le Puy and Rocamadour
- 50 She has two homes of great value,
 And many more throughout the world.
 Why, so far as the swallow flies,
 No one alive could count them all,
 However carefully he tried.
- 55 At Montserrat in Aragon,
 My mother has a splendid house
 And six times twenty silver lamps—
 The people will attest to this,
 For everybody knows it well.
- 60 Her mansion in Pamplona's grand,
 The one in Burgos still better.
 In her houses, enclosed in walls
 With high, crenellated towers,
 She keeps relics, chalices, gems,
- 65 Brocades of fine gold and of silk:
 No one could count all the riches
 With which her mansions are decked out
 When solemn feast days come around.
 And since they are so dignified,
- 70 That is where the archbishops lodge,
 Bishops and papal legates too.
- But I have just a few shelters
 Where homeless rascals come to stay,
 And vagabonds and pilgrims lodge

- 75 Quy n'ont ne maille ne denier;
 Telle gent s'y viennent logier,
 Et genz enfonduz et malades,
 Quy n'ont soing de compter baladez.
 Maiz je ny may qu'elle débat,
- 80 Car chascuns selon son estat
 Est couchiez quant est arrivéz
- [47rb] En povrez drapz touz deschiréz;
 Sy seroi ge se g'y venoie!
 Cuidiez vous que souffrir le doie?
- 85 J'ose bien par devant tous dire,
 Que mielz vault seullement le chire
 Que ma mère art en sez maisons,
 Que tous lez bienz que nous avons,
 Sanz l'autre argent c'on ly apporte.
- 90 Cuidiez vous que je m'en déporte?
 Sire, jugez, faites mon droit,
 Je vous ay proposé mon droit.
 S'elle nye, j'offre à prouver.
 Ichy ne fault point arguer."
- 95 Lorz dist ly papez à briez mos,
 Quant Dieux ot finé son propos:
 "Or entendez à moy, Marie!
 Bien avez la rayson oye
 Que vostre filz proposé a,
- 100 Et il me sanble qu'il a droit
 S'il demande la part son père,
 Ou caz que vous fustez sa mère.
 Bailliez luy, si ferez que sage,
 Et ne vous faites point dommage

79. ny G; n'y L

80–81. L; lines obscured in V

89. l'y L

92. line missing in L

100. semble L

- 75 Without a nickel or a dime—
People of that sort stay with me,
Paupers, down-and-outs, and sick folks
Who take no pains to tell fine tales.
But I deny what she argues—
- 80 For each one, as befits his rank,
Receives a bed when he arrives,
Covered with poor and ragged sheets—
I'd get the same if I came there!
Do you think I should suffer this?
- 85 I dare say in front of you all
That even the beeswax candles
My mother burns in her houses
Cost more than all the goods we have—
Not counting money pilgrims bring!
- 90 Do you think I'm amused by this?
Judge, my lord, and give me my rights!
I have set out my case for you.
If she contests, I'll prove my case.
There is no need to hurry here.”
- 95 Then the pope said a few brief words
After God had finished his plea:
“Now you listen to me, Mary!
You have now heard the arguments
That your son has put before us,
- 100 And it seems to me he is right
To claim his father's legacy,
If you were indeed his mother!
Give him his due, if you are smart,
And do your case no further harm

- 105 A venir plaidier devant moy,
 Car par le foy que je vous doy,
 Se vous ne luy faitez raison
 Je vous feré mestre en prison.”
- “Syre, sire,” ce dist Marie,
 110 “Mon filz por ce sy ne m’a mie;
 Vous ne savez point qu’il m’a fait.
 Or me laissez dire mon fait
 Aussy bien qu’il a dit le sien.
 Je vouz dy qu’il me souvient bien,
 115 Se vous en feré menscion:
 Mil anz ot à l’Ascencion,
 Troiz C. IIII^{ex} XXXVII.
 Ung seul n’en porroit on laisser!
 G’y ay puis pensé maintez fois,
 120 Que mon fil sanz pille ne crois
 [47va] Me laisa; aussy fist son père.
 La chose me fut moult amère,
 Quant de moy lez vy départir,
 Maiz je ne lez peux detenir.
 125 Là demouré touste esgarée,
 Comme femne desconfortée,
 Prinz à faire ma besongnette
 Et à filler ma quenoulette;
 Et quant je trouvoie à gaignier,
 130 J’aloie ouvrer de mon mestier
 Et faire chainturez de soie.
 Mon filz scet bien que je savoie
 Bien ouvrer avant qu’il fust né.
 Ensement ay en vérité

110. fils pour L

119–20. L; lines partly obscured in V

127. besoingnette L

- 105 By coming to plead before me.
For, by the faith that I owe you,
If you will not do right by him,
I will have you put in prison.”
- Mary replied, “Come, come, my lord!
110 My son scarcely loves me at all.
You don’t know how he’s treated me!
Allow me to tell my side now
As well as he has told you his.
I tell you, I remember well,
115 If you will take note of the date:
A thousand years since the Ascension,
Three hundred, four score, thirty-seven.*
No one could leave him anything!
I’ve thought about it many times:
120 My son left me without a cent,
As his father did before him.
It caused me the most bitter pain
When I saw them both leaving me,
But I could not force them to stay.
125 There I remained, all comfortless,
Like a disconsolate woman,
So I provided for my needs,
Began to spin with my distaff;
And when I found a way to earn,
130 I went to work at my own trade,
Making girdles and belts of silk.
My son well knows that I knew how
To do fine work before his birth.
True enough, it was in this way

* Taking the Ascension to have occurred in 33 C.E., adding 1417 years would set the date of the lawsuit in 1450.

- 135 Lez granz richessez acquestéez,
 Dont mez maisonz sont réparéez,
 Où je fay faire mon serviche.
 Mon filz meisme, qui pau me prise,
 Y est serviz avecque moy.
 140 Sy a grant tort quant plaide à moy!

- Où tampz qu'il me laissa jadiz,
 L'alay querre par le país,
 Se le trouvé à la Rochelle,
 Tous nulz piéz, en une gonnelle,
 145 Là où il tournoit lez hastierz,
 Sy comme ungz povrez méhaignié.
 Là juoit bien souvent aux déz
 Et portoit lez petiz pastéz
 Par lez tavernez de la ville.
 150 Au soir n'avoit ne croiz ne pille;
 N'avoit point souvent robe noeusve.
 Et quant je regarday son euvre,
 Ung pou de maison que j'avoie,
 Dont nesun compte ne tenoie,
 155 Luy baillay por luy gouverner;
 Et puiz se luy fiz machonner
 Ung bon hospital à Pontoise,
 Dont il deuist vivre bien aise,
 S'il se gouvernast sagement,
 160 De la rente tant seullement.
 Maiz il gaste tout à sez mainz!
 [47vb] Il a bon hospital à Rains,
 Et à Pariz et à Tonnoirre,
 Se il veult mieulz, se le voit querre.

135. Les L

136. réparéez G; réparéez L

141. tampx L

142. alai L

143. le Rochelle V; la Rochelle L

145. les L

155. pour L

159. sagment V; sag[e]ment L

160. tant G; dont V, L

161. L; [tout à sez mainz] obscured in V

135 That I acquired the great riches
 That beautify the houses where
 I have people do my service.
 My son, who esteems me little,
 Is served with me in the same homes.
140 You see how wrong he is to sue!

 In the old days, when he left me,
 I searched for him throughout the land,
 And I found him at La Rochelle,
 All barefoot, wearing a long robe,
145 As he turned the barbecue spits
 Just like some poor crippled fellow.
 He gambled often, played at dice,
 And carried the little pasties
 Through the taverns of the city;
150 At nightfall he hadn't a cent.
 He scarcely ever got new clothes.
 And when I saw his sorry work,
 I gave him a small house I had,
 By which no one set any store,
155 Where he could look after himself.
 And later, I had built for him
 A better hospice at Pontoise,
 Where he could have lived in comfort,
 If he had managed prudently,
160 On income from the rent alone.
 But he wastes everything he gets!
 He has a good hospice at Reims,
 One at Paris, one at Tonnerre.
 If he wants better, let him search!

165 Je say bien que je perderoie
 Touz les bienz que je ly donroie,
 Car che qu'il a est tout gasté.
 Je l'ay maintez foiz regardé
 En chez moustierz, lez braz tenduz,
 170 Povrez, nuz piéz, et mal vestus.
 Bien scay que ainsy se maintenra
 Tant que che siècle chy durra.

Et si vous requier qu'il m'apère
 Letrez de la mort de son père,
 175 Car je croy, et sy n'ay paz tort,
 Que son père n'est mie mort!
 Par la fianche que g'y ay
 Oncquez puiz ne me mariay.
 Et s'il scet que je me marie,
 180 Si viengne querre sa partie;
 Et se je muir, sy prengne tout.
 Vechy de ma cause le bout.
 Plaide à moy tant qu'il luy plaira,
 Aultre chose n'emportera."

185 Lorz dist le juge qu'elle ot droit,
 Et que son fil le surqueroit.
 Sy qu'en la fin fut condempnéz,
 Et me samble qu'il fu jugyéz
 Qu'il doit paier tous lez despens,
 190 Et qu'il doit gouverner lez genz
 De sa mère tant qu'il vivront;
 Et puiz aprèz, quant il morront,
 Marie ara par deverz ly
 Les amez, ch'elle a dit ainsy,

175. si L

179. set L

181. si L

194. ch'elle G; chelle L

165 I know that I would throw away
All the property I gave him,
For everything he has, he wastes.
Many times I've caught sight of him
In these churches, his arms outstretched,
170 Poor and barefoot and badly dressed.
I well know he will live like this
For as long as this world endures.

What's more, I ask, let him show me
Letters to prove his father's death.
175 For I believe, unless I'm wrong,
His father never died at all!
By the fealty I owe him,
I have never married again.
If he knows I have remarried,
180 Then let him claim his legacy!
And if I die, let him take all.
I rest my case. Now let him plead
As much as he likes against me:
He will not get a penny more."

185 Then the judge said that she was right—
Her son was demanding too much.
So in the end, he lost his case.
It was decreed, it seems to me,
That he must pay all the court costs
190 And has to maintain the servants
Of his mother throughout their lives.
Then afterward, when they have died,
Mary will have at her pleasure
The souls—for this is what she said—

195 De cheulz quy l'aront bien servicee.

Por moy et pour vous luy suplie
 Que sy bien la puissonz servir,
 Qu'en la fin nous puissonz venir
 En la gloire de paradis. Amen.

196. Pour L

197. la G; le V, L

199. L; line obscured in V

G Emendations of Gérard Gros, "Questions d'héritage, ou *La desputoison de Dieu et de sa mère*," in *Les relations de parenté dans le monde médiéval*, Sénéfiance 26 (Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1989), 487–507.

L Edition of Ernest Langlois, "Notice du manuscrit Ottobonien 2523," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire de l'École Française de Rome* 5 (1885): 56–61.

V Rome, Vat. Ottobon. ms. 2523 (fols. 46–47); region of Laon, 1453; the sole manuscript.

195 Of everyone who served her well.

For you and for myself, I pray
That we may serve her here so well
That in the end we may arrive
In the glory of Paradise. Amen.

NOTES

CHAPTER 1. THEORIZING CROSSOVER

1. For a dispassionate account see Kathy Cawsey, *Twentieth-Century Chaucer Criticism: Reading Audiences* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011), 85–108.
2. D. W. Robertson Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962); idem, “The Doctrine of Charity in Mediaeval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach Through Symbolism and Allegory,” *Speculum* 26 (1951): 24–49; idem, “Some Medieval Literary Terminology, with Special Reference to Chrétien de Troyes,” *Studies in Philology* 48.3 (1951): 669–92; idem, “The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts,” in *The Meaning of Courtly Love*, ed. F. X. Newman (Albany: SUNY Press, 1968), 1–18.
3. Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, III.22–34, trans. D. W. Robertson Jr. (New York: Macmillan, 1958), 92–99.
4. Ralph Hanna, “Donaldson and Robertson: An Obligatory Conjunction,” *Chaucer Review* 41.3 (2007): 240–49, especially 245–46.
5. E. Talbot Donaldson, “Patristic Exegesis in the Criticism of Medieval Literature: The Opposition” (1958), repr. in *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970), 134–53.
6. Lee Patterson, *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 26.
7. D. W. Robertson Jr., “The Allegorist and the Aesthetician,” in *Essays in Medieval Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 85–101.

8. Alan T. Gaylord, "Reflections on D.W. Robertson, Jr., and 'Exegetical Criticism,'" *Chaucer Review* 40.3 (2006): 312.

9. Steven Justice, "Who Stole Robertson?" *PMLA* 124 (2009): 610.

10. *Ibid.*, 611.

11. Patterson, *Negotiating the Past*, 26–29.

12. "The medieval mind" was not a Robertsonian invention. See Henry Osborn Taylor's textbook, *The Mediaeval Mind: A History of the Development of Thought and Emotion in the Middle Ages*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1911), which was reprinted twelve times until 1971; Frederick Artz, *The Mind of the Middle Ages, A.D. 200–1500: An Historical Survey* (New York: Knopf, 1953); William Manchester, *A World Lit Only by Fire: The Medieval Mind and the Renaissance: Portrait of an Age* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1992).

13. Nicholas Watson, "Censorship and Cultural Change in Late-Medieval England: Vernacular Theology, the Oxford Translation Debate, and Arundel's Constitutions of 1409," *Speculum* 70 (1995): 822–64; "Visions of Inclusion: Universal Salvation and Vernacular Theology in Pre-Reformation England," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 27 (1997): 145–87; "Conceptions of the Word: The Mother Tongue and the Incarnation of God," *New Medieval Literatures* 1 (1997): 85–124.

14. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Bradley Warren, eds., *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson, eds., *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003).

15. Dorothea Kullmann, ed., *The Church and Vernacular Literature in Medieval France* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 2009), 7–8.

16. *Ibid.*, 11.

17. John D. Cotts, *The Clerical Dilemma: Peter of Blois and Literate Culture in the Twelfth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009).

18. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, "The 'Clerical Proletariat' and the Rise of English: A New Look at Fourteenth-Century Book Production," plenary lecture at the International Congress on Medieval Studies, Kalamazoo, May 2010.

19. Constance Brittain Bouchard, *"Every Valley Shall Be Exalted": The Discourse of Opposites in Twelfth-Century Thought* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 4.

20. Catherine Brown, *Contrary Things: Exegesis, Dialectic, and the Poetics of Didacticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 148.

21. *Ibid.*, 14.

22. Sarah Kay, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 2–3.

23. Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, vv. 21,573–82, ed. Daniel Poirion (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1974), 568–69. The translation is my own.

24. *Ibid.*, vv. 7121–26. These lines do not occur in the standard translation by Frances Horgan, *The Romance of the Rose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). But Chaucer knew them: at the end of the *Pardoner's Tale* the angry Host declares, “I wolde I hadde thy coillons in myn hond / In stide of relikes or of seintuarie. / Lat kutte hem of, I wol thee helpe hem carie; / They shul be shryned in an hogges toord!” (vv. 952–55). All quotations are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed., ed. Larry D. Benson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

25. Chaucer parodies this axiom in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*: “Taketh the fruyt, and lat the chaf be stille” (v. 3443). Cf. Bernard F. Huppé and D.W. Robertson Jr., *Fruyt and Chaf: Studies in Chaucer's Allegories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

26. Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 292.

27. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Chrétien Continued: A Study of the Conte du Graal and Its Verse Continuations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 18–19.

28. *Demandes d'amour* were a staple of “courts of love,” as in Andreas Capellanus's *De amore*. Chaucer uses them to end the *Knight's Tale*, part 1, as well as the *Franklin's Tale*: Which lover was worse off, the imprisoned Palamon or the banished Arcite? Who was the most generous—Arveragus, Aurelius, or the magician? Marguerite Porete imagines God's *demande d'amour* to the loving soul: What would she do if he loved another more than her, or commanded her to love another more than him, or required another to love her more than he did?

29. Nancy Netzer, “Secular and Sacred Objects from the Middle Ages: Illuminating the History of Classification,” in *Secular Sacred, 11th–16th Century: Works from the Boston Public Library and The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*, ed. Nancy Netzer (Chestnut Hill, MA: Charles S. and Isabella V. McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2006), 11.

30. For a summary of art-historical interpretations, see Cecilia De Carli, *I dischi da parto e la pittura del primo Rinascimento toscano* (Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 1997), 74–75.

31. Though set as an independent song in Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, this is stanza 8 of the long poem “Si linguis angelicis,” no. 77 in Alfons Hilka and Otto Schumann, eds., *Carmina burana*, 2 vols. (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1930–1941), 1:53.

32. Latin *generosa* has the meanings of “noble,” “generous,” and “high-born,” while its derivation from *genero* evokes the goddess's procreative power. The poem has generated predictably opposite readings from Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon,

1965–1966), 1:318–31, and D. W. Robertson Jr., “Two Poems from the *Carmina Burana*,” *American Benedictine Review* 27 (1976): 36–59.

33. Eugene B. Cantelupe, “The Anonymous *Triumph of Venus* in the Louvre: An Early Italian Renaissance Example of Mythological Disguise,” *Art Bulletin* 44 (1962): 240.

34. Jacqueline Marie Musacchio, “The Medici-Tornabuoni *Descosto da Parto* in Context,” *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 33 (1998): 140.

35. Michael Camille suggests that the new mother, in the discomfort of her lying-in, “might have identified less positively with this Venus, who appears pinned-down and vulnerable in her triumph.” I find this unlikely. *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1998), 33.

36. Alcuin Blamires, “The ‘Religion of Love’ in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* and Medieval Visual Art,” in *Word and Visual Imagination: Studies in the Interaction of English Literature and the Visual Arts*, ed. Karl Josef Höltgen, Peter M. Daly, and Wolfgang Lottes (Erlangen: Universitätsbund Erlangen-Nürnberg, 1988), 23.

37. On this technique see Chantal Phan, “From Sacred to Secular and from Secular to Sacred: The Role of Text-Music Relations in Two Lyric Contrafacts,” in *The Church and Vernacular Literature*, ed. Kullmann, 214–23.

38. Sylvia Huot, *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet: The Sacred and the Profane in Thirteenth-Century Polyphony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 8.

39. Bruce Holsinger finds that medieval critiques of polyphony focused not on the difficulty of hearing the words (which later troubled the Council of Trent) but on its sensual sweetness, in particular the homoerotic connotations of bass voices mingling with male trebles. “Polyphones and Sodomites: Music and Sexual Dissidence from Leoninus to Chaucer’s Pardoner,” in *Music, Body and Desire in Medieval Culture: Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 137–87.

40. Huot, *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet*, 48–49.

41. Brown, *Contrary Things*, 17.

42. “De Vigilia Paschali,” in *Liber Usualis Missae et Officii*, ed. monks of Solesmes (Tournai: Desclée, 1960), 776N.

43. “Adam Lay Bound,” in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, vol. 1, 7th ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2000), 354. The most famous modern setting is Benjamin Britten’s in *A Ceremony of Carols*.

44. “Amplius nobis profuit culpa quam nocuit”; “fructuosior culpa quam innocentia.” Ambrose of Milan, *De institutione virginis* 104 (PL 16:331a); *De Jacob et vita beata* I.21 (PL 14:607c). The key passages on this theme were first collected by Arthur O. Lovejoy in “Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall,” *ELH* 4 (1937): 161–79. See also Victor Yelverton Haines, *The Fortunate*

Fall of Sir Gawain: The Typology of "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982), 1–14.

45. "Ampliora adepti per ineffabilem Christi gratiam quam per diaboli amiseramus invidiam." Leo I, *Sermo* 73, "On the Lord's Ascension" (PL 54:396c).

46. Gregory I, *In Librum primum Regum expositiones* IV.7 (PL 79:222ab).

47. Lovejoy, "Milton and the Paradox of the Fortunate Fall," 171; Bernard Capelle, "L'Exultet' pascal oeuvre de saint Ambroise," in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, 6 vols. (Rome: Vatican, 1946), 1:228, 232, 246. The *felix culpa* is also missing from the Exultet as it now appears in the Book of Common Prayer.

48. Logically, the *felix culpa* does not entail the *necessarium Adae peccatum*. A number of twelfth-century theologians, and notably Duns Scotus in the fourteenth, taught the absolute predestination of Christ—the belief that only the Crucifixion, not the Incarnation, is contingent on the Fall.

49. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* III.1.3, ad 3, ed. Institute of Mediaeval Studies of Ottawa (Ottawa: Commissio Piana, 1953), 4:2,418b.

50. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

51. Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London: Penguin, 1985).

52. Ascribed to Gregory in *Glossa ordinaria, Liber II Regum*, c. 11 (PL 113:572a), and in Richard of Saint-Victor, *De eruditione hominis interioris*, II.9 (PL 196:1307d). I have been unable to find the maxim in Gregory's works, though in his commentary *In Librum primum Regum expositiones* III.5 (PL 79:184b), he states, "qui quo viliora per litterae sonum audit, eo ea per spiritalem significationem utiliora esse intelligit." (The more vile things sound if taken literally, the more useful the hearer understands them to be if interpreted spiritually.)

53. *Glossa ordinaria, Liber II Regum*, c. 11 (PL 113:572d). Cf. Claudius of Turin, *In Libros Regum* II (PL 50:1091a).

54. Henri de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale: Les quatre sens de l'Écriture*, 4 vols. (Paris: Aubier, 1959), 2:461–62.

55. "Sicut enim in imagine non tam intendimus tabulam quam picturam, sic in expositione non tam debemus historiam quam figuram; quia tabulae historiae non semper aequae respondent picturae allegoriae; [significans] quandoque sit malum, et significatum bonum, et e converso." Innocent III, *Sermo* 24 (PL 217:561d), emended. Cf. de Lubac, *Exégèse médiévale*, 2:462.

56. For versions of this interpretation, see for example "The Secret Book of John," "The Nature of the Rulers," "Exegesis on the Soul," and "Thunder," in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures*, ed. Marvin Meyer and James M. Robinson (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

57. Marvin W. Meyer, *Judas: The Definitive Collection of Gospels and Legends about the Infamous Apostle of Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 2007); James M.

Robinson, *The Secrets of Judas: The Story of the Misunderstood Disciple and His Lost Gospel* (New York: Harper, 2006); William Klassen, *Judas: Betrayer or Friend of Jesus?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996).

58. Marguerite Porete, *Le mirouer des simples ames*, ch. 117, ed. Romana Guarnieri, CCCM 69 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), 310.

59. For a more nuanced account of her trial see Sean L. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor: The Trials of Marguerite Porete and Guiard of Cressonessart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012).

60. *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, no. 1147, ad 1347, ed. Henri Denifle, 4 vols. (Paris: Delalain, 1889–1897), 2: 610–11. Cf. Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitorial Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 245–46. For more on this little-known figure see Mauricio Beuchot, “John of Mirecourt,” in *A Companion to Philosophy in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jorge J. E. Gracia and Timothy B. Noone (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 377–81.

61. John Wyclif, Sermon 90, in *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, ed. Thomas Arnold, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1869–1871), 1:320–21.

62. Julian of Norwich, *A Revelation of Love*, ch. 51, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 283.

63. *Ibid.*, ch. 46, p. 263.

64. *Ibid.*, ch. 45, pp. 259–61.

65. *Ibid.*

66. Ralph Hexter, *Equivocal Oaths and Ordeals in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 112–20.

67. “Einer list ir herzen vür geleit / vil verre ûf gotes höfscheit.” Gottfried von Strassburg, *Tristan*, vv. 15,555–56, ed. Karl Marold, 2 vols. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 1:262; trans. A. T. Hatto (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1960), 246.

68. *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997); Green, *Crisis of Truth*, 1–31, 333–34; Dean Baldwin, “*Amis and Amiloun*: The Testing of Treuthe,” *Papers on Language and Literature* 16 (1980): 353–65.

69. Eugen Kölbing, *Amis and Amiloun, zugleich mit der altfranzösischen Quelle* (Heilbronn: Henninger, 1884); *Ami and Amile, Translated from the Old French*, trans. Samuel Danon and Samuel N. Rosenberg (York, SC: French Literature Publications, 1981).

70. “The Amis and Amiloun Story of Radulfus Tortarius,” in *Amis and Amiloun*, ed. MacEdward Leach, EETS 203 (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 101–5. See also Leach’s introduction, especially xvi–xxxii.

71. “Vita Amici et Amelii carissimorum,” in Kölbing, *Amis and Amiloun, zugleich mit der altfranzösischen Quelle*, xcvi–cx; Kathryn Hume, “Structure and

Perspective: Romance and Hagiographic Features in the Amicus and Amelius Story,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 69 (1970): 89–107.

72. Rachel Bromwich, “Celtic Elements in Arthurian Romance: A General Survey,” in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to A. H. Diverres*, ed. P. B. Grout, R. A. Lodge, C. E. Pickford, and E. K. C. Varty (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), 41–55. Bromwich argues that the origins of nomenclature should be sought in Welsh sources and those of plot motifs in Irish.

73. Among the works of R. S. Loomis see *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1927); *Arthurian Tradition and Chrétien de Troyes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1949); *Wales and the Arthurian Legend* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1956); *The Grail, from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); *The Development of Arthurian Romance* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1963); (ed.) *Arthurian Literature in the Middle Ages: A Collaborative History* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1959).

74. For various theories see R. S. Loomis, “The Oral Diffusion of the Arthurian Legend,” in *Arthurian Literature and Chrétien de Troyes*, 52–63; Constance Bullock-Davies, *Professional Interpreters and the Matter of Britain* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1966); and Patrick Sims-Williams, “Did Itinerant Breton *Conteurs* Transmit the *Matière de Bretagne*?” *Romania* 116 (1998): 72–111.

75. Bromwich, “Celtic Elements in Arthurian Romance,” 51–52.

76. So for instance Kenneth G. T. Webster, positing “myriads” of lost sources for Chrétien de Troyes, describes him as “a beautiful moon shining by reflected light and obscuring with his brilliance the great stars beyond him.” *Guinevere: A Study of Her Abductions* (Milton, MA: Turtle Press, 1951), 52–53.

77. In the prologue to *Erec et Énide* Chrétien calls his work “une molt bele conjointure” (v. 14; ed. and trans. Carleton W. Carroll [New York: Garland, 1987], 2). He ascribes the “matiere et san” of the *Lancelot* to his patron, Countess Marie. *Le Chevalier de la Charrette (Lancelot)*, v. 26, ed. Alfred Foulet and Karl D. Uitti (Paris: Bordas, 1989), 2.

78. Stuart Piggott, *Ancient Britons and the Antiquarian Imagination: Ideas from the Renaissance to the Regency* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989).

79. Laurent Guyénot, *La Lance qui saigne: Métatextes et hypertextes du Conte du Graal de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Champion, 2010), 12.

80. John Darrah, *Paganism in Arthurian Romance* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994), 38–62.

81. Ibid., 6–7; Sir James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, abr. ed. (1922; repr. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 1–10.

82. Thomas Babington Macaulay, “The Battle of the Lake Regillus,” X, in *Lays of Ancient Rome* (Philadelphia: Butler, 1868), 104.

83. Virgil refers to the Golden Bough as sacred to Proserpina (*Iunoni infernae*) in *Aeneid* VI.136–43. The connection with Diana's cult at Nemi was introduced by Servius: *Qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii*, ed. Georg Thilo and Hermann Hagen, 3 vols. (1881–1887; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1986), 2:30. See Anthony Ossa-Richardson, "From Servius to Frazer: The Golden Bough and Its Transformations," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 15 (2008): 339–68.

84. Ovid, *Fasti* III.263–74, ed. E. H. Alton et al. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1978), 62; Strabo, *Geography* V.3.12, trans. H. C. Hamilton and W. Falconer, 3 vols. (London: Bohn, 1854–1857), 1:355–56; Suetonius, *Caligula* 35, in *The Twelve Caesars*, trans. Robert Graves, rev. ed. (London: Penguin, 1979), 169; Pausanias, *Description of Greece* II.27.4, trans. W. H. S. Jones, 5 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965–1969), 1:392–93.

85. For partisans of the "historical Arthur" see Geoffrey Ashe, *The Quest for Arthur's Britain* (New York: Praeger, 1968); Leslie Alcock, *Arthur's Britain: History and Archaeology, AD 367–634* (London: Allen Lane, 1971); John Morris, *The Age of Arthur: A History of the British Isles from 350 to 650* (New York: Scribner, 1973); Graham Anderson, *King Arthur in Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 2003).

86. Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier au lion, ou, Le roman d'Yvain*, ed. and trans. David F. Hult (Paris: Livre de poche, 1994); Darrah, *Paganism in Arthurian Romance*, 93, 241.

87. For a mythic and folkloric analysis of *Yvain* see Pierre Gallais, *La Fée à la Fontaine et à l'Arbre: un archétype du conte merveilleux et du récit courtois* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), 84–99.

88. Renaut de Bâgé, *Le Bel Inconnu (Li Biaus Descouneüs; The Fair Unknown)*, ed. Karen Fresco, trans. Colleen P. Donagher, Garland Library of Medieval Literature 77A (New York: Garland, 1992), 110–47.

89. Francis Dubost, "Tel cuide bien faire qui faut: le 'beau jeu' de Renaut avec le merveilleux," in *Le Chevalier et la merveille dans le Bel Inconnu, ou, Le beau jeu de Renaut*, ed. Jean Dufournet and Emmanuèle Baumgartner (Paris: Champion, 1996), 49; Guyénot, *La Lance qui saigne*, 151–54.

90. *Lancelot: Roman en prose du 13e siècle*, XCI.1–28, ed. Alexandre Micha, 9 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1978–1983), 5:92–113; *Lancelot* VI.162, in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. Norris J. Lacy et al., 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1993–1996), 3:231–37.

91. Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 131, 153, 224.

92. "Guilty" is Carleton Carroll's translation of *malfet*; see *Lancelot*, part 6, in *Lancelot-Grail*, ed. Lacy, 3:335. Taken as the past participle of *malfaire* it denotes a knight who has "behaved badly" or "transgressed." But the ambiguous term can also have a passive sense: "badly made, ugly." Hence T. H. White

famously designates Lancelot “the ill-made knight” in *The Once and Future King* (London: Collins, 1958).

93. *Lancelot*, CVII.43–48, CVIII.1–12, ed. Micha, 6:231–41; *Lancelot* VI.178–79, in *Lancelot-Grail*, ed. Lacy, 3: 336.

94. See for example “The Cursèd Carolers of Colbek” in Robert Mannyng of Brunne, *Handlyng Synne*, vv. 9,011–257, ed. Idelle Sullens (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1983), 225–31.

95. *Lancelot* V.150, in *Lancelot-Grail*, ed. Lacy, 3:165–71.

96. Erich Köhler, “Le rôle de la ‘coutume’ dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes,” *Romania* 81 (1960): 386–97.

97. For a remarkable illustration of this danger in a modern romance, see Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (London: Bloomsbury, 2004), 709–10, 729–30. In *The Custom of the Castle: From Malory to Macbeth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), Charles Ross reads the topos from the standpoint of legal history but falls into the trap of excessive rationalism and overlooks its supernatural dimensions.

98. John Van Engen, “The Twelfth Century: Reading, Reason, and Revolt in a World of Custom,” in *European Transformations: The Long Twelfth Century*, ed. Thomas F. X. Noble and John Van Engen (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 17–44.

99. Jacques Ribard, “Pour une interprétation théologique de la ‘coutume’ dans le roman arthurien,” in *Mittelalterstudien Erich Köhler zum Gedenken*, ed. Henning Krauss and Dietmar Rieger (Heidelberg: Winter, 1984), 241–48.

100. See especially Romans 5–11 and Galatians 3–4.

101. *Le Roman de Tristan en prose*, ed. Renée L. Curtis, 3 vols. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 2:68–91; *The Romance of Tristan: The Thirteenth-Century Old French ‘Prose Tristan,’* abr. trans. Renée L. Curtis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 89–91.

102. Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 194–95; Darrah, *Paganism in Arthurian Romance*, 85.

103. Helaine Newstead, *Bran the Blessed in Arthurian Romance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), 15–17.

104. In Robert de Boron’s *Joseph of Arimathea*, Bron is Joseph’s brother-in-law and the first Fisher King. *Merlin and the Grail: Joseph of Arimathea, Merlin, Perceval: The Trilogy of Prose Romances Attributed to Robert de Boron*, trans. Nigel Bryant (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 34–44.

105. Glenys Goetinck, *Peredur: A Study of Welsh Tradition in the Grail Legends* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975); Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 238–39.

106. *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, v. 700, in *The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet*, ed. Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, trans. Casey Finch

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 240. I have modernized thorns and yoghs.

107. *Fled Bricrend: The Feast of Bricriu, an Early Gaelic Saga*, ed. and trans. George Henderson (London: Irish Texts Society, 1899).

108. Kathleen Basford, *The Green Man* (New York: D. S. Brewer, 1998); Fran Doel and Geoff Doel, *The Green Man in Britain* (Stroud: Tempus, 2001), 65–83.

109. John Speirs, “Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,” *Scrutiny* 16 (1949): 274–300. For critiques see C. S. Lewis, “The Anthropological Approach,” in *English and Medieval Studies Presented to J. R. R. Tolkien*, ed. Norman Davis and C. L. Wrenn (London: Allen & Unwin, 1962), 219–30, and Carl Lindahl, “*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Myth in Its Time,” in *Telling Tales: Medieval Narratives and the Folk Tradition*, ed. Francesca Canadé Sautman et al. (New York: St. Martin’s, 1998), 249–67.

110. Claude Lecouteux, *Au-delà du merveilleux: Des croyances au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1995), 169; Lindahl, “*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and Myth in Its Time,” 258; Ronald Hutton, *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year 1400–1700* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 46–47.

111. All citations from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* are taken from the edition by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, *The Complete Works of the Pearl Poet*, with translation by Casey Finch (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993). Subsequent references are line numbers in the text; translations are my own.

112. Sarah Semple, “A Fear of the Past: The Place of the Prehistoric Burial Mound in the Ideology of Middle and Later Anglo-Saxon England,” *World Archaeology* 30 (1998): 111.

113. R. E. Kaske, “Gawain’s Green Chapel and the Cave at Wetton Mill,” in *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Francis Lee Utley*, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 111–21; Ralph Elliott, “Landscape and Geography,” in *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), 105–17.

114. The *Prose Lancelot* explains that people called Arthur’s sister “Morgan the Goddess” because of her vast knowledge of magic. *Lancelot* III.93, in *Lancelot-Grail*, ed. Lacy, 2:305. See also Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les fées au Moyen Âge: Morgane et Mélusine* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1984).

115. Darrah, *Paganism in Arthurian Romance*, 148; S. Elizabeth Passmore and Susan Carter, eds., *The English “Loathly Lady” Tales: Boundaries, Traditions, Motifs* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2007).

116. The name “Bertilak” itself may derive from “Bachlach,” the churl of the Irish tale. Lawrence Besserman, “The Idea of the Green Knight,” *ELH* 53 (1986): 226.

117. Robert Rawdon Wilson, "Godgames and Labyrinths: The Logic of Entrapment," *Mosaic* 15.4 (1982): 6; Tison Pugh, "Gawain and the Godgames," *Christianity and Literature* 51 (2002): 525–51. The term derives from Fowles's 1966 novel, *The Magus*.
118. Pugh, "Gawain and the Godgames," 529, 543–44.
119. Ad Putter, *An Introduction to the "Gawain"-Poet* (London: Longman, 1996), 94.
120. Besserman, "Idea of the Green Knight," 227 (emphasis in original).
121. Lewis, "The Anthropological Approach," 222.
122. Philip F. O'Mara, "Robert Holcot's 'Ecumenism' and the Green Knight," *Chaucer Review* 26.4 (1992): 331.
123. Ibid., 334. See also part 2 of his article, "Holcot and the *Pearl*-Poet," *Chaucer Review* 27.1 (1992): 97–106.
124. Angela Carson, "Morgain la Fée as the Principle of Unity in *Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 23 (1962): 3–16; Albert B. Friedman, "Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Speculum* 35 (1960): 260–74; Geraldine Heng, "Feminine Knots and the Other *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *PMLA* 106 (1991): 500–514; Elizabeth Scala, "The Wanting Words of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," *Exemplaria* 6 (1994): 305–38.
125. The order's motto, "hony soyt qui mal pence" (shame on him who thinks evil) follows the poem in its sole manuscript. See Francis Ingledew, "*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" and the Order of the Garter (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).
126. Haines, *The Fortunate Fall of Sir Gawain*, 178–94.
127. The outstanding work in this vein is still Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*. Huot, in *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet*, is one of very few literary critics to pay due attention to music. I have explored lyric crossover in "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling," 138–89, in *God and the Goddesses*, and "Love's Arrows: Christ as Cupid in Late Medieval Art and Devotion," in *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 263–86.
128. Margaret Hurley, "Saints' Legends and Romance Again: Secularization of Structure and Motif," *Genre* 8 (1975): 60–73; Peter F. Dembowski, "Literary Problems of Hagiography in Old French," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 7 (1976): 117–30; Diana T. Childress, "Between Romance and Legend: 'Secular Hagiography' in Middle English Literature," *Philological Quarterly* 57 (1978): 311–22; Brigitte Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 30–38; Simon Gaunt, "Saints, Sex and Community: Hagiography," in *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 180–233; Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, 219–31.
129. Cazelles, *Lady as Saint*, 33–34.

130. On the saint's unusually fashionable as well as regal image, see Karen A. Winstead, "St. Katherine's Hair," in *St. Katherine of Alexandria: Texts and Contexts in Western Medieval Europe*, ed. Jacqueline Jenkins and Katherine J. Lewis (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 171–99.

131. "The Old Czech *Life of St. Catherine of Alexandria*," trans. Alfred Thomas, in *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology*, ed. Thomas Head (New York: Garland, 2000), 776. Cf. Alfred Thomas, *Anne's Bohemia: Czech Literature and Society, 1310–1420* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 88–109. Thomas proposes the Dominican Jan Moravec as the likeliest author.

132. For two very different treatments of this aesthetic see Jody Enders, *The Medieval Theater of Cruelty: Rhetoric, Memory, Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), and Caroline Walker Bynum, "Violent Imagery in Late Medieval Piety," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 30 (2002): 3–36.

133. Clemence of Barking, *The Life of St. Catherine of Alexandria*, vv. 2,183–98, ed. William MacBain (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), 69–70. The translation is in William MacBain, "Five Old French Renderings of the *Passio Sancte Katherine Virginis*," in *Medieval Translators and Their Craft*, ed. Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1989), 59.

134. MacBain, "Five Old French Renderings of the *Passio Sancte Katherine Virginis*"; Duncan Robertson, "Writing in the Textual Community: Clemence of Barking's Life of St. Catherine," *French Forum* 21 (1996): 5–28. See also Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, 228–32.

135. Gottfried, *Tristan*, vv. 233–40, ed. Marold, 6. Cf. Thomas, "Old Czech *Life of St. Catherine of Alexandria*," 779.

136. Martha Easton, "Pain, Torture and Death in the Huntington Library *Legenda Aurea*," in *Gender and Holiness: Men, Women, and Saints in Late Medieval Europe*, ed. Samantha J. E. Riches and Sarah Salih (London: Routledge, 2002), 50.

137. Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*; Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, 185–98; Karen A. Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Osborn Bokenham, *A Legend of Holy Women*, trans. Sheila Delany (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992).

138. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150–1300: Virginity and its Authorizations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 96–99; Janice A. Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature*, 2nd ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 134.

139. Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150–1300*, 17.

140. Valerie R. Hotchkiss, *Clothes Make the Man: Female Cross Dressing in Medieval Europe* (New York: Garland, 1996), 13–20. For a complete list of legends with summaries, see Hotchkiss's hagiographic appendix, 131–41.

141. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 1:324–25, 2:230–33; Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*, 238–57; Hotchkiss, *Clothes Make the Man*, 25–27.

142. *Silence: A Thirteenth-Century French Romance*, ed. and trans. Sarah Roche-Mahdi (East Lansing: Colleagues, 1992).

143. Some have argued that “Heldris of Cornwall,” the otherwise unknown poet of *Silence*, was herself a woman: Kathleen Brahney, “When *Silence* Was Golden: Female Personae in the *Roman de Silence*,” in *The Spirit of the Court*, ed. Glyn Burgess and Robert Taylor (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1985), 61; Suzanne Akbari, “Nature’s Forge Recast in the *Roman de Silence*,” in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture*, ed. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 46; Lorraine Stock, “The Importance of Being Gender ‘Stable’: Masculinity and Feminine Empowerment in *Le Roman de Silence*,” *Arthuriana* 7 (1997): 28–29.

144. Andrea Liebers, “*Eine Frau war dieser Mann*”: *Die Geschichte der Hildegund von Schönau* (Zurich: eFeF-Verlag, 1989); Hotchkiss, *Clothes Make the Man*, 33–47; Martha G. Newman, “Real Men and Imaginary Women: Engelhard of Langheim Considers a Woman in Disguise,” *Speculum* 78 (2003): 1184–1213. Hildegund is represented textually as a saint, but she never had an actual cult.

145. *Acta inquisitionis* 4, in *Jutta and Hildegard: The Biographical Sources*, trans. Anna Silvas (Turnhout: Brepols, 1998), 262.

146. On Hildegard’s “virile mind” see Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard’s Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 254–55.

147. C. H. Talbot, ed. and trans., *The Life of Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Recluse*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: Medieval Academy of America, 1998).

148. C. Stephen Jaeger, “The Loves of Christina of Markyate,” in *Christina of Markyate: A Twelfth-Century Holy Woman*, ed. Samuel Fanous and Henrietta Leyser (London: Routledge, 2005), 111.

149. Neil Cartlidge, “The Unknown Pilgrim: Drama and Romance in the *Life of Christina of Markyate*,” in *Christina of Markyate*, ed. Fanous and Leyser, 79–98.

150. Ilse E. Friesen, *The Female Crucifix: Images of St. Wilgefortis since the Middle Ages* (Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001); Gustav Schnürer and Josef M. Ritz, *Sankt Kümmernis und Volto Santo: Studien und Bilder* (Düsseldorf: Schwann, 1934).

151. Lewis Wallace, “The Bearded Woman on the Cross: St. Ontcommer and Medieval Popular Piety,” honors B. A. thesis, Northwestern University, 2010.

152. The popular *Vie de Sainte Marie l’Egyptienne* survives in fourteen Old and Middle French versions, as well as six other vernaculars. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, 213–28.

153. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 1:127–28.

154. Stags of this kind appear in Chrétien's *Erec et Énide*, Marie de France's *Guigemar*, the Welsh *Peredur*, and the *Prose Lancelot*. The legendary St. Eustace encounters a stag with a crucifix between its antlers; Christ reveals himself by speaking to him from the animal's mouth. Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend*, 2:266–71.

155. Elizabeth Archibald points out that Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* was unknown in the Middle Ages; scholars knew the myth mainly from the truncated version in Statius's *Thebaid*. *Incest and the Medieval Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), 71–72.

156. Hartmann von Aue, *Gregorius: The Good Sinner*, vv. 175–76, ed. and trans. Sheema Zeben Buehne (New York: Ungar, 1966), 30–31. Thomas Mann's novel *Der Erwählte* (*The Holy Sinner*) is a retelling of the Gregorius legend.

157. *Ibid.*, vv. 3,522–28.

158. On this text see Anita Guerreau-Jalabert, "Inceste et sainteté: La *Vie de St. Grégoire* en français (XIIe siècle)," *Annales* 43 (1988): 1291–1319, and Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, 200–212.

159. Daniel Rocher, "Das Motiv der 'felix culpa' und des betrogenen Teufels in der 'Vie du pape Grégoire' und in Hartmanns 'Gregorius,'" *Germanisch-romanische Monatsschrift*, n.s. 38 (1988): 57–66.

160. Hendrik B. Sol, ed., *La vie du pape saint Grégoire: Huit versions françaises médiévales de la Légende du bon pêcheur*, text B1, v. 186 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1977), 28. For a similar take on Galahad's conception, see chapter 2 below, pp. 86–88.

161. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 253–54.

162. *Gesta Romanorum*, c. 81, ed. Hermann Oesterley (Berlin: Weidmann, 1872), 408–9; Archibald, *Incest and the Medieval Imagination*, 124–25.

163. *Sir Gowther*, in *Six Middle English Romances*, ed. Maldwyn Mills (London: Dent, 1973), 148–68.

164. "This chyld within hur was non odor / Bot eyvon Marlyon halfe brodur, / For won fynd gatte hom bothe" (vv. 94–96). Geoffrey of Monmouth invented the story of Merlin's demonic paternity. *The History of the Kings of Britain*, VI.18, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), 167–68. The tale was greatly elaborated by Robert de Boron (or his continuator) in his *Merlin*; see *Merlin and the Grail*, trans. Nigel Bryant (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), 45–63.

165. Hartmann von Aue, *Gregorius*, vv. 1,517–21.

166. *Roman de Robert le Diable*, ed. Elisabeth Gaucher (Paris: Champion, 2006).

167. C. B. Rowntree, "A Carthusian World View: Bodleian MS E Museo 160," *Spiritualität Heute und Gestern*, *Analecta Cartusiana* 35:9 (Salzburg: Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik, 1990): 41. I thank Steven Rozenski Jr. for this reference.

168. On this problem see Maud Burnett McNerney, “Pelagius, Rupert, and the Problem of Male Virginity in Hrotsvitha and Hildegard,” in *Eloquent Virgins from Thecla to Joan of Arc* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 143–63.

169. *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, ed. Christopher Storey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).

170. Jean-René Valette, “Le héros et le saint dans la *Queste del Saint Graal*: image et ressemblance,” in “*De sens rassis*”: *Essays in Honor of Rupert T. Pickens*, ed. Keith Busby, Bernard Guidot, and Logan E. Whalen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 667–81.

171. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Liber ad milites Templi de laude novae militiae*, I.1 and IV.8, in *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, ed. Jean Leclercq, C. H. Talbot, and H. M. Rochais, 8 vols. (Rome: Editiones cistercienses, 1957–1977): 3:214, 221; Bernard of Clairvaux, “In Praise of the New Knighthood,” trans. Conrad Greenia, in *Treatises III* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1977), 130, 140.

172. Marco Nievergelt, “The Inward Crusade: The Apocalypse of the *Queste del Saint Graal*,” *Neophilologus* 92 (2008): 1–17.

173. *La Queste del Saint Graal: roman du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Albert Pauphilet (Paris: Champion, 1923), 278.

CHAPTER 2. DOUBLE CODING

1. In his celebrated lines on the *trois matieres* known to late twelfth-century poets, Jean Bodel describes the *matiere de Bretagne* as “pleasant and frivolous” (*si vain et plaisant*) compared to the authentic matter of France and the edifying matter of Rome. *La Chanson des Saisnes*, vv. 6–11, ed. Annette Brasseur, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1989), 1:3.

2. I do not consider the origins of the Grail itself, a question on which too much has been written already. For a good recent study of the so-called pagan side see John Carey, *Ireland and the Grail* (Aberystwyth, Wales: Celtic Studies Publications, 2007).

3. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “An Interpreter’s Dilemma: Why Are There So Many Interpretations of Chrétien’s *Chevalier de la Charrette*?” *Romance Philology* 40 (1986): 159–80; Sarah Kay, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 8–11.

4. John Darrah, *Paganism in Arthurian Romance* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1994), 69; Rachel Bromwich, “Celtic Elements in Arthurian Romance: A General Survey,” in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to A. H. Diverres*, ed. P. B. Grout et al. (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1983), 42.

5. Kenneth G. T. Webster, *Guinevere: A Study of Her Abductions* (Milton, MA: Turtle Press, 1951), 126–27.

6. Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes: The Man and His Work*, trans. Raymond J. Cormier (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1982), 101–2. In *Erec et Enide*, Chrétien mentions a similarly named “Maheloas,” lord of the *Isle de Voirre* (Island of Glass), a French version of “Glastonbury.”
7. Marilyn Stokstad, “Modena Archivolt,” in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (New York: Garland, 1991), 324–26.
8. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *The History of the Kings of Britain*, X.13, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1966), 257.
9. Cf. Darrah, *Paganism in Arthurian Romance*, 62, 69.
10. Derek Brewer, “The Presentation of the Character of Lancelot: Chrétien to Malory,” in *Lancelot and Guinevere: A Casebook*, ed. Lori J. Walters (New York: Garland, 1996), 3–27.
11. Chrétien de Troyes, *Le Chevalier de la charrette (Lancelot)*, ed. Alfred Foulet and Karl D. Uitti (Paris: Bordas, 1989). Subsequent references are line numbers in the text.
12. David J. Shirt, “Chrétien de Troyes and the Cart,” in *Studies in Medieval Literature and Languages in Memory of Frederick Whitehead*, ed. William Rothwell et al. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973), 279–301.
13. Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, 102; Laurent Guyénot, *La Lance qui saigne: Métatextes et hypertextes du Conte du Graal de Chrétien de Troyes* (Paris: Champion, 2010), 19–20.
14. Lancelot IV.111, in *Lancelot-Grail: The Old French Arthurian Vulgate and Post-Vulgate in Translation*, ed. Norris J. Lacy et al., 5 vols. (New York: Garland, 1993–1996), 3:26–29.
15. William A. Nitze and T. A. Jenkins, eds., *Le haut livre du Graal: Perlesvaus*, 2 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932–1937), Branch 2, 1:51; Nigel Bryant, trans., *The High Book of the Grail: A Translation of the Thirteenth-Century Romance of Perlesvaus* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1978), 33–35. “Branch” in this romance simply means “chapter.”
16. Darrah, *Paganism in Arthurian Romance*, 78–82.
17. Pierre Gallais, *La Fée à la Fontaine et à l'Arbre: Un archetype du conte merveilleux et du récit courtois* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1992), 186–87.
18. Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 66–67; Roberta L. Krueger, “Desire, Meaning, and the Female Reader: The Problem in Chrétien’s *Charrete*,” in *The Passing of Arthur: New Essays in Arthurian Tradition*, ed. Christopher Baswell and William Sharpe (New York: Garland, 1988), 39.
19. Bruckner, “An Interpreter’s Dilemma,” 165–67.
20. Lucienne Carasso-Bulow, *The “Merveilleux” in Chrétien de Troyes’ Romances* (Geneva: Droz, 1976); Daniel Poirion, *Le merveilleux dans la littérature française du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982), 70–81.

21. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, “Le Chevalier de la Charrette: That Obscure Object of Desire, Lancelot,” in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005), 147.

22. Jacques Ribard, *Chrétien de Troyes, “Le Chevalier de la charrette”: Essai d’interprétation symbolique* (Paris: Nizet, 1972), 43–44.

23. Ibid., 37, 49.

24. Ibid., 48, 127–32.

25. Ibid., 36, 43.

26. Ibid., 143.

27. Lori Walters, “Holy Adultery: The *Charrette*, Crusader Queens, and the Guiot Manuscript (Paris, BNF fr. 794),” in *Dame Philology’s Charrette: Approaching Medieval Textuality through Chrétien’s “Lancelot”: Essays in Memory of Karl D. Utti*, ed. Gina L. Greco and Ellen M. Thorington (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2012), 37–75.

28. Ibid., 48.

29. Ibid., 42.

30. Morgan Powell, “Translating Scripture for *Ma dame de Champagne*: The Old French ‘Paraphrase’ of Psalm 44 (*Eructavit*),” in *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Bradley Warren (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 83–103.

31. E. Ann Matter, *The Voice of My Beloved: The Song of Songs in Western Medieval Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); Ann W. Astell, *The Song of Songs in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian, 1995); Rachel Fulton, *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800–1200* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 244–470.

32. Nancy Freeman-Regalado, “*La chevalerie celestiel*: Spiritual Transformations of Secular Romance in *La Queste del Saint Graal*,” in *Romance: Generic Transformation from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Marina Scordilis Brownlee (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1985), 100.

33. D. W. Robertson Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 450.

34. John Jay Parry, introduction to Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), 13–17; Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, 106.

35. “Dicimus enim et stabilito tenore firmamus amorem non posse suas inter duos iugales extendere vires. Nam amantes sibi invicem gratis omnia largiuntur . . . Iugales vero mutuis tenentur ex debito voluntatibus obedire.” Andreas Capellanus, *On Love*, I.6. G, ed. and trans. P. G. Walsh (London: Duckworth, 1982), 156–57.

36. Cf. Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, 87.
37. Cf. Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes*, 104.
38. Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot, or The Knight of the Cart*, trans. Ruth Harwood Cline (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 16–17.
39. Ruth Harwood Cline, translator's note in Chrétien de Troyes, *Lancelot, or The Knight of the Cart*, 223; Bruckner, "Le Chevalier de la Charrette," 148.
40. Kay, *Courtly Contradictions*, 82.
41. C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936), 29.
42. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer*, 487.
43. Peggy McCracken, *The Romance of Adultery: Queenship and Sexual Transgression in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 26–31, 119–20; Georges Duby, *The Knight, the Lady and the Priest: The Making of Modern Marriage in Medieval France*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: Pantheon, 1983), 222.
44. By the title *Prose Lancelot* I denote only the third, largest portion of the Vulgate or Lancelot-Grail Cycle.
45. Chrétien de Troyes, *Le roman de Perceval; ou, Le conte du Graal*, ed. William Roach, 2nd ed. (Geneva: Droz, 1959); *Perceval, or The Story of the Grail*, trans. Ruth Harwood Cline (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985).
46. Hélinand of Froidmont, *Chronicon* 45, anno 718 (PL 212: 814d–815a).
47. Robert de Boron, *Le Roman de l'estoire dou Graal*, ed. William A. Nitze (Paris: Champion, 1971); *Joseph of Arimathea*, trans. Nigel Bryant, in *Merlin and the Grail*, 15–44. But a poor manuscript tradition makes the attribution problematic. Robert is traditionally credited with the *Estoire/Joseph* as well as its two sequels, *Merlin* and the prose *Didot Perceval*. See Rupert T. Pickens, "Perceval and the Grail: Robert de Boron (the *Estoire dou Graal*, *Merlin*, and the *Didot-Perceval*)," in *The Arthur of the French: The Arthurian Legend in Medieval French and Occitan Literature*, ed. Glyn S. Burgess and Karen Pratt (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006), 247–59. In a revisionist argument, Linda Gowans offers evidence that the Prose *Joseph*, the sole work she ascribes to Robert, precedes its redaction by an anonymous poet. "What Did Robert de Boron Really Write?" in *Arthurian Studies in Honour of P. J. C. Field*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 15–28.
48. Jean Frappier notes that the mysterious text could even have been *Perlesvaus*. *Étude sur la Mort le Roi Artu, roman du XIIIe siècle*, 3rd ed. (Geneva: Droz, 1972), 433. See also Thomas E. Kelly, *Le Haut Livre du Graal: Perlesvaus, A Structural Study* (Geneva: Droz, 1974), 14.
49. Urban T. Holmes, *Chrétien de Troyes* (New York: Twayne, 1970), 161.
50. Réjane Molina, "Hélinand de Froidmont, Hélinand de Perseigne, et la littérature du Graal," in *Hélinand de Froidmont: Colloque et exposition, mai–juin 1987* (Warluis: Amis de l'Abbaye de Saint-Arnoult, 1987), 57–63. On

Hélinand's post-conversion poetry see William D. Paden Jr., "De monachis rithmos facientibus: Hélinand de Froidmont, Bertran de Born, and the Cistercian General Chapter of 1199," *Speculum* 55 (1980): 669–85.

51. *Le Roman de Perceforest*, ed. Jane H. M. Taylor (Geneva: Droz, 1979–); *Perceforest: The Prehistory of King Arthur's Britain*, (abridged), trans. Nigel Bryant (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011); Christine Ferlampin-Acher, *Perceforest et Zéphir: propositions autour d'un récit arthurien bourguignon* (Geneva: Droz, 2010).

52. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Chrétien Continued: A Study of the "Conte du Graal" and Its Verse Continuations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

53. For early disputes on the date of *Perlesvaus* see Kelly, *Le Haut Livre du Graal*, 9–15. Bruckner is agnostic (*Chrétien Continued*, 12), while Keith Busby shares Kelly's view that *Perlesvaus* "certainly predates" the *Queste* ("Perlesvaus," in *The New Arthurian Encyclopedia*, ed. Norris J. Lacy [New York: Garland, 1991], 358–59). *Perlesvaus* is extant in four manuscripts, as opposed to forty-three for the *Queste*. All but four *Queste* manuscripts place the work within the Vulgate Cycle.

54. R. S. Loomis, *The Grail, from Celtic Myth to Christian Symbol* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 97–101, 276.

55. Charles Méla, *La Reine et le Graal: La conjointure dans les romans du Graal de Chrétien de Troyes au "Livre de Lancelot"* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1984), 176.

56. Richard Barber, "Chivalry, Cistercianism, and the Grail," in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. Carol Dover (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 10–11; Christine Ferlampin-Acher, "Fausse creance, mauvaise loi et conversion dans *Perlesvaus*," *Le Moyen Âge* 11.2 (2005): 312. For Guyénot the work is "psychedelic" and "nightmarish" (*La Lance qui saigne*, 294).

57. Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 181. A hermit tells King Arthur that, because of Perceval's failure, "all lands are now rent by war; no knight meets another in a forest but he attacks him and kills him if he can." Bryant, *The High Book of the Grail*, Branch 1, 27. For a theological interpretation of the Waste Land see Angus J. Kennedy, "Punishment in the *Perlesvaus*: The Theme of the Waste Land," in *The Grail: A Casebook*, ed. Dhira B. Mahoney (New York: Garland, 2000), 219–35. For an alternative historical explanation see R. Howard Bloch, "Wasteland and Round Table: The Historical Significance of Myths of Dearth and Plenty in Old French Romance," *New Literary History* 11 (1980): 255–76.

58. Molina, "Hélinand de Froidmont," 59.

59. Richard Barber, *The Holy Grail: Imagination and Belief* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 28–29.

60. Barber, *The Holy Grail*, 46–47.

61. Jeanne Lods, "Symbolisme chrétien, tradition celtique et vérité psychologique dans les personnages féminins de *Perlesvaus*," in *Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Pierre le Gentil* (Paris: SEDES, 1973), 511–12.

62. Diodorus of Sicily, *Bibliotheca historica* V.29, ed. and trans. C. H. Oldfather, 12 vols. (London: Heinemann, 1933–1967), 3:172–75. Diodorus was unknown to the Latin Middle Ages; his work was first translated from the Greek by Poggio Bracciolini in 1472.

63. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 8, 1:162; *The High Book of the Grail*, 106.

64. Guyénot speculates that the dead knight's "brother" who is to behead Lancelot is actually his ghost—a recurrent otherworld motif in this romance. *La Lance qui saigne*, 300.

65. J. D. M. Ford, "'To Bite the Dust' and Symbolical Lay Communion," *PMLA* 20.2 (1905): 197–230.

66. *The High Book of the Grail*, Branch 6, pp. 90–91; Branch 9, pp. 181–84.

67. Kennedy, "Punishment in the *Perlesvaus*," 231.

68. Robert Deschaux, "Merveilleux et fantastique dans le Haut Livre du Graal: *Perlesvaus*," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 26 (1983): 337.

69. Chrétien, *Perceval*, vv. 4603–717, ed. Roach, 135–39.

70. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 6, 109–10; *The High Book of the Grail*, 73–74.

71. Its driver is more often the Ankou, a skeletal male. In the twelfth-century Breton church of La Martyre, he is carved above a holy-water stoup (ca. 1600), holding a scythe in one hand and a severed head in the other: <http://fr.topic-topos.com/benitier-la-martyre>.

72. Lods, "Symbolisme chrétien," 512–13; Guyénot, *La Lance qui saigne*, 77.

73. "Rem tibi quam scieris aptam dimittere noli: fronte capillata, post haec occasio calva." (Don't let go of something you know is right for you; Opportunity has hair on her forehead but is bald behind.) *Disticha Catonis* II.26, ed. Marcus Boas and H. J. Botschuyver (Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1952), 134–35. The same proverb is cited in *Carmina burana* no. 77.

74. Geoffrey of Monmouth, *History of the Kings of Britain*, X.3, 240.

75. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 6, 1:131; *The High Book of the Grail*, 86.

76. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 6, 1:101–2; *The High Book of the Grail*, 68.

77. *Ibid.*

78. Gallais, *La Fée à la Fontaine*, 180; Lods, "Symbolisme chrétien," 505–6.

79. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 6, 1:105; *The High Book of the Grail*, 70.

80. Ferlampin-Acher, "*Fausse creance, mauvaise loi et conversion dans Perlesvaus*," 304.

81. *The High Book of the Grail*, Branch 8, 131; Branch 9, 162–64.

82. Photograph on the Notre-Dame website: <http://www.notredamede.paris.fr/Veneration-of-the-Crown-of-Thorns>. Two stained glass windows from the 1240s illustrate the circular relic. In the "Passion Relics" window at Sainte-Chapelle it is suspended above an altar, while a window from the cathedral of

St-Gatien in Tours (now at the Cloisters, New York) shows Louis IX carrying it in procession. See also William Chester Jordan, “Judaizing the Passion: The Case of the Crown of Thorns in the Middle Ages,” in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations: in Honor of David Berger*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 55. The present reliquary dates from the nineteenth century.

83. Ferlampin-Acher, “*Fausse creance, mauvaise loi et conversion dans Perlesvaus*,” 305. Bryant translates *Tor* only as “tower.”

84. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 9, 1:256; *The High Book of the Grail*, 165.

85. For legends of Virgil as a magician see Domenico Comparetti, *Virgil in the Middle Ages*, trans. E. F. M. Benecke (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1966), Part 2.

86. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 9, 1:250; *The High Book of the Grail*, 161.

87. These include Queen Jandree and the lady of the Mad Castle, both in Branch 11. Queen Jandree had asked her pagan gods to strike her blind so that she would never have to look on a Christian. The knights of the Mad Castle, seized with demonic frenzy as soon as they see the cross on Perceval's shield, hack each other to pieces. *The High Book of the Grail*, 238–43.

88. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 6, 1:110–11; *The High Book of the Grail*, 74.

89. Lods, “Symbolisme chrétien,” 514–15. See also Lisa Lampert-Weissig, “‘Why Is This Knight Different from All Other Knights?’ Jews, Anti-Semitism, and the Old French Grail Narratives,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106 (2007): 224–47.

90. See chapter 1 above, pp. 18–19.

91. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 9, 1:239–40; *The High Book of the Grail*, 154–55.

92. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 9, 1:257–58; *The High Book of the Grail*, 166. Not all manuscripts have the last sentence about the Jews' eternal subjection.

93. This episode is a source for Malory's Questing Beast, pursued in vain by the Saracen knight Palomides before his conversion. In the *Queste*, Synagoga and Ecclesia are allegorized as two ladies who ride on a serpent and a lion, respectively.

94. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 4, 1:82; *The High Book of the Grail*, 55.

95. Gary R. Simes, “*La Queste del Saint Graal* as Chivalric Anti-romance,” *Parergon*, n.s. 5 (1987): 58.

96. Sir Thomas Malory, *Works*, ed. Eugène Vinaver, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 629; *Le Morte D'Arthur* (the William Caxton version, 1485) ed. Janet Cowen, 2 vols. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969). Subsequent references appear in the text. I cite the Middle English text from Vinaver's edition of the Winchester manuscript as closest to what Malory wrote. But, since the great majority of readers encounter him through Caxton, I supply Caxton's book and chapter numbers for convenience.

97. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, 57–62.

98. Anita Guerreau-Jalabert, “Le graal, le Christ et la chevalerie,” in *Pratiques de l'eucharistie dans les Églises d'Orient et d'Occident (Antiquité et Moyen Âge)*,

2 vols., ed. Nicole Bériou, Béatrice Caseau, and Dominique Rigaux (Paris: Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, 2009), 2:1057–72. Cf. Kathryn Marie Talarico, "Romancing the Grail: Fiction and Theology in the *Queste del Saint Graal*," in *Arthurian Literature and Christianity: Notes from the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Meister (New York: Garland, 1999), 29–59.

99. Robert de Boron, *Le Roman de l'estoire dou Graal*, vv. 851–948, ed. Nitze, 30–33. Cf. *Joseph of Arimathea*, trans. Bryant, 21–22.

100. Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses: Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe*, trans. Eva Pálmai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

101. There has been extensive argument over the relationship between the *Queste* and the Cistercians. See for example Étienne Gilson, "La mystique de la grâce dans *La Queste del Saint Graal*," *Romania* 51 (1925): 321–47; Jean Frappier, "Le Graal et la chevalerie," *Romania* 75 (1954): 165–210; Pauline Matarasso, *The Redemption of Chivalry: A Study of the "Queste del Saint Graal"* (Geneva: Droz, 1979), 225–29, 240; Fanni Bogdanow, "An Interpretation of the Meaning and Purpose of the Vulgate *Queste del Saint Graal* in the Light of the Mystical Theology of St Bernard," in *The Changing Face of Arthurian Romance: Essays on Arthurian Prose Romances in Memory of Cedric E. Pickford*, ed. Alison Adams et al. (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1986), 23–46; Karen Pratt, "The Cistercians and the *Queste del Saint Graal*," *Reading Medieval Studies* 21 (1995): 69–96; Barber, "Chivalry, Cistercianism and the Grail"; Jean-René Valette, "Le héros et le saint dans la *Queste del Saint Graal*: Image et ressemblance," in "*De sens rassis*": *Essays in Honor of Rupert T. Pickens*, ed. Keith Busby, Bernard Guidot, and Logan E. Whalen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 667–81.

102. After slaughtering the inhabitants of a hostile castle, the Grail companions "held themselves for sinners, saying it was an evil work to massacre so many"—but a priest promptly arrives to say that the lords of the castle were pagans and monstrous criminals. *The Quest of the Holy Grail*, trans. P. M. Matarasso (London: Penguin, 1969), 239–41.

103. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 8, 1:167; *The High Book of the Grail*, 110.

104. *Perlesvaus*, Branch 8, 1:168; *The High Book of the Grail*, 111.

105. In 1191 the monks of Glastonbury, raising funds to rebuild their church after a fire, uncovered what they claimed were the tombs of Arthur and Guenevere, complete with an ancient-seeming inscription. A colophon in *Perlesvaus* refers to these tombs, giving 1191 as a firm *terminus a quo*.

106. *La Queste*, ed. Pauphilet, 61; *The Quest*, trans. Matarasso, 85.

107. *La Queste*, 66; *The Quest*, 89.

108. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe*, 132.

109. *Ibid.*, 260–61. See also Bruckner, *Chrétien Continued*, 173–79.

110. *Lancelot: Roman en prose du 13e siècle*, LXXVIII.57–58, ed. Alexandre Micha, 9 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1978–1983), 4:209–11; *Lancelot-Grail* V.149, ed. Lacy, 3:164–65.

111. *Lancelot* LXXVIII.46, ed. Micha, 4:202; *Lancelot-Grail*, ed. Lacy, 3:162.
112. Arthur is begotten by Uther Pendragon on Igerne, the Duke of Cornwall's wife, through Merlin's enchantment. The wizard is himself the son of an incubus and a holy woman; Mordred is begotten by Arthur on his sister Morgause.
113. Emmanuèle Baumgartner, "From Lancelot to Galahad: The Stakes of Filiation," in *The Lancelot-Grail Cycle: Text and Transformations*, ed. William W. Kibler (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 14–30. See also Grace Armstrong Savage, "Father and Son in the *Queste del Saint Graal*," *Romance Philology* 31 (1977): 1–16; Jon Whitman, "The Body and the Struggle for the Soul of Romance: *La Queste del Saint Graal*," in *The Body and the Soul in Medieval Literature*, ed. Piero Boitani and Anna Torti (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999), 31–61 (with genealogical charts).
114. "Laudo nuptias, laudo coniugium, sed quia mihi uirgines generant: lego de spinis rosas, de terra aurum, de conca margaritum." Jerome, "Ad Eustochium," *Epistolae* 22.20, ed. and trans. Jérôme Labourt, 8 vols. (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1949–1963), 1:130.
115. On the debate over authorship see Alexandre Micha, *Essais sur le cycle du Lancelot-Graal* (Geneva: Droz, 1987), 297–313. Micha himself argues for a single author.
116. *La Queste*, 125; *The Quest*, 142.
117. *La Queste*, 205–06; *The Quest*, 217.
118. *La Queste*, 227–28; *The Quest*, 236–37.
119. *Lancelot* I.22 in *Lancelot-Grail*, ed. Lacy, 2:61–68. Cf. Matarasso's notes to *The Quest*, 299–300.
120. *La Queste*, 253.
121. Cf. Savage, "Father and Son," 10–13.
122. Helen Cooper, "The *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* in England: Malory and his Predecessors," in *A Companion to the Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. Carol Dover (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), 157. See also Terence McCarthy, "Malory and His Sources," in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. Elizabeth Archibald and A. S. G. Edwards (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 75–95.
123. James I. Wimsatt, "The Idea of a Cycle: Malory, the Lancelot-Grail, and the *Prose Tristan*," in *The Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. Kibler, 206–18.
124. "Malory has little time for the mysticism and the magic, the religious doctrine and the personal sentiment, the psychological enquiry and the amorous intrigue of French romance." McCarthy, "Malory and His Sources," 80.
125. Dhira B. Mahoney, "The Truest and Holiest Tale: Malory's Transformation of *La Queste del Saint Graal*," in *Studies in Malory*, ed. James W. Spisak (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1985), 109–28; Stephen C. B. Atkinson, "Malory's Lancelot and the Quest of the Grail," in *Studies in Malory*, ed. Spisak, 129–52; Jill Mann, "Malory and the Grail Legend," in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. Archibald and Edwards, 203–20; P. J. C. Field, "Malory and the

Grail: The Importance of Detail,” in *The Grail, the Quest and the World of Arthur*, ed. Norris J. Lacy (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 141–55.

126. This double coding is also found in the *Mort Artu*, but my account will highlight Malory’s distinctive emphases and changes to his main source. His last tale also draws on the English *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*.

127. C. David Benson, “The Ending of the *Morte Darthur*,” in *A Companion to Malory*, ed. Archibald and Edwards, 221.

128. Bruckner, “*Le Chevalier de la Charrette*,” 137.

129. In the *Mort Artu*, chap. 8 (*Lancelot-Grail*, ed. Lacy, 4:114), the Maid’s letter is addressed to the whole court, condemning Lancelot as “the most valiant and yet the vilest man in the world.” In Malory the letter addresses Lancelot alone, calling him peerless.

130. Among Lancelot’s male lovers is also the knight Malory calls “Galehaut the Haut Prince,” whose role he has greatly diminished from the Vulgate Cycle—possibly because Galehaut’s love is too clearly homoerotic. In the Vulgate, he dies of grief upon hearing a false rumor of Lancelot’s death, and Lancelot is ultimately buried in the same tomb. For Galehaut’s love see also *Lancelot do Lac: The Non-Cyclic Old French Prose Romance*, ed. Elspeth Kennedy, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 1:333–34.

131. Malory’s debt to *Perlesvaus* is noted by Cooper, “The *Lancelot-Grail Cycle* in England,” 157, and McCarthy, “Malory and His Sources.” Field asserts that “he seems to have known [it] quite well” (“Malory and the Grail,” 147). “Hallewes” (Vinaver) or “Hellawes” (Cowen/Caxton) is the name Malory gives to *Perlesvaus*’s Haughty Maiden; the phonetic spellings suggest that he knew of Heloise through oral rather than written sources. He may have heard the legend that, when she was buried next to Abelard, his skeleton opened its arms to embrace her. This is first recorded in the Chronicle of Tours (before 1227). Peter Dronke, *Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press, 1976), 23, 50–51. Learned women in romance are often depicted as sorceresses.

132. Karen Bezella-Bond, “Blood and Roses: Maytime and Revival in the *Morte Darthur*,” in *Reputation and Representation in Fifteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Douglas L. Biggs, Sharon D. Michalove, and A. Compton Reeves (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 187–210.

133. This is Malory’s invention; neither Chrétien nor the *Prose Lancelot*, which places the episode much earlier, includes this feat.

134. Peter R. Schroeder, “Lancelot as Casuist,” in *The Hands of the Tongue: Essays on Deviant Speech*, ed. Edwin D. Craun (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 2007), 95–112.

135. Ann Elaine Bliss, “The Symbolic Importance of Processions in Malory’s *Morte Darthur* and in Fifteenth-Century England,” in *The Social and Literary Contexts of Malory’s Morte Darthur*, ed. D. Thomas Hanks Jr. and Jessica Gentry Brogdon (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 75–93.

136. See the eloquent conclusion of Larry D. Benson, *Malory's Morte Darthur* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 244–48.

137. Jeffrey L. Morgan, “Malory’s Double Ending: The Duplicitous Death and Departing,” in *Sir Thomas Malory: Views and Re-views*, ed. D. Thomas Hanks Jr. (New York: AMS Press, 1992), 94.

138. In the earlier scene, the four royal sorceresses are Morgan le Fay, queen of Gore, with “the quene of North Galys, and the quene of Estlonde, and the quene of the Oute Iles.” In the death of Arthur, “the quene of the Waste Londis” and the chief lady of the lake replace the last two. This substitution of similar names is typical of Malory’s practice over long stretches of *Le Morte Darthur*.

139. Paul J. Alexander, “The Medieval Legend of the Last Roman Emperor and Its Messianic Origin,” *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 41 (1978): 1–15.

140. Gerald of Wales, *Speculum ecclesiae*, Dist. 2, cap. 9, in *Giraldi Cambrensis Opera*, vol. 4, ed. J. S. Brewer (London: Longman, 1873), 48–49. See also idem, *De principis instructione*, Dist. 1, cap. 20, ed. George F. Warner, in *Opera* 8:126–29.

141. On regionalism in *Le Morte Darthur* see Kenneth Hodges, “Why Malory’s Lancelot Is Not French: Region, Nation, and Political Identity,” *PMLA* 125 (2010): 556–71. Hodges surprisingly identifies Malory’s “Beawme” (Benwick) with the small village of Bommès in Guienne, rather than Beaune in Burgundy.

142. E. Kay Harris, “Lancelot’s Vocation: Traitor Saint,” in *The Lancelot-Grail Cycle*, ed. Kibler, 219–37.

143. Harris, “Lancelot’s Vocation,” 232.

144. Compare the *Stanzaic Morte Arthur*, vv. 3622–737, in *King Arthur’s Death: The Middle English “Stanzaic Morte Arthur” and “Alliterative Morte Arthure,”* ed. Larry D. Benson and Edward E. Foster (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute, 1994), 113–16. The scene does not occur in the *Mort Artu*, though a version of it is interpolated in one manuscript: *The Death of Arthur*, ch. 25, in *Lancelot-Grail*, ed. Lacy, 4:158.

145. Benson, “The Ending of the *Morte Darthur*,” 235–37.

146. Karen Cherewatuk, “The Saint’s Life of Sir Lancelot: Hagiography and the Conclusion of Malory’s *Morte Darthur*,” *Arthuriana* 5.1 (1995): 62–78.

147. See for example Sarah J. Hill, “Recovering Malory’s Guinevere,” in *Lancelot and Guinevere*, ed. Walters, 267–77; Mickey Sweeney, “Divine Love or Loving Divinely? The Ending of Malory’s *Morte Darthur*,” *Arthuriana* 16.2 (2006): 73–77.

148. P. J. C. Field, *The Life and Times of Sir Thomas Malory* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1993).

149. Simes, “*La Queste del Saint Graal* as Chivalric Anti-romance.”

150. E. Talbot Donaldson, “The Ending of *Troilus*,” in *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970), 91.

151. D. Thomas Hanks Jr., “Malory, the *Mort[e]s*, and the Confrontation in Guinevere’s Chamber,” in *Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Hanks, 78–90.

152. Atkinson, “Malory’s Lancelot and the Quest of the Grail,” 132.

153. Robert L. Kelly, “Wounds, Healing, and Knighthood in Malory’s Tale of Lancelot and Guenevere,” in *Studies in Malory*, ed. Spisak, 191.

154. Cf. Peter Waldron, “‘Vertuose Love’ and Adulterous Lovers: Coming to Terms with Malory,” in *Sir Thomas Malory*, ed. Hanks, 54–62.

CHAPTER 3. CONVERSION

1. Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965–1966); Nicolas Perella, *The Kiss Sacred and Profane: An Interpretative History of Kiss Symbolism and Related Religio-Erotic Themes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969); Jean Leclercq, *Monks and Love in Twelfth-Century France: Psycho-historical Essays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979); Thomas Hyde, *The Poetic Theology of Love: Cupid in Renaissance Literature* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1986); *Poetics of Love in the Middle Ages: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Moshe Lazar and Norris J. Lacy (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1989); Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York: Abrams, 1998); C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000); Hildegard Keller, *My Secret Is Mine: Studies on Religion and Eros in the German Middle Ages* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000).

2. Marguerite Porete, *Le mirouer des simples ames*, ed. Romana Guarnieri, with facing-page Latin translation, *Speculum simplicium animarum*, ed. Paul Verderyn, CCCM 69 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986). Translations are my own, but I have consulted Margaret Porette [sic], *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. Edmund Colledge, J. C. Marler, and Judith Grant (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. Ellen L. Babinsky (New York: Paulist, 1993).

3. Barbara Newman, “*La mystique courtoise*: Thirteenth-Century Be-guines and the Art of Love,” in *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 138.

4. For Marguerite’s energetic distribution of her own work, see Suzanne Kocher, *Allegories of Love in Marguerite Porete’s “Mirror of Simple Souls”* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2008), 32–34. Marie Bertho has plausibly suggested that Marguerite herself was the copyist, perhaps a professional scribe: “*Le Miroir des*

âmes simples et anéanties” de Marguerite Porète: *Une vie blessée d’amour* (Paris: Larousse, 1993), 29–32. Michael G. Sargent, in “The Annihilation of Marguerite Porete,” *Viator* 28 (1997): 253–79, describes the *Mirror*’s pattern of transmission as “quite broad, but relatively thin” (262). But as further records of lost manuscripts come to light, the thinness can be contested. On the work’s continued circulation see Geneviève Hasenohr, “La tradition du *Miroir des simples âmes* au XVe siècle: De Marguerite Porete († 1310) à Marguerite de Navarre,” *Comptes-rendus des séances de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, 143.4 (1999): 1347–66; Robert E. Lerner, “New Light on *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,” *Speculum* 85 (2010): 91–116; Sean L. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor: The Trials of Marguerite Porete and Guiard of Cressonessart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2012), 204–7; Zan Kocher, “The Apothecary’s *Mirror of Simple Souls*: Circulation and Reception of Marguerite Porete’s Book in Fifteenth-Century France,” *Modern Philology*, forthcoming.

5. Romana Guarnieri, “Lo *Specchio delle anime semplici* e Margherita Poirette,” *L’Osservatore Romano* 141 (16 June 1946), 3; eadem, “Il Movimento del Libero Spirito: Testi e documenti,” *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 4 (1965): 351–708; Robert E. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972).

6. Lerner, *The Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*; Paul Verdeyen, “Le procès d’inquisition contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart (1309–1310),” *Revue d’histoire ecclésiastique* 81 (1986): 47–94; Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*.

7. Paul Mommaers, “La Transformation de l’amour selon Marguerite Porete,” *Ons Geestelijk Erf* 65 (1991): 89–107; Louise Gnädinger, “Die Lehre der Margareta Porete von der Selbst- und Gotteserkenntnis: Eine Annäherung,” in *Denkmodelle von Frauen im Mittelalter*, ed. Béatrice Acklin Zimmermann and Elisabeth Gössmann (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1994), 125–48; Luisa Muraro, *Lingua materna, scienza divina: Scritti sulla filosofia mistica di Margherita Porete* (Naples: D’Auria, 1995); Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200–1350* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 244–65; John A. Arsenault, “Authority, Autonomy, and Antinomianism: The Mystical and Ethical Piety of Marguerite Porete in *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,” *Studia Mystica* 21 (2000): 65–94; Joanne Maguire Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete’s “Mirror of Simple Souls”* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001); Barbara Hahn-Jooss, “*Ceste ame est Dieu par condicion d’amour*: Theologische Horizonte im “Spiegel der einfachen Seelen” von Marguerite Porete (Münster: Aschendorff, 2010).

8. Edmund Colledge and J. C. Marler, “‘Poverty of the Will’: Ruusbroec, Eckhart and *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,” in *Jan van Ruusbroec: The Sources, Content, and Sequels of His Mysticism*, ed. Paul Mommaers and N. de Paepe (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1984), 14–47; Maria Lichtmann, “Marguerite Porete and Meister Eckhart: *The Mirror for Simple Souls* Mirrored,” in *Meister*

Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics: Hadewijch of Brabant, Mechtbild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum, 1994), 65–86; Michael Sells, “The Pseudo-Woman and the Meister: ‘Unsayings’ and Essentialism,” in *Meister Eckhart and the Beguine Mystics*, ed. McGinn, 114–46; Amy Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife: Mechtbild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Catherine M. Müller, “‘La lettre et la figure’: lecture allégorique du *Mirouer* de Marguerite Porete dans *Les prisons* de Marguerite de Navarre,” *Versants* 38 (2000): 153–167; Theresia Heimerl, *Frauenmystik—Männermystik? Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede in der Darstellung von Gottes- und Menschenbild bei Meister Eckhart, Heinrich Seuse, Marguerite Porete und Mechtbild von Magdeburg* (Münster: Lit, 2002).

9. Paul Verdeyen, “Ruusbroec’s Opinion on Marguerite Porete’s Orthodoxy,” *Studies in Spirituality* 3 (1993): 121–29; Irene Leicht, *Marguerite Porete: Eine fromme Intellektuelle und die Inquisition* (Freiburg: Herder, 1999); Edmund Colledge et al., “Introductory Interpretative Essay,” in *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, xxxv–lxxxvii.

10. *Speculum simplicium animarum*, ed. Verdeyen, CCCM 69 (see note 2 above); Claire Le Brun-Gouanvic, “Le *mirouer des simples ames aneanties* de Marguerite Porete (vers 1300) et le *Speculum simplicium animarum* (vers 1310): Procès d’inquisition et traduction,” in *D’une écriture à l’autre: Les femmes et la traduction sous l’Ancien Régime*, ed. Jean-Philippe Beaulieu (Ottawa: Presses de l’Université d’Ottawa, 2004), 81–99.

11. Margaret Porete, “*The Mirror of Simple Souls*: A Middle English Translation,” ed. Marilyn Doiron, *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 5 (1968): 241–355.

12. On the special value of the Middle English text as a witness to Marguerite’s lost original, see Lerner, “New Light.” Other important studies include Edmund Colledge and Romana Guarnieri, “The Glosses by ‘M. N.’ and Richard Methley to *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,” *Archivio italiano per la storia della pietà* 5 (1968): 357–82; Nicholas Watson, “Misrepresenting the Untranslatable: Marguerite Porete and the *Mirouer des simples ames*,” *New Comparison* 12 (1991): 124–37; idem, “Melting into God the English Way: Deification in the Middle English Version of Marguerite Porete’s *Mirouer des simples ames anienties*,” in *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England*, ed. Rosalynn Voaden (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1996), 19–49; Marleen Cré, “Women in the Charterhouse? Julian of Norwich’s *Revelations of Divine Love* and Marguerite Porete’s *Mirror of Simple Souls* in British Library, MS Additional 37790,” in *Writing Religious Women: Female Spiritual and Textual Practices in Late Medieval England*, ed. Denis Renevey and Christiania Whitehead (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 43–62.

13. Catherine M. Müller, *Marguerite Porete et Marguerite d’Oingt de l’autre côté du miroir* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999); Kocher, *Allegories of Love*. See

also Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua († 203) to Marguerite Porete († 1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 217–28, and Bertho, *Le “Miroir des âmes simples et anéanties de Marguerite Porète.”*

14. Barbara Newman, “The Mirror and the Rose: Marguerite Porete’s Encounter with the *Dieu d’Amours*,” in *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*, ed. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan Robertson, and Nancy Bradley Warren (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 105–23.

15. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 27–28. In addition to the contemporary evidence, a century later Jean Gerson, rendering an astute, ambivalent judgment on the *Mirror*, refers to its author as “Maria de Valenciennes.” “De distinctione verarum revelationum a falsis,” in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Palémon Glorieux, 10 vols. (Paris: Desclée, 1961–1973), 3:51–52.

16. For an engaging look at Picard, or “Ch’ti,” language and culture today, see the comic film by Dany Boon, *Bienvenue chez les Ch’tis* (*Welcome to the Sticks*, 2008).

17. William W. Kibler, *An Introduction to Old French* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1984), 251; Serge Lusignan, “Picard French: Language and Public Administration in Medieval Northern France,” paper given at the “Multilingualism in the Middle Ages” conference, University of Bristol, Bristol, 17 March 2008.

18. Tony Hunt, introduction to *Les Cantiques Salemon: The Song of Songs in MS Paris BNF fr. 14966* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), 6.

19. Auguste Breuil, “La Confrérie de Notre-Dame du Puy d’Amiens,” *Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Picardie*, 2nd ser., vol. 3 (Amiens: Duval et Herment, 1854), 485–662; Edmond Faral, *Les jongleurs en France au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1910), 138–42; Gérard Gros, *Le poète, la Vierge et le prince du Puy: Études sur les Puyx marials de la France du Nord du XIV^e siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1992); Jean-Charles Herbin, “Activité poétique et ménestrels à Valenciennes aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles,” in *Valenciennes aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles: Art et histoire*, ed. Ludovic Nys and Alain Salamagne (Valenciennes: Presses Universitaires de Valenciennes, 1996), 297–313; Ardis Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France: From Jean Renart to Guillaume de Machaut* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 133–50.

20. Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, 150.

21. On the *puy* of Arras, officially called the Carité de Notre Dame des Ardents, see Carol Symes, *A Common Stage: Theater and Public Life in Medieval Arras* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 69–126, and Louise Barbara Richardson, “The *Confrérie des jongleurs et des bourgeois* and the *Puy d’Arras* in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Literature,” in *Studies in Honor of Mario A. Pei*, ed. John Fisher and Paul A. Gaeng (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 161–71.

22. Gros, *Le poète, la Vierge et le prince du Puy*, 19.

23. “Histoire de la chapelle et confrérie de Nostre-Dame du Puy, unie à l’église paroissiale de Nostre-Dame de la Chaussée, composée par M. Jacques-Michel Duforest, pasteur du béguinage de Valenciennes [sic], prince et confrère de ladite chapelle.” Valenciennes, Bibliothèque municipale, ms. 537.

24. Gabriel A. J. Hécart, ed., *Serventois et sottes chansons couronnés à Valenciennes*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Mercklein, 1834). Although Hécart’s scholarship was rather casual by today’s standards, his valuable *Dictionnaire rouchi-français*, 3rd ed. (Valenciennes: Lemaître, 1834) has been reprinted and is available at several sites online. Later in the fourteenth century the *puy* of Valenciennes began to encourage compositions in a more standard French: Gros, *Le poète, la Vierge et le prince du Puy*, 16.

25. Edward Järnström and Arthur Långfors, eds., *Recueil de chansons pieuses du XIIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1910, 1927), 2:197–213; Arthur Långfors, ed., *Deux recueils de sottes chansons: Bodléienne, Douce 308 et Bibliothèque Nationale, fr. 24432* (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1945), 92–149. For a newer edition of these parodies, see *Sottes chansons contre amours: Parodie et burlesque au Moyen Âge*, ed. and trans. Eglal Doss-Quinby, Marie-Geneviève Grossel, and Samuel N. Rosenberg (Paris: Champion, 2010).

26. Långfors, *Deux recueils de sottes chansons*, 106.

27. Jane H. M. Taylor, *The Poetry of François Villon: Text and Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 155–57.

28. “Et est dit serventoys pour ce qu’il doit estre servant devant et derriere a une amoureuse.” Baudet Herenc, *Le doctrinal de la seconde rhétorique*, section 3, in *Recueil d’arts de seconde rhétorique*, ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1902), 170. *Serventois* is the *langue d’oïl* form of the Old Occitan *sirventes*, a political or satirical song—derived in turn from *sirvent*, or “servant.” *Le Grand Robert de la langue française*, ed. Alain Rey, 2nd ed., version électronique, gr.bvdep.com.

29. “Et avient souvent qu’il prent les terminations et premieres lignes d’une amoureuse, laquele amoureuse traite de matiere d’amours. . . . Et les dis serventois le plus sont fais a l’onneur de la vierge Marie et par figure de la Bible.” Jean Molinet, *L’art de rhétorique*, section 37, in *Recueil d’arts de seconde rhétorique*, ed. Langlois, 244–45.

30. Gérard Gros, *Le poème du Puy marial: Étude sur le serventois et le chant royal du XIVe siècle à la Renaissance* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1996), 38.

31. Järnström and Långfors, *Recueil de chansons pieuses du XIIIe siècle*, 208.

32. *Ibid.*, 211.

33. “Je suis Dieu, dit Amour, car Amour est Dieu, et Dieu est amour.” *Mirouer*, ch. 21, p. 82. “God is love” (*caritas*) is biblical (1 John 4:8); “love is God” is not.

34. See for example *Mirouer* ch. 31, pp. 102–3. The Latin translator could have preserved the feminine gender and translated *Amour* as *Caritas*, but did not.

35. Långfors, *Deux recueils de sottes chansons*, 107.

36. Mechthild of Magdeburg, *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, II.23, trans. Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist, 1998), 88.

37. Långfors, *Deux recueils de sottes chansons*, 117.

38. Långfors (ibid.) notes that *franchise* in v. 25 is an error, since the rhyme scheme demands a word rhyming with *substanche*. Since a scribe would not replace a common word with a rare one, the error shows how familiar the concept of *noble franchise* must have been in the poet's milieu.

39. *Mirouer*, ch. 45, p. 138.

40. "Voyez comment il m'a franchement donné ma franche voulenté." *Mirouer*, ch. 104, p. 284.

41. *Mirouer*, ch. 85, p. 240.

42. *Mirouer*, ch. 89, p. 252.

43. "Le quart costé est, . . . que il luy fait ce tenir de luy, qui, de sa bonté, l'a en telle bonté par sa bonté muee; qui, de son amour, l'a en telle amour par amour muee; et de son vouloir l'a en tel vouloir, par divin vouloir, purement muee." *Mirouer*, ch. 82, p. 234.

44. "Ilz sont venuz en l'estat de franchise, c'est a dire, qu'ilz soient cheuz des Vertuz en Amour, et d'Amour en nient." *Mirouer*, ch. 90, p. 256. See also ch. 118, p. 328, and Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, 163.

45. *Mirouer*, ch. 131, p. 388.

46. *Mirouer*, ch. 132, p. 388.

47. *Mirouer*, ch. 132, p. 390.

48. For theories on the original ending and later additions see below, pp. 142–43. The chapter headings in the Chantilly manuscript and the Guarnieri edition are probably not original. The Middle English translation breaks the work into only thirty chapters, as compared with 139 in Chantilly, while most of the Latin mss. lack any chapter divisions. Sean L. Field, "Fractured *Mirror*: When, Why, and How Often Did Marguerite Porete Rewrite Her Book?", paper delivered at the 44th International Congress on Medieval Studies, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, May 2009.

49. Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 29–30, 49–54.

50. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 49–62.

51. Järnström and Långfors, *Recueil de chansons pieuses du XIIIe siècle*, 200.

52. The editors comment on the difficulty of the last two lines and the usage of *lui* in the sense of *soi*. The penultimate line could grammatically be translated, "For a heart without him [the One] can conceive in him," but the sense would be murky.

53. *Mirouer*, ch. 111, p. 304. The passage is all but impossible to translate; for another attempt see Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 181.

54. *Mirouer*, ch. 113, p. 306; cf. ch. 92, p. 258.

55. *Mirouer*, ch. 124, p. 360.
56. Järnström and Långfors, *Recueil de chansons pieuses du XIIIe siècle*, 201.
57. Valenciennes, Bibl. Municipale ms. 239, fols. 68v–69v (*Mirouer*, ch. 77–78). For an edition of the excerpt see Hasenohr, “La tradition du *Miroir*,” 1361–63.
58. This is Metz, Bibliothèque Municipale, ms. 535 (circa 1300), formerly at the abbey of St-Arnould in Metz. See Paul Meyer, “Notice du ms. 535 de la Bibliothèque Municipale de Metz, renfermant diverses compositions pieuses (prose et vers) en français,” *Bulletin de la Société des Anciens Textes Français* (Paris: Didot, 1886), 41–76.
59. Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, 104.
60. Gautier de Coinci, *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame*, ed. V. Frédéric Koenig, 4 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1955–1970); *Gautier de Coinci: Miracles, Music, and Manuscripts*, ed. Kathy M. Krause and Alison Stones (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006); Butterfield, *Poetry and Music in Medieval France*, 104–15; Sylvia Huot, *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet: The Sacred and the Profane in Thirteenth-Century Polyphony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 63–65.
61. Gérard de Liège, *Quinque incitamenta ad deum amandum ardentier*, ed. André Wilmart, in “Les traités de Gérard de Liège sur l’amour illicite et sur l’amour de Dieu,” in *Analecta Regimensia: Extraits des manuscrits latins de la reine Christine conservés au Vatican* (Rome: Vatican, 1933, repr. 1966), 205–47; David Carlson, “Religion and Romance: The Languages of Love in the Treatises of Gerard of Liège and the Case of Andreas Capellanus,” in *Poetics of Love in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lazar and Lacy, 81–92.
62. Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 73; Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 151–55.
63. *La court de Paradis: Poème anonyme du XIIIe siècle*, ed. Eva Vilamo-Pentti (Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1953), 99, 97, 101. See also Huot, *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet*, 77–80.
64. Hunt, *Les Cantiques Salemon*, 150.
65. Walter Simons, “‘Staining the Speech of Things Divine’: The Uses of Literacy in Medieval Beguine Communities,” in *The Voice of Silence: Women’s Literacy in a Men’s Church*, ed. Thérèse de Hemptinne and María Eugenia Góngora (Turnhout: Brepols, 2004), 99–100.
66. Geneviève Hasenohr, “D’une ‘poésie de béguine’ à une ‘poétique des béguines’: Aperçus sur la forme et la réception des textes (France, XIIIe–XIVe siècles),” *Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* 150.2 (2006): 913–43.
67. *Ibid.*, 937.
68. My use of the term *beguine poems* does not imply that their authors were beguines. For more crossover songs without clear beguine connections, see Alfred Jeanroy, “Imitations pieuses de chansons profanes,” *Romania* 18

(1889): 477–86; Paul Meyer, “Chansons pieuses du ms. de l’Arsenal 3517,” *Romania* 18 (1889): 486–91.

69. Meyer, “Notice du ms. 535.”

70. For the text of all four poems see Alfons Hilka, “Altfranzösische Mystik und Beginentum,” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 47 (1927): 121–70. No rubric divides the first two, which Hilka prints as a single text. But they are clearly separate. “A Dieu proier” is composed in irregular monorhymed *laisses*, while “Quant li mundain” is in rough couplets. After the didactic close of the first poem, the second begins with a new first-person narrative. Cf. Hasenohr, “D’une ‘poésie de béguine’ à une ‘poétique des béguines,’” 919n.

71. E. Bechmann, “Drei *Dits de l’ame* aus der Handschrift Ms. Gall. Oct. 28 der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin,” *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 12 (1889): 56. The current shelfmark is Lund, Universitetsbiblioteket, Medelt. Hdskr. 53. Hasenohr, “D’une ‘poésie de béguine’ à une ‘poétique des béguines,’” 933.

72. The word *beguinage* at this period means not a convent or institution, but “beguinhood”—the way of life appropriate to beguin/es. The term is gender neutral. Cf. Hasenohr, “D’une ‘poésie de béguine’ à une ‘poétique des béguines,’” 916.

73. *Mirouer*, ch. 71, p. 198; ch. 18, p. 72; ch. 9, p. 32.

74. Hilka, “Altfranzösische Mystik und Beginentum,” 145.

75. “Li leguaz amoureux,” in St. Petersburg, Hermitage, ms. Fr. f. v. XIV 9, fols. 283v–284v, ed. Arthur Långfors, *Miracles de Gautier de Coinci: Extraits du manuscrit de l’Ermitage* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Kirjapainon, 1937), 310–17.

76. *Ibid.*, 315.

77. Karl Christ, ed., “*La Règle des fins amans*: Eine Beginenregel aus dem Ende des XIII. Jahrhunderts,” in *Philologische Studien aus dem romanisch-germanischen Kulturkreise: Festgabe Karl Voretzsch*, ed. B. Schädel and W. Mulertt (Halle: Niemeyer, 1927), 173–213.

78. “Li .v. signes d’amors [est] que ce on lait sa volenté por celi ou pour celui que [on] aime . . . Li .vj. signes d’amors est que amors ne vuet nului acompaignier avuec li, ains vuet que tout soit sien et vuet tout avoir par li. Li .vij. signes d’amors est que cuers ne puet estre en pais se il n’est ou corporellement ou esperituellement avuec ce qu’il aime.” Långfors, *Miracles de Gautier de Coinci*, 318.

79. *Mirouer*, ch. 31, p. 104.

80. F. J. Tanqueray, “Exhortation à l’amour divin: poème du XIIIe siècle,” *Romania* 66 (1940): 322–54.

81. *Ibid.*, 338.

82. This phrase defies translation. Colledge, Marler, and Grant read “ungraciously”; Babinsky, “in an uncourtly way.” *Mirouer*, ch. 62, p. 180.

83. Field places the date of her birth “sometime near 1260.” *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 27.

84. Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 81–106; Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, 137–67.

85. “Douls Jhesucris,” stanza 20, in Bechmann, “Drei Dits de l’ame,” 62.

86. “Li leguaz amoureux,” stanza 5, in Långfors, *Miracles de Gautier de Coinci*, 315.

87. Unpublished poem cited in Hasenohr, “D’une ‘poésie de béguine’ à une ‘poétique des béguines,’” 927.

88. “A Dieu proier,” stanza 10, ed. Hilka, “Altfranzösische Mystik und Beginentum,” 129.

89. Gérard de Liège, *Quinque incitamenta ad deum amandum ardentier* 4.1, p. 240.

90. *Compilatio singularis exemplorum*, in Hilka, “Altfranzösische Mystik und Beginentum,” 160. See also “Douls Jhesucris,” stanza 2, in Bechmann, “Drei Dits de l’ame,” 57: “O douls amis pau conjoïs, / o douls amis petit servis, / o douls amis petit doubtés.”

91. Sylvia Huot, “Popular Piety and Devotional Literature: An Old French Rhyme about the Passion and its Textual History,” *Romania* 115 (1997): 456; Hasenohr, “D’une ‘poésie de béguine’ à une ‘poétique des béguines,’” 938–42.

92. “Li leguaz amoureux,” in Långfors, *Miracles de Gautier de Coinci*.

93. Rachel Fulton, “‘Taste and See That the Lord Is Sweet’ (Ps. 33:9): The Flavor of God in the Monastic West,” *Journal of Religion* 86 (2006): 180–81 (on translations).

94. “Amours me font en sospirant chanter,” in Meyer, “Notice du ms. 535,” 70.

95. “Grans est li cuers,” in Meyer, “Notice du ms. 535,” 60.

96. “Douls Jhesucris,” stanza 24, in Bechmann, “Drei Dits de l’ame,” 63.

97. “Exhortation,” stanza 13, in Tanquerey, “Exhortation à l’amour divin: poème du XIIIe siècle,” 347–48.

98. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De laude caritatis*, ed. and trans. Patrice Sicard, in *L’oeuvre de Hugues de Saint-Victor*, 2 vols. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 1:173–207; idem, “On the Praise of Charity,” trans. Franklin T. Harkins, in *On Love: A Selection of Works of Hugh, Adam, Achard, Richard, and Godfrey of St Victor*, ed. Hugh Feiss (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 149–68; Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 146–48.

99. *Mirouer*, ch. 4, p. 18.

100. Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 72.

101. “Exhortation,” stanza 18, in Tanquerey, “Exhortation à l’amour divin: poème du XIIIe siècle,” 353.

102. *Mirouer*, ch. 87, pp. 246–48.

103. See chapter 82 in Richard of St. Victor, *The Twelve Patriarchs*, trans. Grover Zinn (New York: Paulist, 1979), 139–40.

104. Cf. Newman, *God and the Goddesses*, 151–69.

105. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 157.

106. *Mirouer*, ch. 117, p. 310. See chapter 1 above, p. 20.

107. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 50–54, 85.

108. “Exhortation,” stanza 17, in Tanqueray, “Exhortation à l’amour divin: poème du XIII^e siècle,” 352–53.

109. “Pour moustrer que dieus s’esbanie,” stanza 16, in Bechmann, “Drei Dits de l’ame,” 72.

110. “A Dieu proier,” stanza 16, in Hilka, “Altfranzösische Mystik und Beginentum,” 131.

111. “Douls Jhesucris,” stanza 22, in Bechmann, “Drei Dits de l’ame,” 63.

112. *Ibid.*, stanza 12, p. 60.

113. *Ibid.*, stanza 8, pp. 58–59.

114. See for example Bernart de Ventadorn’s famous *canço*, “Can vei la lauzeta mover,” in which he says of his lady, “Tout m’a mo cor, e tout m’a me, / e se mezeis e tot lo mon.” (She has it all: she took my heart, and me, / and herself, and the whole world.) *Lyrics of the Troubadours and Trouvères: An Anthology and a History*, ed. and trans. Frederick Goldin (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1983), 146–47.

115. Sean L. Field, “Annihilation and Perfection in Two Sermons by Gilbert of Tournai for the Translation of St. Francis,” *Franciscana* 1 (1999): 237–74.

116. “Istam unionem et potestatem et cognitionem nulla anima habere potest, nisi solum illa, que in nichilum est redacta, et cuius vita est Deus.” (No soul can have this union, power, and awareness except one that has been reduced to nothingness and whose life has become God.) Johannes von Magdeburg, O.P., *Die Vita der Margareta contracta, einer Magdeburger Rekluse des 13. Jahrhunderts*, cap. 67, ed. Paul Gerhard Schmidt (Leipzig: Benno, 1992), 95; English translation by Gertrud Jaron Lewis and Tilman Lewis in *Living Saints of the Thirteenth Century: The Lives of Yvette, anchoress of Huy; Juliana of Cornillon, Author of the Corpus Christi Feast; and Margaret the Lame, anchoress of Magdeburg*, ed. Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), 391.

117. “. . . multorum notitiam hominum habuerim in Brabantia et in diversis terris, religiosorum virorum ac feminarum religiosarum tam claustralium quam earum, que Beghine vulgariter appellantur.” Johannes von Magdeburg, *Die Vita der Margareta contracta*, cap. 66, pp. 92–93; English translation in Mulder-Bakker, *Living Saints of the Thirteenth Century*, 388.

118. Mechthild of Hackeborn, *Liber specialis gratiae*, II.17, in *Revelationes Gertrudianae ac Mechthildianae*, 2 vols., ed. monks of Solesmes (Poitiers: Oudin, 1877), 2:152.

119. “Ipse amor increatus operatur; et ipse operatur omne bonum quod per nos operatur, et nos operamur omne malum. Et ista est vera annihilatio, videre in veritate quod nos non sumus operatores alicuius boni.” (It is uncreated Love that acts; and it does all the good that is done through us, and we ourselves do all the evil. And this is true annihilation: to see in truth that we are not the doers of any good.) Angela of Foligno, “Instructio II,” in *Il Libro della beata Angela da Foligno*, ed. Ludger Thier and Abele Calufetti, 2nd ed. (Rome: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Aquas, 1985), 436–38. Cf. *Mirouer*, ch. 118, pp. 324–28.

120. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 157; idem, “The Abyss of Love: The Language of Mystical Union among Medieval Women,” in *The Joy of Learning and the Love of God: Studies in Honor of Jean Leclercq*, ed. E. Rozanne Elder (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995), 95–120.

121. *Mirouer*, ch. 94, p. 264; Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 139.

122. *Mirouer*, ch. 108, p. 292.

123. *Mirouer*, ch. 131, p. 380. A Celestine monk in 1470 critiqued the paradoxical thought of this chapter as impossible, spiritually dangerous, and self-contradictory. *Livre de la discipline d’amour divine*, ed. Regnault Chaudière (Paris, 1519), as cited in Hasenohr, “La tradition du *Miroir*,” 1365–66.

124. *Mirouer*, ch. 8, p. 30.

125. *Mirouer*, ch. 21, p. 80.

126. *Mirouer*, ch. 92, p. 260. The Latin has *videt Deus seipsum* (God sees himself), p. 261.

127. *Mirouer*, ch. 118, pp. 322–24.

128. Or “from the abundance of Love”; the French is ambiguous.

129. Cf. Müller, *Marguerite Porete et Marguerite d’Oingt*, 124–25.

130. *Compilatio singularis exemplorum*, in Hilka, “Altfranzösische Mystik und Beginentum,” 159. This derives from Rutebeuf’s *Diz des beguines*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Michel Zink, 2 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1989), 1:240.

131. *Compilatio*, in Hilka, “Altfranzösische Mystik und Beginentum,” 160. One manuscript (Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 679) introduces these antitheses with the sentence, “Cum esset turbata de bona correptione magistri sicut superba et praesumptuosa [beguina] respondit, quasi diceret: Vos debetis bene beguinas reprehendere.” (When she was disturbed by the just rebuke of a master, [a beguine] replied as a proud and presumptuous woman, as if she were to say: Surely *you* have a right to criticize beguines!)

132. Hollywood, *The Soul as Virgin Wife*, 199–200.

133. *Mirouer*, ch. 122, p. 344.

134. This caution is echoed in the so-called *approbatio* of Godfrey of Fontaines: “Sed bene dixit quod non consulebat quod multi eum [librum] uiderent. Quia, ut dicebat, possent dimittere uitam suam ad quam sunt uocati, aspirando ad istam ad quam forte numquam pruenirent; et sic per hoc decipi

possent.” (But indeed, he said he did not advise that many people should see [the book]. For, as he said, they might abandon their own way of life, to which they have been called, aspiring to this life to which they may never attain; and thus they could be deceived through it.) *Mirouer*, ch. 140, p. 407. See Sean L. Field, “The Master and Marguerite: Godfrey of Fontaines’ Praise of *The Mirror of Simple Souls*,” *Journal of Medieval History* 35 (2009): 1–14.

135. *Mirouer*, ch. 121, p. 340.

136. Cf. Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, 218; Colledge et al., “Introductory Interpretative Essay,” *Mirror of Simple Souls*, xli; Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 47–49. Field argued in “Fractured *Mirror*” for an original ending after ch. 119 and several later additions in stages (ch. 120–22, 123–36, and 137–39).

137. The Latin and Middle English versions give only portions of these lyrics, which they render in prose. This is not surprising, since medieval lyric poetry (as opposed to narrative) was often imitated, but rarely translated.

138. *Mirouer*, ch. 122, p. 346.

139. Sylvia Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose” and Its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

140. Pierre-Yves Badel, *Le Roman de la Rose au XIV^e siècle: Étude de la réception de l’œuvre* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), 55–62.

141. Hunt, *Les Cantiques Salemon*, vv. 17–24, pp. 105–6. In my *God and the Goddesses* I mistakenly ascribed these lines to the trouvère Robert of Reims (157).

142. Christ, *La Règle des fins amans*, 205; Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, 143.

143. Herman de Valenciennes, *Li romanz de Dieu et de sa mère*, ed. Ina Spiele (Leyden: Presse Universitaire, 1975).

144. For fuller discussion see Hunt, *Les Cantiques Salemon*, 86–95.

145. Frederick C. Ostrander, ed., *Li Romans dou Lis*, vv. 555–57 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1915), 39. Subsequent references are verse numbers in the text. On the Jews and the Bretons see vv. 2705–11, p. 106.

146. Breuil, “La Confrérie de Notre-Dame du Puy d’Amiens,” 630–31.

147. Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, v. 21,779, ed. Daniel Poirion (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1974), 573.

148. Ernest Langlois, “Gui de Mori et le *Roman de la Rose*,” *Bibliothèque de l’École des Chartes* 68 (1907): 249–71; Marc-René Jung, “Gui de Mori et Guillaume de Lorris,” *Vox romanica* 27 (1968): 106–37; David F. Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First “Roman de la Rose”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 34–64; Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 85–129; Andrea Valentini, *Le remaniement du “Roman de la Rose” par Gui de Mori: Étude et édition des interpolations d’après le manuscrit Tournai*, *Bibliothèque de la Ville*, 101 (Brussels: Académie royale de Belgique, 2007).

149. Gui de Mori, vv. 13–20, in Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 338. I have deleted the editor’s comma after “Pour ce qu’elle est.”

150. Ibid., vv. 123–25, p. 343.

151. This observation militates against the intriguing theory that “Gui de Mori” was a pseudonym of the Franciscan Guibert de Tournai (d. 1284), since Guibert was a sharp critic of beguines. That thesis has been argued by Lori Walters in a series of articles, notably “Who Was Gui de Mori?,” in *Riens ne m’est seur que la chose incertaine: Études sur l’art d’écrire au Moyen Âge offertes à Eric Hicks*, ed. Jean-Claude Mühlethaler and Denis Billotte (Geneva: Slatkine, 2001), 133–46. Andrea Valentini provides opposing evidence in “Sur la date et l’auteur du remaniement du *Roman de la Rose* par Gui de Mori,” *Romania* 124 (2006): 361–77.

152. Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 136–37.

153. Hugh of Saint-Victor, *De arrha anime*, in *L’oeuvre de Hugues de Saint-Victor*, ed. H. B. Feiss et al. (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 1: 226.

154. Valentini, *Le remaniement du “Roman de la Rose” par Gui de Mori*, 138. Cf. Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 120.

155. “Il ne tient pas a elle, dit l’Espoux de ceste Ame mesmes; je vous ay par mon Loingprés les erres envoiees, mais nul me demande qui est ce Loingprés.” *Mirouer*, ch. 61, p. 178.

156. Valentini, *Le remaniement du “Roman de la Rose” par Gui de Mori*, 22–30.

157. Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 164.

158. For the independent form of this poem see Huot, “Popular Piety and Devotional Literature,” 461–64; for the very similar version embedded in the *Rose*, see her *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 365–68.

159. Boethius, *De consolazione Philosophiae*, Book 2, Meter 8 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973), 226. The translation is mine.

160. This line makes no obvious sense. A variant reads “Amour fit Dieu gesir en cendre” (Love made God lie in ashes). Huot, “Popular Piety and Devotional Literature,” 453, 473; Hasenohr, “D’une ‘poésie de béguine’ à une ‘poétique des béguines,’” 941.

161. Appendix C, vv. 33–38, in Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 366.

162. Huot, “Popular Piety and Devotional Literature,” 457–59.

163. Appendix C, vv. 65–72, in Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 367.

164. “Donc aime la vierge Marie, / Par amour a li te marie. / T’ame ne veult aultre mari, / Par amour a lui te mari, / Après Jhesu Crist son espous: / A lui te donne, a lui t’espous.” Ibid., vv. 99–104, p. 368.

165. Jean de Meun, *Roman de la Rose*, v. 10642. The translations are my own, but I have consulted the prose version by Frances Horgan, *The Romance of the Rose* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), and the verse translation of Harry W. Robbins, *The Romance of the Rose*, ed. Charles W. Dunn (New York: Dutton, 1962). Subsequent references are verse numbers in the text.

166. In her epilogue (chs. 123–32), Marguerite does draw on some of these genres, such as exegesis, hagiography (Mary Magdalene), and spiritual autobiography (how she herself entered the “Land of Freedom”).

167. Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 53. After the three principal speakers, the most important are Truth, with fourteen speeches; Holy Church, with eight (plus three more for “Holy Church the Little”); and the Holy Spirit, with six. Among those with one or two speeches apiece are God the Father, the Bridegroom of the Soul, Divine Law, Courtesy of the Goodness of Love, the Exalted Damsel of Peace, Fear, Temptation, Knowledge of Divine Light, Astonishment, Desire, and She Who Seeks.

168. Edmund Colledge, J. C. Marler, and Judith Grant, “Introductory Interpretative Essay,” in Porette [sic], *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, lxvi–lxix. These authors take Jean de Meun to be endorsing, rather than anatomizing or satirizing, the “enslavement by human passion” that typifies “Perfect Love” (lxvii). See also Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 68.

169. Suzanne Conklin Akbari, “The Object of Devotion: Fundamentalist Perspectives on the Medieval Past,” in “*Something Fearful*”: *Medievalist Scholars on the Religious Turn*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton and Jonathan Juifls, special issue of *Religion & Literature* 42 (2010): 305–7.

170. As Karl D. Uitti points out, *se mirer* is often mistranslated: it means “to gaze intently,” not necessarily at oneself. “‘Cele [qui] doit estre Rose clamee’ (Rose, vv. 40–44): Guillaume’s Intentionality,” in *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose*: *Text, Image, Reception*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 54, 62 n. 23.

171. Nature’s reconciliation of free will with divine foreknowledge follows Boethius, *Consolation of Philosophy* (Book 4, Prose 6), but Boethius does not use the mirror image. The *speculum providentiae*, symbolizing “eternal mind,” first appears as an attribute of Urania in Bernard Silvestris’s *Cosmographia*, trans. Winthrop Wetherbee (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 114–15. Jean’s immediate source was probably Alan of Lille’s *Anticlaudianus*, I.450–510, where Racio wields a triple mirror. *Anticlaudianus*, ed. R. Bossuat (Paris: Vrin, 1955), 70–71.

172. Müller, *Marguerite Porete et Marguerite d’Oingt*, especially 51–53 and 60–73; Newman, *From Virile Woman to WomanChrist*, 153–58.

173. *Mirouer*, ch. 1, p. 12. The last phrase is difficult to translate: Babinsky has “she dreamed of the king,” and Colledge, Marler, and Grant, “she could imagine that the king himself was present.” I follow the literal version of Peter Dronke in *Women Writers of the Middle Ages*, 219. Interestingly, an alternate text is reflected in the Latin (“Et mediante tali imagine . . . semetipsam aliquid quietabat”) and Middle English (“And bi þe sijt of þis ymage . . . sche was eesid”).

174. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 247.

175. *Mirouer*, ch. 118, p. 330.

176. The Chantilly manuscript gives the full title as *Le mirouer des simples ames anienties et qui seulement demourent en vouloir et desir d'amour*. Kocher has convincingly shown that the long final clause is a scribal error based on a passage in chapter 13: *Allegories of Love*, 11–13. Most translations follow the short title, *Le mirouer des simples ames*. But I would argue that the adjective *anienties* (which does not appear in chapter 13) is essential to Marguerite's meaning. Kocher cites manuscript evidence for its authenticity in "The Apothecary's *Mirror of Simple Souls*."

177. *Mirouer*, ch. 96, p. 268.

178. *Mirouer*, ch. 119, p. 334.

179. "J'ay dit, dit ceste Ame, que Amour l'a fait escrire par humaine science, et par le vouloir de la mutacion de mon entendement, dont j'estoie encombrée, comme il appert par ce livre; car Amour l'a fait, en descombrant mon esperit parmy ces trois dons." (I have said—says this Soul—that Love caused it to be written by human knowledge and by the will to transform my understanding, with which I was burdened, as it appears in this book; for Love made it, unburdening my spirit through these three gifts.) *Mirouer*, ch. 119, p. 334.

180. *Mirouer*, ch. 3, p. 16.

181. The same dynamic is at work in German and Dutch lyrics featuring Frau Minne, while the Italian *stilnovisti* developed alternative tropes to represent the masculine Amore. The French *amour* became masculine in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries under the influence of humanistic Latin, but its plural *les amours* remains feminine. Walther von Wartburg, *Französisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 27 vols. (Bonn: Klopp, 1928–1955), 24:469.

182. David F. Hult, "Language and Dismemberment: Abelard, Origen, and the *Romance of the Rose*," in *Rethinking the "Romance of the Rose"*, ed. Brownlee and Huot, 120.

183. Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot, "Introduction: Rethinking the *Rose*," in *Rethinking the "Romance of the Rose"*, ed. idem, 15; Lori Walters, "Illuminating the *Rose*: Gui de Mori and the Illustrations of MS 101 of the Municipal Library, Tournai," in *Rethinking the "Romance of the Rose"*, ed. Brownlee and Huot, 178–79; Simon Gaunt, "Bel Accueil and the Improper Allegory of the *Romance of the Rose*," *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998): 65–93.

184. In *Ennobling Love*, C. Stephen Jaeger illumines the dependence of *fin'amor* upon an older practice of passionate male friendship, understood as morally and socially ennobling rather than erotic.

185. Joan Ferrante argues that Bel Acuel has to be male because he "plays the courtly game on the man's terms." *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature from the Twelfth Century to Dante* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 110.

186. *Mirouer*, ch. 21, p. 82.

187. Hult, *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*, 6.

188. McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 263.

189. “The lesbian and gay metaphors all suggest intimacy and proximity of the spiritual lovers, in contrast with many of the mixed-sex metaphors which convey distance and difference.” Kocher, *Allegories of Love*, 94.

190. *Mirouer*, ch. 122, p. 346. My italics in the translation convey the intensity of the contrast.

191. I thank Sylvia Huot for this suggestion. Personal communication, 9 December 2011.

192. This phrase audaciously links the jealous God of the Bible (e.g., Exodus 20:5) with the stock character of the Jealous Husband in trouvère lyrics and the *Rose*. *Mirouer*, ch. 71, p. 198.

193. *Mirouer*, ch. 6, p. 24.

194. *Mirouer*, ch. 8, p. 30.

195. In Gui de Mori’s version, Reason instead praises the love of God. Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 95–98, 339–41.

196. *Le Roman de la Rose*, vv. 5388–404.

197. The plucking of the Rose is not technically rape, since Bel Acuel has freely granted it to the Lover (vv. 21340–45). But the sex scene that follows emphasizes the Lover’s violent and selfish pleasure, while Bel Acuel protests that he is “trop outrageus” (v. 21739). Kathryn Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 68–71; Leslie Cahoon, “Raping the Rose: Jean de Meun’s Reading of Ovid’s *Amores*,” *Classical and Modern Literature* 6 (1986): 261–85.

198. Joseph Baird and John Kane, ed. and trans., *La Querelle de la Rose: Letters and Documents* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978); Ferrante, *Woman as Image in Medieval Literature from the Twelfth Century to Dante*, 111–17; John Fleming, *Reason and the Lover* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

199. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 126–29.

200. *Ibid.*, 128, 321–22. The first proposition is found in chapters 6, 8, and 21 of the *Mirouer*, the second in chapters 9 and 17.

201. Colledge, Marler, and Grant, “Introductory Interpretative Essay,” in Porette [sic], *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, xlv–xlv; McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 245; Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*, 75–76. For the complete trial records see Verdeyen, “Le procès d’inquisition,” and the corrected English translation of these sources in Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 209–31.

202. Field, *The Beguine, the Angel, and the Inquisitor*, 193–94.

203. *Ibid.*, 197–98.

204. *Errorres Beguardorum et Beguinarum de statu perfectionis*, Constitutio “Ad nostrum” (May 6, 1312), article 6, in Heinrich Denzinger and Adolf Schön-

metzer, eds., *Enchiridion symbolorum, definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, 33rd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1965), 282.

205. “Ad nostrum,” article 7, in *ibid.*, 282.

206. Lerner, *Heresy of the Free Spirit in the Later Middle Ages*, 78–84.

207. Porete, “*The Mirror of Simple Souls*”: *A Middle English Translation*, ed. Doiron, 259; English translation in “Appendix 2,” in Porete [*sic*], *The Mirror of Simple Souls*, trans. Colledge, Marler, and Grant, 187.

208. “Arés, por Dieu, baron, arés, / Et vos linages reparés.” *Le Roman de la Rose*, vv. 19,701–2.

209. Huot, *The “Romance of the Rose,”* 114.

210. *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, no. 473, ad 1277, ed. Henri Denifle, 4 vols. (Paris: Delalain, 1889–1897), 1:543–55.

211. These are propositions no. 168 (“Quod continentia non est essentialiter virtus”), 169 (“Quod perfecta abstinencia ab actu carnis corrumpit virtutem et speciem”), and 183 (“Quod simplex fornicatio, utpote soluti cum soluta, non est peccatum”). *Chartularium*, 1:553.

212. “Librum etiam ‘De amore,’ sive ‘De Deo amoris,’ qui sic incipit: *Cogit me multum*, etc. et sic terminatur: *Cave igitur, Galtere . . . per eandem sententiam nostram condempnamus.*” *Chartularium*, 1:543.

CHAPTER 4. PARODY

The section “Mocking Mass Murder: *The Passion of the Jews of Prague*” in this chapter is abridged from my article “*The Passion of the Jews of Prague: The Pogrom of 1389 and the Lessons of a Medieval Parody*,” *Church History* 81 (2012): 1–26, which includes a fuller historical account of the pogrom with complete documentation.

1. Nil Korkut, *Kinds of Parody from the Medieval to the Postmodern* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 21.

2. Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (New York: Methuen, 1985), 36.

3. Paul Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter, mit 24 ausgewählten parodistischen Texten*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1963); Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages: The Latin Tradition* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

4. M. M. Bakhtin, “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse,” in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 41–83; see especially 71–77.

5. Mark Burde, “The *Parodia sacra* Problem and Medieval Comic Studies,” in *Laughter in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: Epistemology of a*

Fundamental Human Behavior, Its Meaning, and Consequences, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 223.

6. Burde, “The *Parodia sacra* Problem and Medieval Comic Studies,” 227–28, summarizing Francesco Novati, “La parodia sacra nelle letterature moderne,” *Studi critici e letterari* (Turin: Loescher, 1889), 177–265.

7. Sylvia Huot, *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet: The Sacred and the Profane in Thirteenth-Century Polyphony* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 11.

8. *Aucassin et Nicolette*, ed. Anne Elizabeth Cobby, trans. Glyn S. Burgess, in “*The Pilgrimage of Charlemagne*” and “*Aucassin and Nicolette*” (New York: Garland, 1988), 125–26.

9. A critical bibliography would fill pages, but two of the most influential feminist treatments are Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 113–31, and Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 26–57. For a magisterial treatment of the Wife among her *auctoritees*, see Alastair Minnis, *Fallible Authors: Chaucer’s Pardoner and Wife of Bath* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).

10. *Le Roman de la Rose*, vv. 12,861–67 and 12,932–44, ed. Daniel Poirion, 354–56.

11. Renaut de Beaujeu, *Le lai d’Ignaure ou Lai du prisonnier*, ed. Rita Lejeune (Brussels: Palais des Académies, 1938); *The Old French Lays of “Ignaure,” “Oiselet” and “Amours,”* ed. and trans. Glyn S. Burgess and Leslie C. Brook (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010). The manuscript is Paris, BNF ms. français 1553, fols. 485–88. *Ignaure* is the thirty-fifth romance in a large collection. The translations presented here are my own.

12. Renaut de Bâgé, *Le Bel Inconnu (Li Biaus Descouneüs; The Fair Unknown)*, ed. Karen Fresco, trans. Colleen P. Donagher (New York: Garland, 1992), xii. The new edition of *Ignaure* by Burgess and Brook takes no position on the issue (9).

13. “Soriz ki n’a c’un trau poi dure” (v. 373). The saying was proverbial.

14. For the most thorough discussion see Milad Doueihi, *A Perverse History of the Human Heart* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). See also Madeleine Jeay, “Consuming Passions: Variations on the Eaten Heart Theme,” in *Violence against Women in Medieval Texts*, ed. Anna Roberts (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998), 75–96; Simon Gaunt, *Love and Death in Medieval French and Occitan Courtly Literature: Martyrs to Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 90–103; Heather Webb, *The Medieval Heart* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 143–69.

15. Jakemes, *Le Roman du Castelain de Couci et de la Dame de Fayel*, ed. Maurice Delbouille (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1936). For excerpts in modern French see Danielle Régnier-Bohler, trans., *Le coeur mangé: Récits érotiques et courtois des XIIe et XIIIe siècles* (Paris: Stock, 1979), 241–51.

16. Danielle Buschinger, “Le *Herzmaere* de Konrad von Würzburg et la légende du ‘Coeur mangé,’” in *Le récit bref au Moyen Âge*, ed. Danielle Buschinger (Paris: Champion, 1980), 263–76.

17. Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, Day 4, Story 1, trans. Mark Musa and Peter Bondanella (London: Penguin, 1982). Christine de Pizan retells this tale in her *Book of the City of Ladies* (II.59), trans. Earl Jeffrey Richards (New York: Persea, 1982). In Day 4, Story 9, Boccaccio tells another eaten-heart tale based on the *vida* of the troubadour Guilhem de Cabestanh.

18. Arnaut-Guilhem de Marsan, *L'ensenhamen d'Arnaud-Guilhem de Marsan, ou, Code du parfait chevalier*, ed. Jacques de Cauna, trans. Gérard Gouiran (Monein: Pyrémonde, 2007), 74–75.

19. Text and French translation in Luciano Rossi, “Suggestion métaphorique et réalité historique dans la légende du coeur mangé,” in *Il cuore / The Heart*, ed. Nathalie Blancardi et al., *Micrologus: Natura, Scienze et Società Medievali* 11 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2003), 492–95.

20. Isabel de Riquer, “*Linbaure*: Cent ans d'études sur un *senhal*,” *Revue des langues romanes* 96 (1992): 41–67.

21. According to the online *Grand Robert de la langue française* (ed. Alain Rey, 2nd ed., gr.bvdep.com), the verb *ignorer* is attested only from 1330. But its oral usage may be older and, in any case, it is derived from Latin *ignorare*, with the same meaning. R. Howard Bloch treats *Le lai d'Ignaurée* as an “allegory of ignorance” under the rubric “Ignorance is Bliss”: *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 123–29.

22. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Edouard Dumoutet, *Corpus Domini: Aux sources de la piété eucharistique médiévale* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1942); Charles M. A. Caspers, “‘*Meum summum desiderium est te habere*’: l'eucharistie comme sacrement de la rencontre avec Dieu pour tous les croyants (ca. 1200–ca. 1500),” in *Fête-Dieu (1246–1996): Actes du colloque de Liège, 12–14 septembre 1996*, 2 vols., ed. André Haquin (Louvain-la-Neuve: Université Catholique de Louvain, 1999), 1:127–51.

23. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, “Satirical Views of the Beguines in Northern French Literature,” in *New Trends in Feminine Spirituality: The Holy Women of Liège and Their Impact*, ed. Juliette Dor, Lesley Johnson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), 237–49.

24. Rossi, “Suggestion métaphorique et réalité historique dans la légende du coeur mangé,” 486.

25. Doueiri, *A Perverse History of the Human Heart*, 36.

26. Merrall Llewelyn Price, *Consuming Passions: The Uses of Cannibalism in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 41.

27. These lines are difficult and have been variously punctuated and translated. See the notes of Burgess and Brooke, *The Old French Lays of “Ignaure,” “Oiselet” and “Amours,”* 101.

28. Mechthild von Magdeburg, *Das fließende Licht der Gottheit* II.23, ed. Gisela Vollmann-Profe (Frankfurt: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 2003); *The Flowing Light of the Godhead*, trans. Frank Tobin (New York: Paulist, 1998), 88.

29. Hildegard Elisabeth Keller, *My Secret Is Mine: Studies on Religion and Eros in the German Middle Ages* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 58–60.

30. In real life, when the baron Roger de Mortimer killed the rebel Simon de Montfort in 1265, he sent the defeated enemy's head and testicles to Wigmore Castle as a gift to his wife, Lady Mortimer. Richard W. Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 147.

31. Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages: A Critical Study of Texts from Perpetua († 203) to Marguerite Porete († 1310)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 214.

32. Gary Macy, *The Hidden History of Women's Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 96–110. For slightly later evidence see A. J. Minnis, "De impedimento sexus: Women's Bodies and Medieval Impediments to Female Ordination," in *Medieval Theology and the Natural Body*, ed. Peter Biller and A. J. Minnis (York: York Medieval Press, 1997), 109–39.

33. Innocent III, Epistle 187, to Abbot Gui of Morimond and the bishops of Palencia and Burgos, 11 December 1210, PL 216:356. This letter is quoted in full in the *Decretals* of Gregory IX, *Corpus juris canonici* Lib. V, tit. 38, cap. 10, ed. Emil Friedberg, 2 vols. (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1879–1881), 2:886–87.

34. *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium secundum Johannem rusticum quadratum*, in Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 211–16. Lehmann reprints an 1877 edition by Vaclav Tomek. But, with the kind permission of Eva Steinová, I have used her superior critical edition, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium: Kritická edícia Pašijí pražských židov*, M.A. thesis, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic, 2010. Steinová's base manuscript (Třeboň, Třeboňský archiv, A 14) was not known to Tomek or Lehmann.

35. Lehmann knew of two fifteenth-century manuscripts, one at the University of Prague (Prague, Národní Univerzitní knihovna, XI D 7), another in the cathedral library (Prague, Knihovna Metropolitní kapituly u sv. Víta v Praze, O 3); the third is Steinová's manuscript. Her edition also includes another, sharply abridged version of the text.

36. On host desecration tales and the resulting pogroms, see Miri Rubin, *Gentile Tales: The Narrative Assault on Late Medieval Jews* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

37. A good account of Bohemian Jews' social and economic status is Maria Tischler, "Böhmische Judengemeinden 1348–1519," in *Die Juden in den böhmischen Ländern* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983), 37–56.

38. John T. Noonan, *The Scholastic Analysis of Usury* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957); Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978); Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Patricia Ranum (New York: Zone, 1988).

39. On Chaucer's likely knowledge of the pogrom see Sarah Stanbury, "Host Desecration, Chaucer's 'Prioress's Tale,' and Prague 1389," in *Mindful Spirit in Late Medieval Literature: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth D. Kirk*, ed. Bonnie Wheeler (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 211–24.

40. Ludolf von Sagan, *Tractatus de longo schismate*, ed. Johannes Loserth, "Beiträge zur Geschichte der husitischen Bewegung, III," *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte* 60 (1880), 419. Cited in Franz Machilek, *Ludolf von Sagan und seine Stellung in der Auseinandersetzung um Konziliarismus und Husitismus* (Munich: Lerche, 1967), 141, 197.

41. David Nirenberg, *Communities of Violence: Persecution of Minorities in the Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 222.

42. According to František Graus, Ješek is a Czech form of Johannes, which is the name another contemporary source gives the ringleader: *Struktur und Geschichte: Drei Volksaufstände im mittelalterlichen Prag* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1971), 57. See also Josef Jireček, ed., *Historia de caede Iudaeorum Pragensi*, in "Zpráva o židovském pobití v Praze r. 1389 z rukopisu Krakovského," *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich-Böhmischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften in Prag* (Prague, 1880), 227–29.

43. Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 19. Subsequent references are page numbers in the text.

44. "Commotorum chisticolarum tanta perarsit / ira, quod et similes Judeis mortificarent / chisticolas facie, quos Judeos reputabant." (The rage of the rioting Christians burned so fiercely that they even put to death Christians whose faces looked Jewish, thinking that they were Jews.) Johannes von Wetzlar, *Dialogus super Magnificat*, vv. 2139–41, ed. Ernst-Stephan Bauer in *Frömmigkeit, Gelehrsamkeit und Zeitkritik an der Schwelle der grossen Konzilien: Johannes von Wetzlar und sein "Dialogus super Magnificat" (1427)* (Mainz: Gesellschaft für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte, 1981), 278; see also 147–48, n. 94.

45. Eli Valley, *The Great Jewish Cities of Central and Eastern Europe: A Travel Guide and Resource Book to Prague, Warsaw, Crakow, and Budapest* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1999), 64, 79–80.

46. On suicide and infanticide as tactics against forced conversion, see Jeremy Cohen, *Sanctifying the Name of God: Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories of the First Crusade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), and Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chapman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 144–89.

47. “Constitutio pro Judeis,” a bull of Innocent III (1199), which was repeatedly reissued in the thirteenth century. Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century: A Study of Their Relations during the Years 1198–1254*, rev. ed. (New York: Hermon Press, 1966), 92–95.

48. “Item da man schreip . . . daz der juden doit vurleben binach als umb hondert huisgeseß.” Tilemann Elhen von Wolfhagen, *Die Limburger Chronik*, 143, ed. Arthur Wyss, MGH. *Scriptorum qui vernacula lingua usi sunt*, 4:1 (Hannover: Hahn, 1883), 79.

49. “V tunnas plenas argento”: *Chronicon Engelbusii*, in *Scriptores rerum brunswicarum* II, ed. G. W. Leibnitz (Hannover: Hahn, 1711), 1134. A tun was a large cask or barrel used for wine.

50. “[I]nito consilio, ne ex usuraria pingwedine aeris corruptio inficeret civitatem, statuerunt, ut quidam indigentes et egeni cristiani tamen precio appreciati comportatis omnibus cadaveribus in cumulos, que nondum ignis consumpserat, eadem in cineres redigerent igne forti, adiunctis illis et si quos adhuc vivos in latibulis reperissent.” Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensesium*, 23.

51. Rabbi Avigdor Kara, “All the Afflictions,” in Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 196–98; see also 139–40. There are also several Hebrew narrative accounts.

52. Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 84–85, 199–211.

53. On late antique and medieval *centos* see Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 129–76.

54. Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 85.

55. Ibid., 86; Graus, *Struktur und Geschichte*, 52 n. 15; V. Novotný, ed., “Passio etc secundum Johannem Barbatum, rusticum quadratum,” in *Fontes rerum bohemicarum* 7 (Prague: Palackého, 1932), 14–24.

56. Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus miraculorum* V.5, ed. Joseph Strange, 2 vols. (Cologne: Heberle, 1851), 1:282.

57. “Rustici quadrati / semper sunt irati / et eorum corda / . . . / nunquam letabunda.” (Square-shouldered peasants are always angry, and their hearts . . . are never glad.) Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 86. See also Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 136.

58. Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 97.

59. “Rusticus que pars est? Nomen. Quale nomen? Judaicum. Quare? Quia ineptus et turpis ut Judeus.” “Bauernkatechismus,” in Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 197.

60. Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 210–11. Legends of the tenth-century St. Wenceslas inspired J. M. Neale’s famous nineteenth-century carol, “Good King Wenceslas.”

61. Jonathan Culler, “Textual Self-Consciousness and the Textual Unconscious,” *Style* 18 (1984): 369–76. See also Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Pre-modern Text* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), xiii, xvi.

62. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Federique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001). On the necessary if problematic distinction between anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, see Gavin I. Langmuir, *History, Religion, and Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 18–41 and 275–305.

63. Of the three other texts, only the one concerning Edward I's regent is called a *passio* in the manuscript ("Passio iusticiariorum Anglie"); the other two begin with the liturgical rubric *in illo tempore*. All of them range much more broadly across the Bible. Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter*, 199, 202, 205.

64. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 75–81, 239–44.

65. Stephen K. Wright, *The Vengeance of Our Lord: Medieval Dramatizations of the Destruction of Jerusalem* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1989); Alvin E. Ford, ed., *La Vengeance de Nostre-Seigneur: The Old and Middle French Prose Versions* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1993); Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 38–49.

66. Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 12.

67. Jarmila F. Veltruský, *A Sacred Farce from Medieval Bohemia: Mastičkář* (Ann Arbor, MI: Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, 1985), 349–51; Alfred Thomas, *Anne's Bohemia: Czech Literature and Society, 1310–1420* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 69.

68. Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 173–99.

69. Ellen M. Ross, *The Grief of God: Images of the Suffering Jesus in Late Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 17–28.

70. Modern liturgical recitations of the Passion short-circuit this process by having the entire congregation shout, "Crucify him!" The phrase "the religious authorities" is often substituted for John's references to "the Jews."

71. Thomas H. Bestul, *Texts of the Passion: Latin Devotional Literature and Medieval Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 94–95.

72. *Ibid.*, 83–90 (on Ekbert of Schönau, or pseudo-Bernard), 93–97 (on the authentic works of Bonaventure), and 102–3 (on *perfidus* and *perfidia* in anti-Jewish texts). On the replacement of Romans with Jews, see William Chester Jordan, "Judaizing the Passion: The Case of the Crown of Thorns in the Middle Ages," in *New Perspectives on Jewish-Christian Relations: In Honor of David Berger*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach and Jacob J. Schacter (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 51–63.

73. Miri Rubin, "The Passion of Mary: The Virgin and the Jews in Medieval Culture," in *The Passion Story: From Visual Representation to Social Drama*, ed. Marcia Kupfer (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press,

2008), 53–66; eadem, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 252–55; Georg Satzinger and Hans-Joachim Ziegeler, “Marienklagen und Pietà,” in *Die Passion Christi in Literatur und Kunst des Spätmittelalters*, ed. Walter Haug and Burghart Wachinger (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1993), 241–76.

74. Florian Rommel, “Judenfeindliche Vorstellungen im Passionsspiel des Mittelalters,” in *Juden in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters: Religiöse Konzepte—Feindbilder—Rechtfertigungen*, ed. Ursula Schulze (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2002), 183–207.

75. Anna Cornagliotti, ed., *La Passione di Revello: Sacra rappresentazione quattrocentesca* (Turin: Centro Studi Piemontesi, 1976); Jesse Njus, “Performing the Passion: A Study on the Nature of Medieval Acting,” Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 2010, 195–204. The Revello play was written about a century after the pogrom at Prague, though in the meantime the general animosity toward Jews had only hardened.

76. Hyam Maccoby, *Judas Iscariot and the Myth of Jewish Evil* (New York: Free Press, 1992). See chapter 1 above, pp. 19–20.

77. Johannes de Caulibus [sic], *Meditaciones Vite Christi* 75, ed. M. Stallings-Taney (Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 260. On the attribution of this work, see Sarah McNamer, “The Origins of the *Meditationes vitae Christi*,” *Speculum* 84 (2009): 905–55.

78. Ludolph of Saxony, *Vita Jesu Christi* II.28 (Paris: Palmé, 1865), 496.

79. Henry Suso, *Heinrich Seuses Horologium Sapientiae* I.15, ed. Pius Künzle (Freiburg, Switzerland: Universitätsverlag, 1977), 499; *Wisdom's Watch upon the Hours*, trans. Edmund Colledge (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 208.

80. Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 150–73.

81. T. C. G. Thornton, “The Crucifixion of Haman and the Scandal of the Cross,” *Journal of Theological Studies*, n.s. 37 (1986): 419–26; Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 165–67. On Jewish violence against Christians at Purim see Elliott Horowitz, *Reckless Rites: Purim and the Legacy of Jewish Violence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

82. “Sic itaque non moti penitencia, sed desperati in malicia, sonantibus inter ardores ignium musicis instrumentis, quidam ex eis propriis mucronibus sua viscera et puerorum suorum confoderunt.” [Therefore, not moved by penitence but desperate in their malice, as musical instruments resounded among the raging fires, some of them pierced their own entrails and those of their children with their own knives.] Steinová, *Passio Iudeorum Pragensium*, 22.

83. This canticle was sung on the Ember Saturdays of Advent and Lent, and the passage about King Nebuchadnezzar was one of twelve Old Testament lessons read at the Easter Vigil between the Exsultet and the rite of bap-

tism. Andrew Hughes, *Medieval Manuscripts for Mass and Office: A Guide to Their Organization and Terminology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), 36, 98, 264.

84. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 190–91.

85. “Altera autem die post occisionem maledictorum Iudaeorum paruuli, qui reseruati fuerant, a deuotis mulieribus collecti, baptismi gratia insigniti sunt.” (On the day after the slaughter of the accursed Jews, the little children who had been preserved, gathered by devout women, were sealed with the grace of baptism.) Jireček, *Historia de caede Iudaeorum Pragensi*, 229.

86. “Quod audientes Skopko et (sub)camerarius, ad notitiam regis perduxerunt, dicentes, quod extra voluntatem parentum illorum haec facta fuissent. Propter quod provocatus rex indignari coepit in communitatem Pragensium.” (On hearing this, Skopko and the deputy treasurer [Sigmund Huler] brought it to the king’s attention, saying that these things had been done against the will of their parents. Provoked by this news, the king became angry at the people of Prague.) Jireček, *Historia de caede Iudaeorum Pragensi*, 229. In a cynical view, the king may have been angry because forced baptisms meant that fewer Jews would be available as royal financiers in the next generation.

87. Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 108; Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 254.

88. Graus, *Struktur und Geschichte*, 55; Bestul, *Texts of the Passion*, 74–75. Canon 68 of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) repeated this ancient prohibition. For later iterations of the law see Solomon Grayzel, *The Church and the Jews in the XIIIth Century*, vol. 2, 1254–1314, ed. Kenneth Stow (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1989), 258–61, 270.

89. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, 68–90.

90. “De Vigilia Paschali,” in *Liber Usualis Missae et Officii*, ed. monks of Solesmes (Tournai: Desclée, 1953), 776N. The clause “quae expoliavit Aegyptios, ditavit Hebraeos” was removed in a liturgical reform of 1975.

91. Cf. Graus, *Struktur und Geschichte*, 56.

92. Michael Jones, “‘The Place of the Jews’: Anti-Judaism and Theatricality in Medieval Culture,” *Exemplaria* 12 (2000): 353.

93. Jones, “‘The Place of the Jews,’” 330.

94. Rubin, *Gentile Tales*, 3. For similar views in an English context, see Elisa Narin van Court, “Socially Marginal, Culturally Central: Representing Jews in Late Medieval English Literature,” *Exemplaria* 12 (2000): 293–326.

95. Reflecting more than twenty years later on their absence from her visions, Julian said she knew as a matter of faith that “the Jewes that did him to deth . . . ware acursed and dampned without ende, saving tho that were converted by grace.” Yet she added that she never saw their acts or their fate “properly specified.” *A Revelation of Love*, ch. 33, in *The Writings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. Nicholas Watson and Jacqueline Jenkins (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 225.

96. Ernst Langlois, ed., “La Desputoison de Dieu et de sa mère,” in “Notice du manuscrit Ottobonien 2523,” *Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire de L’École Française de Rome* 5 (1885): 25–26, 54–61. The manuscript is in the Vatican Library; I have consulted a microfilm at the Vatican Film Library, St. Louis University, St. Louis, MO. Line numbers in the text refer to my own edition in the appendix.

97. The sole article devoted to it is Gérard Gros, “Questions d’héritage, ou *La desputoison de Dieu et de sa mère*,” in *Les relations de parenté dans le monde médiéval*, Sénéfiance 26 (Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1989), 487–507.

98. Langlois, “Notice du manuscrit Ottobonien 2523,” 25–26.

99. Ibid., 54. His adjective *spirituel* can have either sense.

100. “Mil anz ot à l’Ascencion, / Troiz C. IIIIxx XXXVII.” *La Desputoison*, vv. 115–16.

101. Langlois, “Notice du manuscrit Ottobonien 2523,” 55, followed by Gros, “Questions d’héritage,” 491.

102. Gros discusses Nesson in connection with the *Desputoison* but will not admit him as a source because he accepts Langlois’s false dating of 1417. “Questions d’héritage,” 489, 497–98, 503.

103. For anthologies of debate poetry see Hans Walther, *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Munich: Oskar Beck, 1920); Michel-André Bossy, ed. and trans., *Medieval Debate Poetry: Vernacular Works* (New York: Garland, 1987); John W. Conlee, ed., *Middle English Debate Poetry: A Critical Anthology* (East Lansing: Colleagues, 1991).

104. Pierre-Yves Badel, “Le Débat,” in *La littérature française aux XIV^e et XV^e siècles*, ed. Daniel Poirion (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1988), 96.

105. Ibid., 110.

106. As Gros points out, not all the named churches were in fact Marian. Beauvais Cathedral is dedicated to St. Peter, and the royal necropolis near Paris to St. Denis. “Questions d’héritage,” 496.

107. Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 269.

108. Sharon Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology, and the Daily Lives of the Poor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), 88.

109. E. Jane Burns, *Courtly Love Undressed: Reading Through Clothes in Medieval French Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 86–87.

110. “Protevangeliū of James,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols., ed. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 1: 379–80.

111. See “Maria: Holy Trinity as Holy Family,” chapter 6 in my *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

112. Drogo de Altovillari, *Discussio litis super hereditate Lazari et Marie Magdalene: Ein Streitgedicht des 13. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Michael Peter Bachmann (Bern: Peter Lang, 2002).

113. Walther, *Das Streitgedicht in der lateinischen Literatur des Mittelalters*, 126.

114. Judith M. Davis and F. R. P. Akehurst, trans., *Our Lady's Lawsuits in "L'Advocacie Nostre Dame" and "La Chapelerie Nostre Dame de Baiex,"* based on the text edited by Gérard Gros (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2011); Gérard Gros, *"Ave, Vierge Marie": Étude sur les prières mariales en vers français (XIIe–XVe siècles)* (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 2004), 153–57.

115. Pierre de Nesson, *Hommage à la Vierge*, in *Pierre de Nesson et ses oeuvres*, ed. Arthur Piaget and Eugénie Droz (Paris: Droz, 1925), 39–45 (pp. 41–42). Piaget and Droz reproduce a facsimile of the 1484 *editio princeps* by Robin Fouquet and Jean Cres, printers to the duke of Rohan in Bréhan-Lodéac, Brittany. The edition has no line numbers; I have supplied punctuation and accents.

116. Bernardino de Busti, *Mariale*, ca. 1478 (Brescia: Marchetti, 1588), 949, cited in Hilda Graef, *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 2009), 253.

117. Nesson, *Hommage à la Vierge*, 42.

118. *Ibid.*, 43.

119. Gros, "Questions d'héritage," 501.

120. Pierre de Nesson, *Le lay de Guerre*, vv. 631–53, in *Pierre de Nesson et ses oeuvres*, ed. Arthur Piaget and Eugénie Droz (Paris: Droz, 1925), 66–67.

121. See also Joseph A. Dane, *Parody: Critical Concepts Versus Literary Practices, Aristophanes to Sterne* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), 175–84; Fidel Rädle, "Zu den Bedingungen der Parodie in der lateinischen Literatur des hohen Mittelalters," in *Literaturparodie in Antike und Mittelalter*, ed. Wolfram Ax and Reinhold F. Gleis (Trier: Wissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1993), 171–85.

122. Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 197.

123. *Ibid.*, 9.

124. "[E]ine Brutalität, die selbst den antisemitischsten modernen Christen verletzen muß oder müßte." Paul Lehmann, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter* (Munich: Drei Masken, 1922), 124; *idem*, *Die Parodie im Mittelalter* (1963), 85.

125. Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages*, 201.

CHAPTER 5. CONVERGENCE

1. René Nelli, *L'Érotique des troubadours* (Toulouse: Privat, 1963), 210–11.

2. René also wrote a *Livre des tournois* (after 1460) outlining the protocol of a tournament, with paintings by Barthélemy van Eyck (Paris, BNF, mss.

fr. 2692 and 2693). He is sometimes credited with the pastoral poem *Regnault et Jehanneton* (René and Jeannie), but this may have been offered as a gift to the king in honor of his second wife, Jeanne de Laval. Margaret L. Kekewich, *The Good King: René of Anjou and Fifteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 157–60.

3. On this artist, also known as the “Master of the Heart” or “Master of King René,” see most recently Rose-Marie Ferré, “Barthélemy d’Eyck,” in Marc-Édouard Gautier, ed., *Splendeur de l’enluminure: Le roi René et les livres*, catalogue of the exhibition presented at the Château d’Angers, 3 October 2009–3 January 2010 (Angers: Actes Sud, 2009), 123–31. See also Otto Pächt, “René d’Anjou-Studien I,” *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 69 (1973): 85–126; idem, “René d’Anjou-Studien II,” *Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 73 (1977): 7–106; Franz Unterkircher, “Le coeur enluminé,” in Marie-Thérèse Gousset, Daniel Poirion, and Franz Unterkircher, *Le Coeur d’Amour épris* (Vesoul: Philippe Lebaud, 1981), 81–108; Jean Arrouye, “Le coeur et son paysage,” in *Le “cuer” au Moyen Âge: Réalité et sénéfiance* (Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1991), 29–42; François Avril and Nicole Reynaud, *Les manuscrits à peintures en France, 1440–1520* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993), 236–37; Eberhard König, *Das liebentbrannte Herz: Der Wiener Codex und der Maler Barthélemy d’Eyck* (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1996).

4. These two manuscripts are London, British Library ms. Egerton 1070, and Vienna, Nationalbibliothek cod. 2617.

5. But see Daniel Poirion, “L’allégorie dans le *Livre du Cœur d’Amours espris*, de René d’Anjou,” *Travaux de linguistique et de littérature* 9 (1971): 51–64, and idem, “Le coeur de René d’Anjou,” in *Les Angevins de la littérature* (Angers: Presses de l’Université, 1979), 48–62.

6. The most recent biography is Kekewich, *The Good King*. Foundational works include Théodore, comte de Quatrebarbes, *Oeuvres complètes du roi René, avec une biographie et des notices*, 4 vols. (Angers: Cosnier et Lachèse, 1845–1846), and Albert Lecoy de la Marche, *Le roi René: Sa vie, son administration, ses travaux artistiques et littéraires*, 2 vols. (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1875).

7. For fifteenth- and sixteenth-century testimonies to René’s artistic activity, see Unterkircher, “Le coeur enluminé,” 104–08. Rose-Marie Ferré reassesses this evidence in “Le roi René peintre? État de la question,” in *Splendeur de l’enluminure*, ed. Gautier, 117–21.

8. Vilified by Shakespeare, Queen Margaret is more kindly remembered as the founder of Queens’ College, Cambridge.

9. Kekewich, *The Good King*, 229–31, 244–45.

10. On René as a cultural figure see Noël Coulet, Alice Planche, and Françoise Robin, *Le roi René: Le prince, le mécène, l’écrivain, le mythe* (Aix-en-Provence: Édisud, 1982); Françoise Robin, *La cour d’Anjou-Provence: La vie artistique sous le règne de René* (Paris: Picard, 1985); *Splendeur de l’enluminure*, ed. Gautier;

and Florence Bouchet, ed., *René d'Anjou, écrivain et mécène (1409–1480)* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011).

11. René also had palaces in Aix-en-Provence, Villeneuve-lez-Avignon, and Tarascon, with many other castles and country houses. Robin, *La cour d'Anjou-Provence*, 99–141. His household included more than two hundred servants. SunHee Kim Gertz, *Visual Power and Fame in René d'Anjou, Geoffrey Chaucer, and the Black Prince* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 37.

12. Gertz, *Visual Power and Fame*, 38. René's fluency in German was noted by Gabriel Tetzl, chronicler of the Bohemian lord Leo of Rozmítal, who visited Anjou in 1466. *The Travels of Leo of Rozmítal, 1465–67*, ed. and trans. Malcolm Letts (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1957), 69; Kekewich, *The Good King*, 196.

13. René d'Anjou, *Le Mortifiement de vaine plaisance*, ed. Frédéric Lyna (New York: Stechert, 1926), xxv–xxvii. A portion of René's library catalogue, based on an inventory of 1508, was published by J.-H. Albanès, "La bibliothèque du roi René," *Revue des Sociétés Savantes des Départements*, ser. 5, vol. 8 (1874): 301–11. See also Marc-Édouard Gautier, "La bibliothèque du roi René," in *Splendeur de l'enluminure*, ed. Gautier, 21–35.

14. Stephanie Viereck Gibbs and Kathryn Karczewska, introduction, René of Anjou, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, ed. and trans. Stephanie Viereck Gibbs and Kathryn Karczewska (New York: Routledge, 2001), xv. See also Graham A. Runnalls, "René d'Anjou et le théâtre," in *Études sur les mystères: Un recueil de 22 études sur les mystères français* (Paris: Champion, 1998), 175–209; Lynette R. Muir, "René d'Anjou and the Theatre in Provence," *European Medieval Drama* 3 (2000): 57–72; Gabriella Parussa, "Théâtre, politique et religion: l'art dramatique à la cour de René d'Anjou," in *René d'Anjou, écrivain et mécène*, ed. Bouchet, 223–37; Rose-Marie Ferré, "Culture théâtrale et enluminure à la cour du roi René," in *Splendeur de l'enluminure*, ed. Gautier, 179–89.

15. Marco Nievergelt, "René d'Anjou et l'idéal chevaleresque," in *René d'Anjou, écrivain et mécène*, ed. Bouchet, 239–53.

16. After Quatrebarbes, the only edition is that of Frédéric Lyna (1926), based on Brussels, Bibliothèque Royale, ms. 10308. It includes color reproductions of the miniatures by Jean le Tavernier and black-and-white photographs of the paintings in other manuscripts. René d'Anjou, *Le Mortifiement de vaine plaisance*, trans. Isabelle Fabre (Paris and Geneva: Presses Universitaires de France and Fondation Martin Bodmer, 2009), offers a full-color facsimile of the Cologny-Geneva ms. (Fondation Martin Bodmer, ms. 144), including its miniatures by Jean Colombe, along with Fabre's modern French translation and a preface by Michel Zink. A recently discovered manuscript is Tournai, Bibliothèque du Grand Séminaire, cod. 42.

17. *Mortifiement*, ed. Lyna, 2. Subsequent references are page numbers in the text.

18. Shira Schwam-Baird, “The Crucified Heart of René d’Anjou in Text and Image,” *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 25 (2000): 232. For descriptions of the manuscripts see *Mortifiement*, ed. Lyna, lxviii–lxxxv; Avril and Reynaud, *Les manuscrits à peintures en France, 1440–1520*, 236–37; Zink, preface to *Mortifiement*, trans. Fabre, 37–41. The detached miniatures by Jean Colombe in Metz (Bibliothèque Municipale) have been cut away from their text, which does not survive. Another manuscript formerly in the imperial library of Vienna, stolen during the Napoleonic Wars, resurfaced in 1951. This is now Cologny-Geneva, Fondation Martin Bodmer, ms. 144 (facsimile in *Mortifiement*, trans. Fabre).

19. Raymond of Capua, *The Life of Catherine of Siena*, II.6, trans. Conleth Kearns (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1980), 174–80; Heather Webb, “Catherine of Siena’s Heart,” *Speculum* 80 (2005): 802–17.

20. Catherine’s gift of her heart was an image often linked with her cult in the fifteenth century, for example, in paintings by Giovanni di Paolo and Guidoccio Cozzarelli. An illuminated German manuscript of ca. 1425–1430 (Paris, BNF ms. allemand 34) includes separate miniatures of Catherine’s gift and Christ’s counter-gift. Jeffrey Hamburger, “Sainte Catherine de Sienne: Manuscrit germanique du XVe siècle,” *Art de l’enluminure* 11 (December 2004–February 2005): 44.

21. Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, “La légende du coeur inscrit dans la littérature religieuse et didactique,” in *Le “cuer” au Moyen Âge: Réalité et sénéfiance* (Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1991), 297–312; Christiane Reynaud, “La mise-en-scène du coeur dans les livres religieux de la fin du Moyen Âge,” in *Le “cuer” au Moyen Âge*, 313–43; Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1998), 111–17; Barbara Newman, “Love’s Arrows: Christ as Cupid in Late Medieval Art and Devotion,” in *The Mind’s Eye: Art and Theological Argument in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeffrey Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 263–86.

22. Jeffrey Hamburger, *The Rothschild Canticles: Art and Mysticism in Flanders and the Rhineland circa 1300* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 75–76; Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 159–65.

23. Zink, preface to *Mortifiement*, trans. Fabre, 32.

24. Coulet, Planche, and Robin, *Le roi René*, 167.

25. The miniatures in this manuscript, reproduced by Lyna, are ascribed to Jean le Tavernier.

26. Schwam-Baird, “Crucified Heart of René d’Anjou in Text and Image,” 236, 240.

27. Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum, ms. 165. This manuscript, illustrated by Loyset Liédet, is the only one that does not follow the model of Barthélemy van Eyck. Liédet depicts the Soul instead as a classicizing Psyche, naked and winged. *Mortifiement*, ed. Lyna, lxviii–lxx and plates 1, 2, 3, 7, and 9.

28. Virginie Minet-Mahy, “L’iconographie du coeur et de la croix dans le *Mortifiement* de René d’Anjou et les *Douze Dames de Rhétorique* de George Chastelain: Un dialogue avec Jean Gerson,” *Le Moyen Âge* 113 (2007): 575. See also eadem, “Lecture croisée de Jean Gerson et de René d’Anjou: La figure du prince-poète méditant,” in *René d’Anjou, écrivain et mécène*, ed. Bouchet, 99–117.

29. Giles Constable, “The Popularity of Twelfth-Century Spiritual Authors in the Late Middle Ages,” in *Renaissance Studies in Honor of Hans Baron*, ed. Anthony Molho and John Tedeschi (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), 5–28; Daniel Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity Before Print: Jean Gerson and the Transformation of Late Medieval Learning* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 31–37.

30. Johan Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, trans. F. Hopman (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1954), 181.

31. Ibid.

32. Editions include Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, and René d’Anjou, *Le Livre du Coeur d’Amour épris*, ed. and trans. Florence Bouchet (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2003). I cite the translation of Gibbs and Karczewska unless otherwise noted. Subsequent references are page numbers in the text.

33. *Mortifiement*, ed. Lyna, xx.

34. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 6 (translation altered).

35. *Mortifiement*, ed. Lyna, lxxxi. René had more such devices than any other prince.

36. Ibid., xix, xxiii–xxiv; Gautier, “La bibliothèque du roi René,” 30. “Ardent Désir” was still serving René at his deathbed. Robin, *La cour d’Anjou-Provence*, 186.

37. The knight Cuer appears a little earlier in “Le Debat du Cuer et de l’Ueil” by Michault Taillevent (d. ca. 1448/58). See Robert Deschaux, *Un poète bourguignon du XVe siècle: Michault Taillevent* (Geneva: Droz, 1975), 192–229, and Armand Strubel, “Coeur personnifié, réifié, hypostasié: Les avatars de l’organe dans la littérature du XVe siècle,” in *Il cuore / The Heart*. Micrologus: Natura, Scienze et Società Medievali 11 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2003), 461.

38. Michel Zink, “La tristesse du coeur dans *Le Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris* de René d’Anjou,” in *Le récit amoureux*, ed. Didier Coste and Michel Zéraffa (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1984), 25. See also Poirion, “L’allégorie dans le *Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris*,” 52, and Susanne Rinne, “René d’Anjou and his *Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris*: The Roles of Author, Narrator, and Protagonist,” *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 12 (1986): 145–63.

39. Douglas Kelly, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 213–15. On the separable heart in Charles d’Orléans, see Strubel, “Coeur personnifié, réifié, hypostasié,”

464–67. The best account of this poet-prince may be Hella Haasse's historical novel, *In a Dark Wood Wandering*, trans. Lewis C. Kaplan and Anita Miller (Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1989).

40. Coulet, Planche, and Robin, *Le roi René*, 211; Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, "Récriture et parodie: L'idéal chevaleresque et l'idéal politique à l'épreuve du *Livre du Cœur d'amours espris* de René d'Anjou," in *Formes de la critique: Parodie et satire dans la France et l'Italie médiévales*, ed. Jean-Claude Mühlethaler, Alain Corbellari, and Barbara Wahlen (Paris: Champion, 2003), 252.

41. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 110 (translation altered).

42. Cf. Muir, "René d'Anjou and the Theatre in Provence," 61.

43. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 30 (translation altered).

44. Nievergelt, "René d'Anjou et l'idéal chevaleresque," 251.

45. Catherine M. Jones, "Blazon and Allegory in the *Livre du Cœur d'Amours espris*," in *Conjunctures: Medieval Studies in Honor of Douglas Kelly*, ed. Keith Busby and Norris J. Lacy (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994), 193–204. See also Laurent Hablot, "Mise en signe du livre, mise en scène du pouvoir: Armoiries et devises dans les manuscrits de René d'Anjou," in *Splendeur de l'enluminure*, ed. Gautier, 167–77.

46. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 166–67. This is René's final version of the passage, revised in 1477. His original version has an even more libertine character, with elaborate wordplay on the terms *coquin* and *caymanderie* (begging). See Daniel Poirion, "Le miroir magique," in Gousset, Poirion, and Unterkircher, *Le Cœur d'Amour épris*, 41.

47. Barthélemy's illuminated manuscript is Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Vind. 2597. Color reproductions can be found in *Splendeur de l'enluminure*, ed. Gautier; Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*; Franz Unterkircher, *King René's Book of Love*, trans. Sophie Wilkins (New York: Braziller, 1975); and Gousset, Poirion, and Unterkircher, *Le Cœur d'Amour épris*. The latter volume also includes black-and-white photographs of the miniatures by an anonymous painter who completed the cycle in Paris, BNF ms. fr. 24399. For other mss. of *Le Livre du Cœur* see Unterkircher, "Le cœur enluminé," 85–86.

48. Ingo F. Walther and Norbert Wolf, *Codices Illustres: The World's Most Famous Illuminated Manuscripts, 400 to 1600* (Cologne: Taschen, 2001), 281; Lillian Schacherl, *Très Riches Heures: Behind the Gothic Masterpiece*, trans. Fiona Elliott (Munich: Prestel, 1997), 33–34, 66.

49. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 198 (translation altered). René employed an alchemist during his Italian sojourn in 1438–1442: Poirion, "Le miroir magique," 54.

50. Cf. Mühlethaler, "Récriture et parodie," 244.

51. Muir, “René d’Anjou and the Theatre in Provence,” 62.
52. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 222 (translation altered).
53. Ibid., 212–13; Zink, “La tristesse du coeur dans *Le Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris*,” 32.
54. Mühlethaler, “Récriture et parodie,” 249.
55. Cuer’s archenemy is called Dangier, following the *Rose*, in all manuscripts except Vienna. The king revised his personal copy in 1477, changing the name of this figure to Reffuz because the older term had become obsolete. Poirion, “L’allégorie dans le *Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris*,” 54n; Unterkircher, “Le coeur enluminé,” 87–89.
56. Zink, “La tristesse du coeur dans *Le Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris*,” 24.
57. Zink, “La tristesse du coeur dans *Le Livre du Cuer d’Amours espris*,” 33.
58. For Alain’s poem and others in this tradition, see *Le Cycle de “La Belle Dame sans Mercy”*: *Une anthologie poétique du XV^e siècle*. BNF MS FR. 1131, ed. and trans. David F. Hult and Joan E. McRae (Paris: Champion, 2003), and *Alain Chartier: The Quarrel of the Belle Dame sans Mercy*, ed. and trans. Joan E. McRae (New York: Routledge, 2004).
59. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 140.
60. Alain Chartier, “La belle dame sans mercy,” stanza 36, in McRae, *Alain Chartier*, 60–61 (translation altered).
61. Christine’s *Cent ballades d’amant et de la dame*, a verse dialogue in which a lady lives to regret succumbing to a lover’s promises, was among Chartier’s sources. McRae, *Alain Chartier*, 7.
62. McRae, *Alain Chartier*, 98–99.
63. Ibid., 102–3.
64. Alain Chartier, “L’excusacion de maistre Alain,” stanza 26, in McRae, *Alain Chartier*, 122–23.
65. In addition to the five poems summarized here, Hult and McRae list no fewer than fourteen other works inspired by the *querelle*. *Le Cycle de “La Belle Dame sans Mercy*,” lxix.
66. Poirion, “Le miroir magique,” 43.
67. Some of the troubadours, notably Guilhem IX, did compose songs of fulfilled love; but in the corpus these are a small minority.
68. Achilles Caulier, *L’Ospital d’amours*, stanzas 33–36, in McRae, *Alain Chartier*, 382. *Conscience* can mean either “desire,” as I think likely here, or “knowledge” in the sense of *connaissance*.
69. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 182–83.
70. Caulier, *L’Ospital d’amours*, stanza 160, in McRae, *Alain Chartier*, 444–45.
71. Gibbs and Karczewska, *The Book of the Love-Smitten Heart*, 270–71 (translation altered).

72. On contemporary legends see Poirion, “Le miroir magique,” 39. Rossetti’s 1864 painting *King René’s Honeymoon Cabinet* (London, Victoria & Albert Museum) shows a very youthful René kissing his bride as she plays a virginal.

73. Kekewich, *The Good King*, 151.

74. Poirion, “L’allégorie dans le *Livre du Cœur d’Amours espris*,” 64.

75. Quatrebarbes, *Oeuvres complètes du roi René, avec une biographie et des notices*, 1:cx.

76. Runnalls, “René d’Anjou et le théâtre,” 203.

77. For an excellent reproduction from Paris, BNF ms. fr. 24399, fol. 122v, see *Splendeur de l’enluminure*, ed. Gautier, 309.

78. Florence Bouchet, “Jeux de clair-obscur dans le *Livre du Cœur d’Amours espris* de René d’Anjou: Quête du sens et plaisirs des sens,” in *Feu et lumière au Moyen Âge* (Toulouse: Édisud, 1998), 7–18.

79. Unterkircher, “Le cœur enluminé,” 95. Cf. Muir, “René d’Anjou and the Theatre in Provence,” 61.

80. In 1449 René gave an actor five *gros* for a pair of pointy shoes to represent the World in a morality play on “The World, the Flesh, and the Devil.” Runnalls, “René d’Anjou et le théâtre,” 183–84.

81. Avril and Reynaud, *Les manuscrits à peintures en France, 1440–1520*, 237.

82. Poirion, “Le cœur de René d’Anjou,” 51.

83. *Ibid.*, 58.

84. Zink, “La tristesse du cœur dans *Le Livre du Cœur d’Amours espris*,” 36.

85. London, British Library, ms. Egerton 1070, fol. 53; Unterkircher, “Le cœur enluminé,” 99; Rose-Marie Ferré, “Le roi mort: Une image édifiante de la mort de soi,” in *Splendeur de l’enluminure*, ed. Gautier, 190–97.

86. For the drawing by François Roger de Gaignières, see the cover of Kekewich, *The Good King*; *Splendeur de l’enluminure*, ed. Gautier, 195; or Robin, *La cour d’Anjou-Provence*, plate 35. A large reproduction marks the site of René’s tomb in the Cathedral of Angers.

87. Murielle Gaude-Ferragu, “Le cœur ‘couronné’: Tombeaux et funérailles de cœur en France à la fin du Moyen Âge,” in *Il cuore / The Heart*. Micrologus: Natura, Scienze et Società Medievali 11 (Florence: SISMEL–Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2003), 241–65.

88. Thought to have been lost in the Revolution, René’s coffin was rediscovered in 1895. When it was opened, a crown, an orb, and a sceptre were found with his skeleton. Kekewich, *The Good King*, 244.

89. Michael T. Reynolds, “René of Anjou, King of Sicily, and the Order of the *Croissant*,” *Journal of Medieval History* 19 (1993): 128–29.

90. For an elaborate contemporary account of these ceremonies, see Quatrebarbes, *Oeuvres complètes du roi René, avec une biographie et des notices*, 1:126–32, and Gaude-Ferragu, “Le cœur ‘couronné,’” 260–62.

91. Bernardino of Siena, a celebrated Franciscan preacher, had died in 1444. René was instrumental in obtaining his rapid canonization in 1450, built a chapel to honor him in 1453, and probably commissioned a motet in his honor by Josquin des Prez, ca. 1477–1480. Robin, *La cour d'Anjou-Provence*, 57; Patrick Macey, “Josquin, Good King René, and *O bone et dulcissime Jesu*,” in *Hearing the Motet: Essays on the Motet of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. Dolores Pesce (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 225–26.

CONCLUSION

1. *Ovide moralisé*, Book 10, lines 3750–3800, ed. C. de Boer, 5 vols. (Amsterdam: J. Müller, 1915–1938), 4:100–101.

2. Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Idols in the East: European Representations of Islam and the Orient, 1100–1450* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

3. Marguerite Porete, *Mirouer des simples ames*, ed. Romana Guarnieri, with facing-page Latin translation, *Speculum simplicium animarum*, ed. Paul Verdeyen, CCCM 69 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1986), ch. 32, p. 106.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- CCCM *Corpus christianorum: continuatio mediaevalis* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1966–)
- CUERMA Centre Universitaire d'Études et de Recherches Médiévales d'Aix
- EETS Early English Text Society
- MGH *Monumenta Germaniae historica*
- PL J.-P. Migne, *Patrologiae cursus completus: series latina*, 221 vols. (Paris: Migne, 1861–1864)
- SISMEL Società Internazionale per lo Studio del Medioevo Latino

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