The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

MEDIEVAL AUTHORSHIP AT REASON'S END:

THE *ROMAN DE LA ROSE*'S LEGACY OF MISRULE

A Dissertation in

English

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2016

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the authorial consequences of reason's banishment. It addresses how medieval poets imagine their occupation when the faculty of mean, mediation, and measure is rendered suspect in relation to literary composition and reception. I argue that Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* initiates a literary tradition that understands reason to be in tension with and even antithetical to imaginative writing. The abandonment of rationality proffers the terms and concepts around which authors understand, structure, and represent their occupation. This largely unrecognized tradition of authorial misrule goes on to serve as a speculative domain for later Middle English authors. Poets such as Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, John Lydgate, and Thomas Hoccleve imitate, correct, and reimagine the narrative conditions and implications of Raison's repudiation. These authors gain from the *Rose*'s irrationality a hermeneutic—a method of perception that goes on to shape representation—a topic—a collection of material and terms from which to draw both for literary theory and for literary practice—and a condition for writing—an anti-intellectual source that initiates invention. A writerly art based in misrule, rather than emerging as a broken creative system, ultimately enables medieval writers to recognize, accept, document, and value the morally questionable, the ephemeral, the earthly. Redefined as poetic virtue—as imaginatively productive and artistically challenging—misrule produces authors who see their work as a consequence and simulation of the transient, often rapturous pleasures of a mundane irrationality.

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Acknowledgements

I owe a great deal of thanks to those who have supported me over the course of my graduate career and this project's completion. I would first like to thank the members of my committee: Robert R. Edwards, Patrick Cheney, Scott Smith, and Sherry Roush. Dr. Cheney introduced me to the wonders of the sublime and showed me that authors can be fictions. Without Dr. Cheney's always thoughtful feedback, I never would have realized the dangers of "is" based writing. My craft has improved dramatically under his guidance. Dr. Roush gave me the tools that allowed me finally to get a sense of what Italian scholars (except Contini) have been saying about the Middle Ages. I am especially grateful for her impressively prompt and always insightful commentary. Dr. Smith has been a voice of measured wisdom throughout my graduate career. His enthusiasm for the study and teaching of the Middle Ages has been inspirational. Our conversations on the magic of comics have been an invaluable opportunity for me to come up for air. My advisor, Dr. Edwards, has shaped my growth as a professional medievalist immensely, and without his supervision this project would have never been. His instruction and scholarship are models I hope to follow. Magnanimously, Dr. Edwards did not kick me out of the graduate program, when, in my second year, I told him I wasn't interested in a topic like love because it wasn't related closely enough to the writing process. As this dissertation will show, through his help, I've seen the folly of such thinking.

The Pennsylvania State University and my friends, colleagues, and mentors in the English Department have also assisted me greatly. The College of Liberal Arts generously granted me a teaching release in the Spring of 2015, giving me much needed time to bring this project together. Dr. Nicholas Joukovsky taught me the ins and outs of article writing and devoted a significant amount of his time toward bettering my work. I hope I will not embarrass him in the future with any misplaced m-dashes. I am deeply appreciative of the friendship and guidance of Dr. Robert Burkholder. Being taken into the fold of the Adventure Literature program has been one of the highlights of my time at State College.

I would like to thank my parents for never questioning why someone would want to spend their life studying a period once described as English literature's "Drab Era." Their tireless support has helped me get through what otherwise could have been a trying time. My always faithful companion Rocky also deserves mention. Our many walks together are always stimulating. Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my wonderful girlfriend and partner, Connie Bubash. Connie put up with what must have been an excruciating writing process built from iron and metal. Her constant affection and sage counsel kept me from sputtering into the irrationality of my topic. I couldn't have done it without her.

Introduction

Guillaume de Lorris writes misrule—the rejection of reason for the worldly, chaotic pursuits of desire and excess—into the tracts of literary history. In what is perhaps the second most famous opening of all medieval imaginative composition—the first being, of course, that later, Middle English account of April's sweet yet piercing showers—the initiating author of the *Roman de la Rose* recognizes that, for many readers, he will appear a fool and his work a document of error:[1]

> Whoever thinks or says that to believe in a dream's coming true is folly and absurdity

[1] It is difficult to understate the impact the *Rose* had on medieval authors and audiences. Today, we have roughly 300 manuscript witnesses of the poem. Compare this count to the 83 copies of the *Canterbury Tales*, 16 copies of *Troilus and Criseyde*, 49 copies of the *Confessio Amantis*, and the 43 copies of the *Regiment of Princes*, and a clearer sense of the *Rose*'s massive popularity comes into view. Not only read but rewritten, the *Rose* inspired numerous redactments, continuations, and imitations. Dante himself may have even taken up such a revisionary task with the *Fiore*, a sequence of 232 sonnets that translate, summarize, and amend the Old French poem. On Dante's authorship of the *Fiore*, see Gianfranco Contini, *Il Fiore e Il Detto d'Amore* (Milan: Mondadori, 1984), lxxl–xcv. Besides translating Guillaume's portion into Middle English, Chaucer reimagines the *Rose*'s opening lines in his proem to the *House of Fame* (1–65). On the *Rose*'s wide reception and rewritings, see Pierre-Yves Badel, *Le roman de la rose au XIVe siècle: étude de la réception d l'oeuvre* (Geneva: Droz, 1980); Sylvia Huot, *The "Romance of the Rose" and Its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

may, if he wishes, think me a fool; but, for my part, I am convinced that a dream signifies the good and evil that come to men, for most men at night dream many things in a hidden way which may afterward be seen openly. (11–20)

[Qui conques cuit ne qui que die
Qu'il est folece et musardie
De croire que songes aviegbem
Qui se voudra, por fol m'en tiegne,
Quar endroit moi ai ge fiance
Que songes est senefiance
Des biens as genz et des anuiz
Que li plusor songent de nuiz
Maintes choses covertement
Que l'en voit puis apertement.][2]

Guillaume's preface on the occasionally prophetic nature of dreams conditions the reception of the dream he begins to write soon after. Apparently, the author would have his forthcoming dream-vision understood as a Macrobian *somnium*, or a dream "that conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding," and not an *insomnium*, a fleeting and prophetically

[2] I draw the French text of the *Rose* from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Libraire Honoré Champion, 1970); for the translation, with occasional alteration, I follow Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. Charles Dahlberg, third ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).

meaningless collection of nighttime images.[3] Using his own dream as evidence, Guillaume will show those who see dreams as foolish and absurd to be foolish and absurd themselves. *Folece* and *musardie* prove to be deeply engrained within the writing process: they represent a desired effect of the poem's composition, an intellectual reversal enacted upon skeptics. Yet even with this implicit association, Guillaume's formulation of his vision seems to locate the erroneous as antithetical to the literary.[4] Folly and absurdity are either to be avoided or displaced onto rivals or critics. In literary composition, these forms of misrule can serve act as effect but not as constituent element. Guillaume associates his work with the *somnium* to head off condemnations of inapplicable frivolity. For an author to refuse reason and embrace its other is to claim, for himself and his works, a near celestial reputation.

The *Rose*'s opening lines trace out a standard narrative regarding the relationship between poetic authority and misrule—an author achieves literary greatness by avoiding blemish, mistake, triviality—that quickly becomes suspect as Guillaume further unveils his authorial ambitions. Not content merely to record a prophetic dream, Guillaume would have this prophetic dream also stand as a new *Ars Amatoria*: "It is the Romance of the Rose, in which the whole art of love is contained" [Ce est li *Romanz de la Rose*, / Ou l'art d'Amors est tote enclose"

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[3] Ambrosius Theodosius Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), 5–9, 38 n.44.

[4] The *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, gen. ed. Louise W. Stone and William Rothwell (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association, 1977), defines *folece*, or *folor*, as madness, rage, folly, error, or wantonness, and *musardie*, as folly. Guillaume, as well, seems to recognize little difference between the two and uses the terms interchangeably.

(37–38). Guillaume's dream of love's art will write him into canon.[5] The love whose art Guillaume begins to write and that Jean de Meun ultimately finishes, however, enters into tension with the opening's ostensible denigration of irrational ways and means. For in composing a new art of love, Guillaume and Jean come to compose an art of misrule.

The nature of the *Rose*'s love comes into focus most clearly during Amant's spurning of reason twice-over—a scene told by Guillaume and then retold by Jean—which represents, as I will go on to argue over the course this project, a watershed moment in literary history. Rationality, in the Middle Ages, signified a somewhat more limited set of cognitive operations than that included within our modern sense of the term.[6] While medieval writers put reason to use in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes, the concept generally represents either

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[5] Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* helped enter the Roman poet into the ranks of the medieval *auctores*, the classical authors taught as curriculum in the grammar schools. As Marilynn Desmond points out, "Ovidian texts such as the *Ars amatoria* and the *Heroides* became core pedagogical texts, thereby shaping the thematics as well as the poetics of medieval Latin literature" ("Venus's Clerk: Ovid's Amatory Poetry in the Middle Ages," in *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, ed. John F. Miller and Carole E. Newlands [Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2014], 161–73, here 162). Also see R. J. Hexter, *Ovid and Medieval Schooling: Studies in Medieval School Commentaries on Ovid's Ars Amatoria, Epistulae ex Ponto, and Epistulae Heroidum* (Munich: Arbeo-Gesellschaft, 1986). As attested both by Guillaume's subsequent rewriting as well as the many other imitators, the *Ars amatoria* significantly shaped the thematics and poetics of vernacular literature. On these vernacular reworkings, see Desmond, "Gender and Desire in Medieval French Translations of Ovid's Amatory Work," in *Ovid in the Middle Ages*, ed. James G. Clark, Frank T. Coulson, Kathryn L. McKinley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 108–22; and Peter L. Allen, *The Art of Love: Amatory Fiction from Ovid to the Romance of the Rose* (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

[6] The difficulty today of establishing a concrete definition of reason has been addressed by Nikolas Kompridis, "So We Need Something Else for Reason to Mean," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 8 (2000), 271–95, where, after recognizing the breadth of the term's meaning, Kompridis goes on to add yet another layer of complexity to its definition.

(though occasionally both) a mechanism of perception in charge of translating sensory impressions or a means of imposing a measured order upon an unruly will.[7] Medieval reason is a moderating and hermeneutic faculty; it enables sight, understanding, and measure. As a critical source for attaining knowledge and acting with virtue, medieval reason shoulders in its conceptualization a weighty authority. One might, therefore, expect this concept, when put into allegory, to represent a work's unassailable doctrinal center.[8] One might expect Guillaume's and Jean's Lady Raison to embody the *Rose*'s authorially sanctioned reading. This, however, is not exactly the case: Lady Raison, while delivering a (mostly) philosophically sound discourse, fails to reach her audience because of authorial ineptitude. She can philosophize but not wax poetic. Amant, whom the poem later reveals to be its author, rejects Raison for an earthly and excessive

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[7] It is beyond the scope of this project to document the changing conceptualizations of reason within a history of ideas. Instead, my project relies on the definitions and representations of rationality that would have impacted most directly medieval vernacular writers. Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*, though not radically original in its engagement with rationality, presents us with perhaps the most influential sense of the concept because of the work's widespread transmission and popularity. For Boethius, reason functions largely as perception. As Chaucer translates, "Resoun surmountith ymaginacioun and comprehendith by an universal lokynge the comune spece" (Bk.V, pr. 4, 159–60). While the *Consolatio* does employ reason as a method of discerning virtue from vice, the concept's application as resistance to desire received greater emphasis by later writers such as Augustine and Aquinas (See Thomas, Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge* [Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013], 108–59).

[8] Many early scholars did, in fact, understand the *Rose*'s Lady Raison in such terms. For the most influential accounts, see D. W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 198–99; John Fleming, *Reason and the Lover* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 112–45.

love. The *Rose* comes to literary being only because of its author's acceptance of the qualities that those skeptical of dreams initially would attribute to him and to his work.

The *Rose*'s dismissal of reason for the allure of sensuality is a moment of authorial self-fashioning and literary theorization. Questioning, criticizing, and dispensing with rationality allows the *Rose*'s writers to know themselves as authors and to know their verse as art. Amant becomes Guillaume whose work is read and continued by Jean by assimilating *folece et musardie* into literary production. Irrationality not only spurs composition, but shapes it as well. Lady Raison, long recognized as an author figure, dwells insistently on poetic and linguistic practices.[9] To reject Raison is also to reject her aesthetic program, her criteria for defining, judging, and gauging properly reasonable poetry. Guillaume and Jean position themselves and their work contrary to reason, and, in doing so, fictionalize the creative platforms they come to adopt.

This dissertation examines the authorial consequences of reason's banishment. It addresses how medieval poets imagine their occupation when the faculty of mean, mediation, and measure is rendered suspect in relation to literary composition and reception. I argue that Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose* initiates a literary tradition that understands reason to be in tension with and even antithetical to imaginative writing. The abandonment of rationality proffers the terms and concepts around which authors understand,

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[9] On Raison as an author-figure, see Kevin Brownlee, "The Problem of Faux Semblant: Language, History, and Truth in the Roman de la Rose," in *The New Medievalism*, ed. Marina S. Brownlee, Kevin Brownlee, and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 253; Noah D. Guynn, "Authorship and Sexual/Allegorical Violence in Jean de Meun's 'Roman de la Rose'," *Speculum* 79 (2004), 628–29; Alastair Minnis, *Magister Amoris: The Roman de la Rose and Vernacular Hermeneutics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1–34, 82–163.

structure, and represent their occupation. This largely unrecognized tradition of authorial misrule goes on to serve as a speculative domain for later Middle English authors.[10] Poets such as Geoffrey Chaucer, John Gower, John Lydgate, and Thomas Hoccleve imitate, correct, and reimagine the narrative conditions and implications of Raison's repudiation. From the *Rose*'s irrationality, these authors gain a hermeneutic—a method of perception that goes on to shape representation—a topic—a collection of material and terms from which to draw both for literary theory and for literary practice—and a condition for writing—an anti-intellectual source that initiates invention. A writerly art based in misrule, rather than emerging as a broken creative system, ultimately enables medieval writers to recognize, accept, document, and value the morally questionable, the ephemeral, the earthly. Redefined as poetic virtue—as imaginatively productive and artistically challenging—misrule produces authors who see their work as a consequence and simulation of the transient, often rapturous pleasures of a mundane irrationality.

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[10] There have been a number of previous studies on the connections between medieval rationality and writing. Alexander Murray, for instance, examines the shifting grounds of medieval reason in relation to faith, and argues that works such as *Piers Plowman* capitalized on the progressive rationalizing of medieval culture (*Reason and Society in the Middle Ages* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978]). In this reading, reason's penetration into matters of faith enables poetic production. Nick Davis, too, understands the Middle Ages as a reasonably enlightened era whose well-ordered and Platonic universe led its poets to reject the chaotic potential of irrationality that later early modern authors such as Spenser would come to embrace (*Stories of Chaos: Reason and its Displacement in Early Modern English Narrative* [Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999]). More recently, Linda Tarte Holley proposes that reason's perceptive qualities structured writers' ability to conceive matters divine; this "seeing-from the center" helped structure literary content, form, and narrative perspective (*Reason and Imagination in Chaucer, the Perle-Poet, and the Cloud-Author: Seeing from the Center* [New York: Palgrave-McMillan, 2011]).

Authorship and the literary have been and continue to be central topics of inquiry for medieval scholars.[11] Two foundational texts in the study of the medieval *auctor*, Alaistair Minnis's *Medieval Theory of Authorship* and Rita Copeland's *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages* approach their subject from the perspective of the medieval academy.[12] According to these seminal readings, the medieval writer claims status as an *auctor* through the terminology and theories posited by a learned sect of Latin writers. For Minnis, the establishment of the secular *auctor* depends on the transposition of Biblical interpretive strategies: "thirteenth-century theologians produced a vocabulary which enabled the literary features of Scriptural texts to be analyzed thoroughly and systematically, and which encouraged the emergence, in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, of a more liberal attitude toward classical poetry."[13] Once established, this new model of appreciation became codified in the prologues to the classical *auctores* which later vernacular writers such as Petrarch, Boccaccio, Chaucer, and Gower used when formulating a sense of their own projects.

For Copeland, rhetorical and grammatical treatises furnished medieval writers with the idiom necessary for comprehending their craft. Copeland's work underscores how the medieval *enarratio poetarum* (grammatical commentaries on the poet) and *artes poetriae* (manuals on the art of poetry) understood translation as an act of predatory interpretation: poetic invention

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[11] Studies of medieval authorship find likely origin in M.-D. Chenu, "Auctor, Actor, Autor," *Bulletin du Cange* 3 (1927): 81–86.

[12] Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 144; Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[13] Minnis, *Theory of Authorship*, 144.

stemmed from a close reading of a source, a reading whose methods were structured by grammatical and rhetorical tracts, that actively sought points for amplification, abbreviation, and amendment. Latin commentary and poetic instruction prepared writers to claim the authority of the ancients through revisionary reading.[14]

Following Minnis and Copeland, more recent engagements with medieval authorship have continued to broaden our understanding of the models and methods available to poets when fashioning as sense of their occupational role. Showing the wide range of authorial models open to medieval writers, Anthony Bale traces a development from the author as a craftsmen or translator—a role associated with an often anonymous manuscript culture—toward a sort of celebrity, a prestige developed both by the identifiable naming of writers and by later literary disciples who elevated the departed masters to laureate status.[15] Robert Meyer-Lee, interested in

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[14] A number of scholars either anticipate, parallel, or follow Copeland in turning to the *artes poetriae* to enhance our sense of medieval authorship: J. M. Manly, "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," from *The Proceedings of the British Academy*, XVII (London: Oxford University Press), 95–113; Robert Payne, *The Key of Remembrance* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1963); Peter Dronke, "Medieval Rhetoric," in *The Medieval World*, ed. David Daiches and Anthony Thorlby (London: Aldus Books, 1973), 315–42; Robert R. Edwards, *Ratio and Invention* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1989), 1–12, 75–87; Jane Baltzell, "Amplification and Abbreviation and the Structure of Medieval Narrative," *Pacific Coast Philology* 2 (1967), 32–39; Douglas Kelly, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978); Scott D. Troyan, ed., *Medieval Rhetoric: A Casebook* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Mary Carruthers, ed., *Rhetoric Beyond Words: Delight and Persuasion in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[15] Anthony Bale, "From Translator to Laureate: Imagining the Medieval Author," *Literature Compass* 5/5 (2008): 918–34. Also see Vincent Gillespie, "Authorship," in *A Handbook of Middle English Studies*, ed. Marion Turner (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 137–54; Graham D. Caie, "'I do not wish to be called auctour, but the pore compilatour': The Plight of the Medieval Vernacular Poet," *miscelánea* 29

how poets claim written authority in response to the (sometimes imagined) patronage of political power, argues that the figure of the laureate offered to these late medieval English poets a framework either for imitation and development or for rejection and revision.[16] Robert R. Edwards has explored how the discourse of medieval desire—a topic frequently shown as working at cross-purposes to rationality—expanded writers' imaginative horizons, supplying new possibilities for conceiving narrative, representation, and craft: "In the process of rhetorical invention that underlies writing in medieval literary culture, desire serves the ambitions of authorship no less than the practical aims of composing texts."[17]

The discussion of medieval authorship is intimately bound up with discussion of the medieval literary, a topic that has received renewed interest in recent years.[18] If the study of authorship concerns itself with how writers saw themselves as authors, the study of the literary concerns itself with how authors saw, and how we today should see, their work as art. Anne Middleton has described the late fourteenth century as a period of literary beginnings, a moment when Middle English writers such as Chaucer and Langland began to attribute to their

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(2004), 9–22; Kellie Robertson, "Authorial Work," in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm, Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 441–58.

[16] Robert Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power From Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[17] Robert R. Edwards, *The Flight from Desire: Augustine and Ovid to Chaucer* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 9.

[18] Andrew Galloway, in the introduction to a recent essay collection on the medieval literary, attributes this renewed interest to the rise of New Formalism ("The Medieval Literary," in *Answerable Style: The Idea of the Literary in Medieval England*, ed. Frank Grady and Andrew Galloway [Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press, 2013], 1–14). See Marjorie Levinson, "What is New Formalism," *PMLA* 122 (2007), 558–69.

works a moral seriousness and an ability to effect social change. For Middleton, the literary largely represents the ability of a written work to elicit practicable effect, for poetic language to impose order on unruly historical circumstances.[19] More recently, Peggy Knapp, focusing on Chaucer, connects modern and medieval theories of the beautiful to explain the modes of thinking underlying the author's formal poetic structures. Knapp argues that Chaucer draws on Boethian philosophy to address "the interlace between sensible pleasure, artistic beauty, and contemplation of its intelligibility."[20] In this reading, Boethius's model of the mind becomes a model for creating artful fictions. Malte Urban reads Chaucer's and Gower's reading of old books as positing a model for literary reception: the two authors digest and reuse ancient authorities and then inscribe these interpretive practices within their narratives. Doing so models for audiences a system for appreciating poems as politically active even in historical displacement. Old books become literary authorities when readers recognize their currency for reimagining contemporary social order.[21]

My dissertation aims to enter into conversation with these two interconnected bodies of scholarship by introducing misrule as a central topic. Where earlier readers have drawn valuable attention to the extra-textual discourses and cultures that shaped the medieval author's professional self-understanding, my study focuses primarily on the fictions of authorship and

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[19] Anne Middleton, "Chaucer's 'New Men' and the Good of Literature in the *Canterbury Tales*," in *Literature and Society*, ed. Edward Said (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1980), 15–56; Middleton, "The Audience and Public of *Piers Plowman*," in *Middle English Alliterative Poetry and Its Literary Background: Seven Essays*, ed. David Lawton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1982), 101–23, 147–54; Middleton, "The Idea of Public Poetry in the Reign of Richard II," *Speculum* 53 (1978), 94–114.

[20] Peggy Knapp, *Chaucerian Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 27.

[21] Malte Urban, *Fragments: Past and Present in Chaucer and Gower* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008).

composition embedded within the works themselves.[22] Each of the poems I address reflects on the nature of authoring literature. Their narratives are inhabited by speakers who take it upon themselves to put discourse into an elegantly purposive medium. These speakers craft poetry and then expound upon their methods either directly, through metatextual commentary, or indirectly, through the discussion of closely interconnected issues bearing literary implication. As I will go on to show, misrule recurrently enters into such fictions as vocabulary and hermeneutic, as a lexicon applied when representing craft and as a lens for understanding poetic invention, stylistic form, and textual pleasure. From the *Rose* onward, misrule takes on a rather unexpected dimension when couched in an aesthetic context. Rather than detracting from literary beauty, misrule, in fact, allows writers to enjoy the pleasures of the sensory and sensual while maintaining appearances of rational affinity. Misrule compels writers to imitate the grandeur that lies ever outside reason.

My first chapter builds upon and significantly expands my brief opening discussion on the *Rose*'s *folece et musardie*. I begin with an overview of Boethius's formulation of reason and its fraught relation to affectively-charged, secular poetry. The *Consolatio* presents to Guillaume and Jean both a lens for grasping the nature and functions of rationality as well as an uncomfortable dynamic between sky-bound wisdom and a verse of terrestrial longing. From this framework, the *Rose*'s authors construct an authorship and literary product that complicates the cognitive and aesthetic doctrine of *Philosophia*. The *Rose* charts the conditions of its inception and shows reason and authorship as existing in unresolvable opposition. For the poem to reach discursive being, Amant must cast off the moralizing tethers of rationality and employ a poetics

[22] This approach is deeply indebted to Patrick Cheney, *Shakespeare's Literary Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

based on the achievement, rather than deferral or denial of, folly and absurdity. This poetic system, though not articulated directly, finds expression through implied antithesis. A poetry of *folece et musardie* is a poetry that runs counter to that propounded by Lady Raison. Where this heavenly lady of measure would have literature feature a curtailed verse form, stylistic barrenness, semantic singularity, and the delivery of doctrine over the experience of pleasure, a poetics of *folece* values precisely the opposite.

The *Rose* brings the troubled dynamic between literary production and sensuality into the vernacular sphere and posits the framework that later English poets attempt to resolve and challenge. My second chapter examines Chaucer's response to such a frame in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Here, Boccaccio's *Filostrato* serves as the narrative foundation that allows Chaucer to explore, in concrete terms and setting, what the *Rose* depicted in abstract allegory—a love beyond reason. Such a love gives to Chaucer not only a topic for an ambitious authorship, poetic *materia* that would enter him belatedly into the ranks of Statius and Dante, but also a system for articulating a mode of writing that can represent and simulate the fleeting euphoria achieved by worldly passions. Chaucer subverts the doctrine of the *Rose*'s Raison by appending her teachings to two author figures whose principal compositional desire lies in the furthering of desire. While imperfect, these two writers, Pandarus and Criseyde, generate artistic products that emerge, in the end, as imitable. They are able, because of their enmity toward the mean, to compose the tale for which Chaucer himself had longed. In depicting the success of composition untethered from reason, Chaucer imagines and desires, though without necessarily taking up for himself, a poetry that can contain within its earthly, passing meter the pleasures of eternity.

My third chapter addresses John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, a poem, I argue, which seeks to harmonize the demands of reason, love, and poetry only to realize the impossibility of

its endeavor. A poem deeply influenced by the *Rose*, the *Confessio* describes the process that led to its creation as an author coming to terms with a love that cannot be put rule. The *Confessio* is written because its author refuses to bow before a strictly rational mode of poetry. This program of authorial self-fashioning is forwarded by Genius, a figure who seems to unite in his narrative practices the demands of love and reason. Such unity proves illusory, however, as Genius progressively reveals his authorial missteps and lopsided allegiances. Genius positions himself most directly as an author contrary to Venus in Book VII, which attempts to outline a rhetorical theory that would have persuasive and poetic writings serve as textual analogues to the tempering and intermediate mental faculty. Although Genius hopes to promote this rhetoric of reason, Gower approaches the practice with greater skepticism. At the close of Book VIII, Gower affirms his affinity with the unreasoning when he at last stands in awe of the otherwordly songs authored by those inspired by passions. Although Gower finds himself aged and unable to take up a such an elevated form, he pushes forward into an authorship that nevertheless continues to understand reason as ever outside the literary art.

My fourth chapter turns to two allegories written in rivalrous imitation of the *Rose*—John Lydgate's *Resoun and Sensuallyte* and the anonymous *Assembly of the Gods*. Both works attempt to succeed where Gower failed: they hope to harmonize reason with worldly love. While the two authors do, in fact, achieve this design by rendering a space where no division exists between the longtime rivals, each text shows itself as depending upon a discursive medium that would upset the delicate balance. *Reson and Sensuallyte* defines a restrained, rationally acceptable passion around a set of discursive practices that would foreclose the possibility of affective response and elevated verse form. For Lydgate, a love of reason is antithetical to literary ambition. In contrast to such a limited poetics, *Reson and Sensuallyte*'s other center of

authorial fictions, the unthinking natural environment, comes to house the text's only imaginatively productive source of creative methods. *Reson and Sensuallyte* would call for a silenced and passionless love at the same time as it would imitate the beastly rapture of the purely sensory world. The *Assembly* locates the union between Reason and Sensuality in Death, which serves as both the locus of reconciliation and as a menacingly antagonistic cipher for the author. Like Death, the *Assembly*'s creator values a disintegration of pagan authorities and unimpeded literalism. He would write of measure's and love's accord by imitating the practices undertaken by the figure who represents the very site of that accord. In taking up such a practice, however, the *Assembly*'s author must ignore, like Amant, the counsel of Reason, who advises ever and always that one must flee from death's oblivion. The *Assembly*'s author might seek to imitate the long-sought unity in both form and content, but this project remains out of reach.

My fifth and final chapter traces the career of Thomas Hoccleve in relation to his developing engagement with literary misrule. On its surface, *Male Regle* seems to target the immorality of base appetite. The poem condemns the lusty denizens of the Thames—a group among which Hoccleve situates his youthful self—for gluttonous carnality. Although the poet professes his distance from former indiscretions, he continues to model his authorial work on the Thames's lusty song. A verse of transient, illusory, misruled pleasure, the Boatman's poetry reveals itself as Hoccleve's poetry. The *Regiment of Princes* furthers Hoccleve's skepticism of measure by locating reason in opposition to faith. In showing reason as heretical and then showing his book as faithful, Hoccleve incorporates the unreasonable authority of orthodoxy into his work's hermeneutic matrix. The rational opposition the poem mounts also extends into its self-representation. The *Regiment* is irrational in faith and in its aesthetic faults. The unruly literary form, like faith, serves to achieve authorial ambition. Hoccleve understands error as

value, artistic shortcoming as lucre. The *Series* reevaluates the poet's relation to rationality. Hoccleve models himself on Isidore's authorial Resoun and attempts to compose a text that would stand as material testament to the stable intellect. Hoccleve upsets his affinity to the mean, however, by positing a definition of reason out of line with medieval standards. The rationality the *Series* would embody proves itself, in the end, to be anything but. Hoccleve's major works thus testify to the poet's continued efforts to position himself and his work as representative of a measure rule, efforts that he ultimately undermines in favor of revaluation of unthinking and excessive affect.

The tradition this study traces speaks highly of reason except when speaking about reason's ways of speaking poetically. Though typically vaunted in the domain of practical ethics, rationality, when attached to theories of authorship and poetics, emerges significantly wanting. Such shortcomings enable what were once considered damnable transgressions to function with renewed creative vigor. In reason's decline, the attachment to excess, materiality, affect, and beauty rises in compositional value. Medieval authors adopt irrationalism to transcend received wisdom. When reason is no longer the principal force guiding discourse production, writers can, without censure, direct their attentions to the earthly heavens and terrestrial passions. This creative system does not refuse to dispense wisdom unto readers. Rather, for authors of misrule, the affective and unthinking become viable mechanisms for instilling knowledge. This poetic forgoes the delivery of unified doctrine to record transformative raptures. When misrule becomes virtue, authors and literature become conduits for that which the mind could never grasp alone.

Chapter One

The *Roman de la Rose* and the Poetics of *Folece et Musardie*

The *Roman de la Rose* is a poem that ostensibly contrasts eros and reason. At its center, however, it features the uneasy relationship between authoring literary fiction and satisfying the impossible demands of reason. Narrating the background of its textual inception, the *Rose* locates "folly and absurdity" ["folece et musardie"] (12) as the apparent ground of poetic invention.[1] For Guillaume de Lorris, this entails channeling the sensual delights of a dreamworld to meet the ends of an Ovidian *Ars amatoria*: commanded by Amors, ever Raison's adversary, the dreamer will tell of a nightly vision "in which the whole art of love is contained" ["ou l'art d'Amors est tote enclose"]. When Jean de Meun takes over, he significantly amplifies the narrative and poetic centrality of *folece* by restaging the pivotal encounter between Amant and Raison. His entire continuation stems from a rejection of rational thought. And although Guillaume's and Jean's imaginative projects partly rest on a satiric foundation that questions the complete ethical viability of a love outside of reason, their emblems of rationality remain deeply problematic. In fact, it is in the tensions, contradictions, and failings of both allegorical constructs that we see the nature of a poetics based on a doctrine of reason. As a creator

[1] All quotations from the *Rose* are taken from *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Felix Lecoy (Paris: Librarie Honorè Champion, 1970); the translation, with occasional alteration, is drawn from *The Romance of the Rose*, 3rd ed., trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

of highly wrought discursive forms, Raison stands, in both her appearances, as one of the *Rose*'s crucial fictions of authorship. Her compositional methods, however, rather than adopted or embraced, are consistently challenged by rival authors from both within and without the *Rose*'s narrative world—by Amant, Guillaume, and Jean alike. Such challenges reaffirm Amant's endeavor to craft a narrative opposed to Raison's dogma and imagines a poetry that aspires beyond didacticism and the deferral of pleasure.

Much early *Rose* scholarship focuses on the figure of Lady Raison and addresses how her doctrine corresponds with the poem's final message.[2] For many critics, how one understands Raison determines how one understands the *Rose*. Such an understanding ultimately falls into one of two opposing camps: those scholars who see Raison as the *Rose*'s only trustworthy voice, the figure singularly responsible for establishing the poem's overarching moral message, and those who view her teachings with skepticism and note her inherent contradictions and irony to make the case that Raison promotes a

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[2] To a certain extent, the scholarly attention to Lady Raison pushes back against two of the poem's seminal early critical accounts—Alan Gunn's *The Mirror of Love: A Reinterpretation of "The Romance of the Rose"* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech Press, 1951) and Gérard Paré's *Les idées et les lettres au XIIIe siécle: "Le roman de la rose"* (Montreal: Université de Montréal, Centre de Psychologie et de Pédagogie, 1947). Both scholars emphasize the authority of Nature and Genius within the poem's pantheon of voices, and see the *Rose* as promoting a doctrine of natural love. Prior to Gunn's and Paré's work, most interpretations parallel that of Ernest Langlois, who, rather than attempting to impose a unified meaning onto the text, saw the *Rose* as split into two hermeneutically irreconcilable sections: Guillaume's, an utterly conventional yet somewhat entertaining personification allegory, and Jean's, an erudite, comic, and original composition that cemented the author's status as "un poéte, le plus grand peut-etre du XIIIe siécle" ("Le Roman de la Rose," in *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature francaise*, ed. L. Petit de Julleville [Paris: Armand Colin, 1878–1900], 147). See also Gustave Lanson, *Histoire de la littérature francaise* (Paris: Hachette, 1895), who, like Langlois, avoids an overarching interpretation, but sees the literary value of the text as Jean's embrace of Nature.

flawed outlook, one that readers should reject or at the very least scrutinize. D. W. Robertson, for instance, sees Raison as speaking "with the voice of patristic authority, Boethius, and Cicero, " and her "Boethian discourse affords the positive ideas against which the subsequent materials in the poem are set."[3] Building on Robertson's work, John Fleming "[advances] the argument that Reason alone of all the Lover's teachers in the *Roman de la Rose* commands the authority to be trusted, that hers is the one voice within the poem to which we can confidently listen for the moral adjudication of the poem's amatory doctrine."[4] Such readings rest on the assumption that Guillaume and Jean assimilate an Augustinian worldview that censures Amant's desire as cupidity. The *Rose*, for these scholars, as a whole traces "the stages of sin—suggestion to sense, delight of heart, and the consent of reason."[5]

The second group of critics, more hesitant to embrace Lady Raison fully as the *Rose*'s spokesperson, tends to follow the work of Winthrop Wetherbee, who argued that Raison represents a limited perspective because she "cannot understand the full implications of human depravity, [. . .] cannot think in theological terms, [. . .] [and] can think only in terms of an allegorically coherent universe where the *integumenta* of human

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[3] D. W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 198–99.

[4] John Fleming, *Reason and the Lover* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984) 3. Also see Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 112–45; Charles Dahlberg, "Love and the *Roman de la Rose*," *Speculum* 44 (1969), 568–84; Dahlberg, "Macrobius and the Unity of the *Roman de la Rose*," *Studies in Philology* 58 (1961), 573–82; Diane and Douglas Butturff, "*Le Roman de la Rose* and the Sophistry of Love," *French Review* 45 (1971), 52–58; A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 31.

[5] Dalberg, "Love and the *Roman de la Rose*," 577.

behavior are reflective of a harmony with cosmic processes."[6] Furthering Wetherbee's initial skepticism, scholars like Thomas D. Hill, Michael Cherniss, and Per Nykrog draw attention to the shortcomings of Raison' sense of human sexuality.[7] Rather than an infallible reflection of *ratio*'s idealized conceptualization, Guillaume and Jean instead create in Raison a distinctly literary figure, a fictional construct complete with flaws and ambiguity. By questioning the *Rose*'s most seemingly authoritative figure, these critics also question the possibility of a unified message; they lay the groundwork for later readings that embrace interpretive paradox. As Douglas Kelly points out, "the problem of the work's definitive meaning, and the corollary issues of its artistry and misogyny, by

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[6] Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Literary Influence of the School of Chatres* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 258–69. Also see Wetherbee, "The Literal and the Allegorical: Jean de Meun and the *De planctu Naturae*," *Medieval Studies* 33 (1971), 264–91. Jean-Charles Payen similarly distrusts the teachings of Lady Raison, arriving at a compellingly original reading of the poem that sees it as inventing a radical socio-sexual vision. Downplaying Guillaume's literary imagination, Payen argues that Jean "prone une erotique expansive dont le terme est le jaillissement de la vie" (*La rose et l'utopie: révolution sexuelle et communisme nostalgique chez Jean de Meung* [Paris: Editions Sociales, 1976], 230).

[7] Thomas D. Hill, "Narcissus, Pygmalion, and the Castration of Saturn: Two Mythographical Themes in the *Roman de la Rose*," *Studies in Philology* 71 (1974), 404–26; Michael Cherniss, "Irony and Authority: The Ending of the *Roman de la Rose*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 36 (1976), 227–38; Cherniss, "Jean de Meun's Reson and Boethius," *Romance Notes* 16 (1975), 678-85;" Per Nykrog, *L'amour et la Rose: le grand dessein de Jean de Meun* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988).

their very provocative character, is an indication that the *Rose* actually contains no one definitive meaning."[8]

More recent scholars turn their attention to the *Rose*'s systems of poetics and authorship, attending to how Guillaume and Jean imagine the role of the author and how such conceptualizations connect with the work's poetics, what Paul Zumthor describes as "the creative processes that endow a text with its richness."[9] The *Rose* details not only Amant's quest to fulfill his love, but also a journey through competing systems of literary production. As Kevin Brownlee rightly notes, "the Lover's quest for the rose involves almost exclusively a series of linguistic encounters with personification characters each of whom embodies a different discursive practice, a different poetics."[10] In viewing the *Rose* as a depicting vast narrative landscape peopled with competing author-figures with competing literary practices, these critics have maintained earlier scholarship's emphasis on the role of Lady Raison. Rather than determining the poem's central message (or lack thereof), Lady Raison functions as the *Rose*'s premiere fiction of authorship, one whose methods of composition help expose the aesthetic doctrine of the text itself. Noah Guynn, for instance, reads the discourse of Jean's Raison as "part of a project to exempt

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[8] Douglas Kelly, *Internal Difference and Meaning in the Roman de la Rose* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 11. Also see Peter Allen, "Ars Amandi, Ars Legendi," *Exemplaria* 1 (1989), 181–205.

[9] I draw this definition of poetics from Paul Zumthor, *Toward a Medieval Poetics*, trans. Phillip Bennett (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), xxii. Zumthor elaborates upon this definition, describing poetics as dealing "with the overall signifying structure constituted by a realized discourse and attempts to define the appropriate transformation rules" (xxi).

[10] Kevin Brownlee, "The Problem of Faux Semblant: Language, History, and Truth in the *Roman de la Rose*," in *The New Medievalism*, ed. Marina S. Brownlee, Kevin Brownlee, and Stephen G. Nichols (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 253.

vernacular poetry from euphemistic censorship and rigid rules of literary decorum" while expressing "a nostalgia for a golden age when word and thing had real coherence."[11] Alastair Minnis gleans from Lady Raison's encounter with Amant evidence for an Ovidian Jean de Meun, one who mixes plain-speaking satire with integument to envision an authorship based on pluralistic, and at times opposing, hermeneutics.[12] Sylvia Huot sees in the text's multiple fictions of authorship a tension between Ovidian and Boethian models, embodied by Guillaume and Jean respectively. Such tension finds clearest expression, Huot argues, in the discourse of Raison—particularly in the allegorical figure's references to Orpheus—which through intertexual cues conveys "the amorous and sexual knowledge promised by the poem" and generates the text's literary self-awareness.[13]

With this chapter, I aim to build from such conversations that see Raison as fictionalizing the *Rose*'s literary dimensions, embodying and voicing both its creation and its reception, to explore the implications of a poetics of *folece*—that is, to read against the models of authorship and composition that Raison promotes. What does it mean to write and read a poetry that works against, outside, or beyond rationality? What possibilities of imagination and expression does it potentially open up for later writers?

To address these questions, I will begin by examining the source from which Guillaume and Jean drew much of their material when crafting Lady Raison—Boethius's

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[11] Noah D. Guynn, "Authorship and Sexual/Allegorical Violence in Jean de Meun's 'Roman de la Rose'," *Speculum* 79 (2004), 628–29.

[12] Alastair Minnis, *Magister Amoris: The Roman de la Rose and Vernacular Hermeneutics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1–34, 82–163.

[13] Sylvia Huot, *Dreams of Lovers and Lies of Poets: Poetry, Knowledge, and Desire in the 'Roman de la Rose'* (London: Legenda, 2010), 6.

Consolation of Philosophy—before then moving on to a discussion of both French authors. The intimate connection between the two works has been well documented by past scholars, and my engagement with the *Consolation* aims neither to resituate Boethius's text within a history of ideas nor to demonstrate previously unnoted moments of influence.[14] Instead, I hope to provide an overview of reason's intellectual tradition while highlighting the concept's complexities and tensions. Boethius's text flows into the *Rose*'s figuring of rationality from two fonts: first, his definition of *ratio*, which confines the operations of reason to human cognition while simultaneously imbuing reason with the capacity for metaphysical contact; and second, his representation of Lady Philosophy and her fraught relationship with secular, affectively-charged poetry.

Even though he borrows elements of Boethian *ratio* and *philosophia*, Guillaume creates a Raison radically opposed to Lady Philosophy both in ideology and discursive method, something that, at least to my knowledge, has yet to be fully appreciated in modern critical assessments. Where Lady Philosophy sought to pull Boethius away from worldly trappings using a Latinate song of the cosmos, Guillaume's Raison values above all else earthly economies, counseling secular engagement through vernacular discourse.

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[14] Ernest Langlois, "La Traduction de Boèce par Jean de Meun," *Romania* 42 (1913), 331–69; Langlois, *Origines et sources du "Roman de la Rose"* (Paris: Ernest Thorin, 1890); Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 125; Karl Ott, "Jean de Meun and Boethius: Uber Aufbau und Quellen des *Rosenromans*." in *Philologische Studien: Gedenkschrift fur Richard Kienast* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1978), 193–22; Cherniss, "Jean de Meun's Raison and Boethius," 678–85; William E. Heisse, "The Menippean Boethius in the Personification Allegories of the Middle Ages," in Joel Relihan, *The Prisoner's Philosophy: Life and Death in Boethius's Consolation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 111–26.

Guillaume's Raison authors to stimulate production. For her, discourse and aesthetics are but a means to an end.

With his continuation, Jean attempts to reconcile Guillaume's conflict with Boethian idealism by shoring up the associations between the two heavenly ladies, thus bringing their teachings into tenuous harmony. In doing so, however, Jean presents Raison as a figure of profound ambivalence, a character who espouses orthodoxy (both poetic and moral) only to find herself completely incapable of effecting lasting change within the secular world. As an author-figure representative of a Latinate, didactic poetics that values singular meaning while refusing to sail to affective and stylistic heights, Lady Raison finds herself at odds with much of the *Rose*'s poetic project. And although Jean neither wholly condemns Raison nor explicitly embraces the complete antitype of her authorial practices, in the end he shows the *Rose* itself to emerge largely from poetics of *folece*: a vernacular poetry rooted in the secular world whose ambiguity rejects a simple interpretive movement from specific to universal and whose final aim locates desire and pleasure alongside, and perhaps even above, edification and doctrine.

I

As scholars have long recognized, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* furnished the authors of the *Roman de la Rose* with a model of rationality that outlined the concept's governing functions and emphasized its uncomfortable relationship with poetics. Building on this past criticism, I will offer in this section a brief exposition of Boethius's understanding of *ratio*, attending to the slipperiness of his definition, before turning to Lady Philosophy's famous banishment of the Muses, a moment that has generated significant scholarly discourse, much of which, however, has yet to be put into

conversation with the *Rose*. Even though Boethius's presentation of *ratio* does not significantly intervene into the history of ideas—for the most part the philosopher depends on standard definitions and doctrine—because of the *Consolation*'s landmark status during the Middle Ages, the text offers perhaps the most important paradigm for assessing the function and transformations of reason in the *Rose*.[15] Boethius defines *ratio* as the means by which man processes sensory and imaginative impressions into universal understanding, but extends the concept's range of influence by repeatedly associating it with governance and divinity. Such associations elevate *ratio* above its simple definition as a mediating mode of individual human cognition and demonstrate reason's intimate and essential place within earthly collectives and heavenly order.

Boethius's text also enters into the *Rose*'s engagement with reason both through the description and doctrine of Lady Philosophy, a direct analogue for both French poets' Lady Raison, and through its genre, the *consolatio*, which Guillaume and Jean

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[15] For useful discussions of the *Consolation*'s reception and status during the Middle Ages, see Glynnis M. Cropp, "Boethius and Medieval France: Translations of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and Literary Influence," in *A Companion to Boethius in the Middle Ages*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor and Phillip Edward Phillips (Boston: Brill, 2012), 319–355; *The Medieval Boethius: Studies in the Vernacular Translations of De Consolatio Philosophiae*, ed. Alastair Minnis (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1987); *Boethius in the Middle Ages: Latin and Vernacular Traditions of the 'Consolatio Philosophiae*,' ed. Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen and Lodi Nauta (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 1997); and Winthrop Wetherbee, "The *Consolation* and Medieval Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. John Marenbon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 279–302. For a discussion of the Aristotelian sources for Boethius's model of cognition and his place within the history of ideas, see John Magee, *Philosophia Antiqua: Boethius on Signification and Mind* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 93–140; and Murray Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination in Classical and Mediaeval Thought* (Urbana-Champlain, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1927), 173–76.

appropriate and occasionally challenge.[16] The reason that finally emerges in the *Rose* represents a complex blending of Boethius's *ratio* and *philosophia*, two concepts that Boethius valorizes because of how they allow man to glimpse the godly pattern of Providence. This is not to say, however, that *ratio* and *philosophia* are without a certain level of ambiguity or even tension. These two concepts reveal their limitations when applied to a poetry whose aim is the immediate gratification of worldly pleasure rather than philosophy's delayed promise of heavenly ascendance.[17]

When discussing the nature of Providence in Book V, Lady Philosophy presents reason in its most essential form, clearly defining the basic cognitive mechanics of rationality and its relationship with the other three modes of comprehension—sense, imagination, and intelligence:

> For senses examine the shape set in the underlying matter, imagination the shape alone without the matter; while reason surpasses this too, and examines with a universal consideration the species itself, which is present in single individuals. But the eye of intelligence is higher yet still; for passing beyond the process of going round the whole, it looks with the pure sight of the mind at the simple Form itself. (V. pr. 5. 80–91)

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[16] See Cherniss, "Jean de Meun's Reson and Boethius," 678–85; Michael N. Means, *The Consolatio Genre in Medieval English Literature* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1972), 32–42.

[17] Joel Relihan provocatively reads the *Consolation* as a Menippean satire whose philosophical doctrine is ironic rather than prescriptive. And while many scholars of Boethius regard his argument with some skepticism, the notion of a Lady Philosophy who fails to effect full relief and places herself at odd with secular poetry resonates, as William E. Heise points out, with Jean's and Guillaume's narrative ("The Menippean Boethius," 111–26).

> [Sensus enim figuram in subiecta materia constitutatum, imaginatio vero solam sine materia iudicat figuram. Ratio vero hanc quoque transcendit speciemque ipsam quae singularibus inest universali consideratione perpendit. Intellegentiae vero celsior oculus exsistit; supergressa namque universitatis ambitum ipsam simplicem fornam pura mentis acie contuetur.][18]

In this account, the senses depend on external material presence. If the senses were to perceive a table, for instance, they would not categorize it as a "table," but simply would recognize the general shape of constituent matter. The senses would understand the contours, color, feel, and smell of the flat wooden top and it supporting legs without understanding its species or being able to attach a linguistic referent and only would be able do so as long as the material object remained within the immediate field of perception. Whereas today we tend to reckon the imagination as embodying a certain creative and even poetic potency, Boethius describes the *imaginatio* as a means of recreating sensory inputs within a mental landscape. Boethius's model of imagination combines the function of the senses with that of memory: the imagination retains sensory impressions in the absence of the material object.[19] The table is still without its "tableness" per se, but through the imagination it moves from the material world of the senses and to enter a mental state.

Whereas the senses operate by matter, and imagination through image, reason deals with species and thus gives access to universals. Reason gives order to sensory and mental impressions, places them into proper categories (*species ipsa*), incidentally

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[18] Quotations from Boethius are drawn from *The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. E. K. Rand (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972). I follow Rand's translation with occasional alteration.

[19] Magee, *Philosophia Antiqua*, 102.

allowing them to take on linguistic referent. It is through reason that the combination of the wooden top and supporting legs becomes "table"—an object intelligible to the mind and connected to conventional linguistic signs. The intelligence, the final stage in Boethius's model of comprehension, transcends the workings of reason because of its access to divine Form. Intelligence is essentially the godly version of reason, a sight detached from mundane reality that humans cannot access.[20] As Lady Philosophy later notes, "reason belongs only to human kind, as intelligence only to the divine" ["ratio vero humani tantum generis est sicut intellegentia sola divini"] (V. pr. 5. 18–19). Boethius recognizes that reason cannot hope to achieve the capabilities of the intelligence; it cannot access true Form and remains tethered to the world (although an immaterial one). The tethering of *ratio* is further amplified by the nature of Boethius's investigation into the mechanics of understanding: defining *ratio* entails limiting *ratio*. To explain the abstract working of rationality, Lady Philosophy circumscribes the concept within a concise system of operation. *Ratio* here is not an umbrella term for all profitable intellectual pursuits and activities but a specific function of understanding—it moves from specifics to universals.[21]

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[20] Boethius's definition of intelligence directly parallels that of Providence: "For providence is the divine reason itself, established in the highest ruler of all things, the reason which disposes all things that exist" ["Nam providentia est ipsa illa divina ratio in summo omnium principe constituta quae cuncta disponit"] (IV. pr. 6. 36–37).

[21] Boethius does, however, hint at reason's ability to encompass all human mental activity because it already contains the capacity of both sense and imagination: "Reason, too, when it regards some universal, without using imagination or the senses grasps the imaginable and sensible aspects" ["Ratio quoque cum quid universale respicit, nec imaginatione nec sensibus utens imaginabilia vel sensibilia comprehendit"] (V. pr. 4. 104–106). See Bundy, *The Theory of Imagination*, 173–74, and John Marenbon, *Boethius* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2003), 132–35.

Although Boethius offers a contained definition of *ratio* in Book V, his earlier use of the term, as well as his repeated collocations, broaden the potential of rationality and transform it from a transitional mechanism of comprehension to both a principle of governance and an earth-bound reflection of divinity. In Book III, *metrum* 9 for example, Boethius substitutes *ratio* for *intelligentia*, conflating the two terms and emphasizing their parallel roles:

> O you who with eternal reason govern the universe,
>
> Creator of heaven and earth, who bid time ever move,
>
> And resting still, grant motion to all else;
>
> Whom no external causes drove to make
>
> Your work of flowing matter, but the form
>
> Within yourself of the highest good, ungrudging; from a heavenly pattern
>
> You draw out all things, and being yourself most fair,
>
> A fair world in your mind you bear, and forming it
>
> In the same likeness, bid it being perfect to complete itself
>
> In perfect parts.
>
> (III. m. 9. 1–9)

> [O qui perpetua mundum ratione gubernas
>
> Terrarum caelique sator qui tempus ab aevo
>
> Ire iubes stabilisque manens das cuncta moveri,
>
> Quem non externae pepulerunt fingere causae
>
> Materiae fluitantis opus, verum insita summi
>
> Forma boni livore carens, tu cuncta superno
>
> Ducis ab exemplo, pulchrum pulcherrimus ipse

Mundum mente gerens similique in imagine formans

Perfectasque iubens perfectum absolvere partes.]

The function of the eternal reason (*perpetua ratio*) anticipates the cognitive sense that appears in the more concrete definition presented in Book V, where reason functions as that which gives order and universal form to sensory and imaginative impressions.[22] Unlike the later definition, though, the emphasis in Book III falls on the collective rather than the individual. This shift implies that reason orders, forms, and governs not just internal impression but the external world itself.[23] Such a model of reason as governance continues throughout the *Consolation* and frequently appears in conjunction with divine power.[24] Such connotations in no way contradict Book V's definition, but rather amplify

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[22] As James O'Donnell points out in his commentary to the *Consolatio*, much of Metrum 9 (especially "superno. . . ab exemplo") recalls Plato's Theory of Forms and creation myth as presented in *Timaeus*. There, Plato imagines the world coming into being as a reflection of divine rationality: "The world has been framed in the likeness of that which is apprehended by reason and mind and is unchangeable, and must therefore of necessity, if this is admitted, be a copy of something" (29). The world's rational foundation stems from the creator's desire for aesthetic beauty: "The creator, reflecting on the things which are by nature visible, found that no unintelligent creature taken as a whole was fairer than the intelligent taken as a whole; and that intelligence could not be present in anything which was devoid of soul. For which reason, when he was framing the universe, he put intelligence in soul, and soul in body, that he might be the creator of a work which was by nature fairest and best" (30). The creator imbues intelligence and mind within his products in the same way an artist would color an image with paint. Reason, for Plato, functions cognitively, orderly, and aesthetically. Quotation from Plato is drawn from *Timaeus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Scribner, 1878).

[23] Such an account of reason as a governing force anticipates Passus IV of William Langland's *Piers Plowman*, where, after passing judgment on Lady Meed, the king pledges himself to rule and be ruled by Reson.

[24] For example, "The best kindler of your health we have is your true opinion of the governance of the world, that you believe it to be subject not to the randomness of chance events but to divine

its potential by blurring the separation between reason and intelligence. The distinction between the two lies not in the concepts themselves, as both God and Man operate primarily through reason, but in the nature of the user. The difference is a matter of potency or amplitude rather than function.

Even with such expansive and near-godly powers, *ratio* nevertheless comes into conflict with the inherent and possibly hazardous desire of imaginative composition. The *Consolation* opens with a clash between the Muses of poetry and reason, which, although it initially appears as a rather one-sided affair, remains impossibly unresolved.[25] The introductory poem depicts Boethius's narrator wracked with melancholy and attempting to find comfort in the solace of poetic composition ("See how the lacerating Muses bid me write, / And with unfeigned tears these elegies drench my face." ["Ecce mihi lacerae dictant scribenda camenae / Et veris elegi fletibus ora rigant"], I. m. 1. 3–4). Before the Muses have a chance to intervene, though, Lady Philosophy materializes and banishes them because of their detrimental effect on reason: "These are they who choke the rich harvests of the fruits of reason with the sterile thorns of passion" ["Hae sunt enim quae infructuosis affectuum spinis uberem fructibus rationis segetem necant"] (I. pr. 1. 32–33). Her excoriation of the Muses locates poetry as antithetical to reason because of its

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reason ["Habemus maximum tuae fomitem salutis veram de mundi gubernatione sententiam, quod eam non casuum temeritati sed divinae rationi subditam credis"] (I. pr. 6. 51–54); also see the previously noted definition of Providence (footnote 1).

[25] The conflict between the Muses and Lady Philosophy later became a major topic of poetic discourse and imitation for medieval French authors. See Sylvia Huot, "Re-Fashioning Boethius: Prose and Poetry in Chartier's *Livre de l'Esperance*," *Medium Aevum* 76 (2007), 268–84; Huot, "Guillaume de Machaut and the Consolation of Poetry," *Modern Philology* 100 (2002), 169–95; Eliza Zingesser, "The Genesis of Poetry: Guillaume de Machaut's *Prologue*, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, and Chartrian Neoplatonism," *Viator* 42 (2011), 143–56.

relation to desire. According to Lady Philosophy, poetry— suggestively characterized as a sterile rose (*infructuosae affectuum spinae*)—cannot lead the mind to a higher state of being but accustoms its audiences to the mundane world by instilling within them a negative form of love.[26] Immediately following this damning characterization, Lady Philosophy, somewhat surprisingly, takes up the Muses' melancholic verse form so that she might lament the troubled state of Boethius's mind in a highly wrought meter built around vivid descriptions of the natural world.[27] Though Lady Philosophy's startling use of song seems to suggest the possibility of an intellectually productive poetry—a form of imaginative language that allows man to reclaim his "propria luce"—her condemnation does not simply chase away a specific Muse, such as Erato or Calliope, but all poetry in general.[28] The opening of the prosimetrum thus designates poetry as a type of desire that

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[26] Amy Blumenthal has argued that Lady Philosophy's banishing of the Muses demonstrates her key limitation—the inability to account for human desire and sexuality. Lady Philosophy understands human existence purely in rational terms and does not recognize the effects of corporeality or "the effects of bodily pleasure" ("New Muses: Poetry in Boethius's 'Consolatio'," *Pacific Coast Philology* 21 [1986], 25–26).

[27] "Then she came closer and sat on the end of my bed, and seeing my face worn with weeping and cast down with sorrow, she bewailed my mind's confusion bitterly in these verses" ["Tum illa propius accedens in extrema lectuli mei parte consedit meumque intuens vultum luctu gravem atque in humum maerore deiectum his versibus de nostrae mentis perturbatione conquesta est"] (I. pr. 1. 49–52). Eileen Sweeney has argued that Boethius does not simply banish one form of poetry while accepting the variety that works toward philosophy and truth. In Sweeney's reading, Lady Philosophy takes on the "language, method, and perspective" of the Muses and "the voices of the poets continue to speak and are never completely sublimated into the higher perspective which Boethius has supposedly been freed by Philosophy" (*Logic, Theology, and Poetry in Boethius, Abelard, and Alan of Lille* [New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2006], 39).

[28] As Graham N. Drake points out, Boethius presents the Muses rather vaguely, and this is something his medieval readers noted and set about correcting. Later commentators "move

opposes the proper workings of reason but then proceeds to highlight how such passion-based compositional methods can complement but never fully harmonize with reason. Much like Socrates' condemnation of writing through writing in Plato's *Phaedrus*, Lady Philosophy's waxing poetic enacts a performative contradiction that Boethius does not fully resolve. She denigrates poetry for acting outside of reason, but then proceeds to use imaginative verse "as a means of adumbrating truths that she cannot fully capture through philosophical reasoning."[29] In the end Lady Philosophy voices how poetry can be philosophically but not rationally productive. It is the realm of sensation (*affectus*) that offers the means to reach higher truths.

II

Guillaume's figure of rationality posits the imaginative conditions that Jean later works through and around, amplifies and complicates.[30] To construct his Raison,

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collectively towards restoring the 'classical vision' of the Muses" ("The Muses in the *Consolation*: The Late Medieval Mythographic Tradition," in *New Directions in Boethian Studies*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor and Phillip Edward Phillips [Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007], 170. Boethius's picture of the Muses allowed for some interpretive maneuverability in its generality: the simple label of the "lacerae camenae" ["lacerating Muses"] could imply that they represent one brand of poetry, likely the love elegy. By reclassifying the Muses under the classical rubric, medieval commentators effectively brought all forms of poetry into the Muses' purview, amplifying the tension in Lady Philosophy's later turn to song.

[29] Marenbon, *Boethius*, 162.

[30] In Dahlberg's early reading of the poem, which breaks the work into three overarching thematic movements—the involvement of the senses, the capturing of Amant by the God of Love, and the intervention of Reason—Jean's amplification of Guillaume's Raison represents the defining element of the continuing poet's project ("Macrobius and the Unity of the 'Roman de la Rose,'" 579–80). While more recent critics have veered from Dahlberg's iconographical interpretation, his work, along with Robertson's and Fleming's, nevertheless established the centrality of rationality in modern scholarly paradigms.

Guillaume relies heavily on the framework of Boethius's *Consolation*—something well documented by previous scholars—but he does not adopt such a model full cloth. Guillaume's reason is hardly as derivative as some critics have believed.[31] As I hope to show, Guillaume's emblem of rationality is a radical reinvention of his Boethian source material, one that blends elements of *ratio* and Lady Philosophy to create a revised figure able to cope simultaneously with the divine, secular, and vernacular worlds.

As Langlois pointed out many years ago, the descent of Raison from her tower toward the close of Guillaume's section draws heavily on the opening of Boethius's *Consolation*, and Guillaume continues to develop such parallels in the description, motivations, and functions of his embodiment of rationality.[32] After Bel Acueil denies access to the Rose and flees, and Dangiers threatens to attack, Amant finds himself ejected from Deduit's garden and falls into a deep melancholy ("Cuers ne porroit mie penser / ne bouche d'ome recenser / de ma dolor la quarte parte. / Par poi que li cuers ne me part / quant de la rose me sovient / que si esloignier me covient" [2949–54]). Like the sorrowful Boethius, who opens the prosimetrum elegizing his sudden turn on Fortune's wheel and is saved with the descent of a heavenly lady, Amant, bewailing the difficulty of his quest, finds an apparent remedy from sorrow when a beautiful lady enters from above. From Boethius, Guillaume also derives a medical lexicon describing both the

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[31] See Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose*, 113. Such critical apathy also can be gleaned from the dearth of scholarship devoted to Guillaume's Raison, especially compared to the vast amount of studies devoted to Jean's. Even monographs devoted solely to Guillaume's section rarely address Lady Raison in detail (see, for instance, David Hult *Self-Fulfilling Prophecies: Readership and Authority in the First Roman de la Rose* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 236–38).

[32] Langlois, *Origines et sources du "Roman de la Rose"*, 90–102.

mental state of his character in need of consolation and the role of his interlocutor. Boethius appears to Lady Philosophy as an "sick man" (*aeger*) to whom the poetic Muses have given "sweet poison" (*dulcia venena*) in lieu of "medicine" (*remedium*) and who will "be cured and made strong" ("curandum sanandumque") by philosophical doctrine (I. pr. 1. 27–41). Compare this to how Guillaume's Lover is "weakened" ("afoibli") by "that sickness called love" ("li maus qui amors") which must be forgotten lest he never recover ("Je ne voi mie ta santè / ne ta garison autrement," [3002-3025]). Clearly, Guillaume's Raison is an imitation Lady Philosophy, which is hardly surprising given that the primary role of Boethius's celestial lady is to marshal the power of the poet-philosopher's reason toward understanding its proper relation to the divine intellect.

An important distinction between the two figures occurs in the physical description of Guillaume's Raison which is more suggestive of *ratio* than *philosophia*. In the *Consolation*, Lady Philosophy exists in a liminal state, simultaneously young and old, of average height and impossibly tall, garmented in both luxurious robes and tattered rags. Guillaume's Raison, on the other hand, regularizes the fluctuating extremes of Philosophy and instead appears as a figure of proportion or mediation, thus reflecting the sense of reason as proportion: "She was neither too young nor too short, neither too thin nor too fat" ["El ne fu joine ne chanue, / ne fu trop haute ne trop basse, / ne fu trop grelle ne trop crasse."] (2962–64). Even though Guillaume avoids appropriating the more transcendent qualities of Lady Philosophy, he nevertheless links Raison to divinity, a characteristic never attained by Lady Philosophy but one Boethius repeatedly associates with *ratio*.[33] Guillaume describes Raison as seeming "like she was made in paradise, for

[33] Marenbon, *Boethius*, 154.

Nature would not have known how to make a work of such regularity" ["part qu'el fu fete paravis, / car Nature ne seust pas / ovre fere de tel compas"] and that "God made her personally in his likeness and in his image" ["Dex la fist ou firmament / a sa semblance et a s'image"] (2974–75). Raison's godliness materializes to the Lover first in her perfect regularity, her divine symmetry. Unlike mundane beings shaped by Nature's unsteady hand, Raison's external form reflects the transcendent variety comprehended by God's *intelligentia*.[34] Guillaume's depiction of Raison's godhood, however, betrays a certain limnality: by drawing upon the language of Adamic creation but also situating Raison above Nature, and therefore above humans, Guillaume portrays rationality as existing simultaneously within the supernatural and the mundane worlds, as both beyond and central to human comprehension and understanding.

Most critics have viewed Guillaume's Raison as entirely conventional and as paling in comparison with Jean's more inventive rendition.[35] Guillaume, however, does in fact make a fascinating and perhaps even original intervention with his rendering: he

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[34] As Stephen Barney points out, this divine order of Raison finds an important analogue in the construction of the Garden of Deduit: "[The Garden's] rhetorical disposition aligns its elements with a philosophical conception of just proportions, the *ratio* or Reason, of the cosmos" (*Allegories of History, Allegories of Love* [Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1979]) 186. As Hult convincingly notes, Guillaume's linking of reason and passion also occurs in the numerous parallels between Amor and Raison (*Self-Fulfilling Prophecies,* 236–38). This alignment between Raison, the garden of sensuality and delight, and the appearance of the God of Love anticipates Jean's more explicit mingling of reason and passion.

[35] Fleming, *The Roman de la Rose*, 113. Pierre-Yves Badel notes more nuance in Guillaume's Raison than most critics, viewing her as a broad emblem of the social order, the wisdom of age and experience, and basic intuition ("Raison 'fille de Dieu' et le rationalisme de Jean de Meun," in *Melanges de langue et de litterature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts a Jean Frappier par ses collegues, ses eleves et ses amis*, vol. 1 [Geneva: Droz, 1970], 41–52).

makes Raison an agent designed for the practical, terrestrial realm of exchange. Even with Raison's partially transcendent nature, her attempts at persuading Amant to abandon his course center on activity within the secular world, and this marks the most significant revision that the poet makes to Boethius. Lady Philosophy's consolation depends on a flight from the world of men. She tells Boethius that he can escape the terror of Fortune's fall only by turning from earth-bound desire. Guillaume's Raison advocates a similar program in her opposition to passionate love but does so out of opposing motivations:

> Now consider carefully which course is better, to abandon or to pursue what makes you live in sorrow, that sickness called love, in which there is nothing but madness. Madness, god help me, is the truth! A man who loves can do nothing well nor attend to any worldly gain: if he is a clerk, he loses his learning, and if he follows some other trade, he can hardly accomplish it. (3022–32)

> [Or garde quex est li plus genz
> ou du lessier tot ou du sivre
> ce qui te fet a dolor vivre:
> c'est li maus qui amors a non,
> ou il n'a se folie non.
> Folie, si m'ait Diex, voire!
> Hons qui aime ne puet bien fere
> ne a nul preu dou monde entendre:
> s'il est clers, i piart son aprendre;
> et se il fet autre mestier,
> il n'em puet gaires espoitier.]

Raison's definition of love as madness hinges on production within the secular economy. The pain inflected upon the self by love causes the clerk and the tradesman to give up their pursuits, to remove themselves from networks of transaction. In Raison's reckoning, passionate love leads to the same end as Boethius's *philosophia* and it is ultimately reason that remains tethered to the mundane world.[36] According to Raison, love causes its victims to live without worth ("te fait vivre, et non valoir," 3048). It saps social value by relocating desire from production and exchange to appetite and consumption. Sexual achievement replaces economic gain. Guillaume's Raison opposes love not because it prevents engagement with divine power—in fact, throughout her discourse she shows little concern for matters of the spirit—but because it detracts from secular economic ascent.

Raison's devotion to material production extends into her discursive practices and partially accounts for her rejection. Guillaume depicts Raison as a sort of counter-author, a figure, who because of her mercantile ideology, refuses to appeal to Amant except practically. Amant recognizes her poetic ineptitude and spurns her teachings:

> Now let me be immediately, for you could waste your French in idleness. I would rather die thus than that Love should have accused me of falsity or treason. I want to be praised or blamed, at the end, for having loved well. Anyone who lectures me annoys me. (3071–79)

[36] To some degree, Guillaume's portrayal of reason as a principle focused on production and service anticipates Max Horkheimer's grim diagnosis of modern rationality, which he terms "subjective reason," wherein something is deemed "reasonable" based on its ability to serve a subject's or community's interests (*The Eclipse of Reason* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1947], 3–14.

[Or me lessiez tot quoi ester,

Que vos poriez bien gaster

En oiseus vostre francois.

Je vosdroie morir encois,

Qu'Amors m'eust de fausetè

Ne de traison arestè.

Je me veil loer ou blasmer

Au daerrain de bien amer,

Si m'anuie qui me chastie.]

In a moment that Jean will later reimagine with fascinating results, Guillaume's Amant denies Raison because of his desire for epideictic remembrance and his disdain for her method of consolation. Unlike Lady Philosophy, who seduces Boethius with the sweetness of verse, Raison can only lecture.[37] Amant's characterization of Raison's discursive practice is largely accurate too: for the most part, her speech lacks elevated poetic stylings and makes no use of the sort of exemplary narrative that would allow the Lover to imagine himself within the famed ranks of Raison's champions. In opposing the indolence of love, Raison also opposes the aesthetic, the literary. As such, she can speak using only practices and forms designed for immediate gain or benefit, such as the lecture. Amant crafts his refusal of Raison carefully, and precisely targets the core of her ideology by drawing attention to the idle effect of her vernacular didacticism. If she

[37] Boethius finds himself far more captivated by Lady Philosophy's language than by her rationales: "'How much,' I then said, "does not only the conclusion, the sum of your arguments, delight me, but much more the very words you use'" ["'Quam,' inquam, 'me non modo ea quae conclusa est summa rationum, verum multo magis haec ipsa quibus uteris verba delectant'"] (III. pr. 12. 66–69).

continues in her attempts at edification, her words will have no impact and she soon will occupy the same position as the love-struck clerk or tradesman who find themselves mad and unable to toil toward the fruits of production. She becomes the sterile rose condemned by Lady Philosophy ("infructosis affectuum spinis").

III

With his continuation, Jean explodes the potential of Guillaume's Raison by amplifying the figure's centrality within the poem's overarching interpretive framework and by using it to articulate, in a somewhat oblique and negative fashion, a system of poetics that governs the text's creation and reception. In this section, I will open by outlining in short Jean's well-studied use of the Consolation. Where my engagement differs is in its emphasis and end-point: rather than attempting to posit a comprehensive model for how Jean read the *Consolation* as a whole, I focus on Jean's handling of Boethian rationality and its troubled affiliation with poetry to imagine a new form of writing based on folly and absurdity.

Readers from the medieval period to the modern day, from Pierre Col and Christine de Pizan to John Fleming and Alastair Minnis, have all noted, critiqued, or supported Jean's Lady Raison for her inescapable presence within any critical understanding of the *Rose*'s moral and aesthetic doctrine.[38] For the most part, how one

[38] Pierre Col saw the *Rose* as a firm promotion of rationality: "I claim that Master Jean de Meun, after having been a foolish lover, adhered firmly to reason: for the better he understood the folly to be found in foolish love through experience, the more he disparaged it and praised Reason. And when he wrote this book of the *Rose* he was no longer a foolish lover, but rather repented for having been one, as is apparent from his ability to speak so well of Reason" ("Pierre Col to Christine de Pizan, Late Summer 1402," in *Debating the Romance of the Rose*, ed. and trans. David Hult [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010], 137). Christine's scathing critique of

reads Lady Raison's second incarnation determines how one reads the *Rose*. Jean transforms the interaction between Guillaume's Amant and Raison through expansive revision to create a literary character highly resonant of its exemplar but significantly altered as well. His creation builds upon and comes into tension with Guillaume's understanding of rationality. For Guillaume, Raison serves as a secular analogue to Boethius's Lady Philosophy, god-like and medial but with intense ties to the commercial world. She is a Lady Philosophy equipped for practical function. Jean heightens the connection between Raison and Lady Philosophy, but returns Raison to her original place within the divine world. Jean's Raison goes on to present the Lover with mostly sound moral teachings, but she, much like Guillaume's figure, fails in winning over Amant because of her limited poetic practice.

As a number of scholars have already demonstrated, Jean undoubtedly recognized Guillaume's reliance on the *Consolation* and took steps to expand such intertextual connections during his continuation. Guillaume incorporates Boethius's prosimetrum primarily into the physical description of Raison and the dramatic situation into which she enters. As we have seen, though, her discourse generally remains free of Lady Philosophy's influence. Jean's Raison ventriloquizes much of Philosophy's teachings during her extended exchange with the Lover.[39] For her instruction, Jean's Raison appropriates from Lady Philosophy the meditations on the nature of fortune, the praise of

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the *Rose* focused largely on Raison's language practices: "In fact, I dare say with this statement Master Jean de Meun's Reason has denounced her Father because He Himself taught her a very different lesson" ["Et vraiement je ose dire que la Raison maistre Jehan de Meun renia son Pere a cellui mot, car trop donna autre doctrine"] ("June/July 1401: Christine's Reaction to Jean de Montreuil's Treatise on the Roman de la Rose," ln. 91–94).

[39] Cherniss, "Jean de Meun's Reson," 678–85.

old age, poverty, and the downward spin of the wheel (4392–5374). Interestingly enough, the other major component of Jean's use of the *Consolation* lies in Raison's retelling of the tales of Croesus, Nero, and Jupiter's two barrels. In drawing on such material, Jean's Raison blends Boethian precept and narrative, the latter representing a crucial aspect of the *Consolation*'s literariness and one neglected by Guillaume's Lady.[40] It is, after all, partially the absence of the literary that causes Guillaume's Lover to reject Raison's intervention. Whereas Guillaume's Raison bores the Lover by lecturing, Jean's attempts to do slightly more than instruct: she provides fictional templates through which the Lover can reshape himself into a champion of rationality by either imitating exemplary heroes or by recognizing himself among the tales' unreasonable villains and cutting off like behavior. In a sense, Jean's model of Raison dramatizes the imaginative control present in Boethius's account of *ratio*. Both are quite capable of marshaling the powers of the lower faculties, of creating specific instances of the imagination and then translating them as species into universal application. In the end, however, when the Lover finally rejects Jean's new and improved model of rationality, it seems that not even the power of her brief exemplary narratives can overcome the attachment to worldly desire.

Jean's Raison is more than Lady Philosophy with a different name. Rather, much like Guillaume, Jean imagines his allegorical reason as *philosophia* combined with *ratio*,

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[40] Of all Boethius's works, the *Consolation*, because of its ambiguity, poetry, and use of narrative, is by far the most literary. Seth Lerer, for instance, has gone so far to say that the *Consolation*'s primary concern is the nature and efficacy of discursive forms and practices. See *Boethius and Dialogue: Literary Method in the Consolation of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985). Also see, Danuta Shanzer, "Interpreting the *Consolation*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, 228–54.

a concept Jean understands in a dual sense—both as proportion and a divine faculty of comprehension. When Raison descends from her tower at the opening of Jean's continuation, she questions Amant's ability to seek the median:

> How do the woes of love seem to you now? Are they too sweet or too bitter? Do you know how the choose the mean among them, the mean which can give you aid and sufficiency? (4203–06)
>
> [Que te semble or des maus d'amer?
> Sunt il trop douz ou trop amer?
> Sez en tu le mean eslire
> Que te puist aidier et soffire?]

Lady Raison critiques love because it brings about an imbalance in those it affects. Love pulls its victims between two poles, and without the intervention of reason there is no hope of finding the mean (*le mean*). Reason represents a middle way that allows the circumvention of affective extremes. This medial function bears directly on the notion of a poetics of rationality, the aesthetic and rhetorical system that circumscribes Raison's discursive practices. Raison crafts her speech through the mean to lead her lover to the mean. As a principle of proportion, her speech practices must likewise maintain a careful balance. She cannot and does not sore into stylistic excess, plunge into the troughs of humor, or effect intense emotional responses from her listeners. For Amant, she is nothing but a repetitive distraction, a nuisance rambling in circularity:

> When you make me think elsewhere, by means of the speeches that you repeat here, until I am constantly tired of hearing them, you will see me flee away from here if you do not immediately keep quiet, for my attention is turned elsewhere (7193–98).

[Et quant ailleurs penser me fetes

Par voz paroles ci retretes,

Que je sui ja touz las d'oir

Ja m'en verrez de ci foir,

Se ne vos en taisiez a tant,

Puis que mes quers ailleurs s'atant.]

Raison's failure at winning over the Lover is a failure of poetic practice. Limited to inspiring only median affective responses, Raison cannot generate a discourse capable of enrapturing the Lover, even, as we shall see, when offering herself up as a lover. She can preach but not persuade, distract but never inspire.

Lady Raison's poetics of affective proportion ties in directly with her role as the faculty responsible for the mediation between imaginative specifics and rational universals. Likely stemming from Boethius's definition of *ratio*, Jean presents his model of rationality as opposing passionate love because of desire's attachment to the impressions of individuals. After Amant faults Raison for her promotion of an impossible platonic love (5388–90), she describes a more attainable variety. Her substitute for passion is a love without specifics:

He must love generally and leave particular loves. Let him form a lasting union in which many can participate. (5413–5416)

[Qu'il aint en generalitè

Et lest especialitè,

N'i face ja conmunion

De grant participacion.]

Here, Jean overlays the language of *ratio* onto the description of an ideal rational love. He translates reason's mechanics of internal comprehension into a method for proper human interaction. Reason represents a way of thinking and a method for acting. With such a formulation, Jean implicitly aligns passionate love with the senses and imagination, something Guillaume had already alluded to with the Lover's sensuous encounter in the Garden of Deduit with the Rose and his subsequent ecstasy with its mental impression.[41] Lady Raison opposes Amors because of the specificity requisite for his love—a love that began with single moment of sensory enchantment whose explosive power continues to echo throughout Amant's yearning imagination. Raison's universalizing tendencies have important implications for her role as an author-figure, a creator of purposive discourse. As previously mentioned, her project of poetic universality partly appears in her use of exemplary narrative, stories of individuals designed to elicit a moral message applicable to a broad audience. These narratives, which put the imagination to use for rational ends, are relatively infrequent, though, Raison's tendency being to err toward general philosophical musings instead.[42] As Cherniss notes, it is Raison's failure to account for Amant's specific situation that leads to her final rejection.[43] Amant turns away from rationality and in doing so he rejects

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[41] Kathryn Lynch sees the *Roman de la Rose* as juxtaposing "the spiritual failure of the Lover's lustful imagination to the wholesome advice promoted by Reason." In Jean's dark, satirical vision, imagination and rationality can never fully harmonize (*The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form* [Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1988], 17–18).

[42] As Carolyn Van Dyke notes, "the kind of love [Raison] offers the dreamer is free of images or plot" (*The Fiction of Truth: Structures of Meaning in Narrative and Dramatic Allegory* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985], 86).

[43] Michael Cherniss, "Irony and Authority," 230.

narrative for the sake of exemplarity and doctrine delivered dryly. Jean shows that Raison's universals cannot conquer the passionate pull of the senses and the imagination.

Jean corrects the wavering of Guillaume's Raison between secular and divine worlds to locate his revised literary creation solidly in the latter. Jean's *Raison* looks to her home in the cosmos and strives to turn the Lover's gaze there as well. She makes her divine pedigree most apparent when trying to become the Lover's "amie":

> You will have a lover of such noble family that there is none to compare with her; I am the daughter of God, the sovereign father who made and shaped me so. (5783–87)
>
> [Si avras an cest avantage
> Amie de si haut lignage
> Qu'il n'est nule qui s'i conpere,
> Fille Dieu, le soverain pere,
> Qui telle me fist et forma.]

This moment marks a movement away from Guillaume, who presented Raison as being made in the image of God. With Jean, she attains full godhood, a deification that parallels the association between *ratio* and the heavenly power in the *Consolation*, specifically in how Boethius links the faculty with Providence and celestial sight.[44] Jean further relies on the *Consolation* to pull Raison away from the mundane world by having her repeat Lady Philosophy's disdain for wealth and material trappings (4684–5340, II. pr. 5, and III. pr. 3). Contrary to Guillaume, Jean's Lady Raison, through her direct citation of the

[44] If Jean had access to Augustine's *Soliloquies*, as Fleming and Lynch tentatively suggest, he would have a second model of a *ratio* whose primary responsibility is to lead the unknowing to comprehend the nature of divinity, to glimpse with earthly eyes celestial will and order (See *Reason and the Lover*, 46–63, and *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 123).

Consolation, praises the value of poverty and demonstrates the ease in which riches corrupt. She reminds the Lover that his true place is not upon this earth ("n'est pas vostre pais en terre" [5005]). And although she recognizes the potential good of wealth in its natural state—that is, when distributed among the poor and not hoarded—the amount of space she devotes to deploring riches far outweighs her demonstration of their beneficent potential. Jean, far more than Guillaume, understands reason as transcendent; it represents not just the characteristic that distinguishes man from beast, but the faculty that joins man with God.

When offering herself up to Amant, Raison ostensibly hopes to lead him to a form of purely rational love, which Robert R. Edwards has described as "an art of self-mastery that trades the mystery of desire for the domestication of passion."[45] If Amant accepts Raison's offer, he will follow a famous company of past beaus—Socrates, Heraclitus, and Diogenes—and will have at the last the means of stepping off Fortune's wheel (5812–89). Jean, however, undercuts Raison's advances by instilling her figure with an affective range exceeding that warranted by *ratio*'s intellectual tradition and by associating her with a mythical emblem of unreasonable craving. After alerting the Lover of her divine pedigree, Raison warns him of the fury of rationality scorned:

> Before God, take care lest you refuse me. Maidens unaccustomed to begging are thrown into great sorrow and turmoil when they are refused. You can prove this fact yourself by the case of Echo, without seeking other proofs. (5803–808)
>
> [Por dieu, gar que ne me refuses.
> Trop sunt dolentes et confuses

[45] Edwards, *The Flight from Desire*, 117.

Puceles qui sunt refusees,

Quant de prier ne sunt usees,

Si con tu meismes le prueves

Par Echo, sanz querre autres prueves.]

Raison's threat speaks to her potential for unregulated, overflowing emotion, which subverts the text's allegorical framework. The figure purporting to represent rationality and its hallowed ability to "find the mean" claims the capacity to operate beyond her conceptual boundaries, to act contrary to reason, or like a woman, as Raison herself suggests.

Jean further emphasizes such a contradiction in Raison's fictional nature with the allusion to Echo, which gestures both outward and backward, to Ovid and to Guillaume. For Ovid, Echo is a figure of uncontrollable, fiery passion:[46]

> Now when she saw Narcissus wandering through the fields, she was inflamed with love and followed him by stealth; and the more she followed, the more she burned by a nearer flame; as when quick-burning sulphur, smeared round the tops of torches, catches fire from another fire brought near. (III. 370–74)

[Ergo ubi Narcissum per devia rura vagantem

Vidit et incaluit, sequitur vestigia furtim,

Quoque magis sequitur, flamma propiore calescit,

Non aliter quam cum summis circumlita taedis

Admotas rapiunt vivacia sulphura flammas.]

[46] Quotations from Ovid are drawn from *Metamorphoses, Books I–VIII*, 3rd ed., revised G. P. Goold, trans. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).

Upon espying Narcissus, Ovid's Echo loses her rational temperament and succumbs to unthinking desire, becoming more akin to the elemental than the thinking. Her love for Narcissus precipitates an ontological descent whereby she moves from a cogitative being to a purely instinctual one.[47] Guillaume tempers this depiction slightly:

> For Echo, a great lady, had loved him more than anything born, and was so ill-used on his account that she told him that she would die if he did not give her his love. (1442–46)
>
> [Car Equo, une haute dame,
> L'avoit amè plus que rien nee,
> Et fu por lui si mal menee
> Qu'ele dit que il li donroit
> S'amor ou ele se mouroit.]

Though Guillaume's Echo clearly loves in excess, the French poet's account departs from Ovid's intense emphasis on Echo's irrational passion. Guillaume's Echo loves without measure, but she is not consumed by her passion. Guillaume softens the supernatural

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[47] John Hollander sees Ovid's Echo as emblematizing a deconstructive poetics (*The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After* [Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981). Anne-Emmanuelle Berger and Rachel Gabara further this reading, nothing that "Echo is an originary figure of deconstruction, as altering repetition (*différance*), as a mode of reading imminent to the text which turns reflexively back on itself, as a poetic method of production (of meaning) by reproduction (of sound)" ("The Last Word on Echo," *New Literary History* 27 (1996), 622]. Echo's production of discourse, her mode of authorship, thus enfolds deference and difference to a past source into the folly of irrational desire. For an interesting, but dense theoretical assessment of Echo's agency, see Gayarti Spivak, "Echo," *New Literary History* 1 (1993), 17–43. Also see, Elizabeth Dobbs, "Re-Sounding Echo," *The Chaucer Review* 40 (2006), 289–310.

qualities of Ovid's Echo, presenting her not as a nymph but as an "haute dame," language that Jean later makes use of when describing his Lady Raison as an "haute persone." Further connecting these apparently distant figures is that fact that Guillaume's Echo, much like Jean's Raison, displays a surprising combination of passionate, unmeasured love and reason. When spurned, Echo begs the God of Love for requital. He answers "because her prayer was reasonable" ["ceste priere fu resnable"] and proceeds to curse Narcissus who then loses control of his mind:

> When he saw that he could not accomplish his desire and that he was captured so inescapably that he could in no way take any comfort, he became so distressed that he lost his sense and died in a short time. (1495–1501)
>
> [Car quant il vit qu'il ne porroit
> Acomplir ce qu'il desiroit
> Et qu'il ne porroit avoir confort,
> En nule fin ne en nul sen,
> Il perdi d'ire tot le sen,
> Et fu morz en poi de termine.]

Narcissus's loss of cognitive power comes about not simply from a manic self-love, but from an inability to consummate that love. Self-love in itself does not constitute an irrational act; it is only with the realization of the impossibility of bringing such a love to fruition that the intellectual capacity breaks down. Guillaume accounts for the unrestrained passion that dominates Ovid's characterization of the Echo and Narcissus narrative, but allows for the possibility of harmony, albeit a dissonant one, between love and reason. Echo burns with passion but maintains the ability to craft rational complaint,

while Narcissus loses reason only because of his failure to requite that very passion.[48] Anticipating the ideology of productivity espoused by Guillaume's celestial lady, the rational hinges on the ability to attain a desired end.

Jean seems to have recognized the curious admixture of reason and desire in Guillaume's version of the Echo and Narcissus myth, and transposed it onto the exact moment when his own Lady Raison attempts to embrace a love outside her conceptual purview. Through Raison's identification with Echo, Jean's engagement with Guillaume's model of Raison, which before seemed to be one of correction, now takes on greater nuance, becoming one of allusion and reliance. The tension between the poem's literal and allegorical levels casts Lady Raison not as a direct embodiment of *ratio* or *philosophia* but as a poetic creation. When Lady Raison menaces Amant with the repercussions of *folece* she ceases to be a doctrinal representative and becomes a fully

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[48] Echo's complaint displays her connection to the literary arts, something scholars have noted as an essential characteristic of both Ovid's and Guillaume's handling of the myth. Interpreting Guillaume's rendering, critics have noted both the narrative's connection to medieval senses of the literary and its implications for imaginative composition (though most of the attention has centered on Narcissus and his reflection in the crystalline pool). Poiron, for instance, reads Narcissus as embodying the desire and self-love of the courtly lyric, something Jean responds to by installing the myth of Pygmalion as a counterpoint (Narciesse et Pygmalion dans *Le Roman de la Rose*," in *Essays in Honor of Louis Francis Solano*, ed. Raymond J. Cormier and Urban T. Holmes [Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 153–65. Edwards argues that with Narcissus's tale "Guillaume establishes a fundamental connection between desire and representation" (*The Flight from Desire*, 109). Tracking the connections between Narcissus and Guillaume's fictions of authorship, Hult understands Narcissus and the fountain as staging the problematic relationship between creator and artistic product (*Self-Fulfilling Prophecies*, 263–91).

literary agent.[49] Though her name may link her to a philosophical construct, and though she may reflect much of that construct's intellectual tradition, she is not bound by the history of ideas. She bears the name of reason and appropriates some of its conceptual function, but in the end Jean shows her to be the same as the Lover—a complex character, laden with ambiguity and contradiction, whose nature is determined through the power of fiction. She embraces her opposite and proves herself a fiction that finds its mimetic counterpart in the world of persons and things rather than ideas. This is not to say that the intellectual tradition of rationality played no part in Jean's figure, but rather that it represents but a cog in the text's creative machinery. Lady Raison relies on *ratio* but is not determined by it. Raison stands outside of reason to become a literary being and not dogmatic derivative.

Jean's reliance upon his predecessor's presentation of rationality is short lived. Immediately following the allusion to Echo, and in effect to Guillaume's blending of reason and desire, Jean offers a detail characterizing Lady Raison that sets her in opposition to her previous incarnation. Where Guillaume's Raison wasted her French in trying to win over the Lover, Jean's figure speaks in a language ill equipped for mutual understanding. After Raison begins to woo Amant in earnest, flaunting her beauty and lineage and making thinly veiled threats, he demands that she correct her language: "Now tell me, not in Latin, but in French, what you want me to serve" ["Or me dites donques ainceis / non en latin, mes en francois, / de quoi volez vos que je serve"] (5809–11). Obviously, a great deal of humor is at play here—the Lover's inability to understand Raison's offer demonstrates his apparent foolishness—but that does not negate the fact

[49] Peter Allen sees such contradiction or fragmentation to be central in how the poem as a whole fashions itself as a distinctly literary object ("Ars Amandi, Ars Legendi," 183).

that the supposed embodiment of rationality, the concept in charge of bringing souls to understanding and words to things, cannot fulfill her role because of inadequate discursive practices. She cannot properly match rhetoric to audience. Jean's Amant exists within the vernacular world and he cannot recognize Raison as inhabiting the same space. She represents for him an alien Latinity. By describing Raison's discourse as Latinate, Amant implicitly positions her in opposition to the *Rose*'s own vernacularity and to Jean in particular, the translator who achieves what Raison, because of her Latinity, cannot—transmitting the *Consolation* to a lay audience after translating it into French separately. Consequently, the Lover aligns the *Rose* with a poetics of *folece et musardie*. Interestingly enough, what brings about the Lover's characterization of Raison's language is not overly complex or paradoxical logic (of the sort that appears in Raison's initial definition of Love through contraries), nor is it convoluted syntax or elevated diction, but rather her propositioning him as an Echo-like lover. Raison's language seems foreign to him because she has become foreign from her allegorical referent, transformed into a confused and opaque sign.

This distortion of Lady Raison's referential status calls into question the understanding of allegory she voices toward the end of her discourse. After all, can a character whose nature defies simple allegorical interpretation express accurately the principles of the medium? To what extent can we read her teaching as reflexive of the *Rose*'s imaginative practices? Those critics who see Raison as the only figure reliable enough to navigate through the *Rose*'s hermeneutic torrents tend to take her model of

allegory as proof supporting their universalizing readings.[50] For Raison and for Jean, allegory is a singular philosophical outlook veiled in the delightful trappings of poetry. On this view, as readers, we must pull back that veil to uncover the pithy *sentence* that lies beneath. For those skeptical of reducing the *Rose* to the outlook of a single voice within its narrative medley, Raison's presentation of allegory is but one of the "several but distinct theoretical discourses functioning within the *Rose*."[51] I argue, however, that while Jean refuses to offer a clear resolution to the tension between these compositional methods, he nevertheless gestures toward the viability and even desirability of a poetics running counter to Raison's teachings on allegory. What emerges from the ruins of

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[50] Of such teachings, Robertson writes that "it is appropriate that Raison should be the source of instruction on the subject of poetic appreciation" (*Preface to Chaucer*, 61). Also see Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, 97–135. While more cautious than Fleming or Robertson in accepting Raison as the poem's spokesperson, Marc-Renè Jung understands the *Rose* as requiring the sort of extra-literal reading prescribed by the heavenly lady ("Jean de Meun et l'allègorie," *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des ètudes francaises* 28 (1976), 21–36.

[51] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 89–90. For those critics hesitant to embrace Raison's doctrine, the major point of interest during her discourse on allegory is the tension between plain-speaking and integumental covering. Minnis understands Raison as "a speaker with considerable respect for the literal sense," and this parallels much of Jean's satiric program (*Magister Amoris*, 123). John Flyer reads the scene as revealing the inadequacies of plain-speaking in a post-lapsarian world (*Language and the Declining World in Chaucer, Dante, and Jean de Meun* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007], 60–100). David Hult takes the scene to reveal that "Jean's commitment to the letter is related not simply to the relation between literal and figurative meaning production, but also to the materiality of language and, in particular, to the way in which that materiality can manipulate meaning in the space of vernacular expression, namely French" ("Poetry and the Translation of Knowledge in Jean de Meun," in *Poetry, Knowledge, and Community in Late Medieval France*, ed. Rebecca Dixon and Finn E. Sinclair [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008], 35). Also see Christine McWebb, "Hermeneutics of Irony: Lady Reason and the *Romance of the Rose*," *Dalhousie French Studies* 69 (2004), 3–13.

Raison's broken poetic teachings is a counter-rational system of imaginative writing whose creative doctrine dismantles totalizing authorial hermeneutics and locates pleasure—contra the mercantile aesthetic of Guillaume's Raison—in the sensuality of language and narrative rather than in the self-fashioning profit of philosophy.[52]

During her praise of the medium, Raison claims for allegory a privileged position based on readers' abilities to see past the flourishes of style and the fancy of narrative. After a significant digression, Lady Raison returns to the Lover's earlier objection to her use of "coilles" and cites the curricular reading of the poets as an example of an ideal method of interpretation:

> In our schools indeed they say many things in parables that are very beautiful to hear; however, one should not take whatever one hears according to the letter. In my speech there was another sense, at least when I was speaking of testicles, which I wanted to speak of briefly here, than that which you want to give the word. He who understood the letter would see in the writing the sense which clarifies the obscure fable. The truth hidden within would be clear if it were explained. (7123–36)
>
> [Si dit l'en bien en noz escoles
> Maintes choses par paraboles,

[52] To some degree, this counter-rational poetics realizes the capacities of allegory identified by Pierre-Yves Badel to remove itself from authorial intention and emphasize its literality ("Au Moyen Age dire et vouloir-dire." *Corps écrit* 18 [1986], 53–59). While Badel seems to regard this capacity in a somewhat negative sense, I understand it as offering a liberating potential upon which later English poets would expand. Also see H. R. Jauss, "La Transformation de la forme allègorique entre 1180 et 1240: d'Alain de Lille à Guillaume de Lorris," in *L'Humanisme médiévale dans les littératures romanes* (Paris: 1964), which argues that Jean distrusted the heavily veiled allegorical mode employed by Alan of Lille.

Qui mout sunt beles entendre;

Si ne doit l'en mie tout prendre

A la letre quan que l'en ot.

En ma parole autre sen ot,

Au mains quant des coillons parloie,

Don si briefment parler voloie,

Que celui que tu i veuz metre;

Et qui bien entredroit la letre,

Le sen verroit en l'escriture,

Qui esclarcist la fable oscure.

La veritè dedenz reposte

Seroit clere, s'el iert esposte.]

In discussing practices of reading, Raison outlines her practices of writing; instructing Amant how to read entails that she instruct him in how she writes. She posits an authorial, and therefore authoritative, hermeneutic frame and thus lays bare the creative impulses that imbue her text with meaning. Like the school poets, she crafts a type of discourse that relies upon but ultimately transcends the literal.[53] This transcendence does

[53] Raison also professes an occasional predilection for plain-speaking: "With his permission it is my custom to speak properly of things when I please, without using any gloss" [Par son gré sui je coutumiere / de parler proprement des choses, / quant il me plest, sanza metre gloses"] (7048–50). Minnis sees this inclination as Raison's operative discursive mode, which mirrors that of Jean himself, who "prefers straight-forward narration to the encoding of meaning, and engages in that naked outspokenness which medieval theorists deemed to be characteristic of the medieval literary theory of satire" (*Magister Amoris*, 120). While I agree with Minnis that Raison attends to both literal and allegorical practices crafting her discourse, when attending to matters of a poetic nature Raison displays a taste for the integumental side of the compositional spectrum. For

not occur easily or without intervention. She tells Amant that a deeper truth lies beneath the literal surface but that he cannot get to that truth on his own, that he must rely on her gloss. The truth becomes clear only if it were explained ("s'el iert esposte"), which she offers to do but never gets the chance. Amant cuts her off—effectively rendering her teachings sterile—and instead promises to gloss the poets himself, a vow forgotten and without fruition (7160–68). Jean's text places its audience in something of an interpretive conundrum. The authoritative gloss, twice denied and deferred, never materializes to offer the explanation necessary to reach the understanding required in a purely rational hermeneutic. This is not to say that readers cannot grasp Raison's discourse without a gloss, but simply that to do so requires reading without Raison, without the interpretive guidance requisite for her integumental composition. This moment of unreasonable reading stages in microcosm the hermeneutics undergirding the *Rose* as a whole. Faced with a vast narrative expanse of competing author-figures, readers find themselves set adrift without authorial gloss to buoy final understanding.

In authoring speech, Raison prizes a separation between the trappings of form and the pleasurable and profitable philosophy of invention. Following her discussion of the necessity of the gloss, Raison outlines a poetics based squarely on the famous Horatian maxim *dulce et utile*:[54]

> You will understand it well if you review the integuments on the poets. There you will see a large part of the secrets of philosophy. There you will want to take your great

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further discussion of Jean's use of *gloser* see Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 88 n.16 and Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, 105.

[54] As Dahlberg points out in the notes to his translation, "Reason enunciates the Horatian combination of the pleasing and the useful in a way which reflects Augustine's ideas on these categories" (7169–80).

delight, and you will thus be able to profit a great deal. You will profit in delight and delight in profit, for in the playful fables of the poets lie very profitable delights beneath which they cover their thoughts when they clothe the truth in fables. (7132–48)

[Bien l'entendras, se bien repetes
Les integumanz aus poetes.
La verras une grante parte
Des secrez de philosophie
Ou mout te vodras deliter,
Et si porras mout profiter:
En delitant profiteras,
En profitant deliteras;
Car en leur geus et en leur fables
Gisent deliz mout profitables
Souz cui leur pensees covrirent,
Quant le voir des fables vestirent.]

Raison wants to redirect readerly desire from the sensuality of fiction and form to the intellectual yield of philosophy: when reading the poets, one must take delight not in the playful fables themselves, but in the "secrez de philosophie" bound within integumental trappings.[55] Raison finds little worth in story, arrangement, or style. The very profitable delights lie beneath and not within expression. Philosophy—not language or narrative—determines the final value of any work. A rational poetry is a means of regulating

[55] For a discussion of the term "integument," see Édouard Jeauneau, "L'Usage de la notion d'*integumetum* à travers les gloses de Guillaume de Conches," *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire moyen age* 24 (1957), 35–100.

passion. Desire turns to delight and delight to philosophical profit. In describing imaginative composition as such, Raison mounts a final attempt at diverting Amant's course. Her form of writing can replace the carnality directed toward the Rose by substituting the acquisition of knowledge for sensuous consummation. If Amant follows Raison's suggestion and consents to turning his delight from a love object to a textual one, his passion will lead not to corporeal pleasure but to epistemological bounty.

Amant finds no gain in accepting Raison's ersatz poetic love, and tells her that he does not wish to gloss "les sentances, les fables et les methaphores" but will put off such an undertaking until after he fulfills his service to Amors (7160–61). Amant remains on textual surfaces, implying that allegory and desire are incompatible, and that it is only once passionate love dissipates that glossing can begin. He does not reject poetry as a whole but only the pressing need to uncover its philosophical truth. When Amant turns away from Raison to seek sensuality, he also turns away from a poetry fragmented between form, philosophy, delight, and profit. Amant's neglected vow of glossation is as unachieved as that of *Rose*'s authors, both of whom assure their readers of complete interpretive revelation at the poem's close.[56] When the poem ends with a virtuoso display

[56] Guillaume writes, "I tell you that he who will hear the end of the dream can learn a great deal about the games of Love, provided that he wishes to wait while I tell the tale in French and explain the dream's significance. The truth, which is hidden, will be quite open to you when you hear me explain the dream, for it doesn't contain a lying word" [Qui dou songe la fin ora, / Je vos di bien que il porra / Des jeus d'Amors assez aprendre, / Puis que il veille tant atendre / Que je die et que j'encomance / Dou songe la senefiance. / La verité, qui est coverte, / Vos sera lores toute overte / Quant espondre m'oroiz le songe, / Car il n'i a mot de menconge"] (2065–73). Clearly drawing on Guillaume's promise, Jean, in one of the poem's moments of direct address, states, "Remember what I am saying here. You will have an adequate art of love, and if you have any difficulty I will clarify what confuses you when you have heard me explain the dream. Then, if

of sexual innuendo, and emphatically not the avowed authorial reading, the distinction between Guillaume, Jean, and Amant becomes blurred, which in turn allows for a coalescence of poetic doctrine. As Guynn notes, this repeated refusal of glossing ultimately "suggests the impossibility of discovering anything beyond the imperfect realm of signs."[57] The pleasure of imaginative composition lies not in the ethical expansion of readers but in the immediate artifice of narrative and language. What the final alignment between the *Rose*'s authors and Amant indicates is the impossibility of attaining or voicing fully authoritative interpretive and compositional practices. In the end, Guillaume, Jean, Amant, Raison imagine competing but limited senses of poetry; none can craft adequately a poetics effecting a perfect literature. The textual space acts as a forum for author-figures to promote and dispute their individual poetic and aesthetic practices with the inconclusive debate between Raison and Amant serving as a field for speculation and not prescription.

Raison's sense of allegory as the enfolding of philosophical profit within delightful verse ties to her theory of language—both operate extrinsically. On their own, verse and language are without utility; it is only through their respective conjunctions with philosophy and form that they exhibit use value. Precipitated by Amant's objection

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someone creates opposition, you will know how to reply about love when you have heard me gloss the text. And then, by this text, you will understand whatever I have written before" [Notez ce que ci vois disant, / D'amors avrez art souffisant. / Et se vos i trovez riens trouble, / G'esclarcirai ce qui vos trouble / Quant le songe m'orrez espondre. / Bien savrez lors d'amors respondre, / S'il est qui an sache opposer, / Quant le texte m'orrez gloser; / Et savrez lors par cel escrit / Quant que j'avrai devant escrit / Et quant que je be ́ a escrire"] (15113–23).

[57] Noah D. Guynn, "*Le Roman de la rose*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 9.

to the use of "coilles" during the telling of Saturn's castration, Raison's theory of language and its origins has generated significant scholarly conversation, much of which measures Raison's account in relation to Jean's own practices. Fleming sees Raison's linguistic system as entirely Augustinian and therefore entirely authoritative; Raison's reliance on *De doctrina* and *De magistro* indicates Jean's wholehearted subscription to the espoused doctrine.[58] Poiron, while also noting Jean's desire for a purely rational language, argues that the poem locates sensuality as the bridge between words and things.[59] John Flyer, however, in comparing Raison's linguistic model to that presented by Ovid and the *Genesis* commentaries, asserts that her form of language cannot exist after the fall, and this therefore negates the possibility of Jean's rational discipleship.[60] Similarly skeptical of Raison's dogma, Hult contends that "Reason's static vision of language simply cannot accommodate the diachronicity implicit in Jean's wide ranging metaphoric production."[61]

For the most part, I agree with Flyer's and Hult's assessments of Lady Raison's theory of language. But where Flyer sees a demonstration of "how radically language has changed" since the fall,[62] and Hult proof of a "poetics of dismemberment, allowing at

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[58] Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, 97–135.

[59] Daniel Poiron, "De la signification selon Jean de Meun." in *Archeologie du signe*, ed. Eugene Vance and Lucie Brind'amour (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1983), 165–85. For an opposing view, see Gustav Ineichen, "Le discours linuistique de Jean de Meun," *Romanistische Zeitschrift fur Literaturegeschichte* 2 (1978), 245–51; 252–53.

[60] Flyer, *Language and the Declining World*, 60–100.

[61] David Hult, "Language and Dismemberment: Abelard, Origen, and the *Romance of the Rose*," in *Rethinking the Romance of the Rose: Text, Image, Reception*, ed. Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), 119.

[62] Flyer, *Language and the Declining World*, 99.

once for the free play of words in their material sense and, correspondingly, for the assimilation of concrete objects,"[63] I see the inherent limitations of Raison's linguistic model as implicitly positing an oppositional counterpart that recognizes the power of a fully human discursive medium, one untethered from divine reflection, and that refuses to formalize desire, effectively freeing delightful verse from the tyranny of didacticism.

Raison's status within the history of ideas also inflects her theory of language, which strives to remove any trace of the arbitrary by removing any trace of the human. To correct the corruption of Amant's linguistic practices, she narrates a creation myth that subtly revises the biblical version:

> However, He could indeed name them then when he first created the whole world and whatever exists in it, but he wanted me to find names at my pleasure and to name things, individually and collectively, in order to increase our understanding. (7058–7064)

> [Si les pot il bien nomer lores
> Quant il prumierement cria
> Tout le monde et quan qu'il i a
> Mes il vost que nons leur trovasse
> A mon plersir et les nomasse
> Proprement et communement
> Por craistre nostre entendement.]

As the faculty in charge of effecting understanding by transforming sensory and imaginative impressions into universals, Lady Raison unsurprisingly carries over such a prerogative into her invention of the name. Through divine mandate, she brings

[63] Hult, "Language and Dismemberment," 122.

comprehension to a world of pure matter.[64] Raison elides Adam's presence and purpose during her narrative of language's genesis. It is Raison and not Adam who bestows name upon thing. It would be easy to allegorize this elision by arguing that Raison represents a component of Adam's being, that she is the intellectual vehicle that allows him to accomplish the task of naming. Raison, however, never mentions the human component of naming, and, in fact, goes out of her way to emphasize her divine nature over the mundane (7042–50, 7091–92). Raison saps Adam of agency to posits a language system harmonized with divine order. In her account, the lessons derived from godly tutelage replace human whim in attaching word to thing.[65]

Raison objects to the Lover's prudish understanding of "coilles" because he disrupts rational language's link to divine forms by reintroducing the arbitrariness of human custom. Amant uses a language that runs counter to conceptual parsimony. According to Raison, his euphemistic language needlessly muddles the relationship between sign and referent:

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[64] Flyer notes the inherent impossibility of Raison's claim to have created a fully rational linguistic order, one where words connect fully with their divine forms: "But the fallacy in her argument is that naming 'proprement' is at once rationally possible and, from an Adamic perspective, impossible. The proper names of the things are lost, or if they survive, they survive only in Hebrew" (*Language and the Declining World*, 95).

[65] As Hult points out, Raison's account of linguistic genesis usurps not only the human capacity of naming but, to a certain extent, the divine as well: "Reason's position here is intriguing, for however much her statement that she named things at her pleasure might seem to betoken an admission of arbitrariness in the relation between word and thing, the fact that she is, allegorically speaking, the mythical founder of human language—the language faculty itself—endows her gesture with the same sort of originary status that would have characterized God's own putative language" ("Language and Dismemberment," 118).

> The works had to have names by which men might know how to name them, and withal such names that one might name the things themselves by their very names. If women in France do not name these things, it is only that they are not accustomed to, for the right names would have been pleasing to those who were accustomed to them; and if they named them correctly, they would commit no sin in doing so. (7097–7107)

> [Nons convenoit il qu'els eussent,
> Ou genz nomer ne les seussent;
> Et por ce tels nons leur meismes
> Qu'en les nomast par cels meismes.
> Se fames nes noment en France,
> Se n'est fors desacoutumance,
> Car li propres nons leur pleust,
> Qui acoutumè leur eust;
> Et se proprement les nomassent,
> Ja certes de riens n'i pechassent.]

In a rational language system, words refer to directly to things, the divine forms made by the hand of God. Names name the thing and not another name. In the society of Amant and courtly ladies, however, this immediate referentiality is disrupted by the intervention of a mediating signifier. The women in France use words like "boses, harnais, riens, piches, pines" to refer not to the thing itself but to another word (7113). The referential connection thus becomes thrice removed from its true form. As Maureen Quilligan notes, "euphemisms obscure the natural reality of sexual organs and deny men the ability to see

their cosmic function" and "limit meaning to the carnal."[66] Euphemistic language cannot formalize desire into expression because it places sensuality within the broken container of human custom, as when French women name penises "thorns " ["espines"], even though, "when they are joined to them and feel them, they do not consider them piercing" ["quant les sentent bien joignanz, / els nes tienent pas a poignanz "] (7115–16). Here, the conventional nature of language (*supposito*), wherein words accord with things based on logic and sense, finds itself undermined by the absurdity of the custom of sociolinguistic usage. Convention demands that "thorn," even when used figuratively, refer to something relatively alike. Raison requires a circumscription of metaphor, because in the semantic order of the court, at least according to her logic, arbitrary habit replaces heavenly reflection.

Raison does acknowledge the place of desire within her sign system, but it is, unsurprisingly, one of regulation and purgation. She cites Plato's *Timaeus*, a work created by an author "qui ne fu pas nices" as offering a suitable definition of linguistic purpose: "speech was given us to make our desires known, for teaching, and for learning" ["que donee nous fu parole / por fere noz volairs entendre, / por enseignier et por aprendre"] (7070–72). Rational speech allows for the externalization of internal affections. It takes nebulous desire and gives it a shape suitable for exchange. Raison, though, limits this exchange to expression ("parole / por fere noz volairs entendre") and

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[66] Maureen Quilligan, "Words and Sex: The Language of Allegory in the *De planctu naturae*, the *Roman de la Rose,* and Book III of *The Faerie Queene*," *Allegorica* 1 (1977), 195–216. Also see Quilligan, "Allegory, Allegoresis, and the Deallegorization of Language: The *Romance of the Rose*, the *De planctu naturae*, and the *Parlement of Foules*," in *Allegory, Myth, and Symbol* ed. Morton W. Bloomfield (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 163–86.

mentions nothing of consummation. Language does not exist to fulfill desire but to formalize it. Such formalizing power creates the necessary conditions for language's edifying capacity, because, as Amant's rejection ultimately demonstrates, gaining knowledge through rational instruction can take place only in the absence of passion. Internal desire first must take external linguistic shape to counteract the distraction of carnality. The model of language's formal purpose mirrors rather precisely the overarching goals of Lady Raison's discourse. Her sense of language maps out her project as an author, her theory of language constituting a theory of poetry as well. She crafts speech to persuade Amant to regulate his passion by embracing a love of reason and its teachings. Fully embracing a love of reason requires that Amant imitate and make use of an ideal rational system of language. Raison desires that Amant follow the example of language, that he control and moderate his love, a transformation that should occur through the medium of dialogue. Much like in Guillaume's reckoning, Jean's language of Raison is a language of production, one that creates either expressions of desire or the potential for instruction and understanding. She sees language and poetry as wholly rhetorical and cannot imagine discourse as existing outside of clearly marked ethical and instructive ends.

Raison's lineage and dogma of worldly flight emphasize her supernatural status—qualities intimately bound up with her compositional practices—which some have read as indicative of her centrality within the *Rose*'s overarching moral and aesthetic framework.[67] Because Raison presents herself as divine and counsels *contemptus mundi*,

[67] Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, 38.

critics such as Fleming have argued that to read against her teachings constitutes an act of heresy.[68] It is important to remember, however, that Raison reveals her relation to God at a moment of seduction: she claims to be a daughter of God to increase her appeal as she offers herself up to the Lover. Furthermore, by neither demonstrating the limitless power of this divine figure over base desires nor punishing Amant as a heretic, Jean leaves open the possibility of alternate readings. Regardless of how one reads the poem's overarching message, if such a message can be derived at all, the openness of Jean's project remains clear. The poet never interjects into his narrative to give his poem a single, authoritative meaning. This leads to the conclusion that Raison is not Jean but neither is she his antitype. Rather, she represents a single author-figure within a network of author-figures whose discursive practices ultimately prove contingent and limited. As such, Raison's purported divinity inflects her poetic practices: a mouthpiece for God, her speech acts serve as a vehicle for Christian orthodoxy. The premiere goal of poetry for Raison is salvific rather than aesthetic. To read Raison as the one authoritative voice in the poem, entails reading her poetics as that of the *Rose* as well. Jean neither adopts nor rejects such a compositional paradigm. Instead, he imagines possibilities for such a practice but never veers into the prescriptive realm of the *ars poetica*. Demonstrating Raison's poetic shortcomings hints at an alternate model of imaginative composition, a model based on her opposite, a model of literary *folece*. Jean lays the groundwork for a secular poetics detached from Christian orthodoxy without embracing this creative system as his own.

[68] Hence Fleming's labeling of scholars skeptical of Raison's doctrine as "Ithacan Heretics."

Chapter Two

The Consolation of Desire in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* charts a movement away from reason. In standard readings of the poem, what this entails is not only rejection but also ascent: though Troilus initially revels in the irrationality of terrestrial love, in the end he realizes its impermanence and directs his attention toward cosmic harmony; likewise, the narrator begins his work enchanted by the sensuality of a pagan source, but during the work's composition comes to understand his true calling as a Dantean poet, a Christian artist who strives to instill within his readers celestial sight.[1] Thus, both in terms of its narrative and fictions of poetic practice, *Troilus* shows reason collapsing under the pressure of aesthetic desire but in doing so posits the conditions necessary for heavenly transcendence.

In this chapter, I propose a reassessment of this account and argue that the text's complex interplay between rationality, love, and fiction renders artistic and sexual misrule as viable, and perhaps essential, alternatives to worldly flight. Rather than valuing such misrule only for its edificatory potential—denying reason to attain divine

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[1] Winthrop Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Frank Grady, "The Boethian Reader of *Troilus and Criseyde*," *The Chaucer Review* 33 (1999), 230–251; Richard H. Osberg, "Between the Motion and the Act: Intentions and Ends in Chaucer's 'Troilus'," *ELH* 48 (1981), 257–70; Gerald Morgan, *The Tragic Argument of Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde'* (Lewiston: Edward Mellen Press, 2005).

intelligence—Chaucer's poem instead suggests that the unreasonable desire for physical and textual beauty can function as an earthbound corollary to the celestial order of the spheres.[2] The *Roman de la Rose* looms large behind this expansion of misrule's potential, with Boccaccio's *Filostrato* acting as the vehicle that allows Chaucer to deallegorize and continue Guillaume's and Jean's narrative, to imagine concretely the unfolding and aftermath of a desire unbound.

Although Chaucer's Boethian ending appears to foreclose the ambiguity inherent in the *Rose*'s irrational pursuit of pleasure, its final consolation proves circumspect. For when Criseyde locates her passion for Troilus in his reason bridling delight (IV.1678), she unwittingly identifies the source of the poem's tragedy and the halting doctrine underlying the narrator's attempts to impose interpretive closure.[3] It is reason that

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[2] In making such a claim, this chapter connects with more recent readings that understand the work along the lines of Robert R. Edwards, who describes *Troilus and Criseyde* as "a poem whose celebration of passionate, sexual love unfolds simultaneously with a critique of desire" (*The Flight from Desire: Augustine and Ovid to Chaucer* [New York: Palgrave-McMillan, 2006], 146). Robert Hanning argues that Chaucer defines his authorial project primarily through his representation of the interplay among desire, authority, and comedy (*Serious Play: Desire and Authority in the Poetry of Ovid, Chaucer, and Ariosto* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2010], 103–180). Jessica Rosenfeld writes that *Troilus* demonstrates how "[h]uman felicity 'suffices' precisely because it strives for delightful mutuality in the face of earthly instability, for a goal that is itself inchoate. As Aquinas, Dante, and Chaucer's lovers remind us, the tense of human happiness is always the imperfect" (*Ethics and Enjoyment in Late-Medieval Poetry: Love After Aristotle* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010], 159). My contribution to this discourse lies primarily in explaining how this celebration—and emphatically not a rejection—of earthly love and its associated poetic medium only can occur by embracing misrule as a practical and literary virtue.

[3] Nancy Ciccone makes the case that the poem's tragic momentum stems from how Troilus's "reasoning portrays a double-bind that circumscribes the practical syllogism and derails reason"

precipitates the lovers' fall and that shows itself to be an inadequate poetic response to the rapture of misrule. Chaucer's text establishes an aesthetic of ephemerality, one that levels the division between transcendent reason and transient pleasure.

I

Chaucer begins *Troilus and Criseyde* as Jean de Meun begins his continuation of the *Rose*—by rewriting Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. Some early readers have understood this moment of intertexuality as establishing a moral trajectory for the poem that follows that of the *Consolation*: the invocation's allusions and situational parallels cast the narrator as an analogue to Boethius and gesture toward a shared narrative whose inauguration is sorrow and conclusion transcendence.[4] We should not be surprised by the cold censure of worldly love that appears at the poem's close: the overt associations with the *Consolation* make plain from the start that *Troilus* must end with a realization of transience effected by exemplary teachings on Fortune and Fate. As I shall attempt to show, however, rather than reproducing the *Consolation*'s introductory sequence and embracing its subsequent doctrinal program, the outset of the *Troilus* imitates Boethius through inversion by replacing the consolation of Lady Philosophy with that of the spurned *carminae lacerae*. In doing so, Chaucer imagines his poem's subject matter and

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("Saving Chaucer's Troilus with 'desire and reson twight'," *Neophilologus* 86 [2002], 642). While we both see reason as the origin of the narrative's tragedy, our readings differ in that where Ciccone sees Chaucer highlighting the specific intellectual short-comings of a medieval epistemological framework derived from Aristotle, I argue that Chaucer instead builds from a literary tradition begun with the *Romance of the Rose* that saw the tentative value of rejecting (or at least questioning) reason and its relation to literary undertakings.

[4] D. W. Roberston, *A Preface to* Chaucer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 474–74; Ida L. Gordon, *The Double Sorrow of Troilus: A Study of Ambiguities in 'Troilus and Criseyde'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970).

inventional impetus as working in opposition to the figure who, through the mediation of the *Rose*, had come to represent rationality itself. Instead of anticipating the ending's turn heavenward, the call to Tisiphone undercuts the narrator's final attempts at imposing a hegemonic Boethian hermeneutic. What the opening suggests is that consolation lies not in the dogma of Lady Philosophy but in the misrule of the lacerating muses.

The furious invocation's translation and evocation of the *Consolation*'s first metrum locates Chaucer's narrator in an identical dramatic situation as the lamenting Boethius using an almost identical language. In the starting lines of the *Boece*, Chaucer shows his Boethian speaker compelled toward the melancholic composition of elegy without agency; he is driven by the violence of the muses which causes him to create a verse bathed in tears:[5]

> Allas! I wepynge, am constreyned to bygynen vers of sorwful matere, that whilom in florysschyng studie made delitable ditees. For lo, rendynge muses of poetes enditen me to thynges to ben writen, and drery vers of wretchidness weten my face with verray teres. (I. met. i, 1–6).

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[5] As Anders Cullhed points out, "The sentimental Muses who are dismissed at the beginning of the *Consolation* epitomize the irrational kind of poetry that relies on fables and fabrications, leaving all intellectual or moral responsibility aside" (*The Shadow of Creusa: Negotiating Fictionality in Late-Antique Latin Litearature* [Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015], 441). Anna Crabbe, noting that the meter of Boethius's opening poem recalls Ovid's *Tristia*, argues that the *Consolation*'s banishing of the Muses represents specifically a banishing of Ovidian authorship ("Literary Design in the De Consolatione Philosophiae," in *Boethius: His Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Margaret Gibson [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991], 245). Also see Joachim Gruber, *Kommentar zu Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae*, 2nd rev. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2006) 54–61.

For Chaucer's Boethius, writing poetry is hardly an intellectual endeavor. Almost anticipating the Wordsworthian sense of invention, the "rendynge muses" whip the poet into emotional torment, and his artistic responsibility is but transferring sorrowful overflow into language. Within their act of inspiration, the muses serve as the principle literary agent—they "enditen" the poet—and the poet but a text.[6] The muses, through their "rendynge," compose the writer who then proceeds to give their "drery vers" material form. Reason enters not into such a system of poetics, and perhaps this is why Lady Philosophy later takes such a vehemently oppositional stance to "thise comune strompettis" (I. pr. i, 49). To write for the muses requires a denial of the mean, a complete submission to the unrestrained excess of sense.[7]

Like Boethius (and Amant at the close of Guillaume's section and at the beginning of Jean's), Chaucer shows his narrator to be a "sorwful instrument" who calls on a higher power "for t'endite / thise woful vers that wepen as I write" (I.6–7). Wracked

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[6] Chaucer later reuses this formulation of the inspired poet being *endited* during the invocation to Mary in the Second Nun's Prologue: "Thou confort of us wreches, do me endite / Thy maydens deeth" (VII.32–33). See Lynn Staley, "Chaucer's Second Nun and the Strategies of Dissent," *Studies in Philology* (1992), 314–33. For discussion of "enditen," see Anne Middleton, "Chaucer's 'New Men' and the Good of Literature in the *Canterbury Tales*," in *Literature and Society*, ed. Edward Said (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 15–56. Also see *Boece*, I. pr. i, 44–47: "And whan she saughe this poetical muses approchen aboute my bed and enditynge wordes to my wepynges, sche was litil amoved, and glowede with cruel eighen." Again, the muses, and not the poet, are the ones responsible for the "enditynge" of poetic discourse.

[7] As Raymond Barfield notes, writing for the Muses also entails writing a verse subject to the ravages of temporality (*The Ancient Quarrel Between Poetry and Philosopy* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 86–97). For Boethius, then, the rejection of the Muses' inventional capacities in favor of that of their philosophical counterpart enables the composition of a more permanent text—the dream of Chaucer's narrator at *Troilus*'s close.

by a sadness in need of expression, the narrator finds himself in the same initial situation as Boethius, a parallel enhanced through shared diction. Interestingly, the correspondence in language does not extend to the "rendynge muses," who are replaced by an invocation to Tisiphone. The act of invoking the hellish sister also appears in Book 1 of the *Thebaid*, where Oedipus prays that she show favor to his *votum perversum* and inflict torment on Polyneices and Eteocles (I. 56–87).[8] In Canto IX of the *Inferno*, we see her among her infernal brood, the *meschine de la regina de l'etterno pianto*, wailing down at Dante and Virgil from a high tower of Dis, menacing with threats of eternal damnation (IX. 44–5).[9] Chaucer's familiarity with both works makes it quite possible that either instance could have informed his invocation, particularly with regards to its petitionary and sorrow-laden contexts. I would suggest, however, that the call to Tisiphone primarily strives to reimagine Boethius's "rendynge muses" through Virgil's *Aeneid*.[10] Like Dante, Virgil in Book IV shows Tisiphone to be a sinister inhabitant of the underworld. Instead of a doleful terror confined to a towering precipice, Virgil's Tisiphone serves as Tartarean guard and punisher, sleeplessly watching the entrance to the underworld while distributing punishment to the guilty:

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[8] Quotations from Statius are drawn from *Thebaid*, Vol. 1, Books I–VII, ed. and trans. by D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[9] Quotations from Dante are drawn from *The Divine Comedy*, ed. and trans. by Charles S. Singleton. 6 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

[10] Though scholars have long realized the *Aeneid*'s presentation of the Furies as an analogue to the opening of *Troilus*, no one, at least to my knowledge, has put this source in conversation with Metrum 1 of the *Consolation*.

> Straightway avenging Tisiphone, girt with the lash, leaps on the guilty to scourge them, and with left hand brandishing her grim snakes, calls on her savage sister band. (IV.571–73)
>
> [Continuo sontis ultrix accincta flagello
> Tisiphone quatit insultans, torvosque sinistra
> intentans anguis vocat agmina saeva sororum.][11]

Virgil emphasizes violence over emotion. Brandishing a whip and a fistful of serpents, Tisiphone falls into her prey with no hint of sadness or remorse. The image of the Fury tearing at the guilty, tormenting the damned souls with *flagello*, resonates with that evoked by Boethius's *carminae lacerae* and Chaucer's "rendynge muses." Middle English "renden," while denoting a generalized form of torture and violence, often refers to a whip's tearing of the flesh.[12] The opening invocation to Tisiphone, then, gives specific mythological form to the generalized body of muses in the *Consolation*; it does so by picking up on and concretizing the suggestiveness of the muses' violence, which recalls directly that of the Virgilian Fury's.[13]

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[11] Quotations from Virgil are drawn from *Aeneid*, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–IV*, ed. and trans. G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[12] See, for example, *The Castle of Perseverance*, which uses "renden" to express both a sorrowful and scourging act: "To Mankynd I ney ny, Wyth rewly rappys he schal be rent" (2783), in *The Macro Plays,* ed. M. Eccles (London: EETS 1969), 1–111.

[13] By bringing concrete form to Boethius's broadly generalized depiction of the *carminae*, Chaucer follows the trend of late-medieval commentators, who sought to identify Boethius's vaguely sketched figures with more precise classical exemplars. See Graham N. Drake, "The Muses in the *Consolation*: The Late Medieval Mythographic Tradition," in *New Directions in Boethian Studies*, ed. Noel Harold Kaylor and Phillip Edward Phillips (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007), 170.

Locating this reimagining within a direct translation of Metrum 1 has the effect of reinforcing the parallels between the two inspiring forces while also emphasizing their disparate functions, particularly with respect to invention. In the *Consolation*, the Muses represent a non-agential model of literary creation, where writing occurs through, but not because of, the poet. Although this model does appear in *Troilus*—particularly in the narrator's later denials of authorial responsibility ("For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I," II.18)—at the poem's inception we get a slightly different sense of his text's relation to such an irrational mode of imaginative production. When the narrator calls to Tisiphone, he refigures the inspirational exchange effected by her Boethian analogues. Where the muses "enditen" the weeping Boethius—composing the poet so that he can compose his lamentations—at the opening to *Troilus* it is the narrator who hopes "t'endite." In shifting the subject of Boethius's diction, Chaucer shows his narrator taking on an active role during the course of the poem's genesis: he is not possessed fully by his muse, but retains some measure of control while crafting his work. Tisiphone gives the text discursive form—its "sory chere"—but not its substance. This revision of Metrum 1, brings reason back into poetic invention. The narrator seems to exhibit some intellectual agency over his *endytnge*. Doing so, however, requires that he assimilate the precise animating capacity of Lady Philosophy's principal foes: "T'endite" like the "rendynge muses" entails embracing their methods, that he use the power of unrestrained sense to forward literary aspiration.

Channeling Boethius's muses through Tisiphone, the narrator does not attach to his source of inspiration the implications of reprobation underlying the rending, constraint, and dreariness inflicted by the *carminae*. Boethius gives little reason to doubt

or question Lady Philosophy's stance and actions toward the poetical "mermaydenes" (69).[14] As a woman of "imperial authority," Lady Philosophy delivers the normative doctrine of Boethius's prosimetrum and her banishment of the muses in turn represents, within the *Consolation*, a proper course of action. Chaucer's narrator hardly subscribes to this understanding. Rather, he views the aid of a furious muse as an object of intense desire. He yearns to be like Boethius before the intervention of that heavenly figure of rationality, to compose, not dispel, "a drery vers of wretchidness" using the violent and emotional fury of a "rendynge muse."

The allusions, translation, and revision of Boethius constitute an expectation that hints at the imminent arrival of a celestial instructor to replace those irrational "strompettis." Chaucer upsets this expectation by leaving his narrator fully in the care of "the poetical muses," who enable the telling of Troilus's love. In effect, the verses that follow the narrator's call to Tisiphone stage an alternative literary history: they imagine a *Consolation* where Lady Philosophy never made her heavenly descent, where the narrator must find instead solace in the figures who "destroyen the corn plentyvous of fruytes of resoun' (I. Pr. I, 56–57). This is not to say that Lady Philosophy finds no correlative in *Troilus*. Her replacement, though, is not philosophical doctrine but a tale coded from the opening line as emblematic of misrule ("the double sorwe of Troilus to tellen"). On the one hand, with this substitution Chaucer recuperates the virtue of earthly poetry from the *Consolation*'s spurning—from the muses' product the narrator does, after all, come to the same conclusion as Boethius, realizing that "al nys but a faire / this world that passeth

[14] For discussion of Boethius's application of the literary tradition linking the Muses, the Sirens, and literary invention see, Eric Kaiser,"Odyssee-Szenen als Topoi," *Museum Helveticum*, 21.2 (1964), pp. 109–36; 21.4, pp. 197–224; and Cullhed, *The Shadow of Creusa*, 440.

soone as floures faire" (V. 1840–41).[15] On the other hand, the invocation generates for misrule a value other than that taken from lessons derived in its aftermath. Not only does the opening of *Troilus* show the narrator's creation to rely on an irrational form of invention directly countering that of Boethius—thus showing the centrality of misrule to literary production—but it also creates, through its intertextual markers, a demand for emotional rescue. What finally alleviates the narrator's initial sorrow is not Boethian contempt, but rather the bliss derived from a narrative of transient desire.

II

For Troilus and modern critics alike, to love Criseyde is never so simple as simply loving Criseyde; that is to say, the amorous attachment to the Trojan widow entails a desire for her not only as an individual but for the array of abstract and universal attributes she comes to represent. This moment of rational processing hardly proceeds along a singular course. Readers of Criseyde have seen in her a range of often contradictory symbolic meanings.[16] The ability of Chaucer's fictional construct to sustain the burden of such a

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[15] Brenda Deen Schildgen reads the *Canterbury Tales* as enacting a similar response to Lady Philosophy's banishment of poetic fictions ("Boethius and the Consolation of Literature in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*," in *The Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question*, ed. Leonard Michael Koff and Brenda Deen Schildgen [Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000], 102–27).

[16] Robert O. Payne, for instance, argues that all the poem's major figures are "basically representative [. . .] and that their conventional fixity [allows] them to work out the logic of their positions without the chance inconsistences and non sequiturs of actual existence," and sees Criseyde as an emblem of "self-deceiving meretriciousness" (*The Key to Remembrance*: *A Study of Chaucer's Poetics* [Westport, CT: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1977], 223–24). In a similar vein, D. .W Robertson reads Criseyde as representing "a self-love that seeks the favor of fortune" (*A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962], 486). David Aers attempts to restore to Criseyde a measure of individuation and to

varied set of interpretations betrays the opacity at the core Criseyde's character, a quality repeatedly commented upon by figures from both within and without the poem's fictive worlds.[17] As I shall argue, this opacity stems not from a vacuum in Chaucer's invention, but rather from how the poet overlays onto Boccaccio's more worldly and sensually motivated Criseida an intimate affinity with rationality as presented in the *Rose*.[18] A

Chaucer a poetic practice that accounts for the contemporary position of women (*Chaucer, Langland, and the Creative Imagination* [New York: Routledge, 1980]). More recent critics, although careful not to reduce Criseyde to static symbol, still locate in her construction a variety of potential messages, fictions, critiques, and ideological narratives. Anne McTaggart asserts that Criseyde embodies shame and its capability for rewriting an externally imposed subjectivity ("Shameless Guilt: Criseyde, Dido, and Chaucerian Ethics," *The Chaucer Review* 46 [2012], 371–402). Holly Crocker understands Criseyde to dramatize how "women's fortitude enacts self-destruction" ("'As false as Cressid': Virtue Trouble from Chaucer to Shakespeare," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 43 [2013], 313).

[17] See Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 154; E. T. Donaldson, *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970); repr. (Durham N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1983), 83; Gretchen Mieszkowski, "Chaucer's Much Loved Criseyde," *The Chaucer Review* 26 (1991), 109–32; Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 28–87; C. David Benson, "The Opaque Text of Chaucer's Crisyede," in *"Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. A. Shoaf (Binghamton, NY: Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies, 2002), 17–28. For an important reading challenging this position, see Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 157–87.

[18] Harold Kaylor also sees Criseyde as embodying Boethian rationality. Where Kaylor goes on to contend that the poem's tragic motion emanates from reason's failure to bridle sensuality, I argue just the opposite ("Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyede* and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*," in *To Make his English sweete upon his tonge*, ed. Marcin Krygier and Liliana Sikorska [New York: Peter Lang, 2007], 110–19).

figure and voice of reason, Criseyde embodies the inherent dangers of loving the mean and the potential for literary elevation once this love is abandoned.

Chaucer shows Criseyde's love, like Troilus's, to be an act of volition rather than sudden, uncontrollable rapture.[19] She chooses to love Troilus—the choice is not made for her by passion—and she bases this choice on an aesthetic of love whose foundation is reason. For Criseyde, desire is a performance of the will, actively generated following a period of calculation that gauges both the methodology of courtship and the object of love's compatibility with proportion and temperance. Pandarus, as if aware of her criteria for amorous evaluation, capitalizes on her sense of rational propriety at the outset of his "paynted process," telling her that his "requeste is naught but skylle, ywys / Ne doute of resoun, pardee is ther noon" (II.335–36).[20] In this reckoning, love and reason are interchangeable, a union Criseyde continues to ponder following her uncle's departure as she meditates in her chamber alone:

> In every thyng, I woot ther lith mesure,
>
> For though a man forbede dronkenesse,
>
> He naught forbet that every creature
>
> Be drynkeles for alwey, as I gesse.

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[19] For a discussion of Troilus's reasoned love, see Mary Carruthers, "Virtue, Intention and the Mind's Eye in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Traditions and Innovations in the Study of Medieval English Literature: The Influence of Derek Brewer*, ed. Charlotte Brewer and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer 2013), 73–87.

[20] As the *Middle English Dictionary* notes, "skylle" refers to "the intellectual faculty of reason," "reasonableness," or "that which is reasonable." In these lines, then, with both "skylle" and "resoun" conferring identical meanings, the lexical variance allows Pandarus to get across a sly tautological argument: Troilus' argument is skillful, or reasonable, because there is no lack of reason in it.

Ek sith I woot for me is his destresse,

I ne aughte nat for that thing hym despise,

Sith it is so he meneth in good wyse.

(II.715–21)

Here, Chaucer casts Criseyde as a voice of reason in a dual sense. First, he draws these lines directly from Raison's discourse in the *Rose*.[21] Ventriloquizing Jean's figure, Criseyde literally speaks reason. Second, the content of the material speaks to a doctrine of measure, one that condemns extremes to value the mean. Middle English "meneth" can take on the sense familiar to modern ears of "to mean" or "to intend," but it also can denote to lament or to bewail, the connotation that seems to be active in this context.[22] Criseyde can begin to accept Troilus' love because he demonstrates his sorrow "in good wyse" or in good "mesure," a sense that builds upon the potential for pun in "*mene*th." For Criseyde, reason and desire are not opposites, but inextricably mixed in form and function: reason generates a desire which is then regulated by reason.

Much as Jean depicts his Raison as capable of Echo-like flights of fury, so too does Chaucer show Criseyde as susceptible to the irrational pull of the senses. Those famous lines, "who yaf me drinke," delivered after gazing upon the war-torn prince, indicate all too clearly that Criseyde's love is not without its occasional rational transgress.[23] As she noted before, however, God "naught forbet that every creature be

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[21] *Roman de la Rose*: "If I forbid drunkeness, I do not wish to forbid drinking. Such a course would not be worth a grain of pepper" ["Por ce se je deffent ivrece, / ne voil je pas deffendre a boevre, / ce ne vaudroit un grain de poevre"] (5714–16).

[22] *Middle English Dictionary*, s. v. "meneth."

[23] Most readings of these lines draw connections among Criseyde's "drynke," irrationality, violence, and tragedy, particularly with the possible allusion to the love potion of Tristan and

drynkeles alwey." Even at the moment when she finally relents to desire and gives into the carnality of appetite, she does so out of the same motivations that led Raison to descend from her tower:

> And gan bet mynde and reson to hym take,
>
> But wonder soore he was abayst, iwis;
>
> And with a sik, whan he gan bet awake,
>
> He seyde, "O mercy, God, what thyng is this?"
>
> "Why do yet with yourselven thus amys"
>
> Quod tho Criseyde, "Is this a mannes game?
>
> What, Troilus, wol ye do thus for shame?"
>
> (III. 1121–27)

This moment, absent in Boccaccio's account, reenacts the initial entrance of Lady Raison in Guillaume's section of the *Rose*: Just like Amant, Troilus finds himself overcome by extreme emotion, "sorwe, or fere," and depending on the intervention of an otherworldly lady—a characteristic emphasized by Troilus's calling on divine aid for perception and comprehension—who appears from above ready to restore him to "mynde and reson."[24] Criseyde's working to better Troilus's rational capacities attempts more than a restoration

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Iseult. See Barry Windeatt, "Love," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350–c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2009), 327–33; Nicky Hallett, "Women," in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 486–88; Catherine S. Cox, *Gender and Language in Chaucer* (Gainsville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1998), 49–52. In a more recent interpretation, Thomas Hill advances the interesting notion that even at this moment when Criseyde claims sensory inebriation "she is able to exhibit here the kind of rational control espoused by Troilus" (*She, this in blak: Vision, Truth, and Will in Geoffrey Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde* [New York: Routledge, 2006], 73).

[24] The spatial positioning, with Criseyde descending to Troilus's level, can be inferred from the nature of Troilus's swoon: "And down he fel al sodeynly a-swone" (III.1091).

of consciousness. At this point, in fact, Troilus has already regained consciousness ("he gan his breth to drawe, / And of his swough sone after that adawe," II.1120) following Pandarus's and Criseyde's more physiological attempts at resuscitation ("therwith his pous and paumes of his hondes / They gan to frote, and wete his temples tweye," II.1114–15). "Amys" and stripped of gender ("Is this a mannes game"), Troilus, like Amant's use of "coilles," occupies a semiologically displaced position; he has become a sign without identifiable referent and thus contrary to rational order.[25] Criseyde, marshaling the powers of Raison's daughter Shame, must instruct Troilus in proper symbolic congruence. He must learn to love with reason before he can love Criseyde.

Chaucer's depiction of Criseyde is an average one. During her initial appearance she stands "makeles" in "beaute," filling the palladium temple with a "goodly lokyng that gladed al the preses," who until that moment had "nevere yet seyn thyng to ben presyed derre" (I.172–74). Her opening portrait, largely according with the standards of medieval romance, hovers at the level of vague abstraction as if her figure exceeds the expressive capacities of language and specific detail.[26] Transcendent within Troy's fictive walls, Criseyde's beauty has struck many as entirely conventional, leading to a critical focus on the three physical traits that imbue her with a modicum of individuation (her "widewes

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[25] By calling attention and critiquing Troilus's slippery semiology, Criseyde mirrors Chaucer's own investigation into language that unfolds across the poem. Eugene Vance observes that in *Troilus*, "Chaucer remains centered upon language as a privileged field of aggression; and so he probes that more quiet calamity that begins in the dislocation of signs in the desiring psyche, where promises, meanings, values, and truth are quite simply forgotten" ("Mervelous Signals: Poetics, Sign Theory, and Politics in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *New Literary History* 10 (1979), 329.

[26] N. E. Griffin, "Chaucer's Portrait of Criseyde," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 20 (1921), 39–46; Louis A. Haselmeyer Jr., "The Portraits in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Philological Quarterly* 17 (1933), 220–23.

habit blak," her hair "ytressed" and bound "with a thred of gold," and her "browes joyneden").[27] Although Chaucer's representative strategy is not without certain uniqueness, I argue that it is actually the averageness of Criseyde's depiction that is central to our understanding of her role within the poem. Paradoxically, such averageness is not entirely average in itself. Chaucer relies heavily upon literary conventions in her making, but they are not the expected conventions attached to a romance beloved alone. Rather, Chaucer constructs Criseyde using the tropes and language of the Middle Ages' premiere emblem of the mean, Lady Raison, and in doing so further establishes Criseyde as a Trojan embodiment of rationality.

Toward the middle of Book V, in lines absent in Boccaccio's account, Chaucer gives us perhaps the most telling portrait of Criseyde in the entire poem:[28]

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[27] Laura F. Hodges, "Criseyde's 'widewes habit large of samyt broun' in *Troilus and Criseyde*" in *New Perspectives on Criseyde*, ed. Cindy L. Vitto and Marcia Smith Marzec (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 2004), 37–58; Derek Brewer, "The Ideal of Feminine Beauty in Medieval Literature, especially Harley Lyrics, Chaucer, and some Elizabethans," *Modern Language Review* 50 (1955), 257–69. Jacqueline Tasioulas, "The Idea of Feminine Beauty in *Troilus and Criseyde*, or Criseyde's Eyebrows," in *Traditions and Innovation in the Study of Medieval English Literature*, 117–27.

[28] These lines reiterate and amplify Criseyde's description in Book I: "Criseyde was this lady name al right. / As to my doom, in al Troies cite / Nas non so fair, forpassynge every wight, / so aungelik was hir natif beaute, / That like a thing inmortal semed she, / As doth an hevenysh perfit creature, / That down were sent in scornyge of nature" (I.99–105). Joseph of Exeter's description does make mention of Criseyde's "medium" qualities: In medium librata statum Briseis heriles / Proit in affectum vultus. Nodatur in equos / Flavicies crina sinus, umbreque minoris / Delicias oculos iunctos suspendit in arcus. / Diviciis forme certant insignia morum, / Sobria simplicitas, comis pudor, arida numquam / Poscenti pietas et fandi gracia lenis" (4.156–62). Also see Benoit de Sainte-Maure, *Roman de Troie*, 5275–88 and Guido de Columnis, *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, p. 85.

Criseyde mene was of hire stature;

Therto of shap, of face, and ek of cheere,

Ther myghte ben no fairer creature.

But for to speken of hire eyen cleere,

Lo, trewely, they written that hire syen

That Paradis stood formed in hire yen.

(V.806–17)

This is a dramatic revision of Boccaccio, who simply describes Creseid as "grande" (I.27).[29] For Chaucer, Criseyde's otherworldly, inexpressible beauty depends upon her affinity with the mean. Middle English "stature" refers not just to one's height but can take on a more comprehensive denotation to indicate one's body or generalized physical appearance.[30] Criseyde is mean of stature, and thus in shape, face, and cheer there can be no fairer creature. The beauty Troilus finds so striking at the palladium is then one of proportion, of ratio, and, consequently, of reason, a connection reinforced by her "eyen cleere" that reflect heaven's grace.[31] Although Criseyde's intimate link to a heavenly

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[29] Quotations from Boccaccio are drawn from *The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio*, ed. and trans. Nathaniel Edward Griffin and Arthur Beckwith Myrick (New York: Biblio and Tannen, 1967).

[30] *Middle English Dictionary*, s. v. "stature."

[31] As Peggy Knapp points out, the relationship between Criseyde's medial qualities and her beauty is heavily indebted to Neoplatonic aesthetics (*Chaucerian Aesthetics* [New York: Palgrave-McMillan, 2009], 113). Also see Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 17. Chaucer's most direct and influential encounter with this aesthetic system was likely through the mediation of Jean de Meun. For discussion of Neoplatonism and the *Rose,* see Winthrop Wetherbee, *Platonism and*

mean is suggested in Guido and Benoit, her description in Book V almost directly translates the reckoning of Raison put forth in Guillaume's section of the *Rose*:

> But she was neither yong ne hoor,
>
> Ne high ne lowe, ne fat ne lene,
>
> But best as it were in a mene.
>
> Hir eyen twoo were cleer and bright
>
> As oony candell that brenneth bright
>
> ----------
>
> Hir goodly semblaunt, by devys,
>
> I trowe were maad in paradys,
>
> For Nature hadde never suche a grace,
>
> To forge a werk of such complace.
>
> (B.3205–08)

Both figures, with their clear gaze, beauty that scorns nature—something that Chaucer, in lines that again translate the *Rose*, emphasizes again in Book I's description of Criseyde as "lik an hevenyssh perfit creature, / That down were sent in scornynge of nautre" (I.105–05)—and ethereal points of origin, exude a medial characteristic that enables a rapturous reception and, as I shall go on to demonstrate, inflects ideology. Most surprisingly, perhaps, is the correspondence in age. Critics of *Troilus* have long puzzled over why the narrator, immediately following this account of Criseyde's rational beauty, chooses to admit a gap in his knowledge—"But trewely, I kan nat telle hire age"

Poetry in the Twelfth Century: The Influence of the School of Chatres (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

(V.826).[32] Perhaps rather than a coy attempt at omission, the narrator's uncertainty instead displays Chaucer's continuing appropriation of the *Rose*. The narrator, after all, finds himself in an identical situation as Amant, who only knows that Raison is neither young nor old. They both face the impossible challenge of concretely depicting a figure who exists outside reductive extremes and instead occupies the narrow aesthetic space of divine balance.

On first reading, the placement and timing of Criseyde's rationalized *descriptio* in the middle of Book V can seem redundant, problematic, or out of place.[33] After all, why would Chaucer choose to hold off the most vivid portrait of his titular character until the poem's close? The choice certainly plays into the poem's well-documented symmetrical structure wherein Chaucer restages the pattern of courtship detailed in books I–III but at a highly accelerated pace and with the crucial substitution of Diomedes for Troilus.[34] By

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[32] John M. Bowers, "'Beautiful as Troilus': Richard II, Chaucer's Troilus, and Figures of (Un)Masculinity," in *Men and Masculinities in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Tison Pugh and Marcia Smith Marzec (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008), 9–27; Derek Brewer, "Troilus's 'Gentil' Manhood," in *Masculinities in Chaucer: Approaches to Maleness in the Canterbury Tale and Troilus and Criseyde*," ed. Peter Beidler (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1998), 237–52; Piero Boitani, "Antiquity and Beyond: The Death of Troilus," *The European Tragedy of Troilus*, ed. Piero Boitani (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 1–19; A. C. Spearing, *Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde* (London: E. Arnold, 1976), 22.

[33] Noting the curious placement of Book V's *descriptio* of Criseyde, especially the new and specific details delivered regarding her hair-style and eyebrows, Laura Hodges suggests that Chaucer is working to associate Criseyde with the *Rose*'s Joy and to "cast further doubt upon Criseyde's character" ("Criseyde's 'widewes habit large,'" 56).

[34] John McCall, "Five Book Structure in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 23 (1962), 297–308; Barry Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 180–211; Donald R. Howard, "Experience, Language, and Consciousness: *Troilus and Criseyde*," in

concentrating many of the previous descriptors attached to Criseyde, Chaucer reestablishes Criseyde as an object of incipient desire, rather than of appetite fulfilled, and looks forward to the intervention of Diomedes. This descriptive moment functions, however, not only as foreshadowing, but also posits a rationale for Criseyde's subsequent decisions within the literary context of the *Rose*. Right before the final turn from Troilus, Chaucer emphasizes Criseyde's affinity with the "mene," using physical appearance to merge and build upon philosophical outlook, to imply that the transference of love, and in effect the poem's tragic structure, depends on the nature of such intertextual relations. Chaucer's poem effectively imagines what would happen if Amant accepted Lady Raison's offer, what would happen if he learned to love the mean rather than excess carnality. To love Criseyde is to love the mean, but it turns out that to love the mean is to end in tragedy.

Chaucer's tragedy of reason continues to play out in his representation of Criseyde's decision to remain outside of Troy, which shifts the nature and target of the *Filostrato*'s critique. Whereas Boccaccio used Criseida's betrayal as proof of women's inability to regulate their desires, how "giovone donna è mobile, e vogliosa / È negli amanti molti" ["a young woman is fickle and is desirous of many lovers"] (497), Chaucer makes the opposite case, locating reason, not sensuality, at the center of Criseyde's decision.[35] "With wommen fewe, among the Grekis strong," and with escape from the

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Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies, ed. Jerome Mandel and Bruce A. Rosenberg (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press) 172–92.

[35] Many scholars have observed the rationality undergirding Criseyde's decision to remain among the Greek; unlike Boccaccio's Criseida, wantonness factors little into her final choice. See Robert apRoberts, "The Central Episode in Chaucer's Troilus, *PMLA* 77 (1962), 373–85; Louise O. Fradenburg, "'Our owen wo to drynke': Loss, Gender, and Chivalry in *Troilus and* Criseyde," in

armed camp an impossibility (V.688–721), Criseyde finds herself forced out of the comfort of equilibrium and into an emotional state of excessive fear. To regain her sense of balance, her "mene," Criseyde makes an even exchange, transferring allegiance to a figure, who, as Jennifer Summit notes, is "entirely interchangeable with Troilus."[36] Indeed, Lady Raison herself would find little fault in Criseyde's reasoning following Diomede's persuasive "arguynge" and her ultimate decision to remain outside Troy's walls (V.771):

> Retornying in hire soule ay up and down
> The wordes of this sodeyn
> Diomede, his grete estat, and perel of the town,
> And that she was allone and hadde nede
> Of frendes help; and thus bygan to brede
> The cause whi, the soth for to telle,
> That she took fully purpose for to dwelle.
>
> (V.1023–29)

Chaucer emphasizes Crisyede's agency and rationality—her ability to temper desire for Troilus for the possible and the probable—in the depiction of her decision not to flee to

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"Subgit to alle Poesye", 88–106; Carolyn P. Collette, "Criseyde's Honor: Interiority and Public Identity in Chaucer's Courtly Romance," in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture*, ed. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994), 47–55; George Sanderlin, "In Defense of Criseyde: A Modern 'Scientific' Heroine," *Language Quarterly* 24 (1986), 47–48. Noting the similarities in dramatic situations between Criseyde and Boethius, Sally Slocum tentatively suggests Diomedes as analogue to Lady Philosophy ("Criseyde Among the Greeks, *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 87 [1986], 374).

[36] Jennifer Summit, "*Troilus and Criseyde*," in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006), 235.

Troy, which in essence represents her decision not to return to Troilus. Criseyde's acceptance of Diomedes is a decision based on logic, calculation, and survival: it is born of reason, not passion.[37] She turns Diomede's words up and down, she ponders fully her situation and the solutions he provides, before she then "took fully purpose" to cut all ties with her former home. Considering the futility of escaping a prescient father, the chance of being captured and treated as a spy, and the "jupartie" of falling "into the hondes of some wrecche," succumbing to passion equates quite simply to death or worse. With Criseyde in such a precarious situation, her reason, already a central component of her subjectivity, hardly needs to expend any effort to turn her from desire. Criseyde's decision enacts the counsel Raison offers to Amant: "lasse harme is, so mote I the, deceyve them than decyved be" (Frag. B, 4841–43). With logic coopting *trouthe*, deceit represents an acceptable consequence of motivated self-interest. As such, Criseyde embodies both the form and doctrine of Guillaume's and Jean's celestial lady, and her

[37] Early critics draw upon this calculating aspect of Criseyde as a central piece of evidence in their condemnations of her character. J. S. P. Tatlock, for instance, writes, "None of this is mere coquettish pastime, for which she is in no mood, but there is also no love, nor even desire—it is mere calculation" ("The People in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *PMLA* 56 [1941], 99). Also see Albert S. Cook, "The Character of Criseyde," *PMLA* 22 (1907), 531–47; Arthur Mizener, "Character and Action in the Case of Criseyde," *Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism*, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), 348–65. Unlike these early readers, my goal in drawing attention to this calculating element is not to impart moral judgment on Criseyde, but rather to show how Chaucer's construction enters into a literary tradition stemming from Boethius and the *Rose* to narrativize the ends of reason.

exchange of partners, far from a betrayal to sensuality, simply plays out the logical conclusion of her guiding principle.[38]

Criseyde also fictionalizes Chaucer's rational skepticism in the modes of literary production she defines, employs, and represents. A number of critics have shown how Chaucer repeatedly associates the Trojan widow with authorship and interpretation. Carolyn Dinshaw, for instance, sees Criseyde as an embodiment of a distinctly feminine reading practice, one that "goes beyond licit or proper awareness; it is potentially disruptive of orderly, logical, linear narratives that have well-delimited boundaries" while refusing "the totalizing imposition of control" of masculine readers.[39] Reversing Criseyde's role in the literary experience, Jennifer Summit reads Criseyde as an author-figure who inhabits "a position of textual uncertainty and vulnerability akin to Chaucer's self-representation as a medieval poet."[40] Criseyde defines her function as text, reader, and writer around a poetics of inscrutability. Her compositions evade simple interpretation. As Charles Muscatine notes, "her ambiguity is her meaning."[41] Most attribute the opacity of Criseyde's literary dimensions to an absence in her construction:

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[38] George Lyman Kitterage long ago noted, "She has acted in obedience to her own code, and our ethical system has no status in the case" (*Chaucer and His Poetry* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1915], 132).

[39] Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics*, 53–54. Also see Kara Doyle, "Criseyde Reading, Reading Criseyde," in *New Perspectives on Criseyde*, 75–110.

[40] Jennifer Summit, "*Troilus and Criseyde*," 239. For further accounts of Criseyde's relationship to poetry and authorship, see Jennifer Summit, *Lost Property: The Woman Writer and English Literary History, 1380–1589* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 49–60; and Peter G. Beidler " 'That I was born, alas': Criseyde's Weary Dawn Song," in *New Perspectives on Criseyde*, 255–76.

[41] Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition*, 154.

sketched primarily in broad abstractions with crucial details blatantly omitted ("But wheither that she children hadde or noon, / I rede it naught, therfore I late it goon" I.132–33), Criseyde is a tabula rasa upon which readers impose meaning. As I have shown earlier, however, much of the ambiguity of Criseyde's description stems from her affinity with the *Rose*'s Raison, and I would extend this line of reasoning to include her mode of authorship as well. It is not absence that characterizes the poetics associated with Criseyde but presence—the presence of reason—which Chaucer depicts as the problematic source of her textual mystique.

Criseyde defines herself as writer during the two moments where she actually undertakes written composition—moments that serve as fictions of authorship—and it is in these points that we can glean best the causal relationship between rationality and "textual uncertainty." Criseyde's begins her first composition shortly following Pandarus's delivery of Troilus's confessional missive. Although new to the world of writing ("God help me so, this is the firste lettre / That evere I wroot, ye, al or any del" II.1213–14), Criseyde hardly needs the sort of detailed instruction Troilus requires of Pandarus (a topic I address in the following section). While she follows Pandarus's advice to "at the leeste thonketh" Troilus, Chaucer emphasizes the singularity of her letter's invention and composition ("And into a closet, for t'avise hire bettre, / She wente allone" [II.1215–16]). Criseyde determines for herself the creative principles which generate the work. But where the narrator closely details the contents of Troilus's letter, how he "wrot right in this wyse" (II.1064), Criseyde's remains, to both the narrator and to readers, distant, enigmatic:

> Of which to telle in short is myn entente
>
> Th' effect as fer as I kan understone.

She thanked hym of al that he wel mente

Towardes hire, but holden hym in honde

She nolde nought, ne make hireselven bonde

In love; but as his suster, hym to plese,

She wolde fayn to doon his herte an ese.

(II.1219–25)

Criseyde's letter adheres to the precepts of her literary predecessor. Following Raison, who demands that Amant "leave particular loves," Criseyde refuses to "make hireselven bonde / in love," and instead—and again in language drawn directly from Raison—opts for a love that accords with rational doctrine: the "love of freendshipp [. . .] which makith no man don amys" (5201–02).[42] The creative processes behind the letter's composition work toward a transformation of pleasure from sexual to platonic, from passionate to reasonable. In contradistinction to Troilus and Pandarus, writing's end for Criseyde—at least at this moment—is the mediation of desire. The narrator, however, seems unable to apprehend fully her language, as if he had reached a particularly difficult or even corrupted section in his source text. What he "kan understonde" is but the "effect" and not the content or *sentence*, and even then, of the "effect" he conveys but an abbreviated version ("Of which to telle in short").

Criseyde's second letter, which appears at the close of Book V and which E. T. Donaldson has described as "one of the most poisonously hypocritical letters in the annals of literature," displays this same curious tension between reason and its

[42] See *Romaunt*, "Love of freendship also ther is, / which makith no man don amys" (B.5201–02).

textualization.[43] In response to Troilus's plea for explanation regarding "hire tariynge," she crafts a document that aims for "gret effect [. . .] in place lite," reassures him that she remains a "frende," and attests to her unwavering plans of return (V.1575–1629). That Criseyde's writing practices follow precisely that of the narrator during his treatment of her initial composition suggests that her new, necessarily counter-rational mode of discursive production enters into the fiction of creation undergirding *Troilus* itself.[44] Perhaps it is this strategic alignment that now allows the narrator to accomplish what he could not before—the complete transcription of her language. In a section most manuscripts demarcate as the *Litera Criseydis*, the narrator shows exactly how she "wrot hym ayeyn, and seyde as ye may here" (V.1590).[45] The letter's content is, of course,

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[43] E. T. Donaldson, *Chaucer* (New York: Norton, 1970; repr. Durham, N.C.: Labyrinth Press, 1983), 80.

[44] Of the Trojan widow's pragmatically poetic tactics within the Greek camp, Barbara Nolan writes, "Criseyde is, in this regard, not unlike her translator, Chaucer the poet. Like her, he prefers to go on 'breding' a kind of poetry that shows humans as subjects habitually troping whatever mortal spaces they inhabit for the sake of comfortable dwelling and love" ("Chaucer's Poetics of Dwelling in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Chaucer and the City*, ed. Ardis Butterfield [Oxford: D. S. Brewer, 2006], 74. A number of other scholars have found Criseyde's final letter to be one of the most highly wrought compositions within the poem. Martin Camargo, for instance, traces Criseyde's application of the medieval *ars dictaminis* and finds her craft to be remarkably "effective" (*The Medieval English Verse Love Epistle* [Tubingen, Germany: Niemeyer, 1991], 83). Also see John McKinnell, "Letters as a Type of Formal Level in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Essays of Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Mary Salu (Suffolk, UK: Boydell and Brewer, 1979), 73–89; Monica McAlpine, *The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 87–89.

[45] See, Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, MS 61; University Library, Durham, Cosin MS V.II.13; MS Harley 2280, British Library; MS Harley 1239, British Library; MS Harley 2392, British Library, St. John's College, Cambridge, MS L.1; Huntingdon Library HM 114. MS Rawlinson Poet. 163, Bodleian Library labels the letters as "The lettre of Cresseid," while MS

largely doubleness, Crisyede having "took fully purpose there to dwell" some five hundred lines earlier. Her compositional end-point has slid from desire restraining to desire enabling. As I have already attempted to show, Chaucer codes Criseyde's decision to linger in the Greek camp as an effect of her bond to rationality, but that decision finds no articulation here. Although her actions build from a calculated restraint of want, her writing builds from a refusal to put such reason into language. Instead, she crafts in her letter the fiction the narrator wishes he could, a fiction where she retains her "trouthe of love" and where she is not "rolled [. . .] on many a tonge" (V.1055–1061).

Both letters demonstrate Criseyde's well-documented literary opacity. Indeed, Chaucer anticipates his readers' somewhat puzzled response to her writing and dramatizes it within his text first through the narrator's limited ability to "understonde" her first letter and then again when Troilus finding her second "al straunge" (V.1632). In each instance, this strangeness or distance emerges precisely from an unintelligibility of material Chaucer demarcates, through intertextual and doctrinal echoes to the *Rose*, as emblematic of reason. Whereas the narrator proves unable to textualize Crisyede's first letter—a passion subduing and pleasure revising discursive venture—he succeeds with the second because of the dramatic turn in Criseyde's compositional ends as well as the lack of measured dogma. The second letter expresses "routhe" not reason and this in turn

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Arch. Selden, Supra 56, Bodleian Library labels it "Littera Crisede versus Troili." For scribes', transcribers', and readers' intense interest in the poem's epistles, see Julia Boffey, "Annotation in Some Manuscripts of *Troilus and Criseyde*," *English Manuscript Studies 1100–1700* 5 (1995), 1–17; and C. David Benson and Barry Windeatt, "The Manuscript Glosses to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Chaucer Review* 25 (1990), 33–53; Martha Dana Rust, "'Le Vostre C.': Letters and Love in Bodleian Library Manuscript Arch. Selden B.24," in *New Perspectives on Criseyde*, 111–38.

allows for its linguistic actualization.[46] Although the two works embody two dramatically different modes of creative practices, they both highlight an absence that implies that it is possible to talk *about* reason, but not to talk reason, that the articulation of rationality is a troubled and ever-faltering endeavor. With Criseyde's letters, Chaucer even goes as far as to suggest that not only can reason not take textual form, but that its presence actually prevents the poetic enterprise. These paired moments of composition trace a progression of Criseyde's authorship that moves from a remote didact preaching passion subdued to a creator of fictional worlds that stand against the constraints and pressures of history. To become a writer able to succeed where Chaucer's narrator fails, Criseyde must reject the moderating impulse of reason.

III

More than any other figure in the poem, Pandarus highlights the uncomfortably central position occupied by transient, earthbound pleasure in the *Troilus*'s ethical and poetic enterprise. The go-between, above all, values "casuel pleasuance," which he understands as fleeting sensuality, and to reach his amatory ends he relies on the capacities of the literary arts.[47] In this way, Pandarus models his authorship on Jean de

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[46] Owen Boyton demonstrates Chaucer's dynamic use of *routhe* throughout the poem, and argues that by the time Criseyde departs from Troilus and Troy *routhe* comes to mean "a lament or despair at what cannot be" ("The *Trouthe*/*Routhe* Rhyme in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Chaucer Review* 45 [2010], 239). *Routhe*, in other words, signifies a mode of composition, precisely what rationality is not. For the importance of *routhe* to Criseyde's character and motivations, see Kate Bauer, "Criseyde's Routhe," *Comitatus* 19 (1988), 1–19.

[47] Pandarus has long been recognized as an author-figure. See John M. Flyer, "The Fabrications of Pandarus," *Modern Language Quarterly* 41 (1980), 115–30; Evan Carton, "Complicity and Responsibility in Pandarus's Bed and Chaucer's Art," *PMLA* 94 (1979), 47–61; Thomas Van, "Chaucer's Pandarus as an Earthly Maker," *Southern Humanities Review* 12 (1978), 89–97;

Meun, aspiring to recreate for Troilus the same explosive consummation of desire that awaits Amant at the conclusion of the *Roman de la Rose*. Pandarus authors fictions for the pleasure of the now, but he does so through a rationally driven discursive practice; the teachings of Raison become a vehicle to consummate desire. Steeped in a literary tradition initiated by Boethius and continued and amplified by the *Rose*, Pandarus enters Chaucer's fiction as an agent and apparatus of reason. He censures Troilus for his floundering in lovesick inertia and then becomes the means by which the prince can return to productive being. To accomplish his task, Pandarus dons the poet's laurel and structures his inventions and argumentations around principles of measure. When the go-between lays bare his compositional methodology, he reveals a discursive practice that aims at cognitive restoration and that adheres to a consistent authorial intention expressed through moderated language and form. While this form of writing's ideological drive, intellectual aspirations, and stylistic mode neatly align with Raison's poetics, Pandarus finally subordinates such qualities to the pleasure of content and craft.

At first glance, Raison, of all the figures in the *Rose*, seems to have the least in common with Pandarus, the primary enabler of earthly desire in Chaucer's poem.[48] And

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Edvige Giunta, "Pandarus: Process and Pleasure in Artistic Creativity," *Medieval Perspectives* 6 (1991), 171–77; Nevil Coghill, *The Poet Chaucer*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 55; Rose A. Zimbardo, "Creator and Created: The Generic Perspective of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *The Chaucer Review* 11 (1977), 283–97.

[48] The *Rose*'s pervasive influence on Chaucer's construction of Pandarus has been well documented. C. S. Lewis sees Duenna as the most relevant analogue to the go-between (*The Allegory of Love*, 180). Charles Muscatine argues that "Ami, is indeed, what Pandaro's Italian dualism must have called up in Chaucer's mind" (*Chaucer and the French Tradition*, 141). On Pandarus as a Jean's Genius, see John V. Fleming, "'Smoky Reyn': From Jean de Meun to

even though readers place Pandarus, however partially, within the same literary genealogy as Raison by recognizing the many similarities between him and Lady Philosophy, such connections generally are taken as either subversive or ironic.[49] I argue, however, that while Chaucer undoubtedly embeds a good deal of humor in these *Raison*able resonances, that the moments take on a more nuanced functionality.[50] Chaucer constructs Pandarus from the conventional well-spring of Guillaume de Lorris's Raison, but proceeds beyond emulation to imagine a solution, albeit tenuous one, to the *Rose'*s seemingly impossible split between transient pleasure and rational being.

The initial encounter between Pandarus and Troilus in Book I restages the initial encounter between Amant and Raison in Guillaume's section of the *Rose* but with dramatically different results. The image of Troilus, "wel neigh wood" with "wo," sitting in his chamber alone with his lovelorn despair, recalls Amant's solitary sorrow that

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Geoffrey Chaucer," in *Chaucer and the Craft of Fiction*, ed. Leigh Arrathoon (Rochester, MN: Solaris Press, 1986), 1–21; and Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets*, 76.

[49] Alan Gaylord, "Uncle Pandarus as Lady Philosophy," *PMASAL* 46 (1961), 571–95; Bernard L. Jefferson, *Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1917), 123–38. For reappraisals of such ironic intertextuality, see Martin Camargo, "The Consolation of Pandarus," *The Chaucer Review* 25 (1991), 214–228; Anne Payne, *Chaucer and Mennipean Satire* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), 86–158.

[50] John Fleming writes that "Pandarus' doctrines echo at different times nearly all of Love's preceptors from the *Roman de la* Rose, including Cupid, Lady Reason, Friend, La Vielle, Nature, and Genius (*Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's Troilus* [Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1990], 98). While Fleming and others have noted some of the similarities between the two figures, no one, at least to my knowledge, has undertaken a sustained study, especially one that understands the parallels as more than ironic.

precedes the intervention of Raison (I.498–99).[51] Having established contextual congruity, Chaucer dilates such allusive potential and links Pandarus's mediation in the affair to Troilus's breach of rational decorum. Troilus tells his "fulle frende" that "desir so brennyngly" affects him that "to ben slayn were a gretter joie / to me than kyng of Grece ben and Troye" (I.607–610). Troilus's burning passion has made death more appealing than the prospect not simply of ending the siege, but of ending the siege and then subjugating Greece under Trojan rule. Desire for Criseyde has voided desire for civic production.[52] Such passionate counter-production offends Pandarus's reasonable sensibilities and constitutes a major component of his discourse. Taking the same admonitory tone as Lady Raison, Pandarus upbraids Troilus, censuring him for his "litargie," likening him to "an asse to the harpe [. . .] so dul of hys bestialite" (I.730–35).[53] Pandarus envisions himself as the means of correcting Troilus's slip into lethargy. He will himself bring Troilus back under reason's sway:

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[51] Of course, this situation also parallels that which occurs at the opening of the *Consolation*. What aligns Chaucer's depiction more with the *Rose*, however, is the nature of Troilus's suffering, which stems, like Amant's, from an inability to attain the love object that dominates his mind. Compare these lines in *Troilus* to the analogous scene in the *Rose*: "And I, all sool, disconsolat, / was left aloone in peyne and thought; / for shame to deth I was nygh brought. [. . .] I trowe nevere man wiste of peyne, / but he were laced in loves cheyne" (B.3167–78).

[52] Pandarus's first encounter with the lovelorn Troilus occurs well after Troilus's initial heroism on the battlefield, where he was "founde oon the beste" (I.474). While Troilus's love initially had productive consequences, when Pandarus comes across the lamenting prince his passion has brought him to a state of sloth.

[53] For medieval authors and audiences, beasts were an emblem of unreason: Henry Lovelich, *The History of the Holy Grail*, ed. F. J. Furnivall, vols. 1–2, EETS ES 20, 24 (1874, 1875; reprint as one vol. 1973); vols. 3–5, EETS ES 28, 30, 95 (1877, 1878, 1905; reprint as one vol. 1996): "He [. . .] wasful of coruptioun as ony tigre [. . .] owther ony other savage beste that han non Resoun"

Now know I that ther reson in the failleth.

But tel me, if I wiste what she were

For whom that the al this mysaunter ailleth,

Dorstestow that I tolde in hire ere

Thi wo, sith thow darst naught thiself for feere,

And hire bysoughte on the to han som routhe?

(I.764–69)

It seems the emotional overflow plaguing Troilus has brought the prince outside of amorous production as well, which Pandarus takes as a sure confirmation of Troilus's cognitive impairment. Wallowing in "mysaunter," with Criseyde completely unaware of his love, Troilus assents to passionate stasis, choosing to remain haunted by imagination with little desire for achievement in the real. Pandarus requests the lady's name so that he might effect some "routhe" and in doing so return to Troilus a measure of production, of rationality. Pandarus, however, does not promise to *restore* Troilus's failed reason; rather, he offers to *become* his reason. In Pandarus's reckoning, Troilus has no role in the attainment of "routhe." Pandarus shoulders the burden of achievement to become the means by which Troilus negotiates imaginative obsession and returns to socially and amorously productive engagement. Pandarus, as the figure of enabling mediation, becomes the prince's rational prosthesis.

(25.296); *Middle English Sermons from British Museum MS Royal 18 B.xxiii,* ed. W. O. Ross, EETS 209 (1940; reprint 1987): "The beestes also, þat knew no reson, fell on her knees and worshipped oure Saviour" (316.26); *Three Prose Versions of the Secreta Secretorum,* eds. R. Steele and T. Henderson, EETS ES 74 (1898; reprint 1973): "What ioye ys to þe to vse þe vyce of bestys þat hauen no resoun, and folwyn her dedys?" (58.5).

When Pandarus commences the courtship of Criseyde in Book II, his rhetorical and doctrinal modes grow organically from his status as intellectual proxy. First approaching Criseyde with news of Troilus's love, he indicates hazily that he comes bearing a "requeste" that is "naught but skylle" with "no doubte of resoun" (II.365–66). When Criseyde presses him for further explanation, he unveils his true intent while dilating upon his obedience to a separate but central facet of reason's dogma:

> "Now em, quod she, "what wolde ye devise?
> What is your reed I sholde don of this?"
> "That is wel seyd," quod he, "Certein, best it
> That ye hym love ayeyn for his lovynge,
> As love for love is skilful guerdonyge."
>
> (II.388–392)

Emotion does not enter into the Pandarus's calculating sense of love, only equilibrium. Criseyde must requite Troilus's love because it is the "skilful" thing to do. Balance must be restored. Though Pandarus shifts his *Raison*-able affinity from a reason of temperance to a reason of measure, he does not cast off his previously displayed devotion to Guillaume's more economic reckoning, but in fact blends the two models. He sees Criseyde's reciprocating love as a "guerdonyge"—a reward or repayment for that which Troilus has already invested in the widow without her knowledge or consent.[54] Criseyde has unwittingly incurred a debt from an ominously powerful paymaster. A failure to

[54] Lydgate, too, when later reproducing and inverting these lines in *Troy Book*, connects "guerdonynge" to proper rational conduct: "For riȝt requereth, and also good resoun, Þat deth for deth is skilful guerdonynge" (3.3147). Quoted from *Lydgate's Troy Book, A. D. 1412–20*, ed. Harry Bergen, 4 vols., EETS ES 97, 103, 106, 126 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., 1906–35).

repay would constitute Troilus's love as capital needlessly spent, an unthinkable sin for those beholden to the cult of reason.[55]

Pandarus's art engages reason for its extrinsic and productive functions. He understands rationality not as an end in itself but a means of the continued achievement of sensuality. Shortly following Book III's moment of consummation, Pandarus, in lines drawn from Jean and absent in Boccaccio, continues offering instruction in the rationally discursive craft of love:

> Thow art at ese and holde the wel ther-inne,
>
> For also seur as reed is every fire,
>
> As gret a craft to kepe wel as wynne.
>
> Bridle alwey thei speche and thi desire;
>
> For worldy joie halt nought but by a wire.
>
> That preveth wel, it brest al day so ofte;
>
> For-thi nede is to werken with it softe.
>
> (III.1632–38)

Pandarus codes the maintaining of "ese" and "wel" as a "craft" tied directly to the authorship of discourse. His form of love is artisanal and sensual. He promotes a system of creative methods, a poetics, founded on the regulation of language and emotion, and, implicitly, of emotional language. Pandarus's ideal author is a figure steeped in doubleness, one able to veil design beneath an indirect form of discursive self-presentation. Even though Pandarus suggests that the author bridle his speech and

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[55] Pandarus's representation of love as a form of transaction connects with R. A. Shoaf's reading of the go-between as the poem's consummate "bargainer" whose "paynted process" is a form of "merchandizing." See *Dante, Chaucer, and the Currency of the Word: Money, Images, and Reference in Late Medieval Poetry* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1983), 115–18.

desire—taking up, as Chaucer goes on to do in the *Canterbury Tales*, an authorial persona rather than speaking directly—he nevertheless presents the art as a sexually charged undertaking. The Pandarian craftsman must "werken with it softe." Throughout *Troilus*, Chaucer uses "softe" as a gendered qualifier that repeatedly appears in the context of femininity and carnal desire. For instance, in Book III alone, "softe" appears nine times with each instance describing the moment, or moments leading up to, the consummation of Troilus's and Criseyde's love (perhaps most famously in the *effictio* of Criseyde where the narrator hones in on her "armes smal, her back streight and softe," III.1247). Pandarus sees the artist as redirecting desire rather than doing away with it. Art conceals but does not destroy. Surprisingly, the formulation of Pandarus's poetics, which subordinates rationality as ancillary to pleasure, achieves the same ultimate effect of Raison's admonition against passionate love, specifically when she tells Amant that "whoever accords with Raison will never love *par amour* nor value Fortune" ["quiconque a Reson s'acorde / ja mes par amors n'amera / ne Fortune ne prisera"] (6854–65). Where Raison sees herself as Amant's only means of escaping the perils of a Boethian universe, Pandarus's poetics operate on precisely the opposite assumption. For the crafty go-between, the fickleness and transience of "worldly joie" can be overcome not through disavowal or transcendence but through artful maintenance.

Pandarus most fully theorizes his imaginative practices when expounding to Troilus upon the *ars dictaminis*, a mode of writing intimately bound to the poetic arts.[56]

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[56] This blending of poetry and the *ars dictaminis* plays out concretely in the long version of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Documentum*, which Martin Camargo describes as an "attempt to join the *ars dictaminis*—the art of composing correct and decorous prose, chiefly in letters—and the *ars poetriae* in a single, unified, and comprehensive art of written discourse" ("Toward a

After Pandarus begins his "hous to founde," artfully delivering the tale of love to his niece, he suggests (subtly demands really) that Troilus follow his authorial trace:

> I woot wel that thow wiser art than I,
>
> A thousand fold, but if I were as thow,
>
> God help me so, as I wolde outrely
>
> Of myn owen hond write hire right now
>
> A lettre, in which I wolde hire tellen how
>
> I ferde amys, and hire biseche of routhe.
>
> Now help thiself, and leve it nought for slouthe.
>
> (II.1002–08)

Opening with the sort of humble self-degradation repeatedly invoked by the narrator, Pandarus, employing a doubleness of meaning, advises that Troilus both begin composition immediately ("write hire right now") and that he "write hire right," that he construct his letter by adhering to the aesthetic program laid out by the failed lover but master craftsman. Pandarus sees the content of the letter as a textualization of the scene from Book I wherein Troilus laments his plight in solitude, lethargically trapped in "mysaunter" while his "reson [. . .] faileth." As I have shown earlier, Chaucer codes this scence as a moment of rational outsourcing. Unlike that earlier moment, however, now it is not Pandarus who will "hire bysoughte on the to han som routhe" but Troilus who will

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Comprehensive Art of Written Discourse: Geoffrey of Vinsauf and the *Ars dictaminis*," *Rhetorica* 2 [1988], 168). On Chaucer's engagement with and application of the *ars dictaminis*, see Ann W. Astell, *Chaucer and the Universe of Learning* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 166–67; John H. Fisher, *The Importance of Chaucer* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), 37–69; and John M. Crafton, "Chaucer's Treasure Text: The Influence of Brunetto Latini on Chaucer's Developing Narrative Technique," *Medieval Perspectives* 4–5 (1989–90), 25–41.

"hire biseche of routhe." The repetition of diction suggests a moment of transition, albeit a partial one. Composition, for Troilus, becomes a means of attaining a measure of reason that had been previously absent. Writing enables him to fill the role previously occupied by Pandarus. Chaucer shows writing to function simultaneously as an instrument of rationality and of desire: bringing Troilus one step closer to the fulfillment of his passionate intent while also bringing him into productive thought and action, the discursive craft imagined here effects a harmony deemed impossible by Lady Raison.

Although the authorship of the letter is a collaborative one, the invention and aesthetic are solely of Pandarus's devising. Augmenting his instruction, Pandarus dictates the missive's ideal method of style and delivery:

> Towchynge thi lettre, thou art wys ynough.
> I woot thow nylt it dygneliche endite,
> As make it with thise arguments tough;
> Ne scryvenyssh or craftyly it write;
> Biblotte it with thi teris ek a lite;
> And if thow write a goodly word al softe,
> Though it be good reherce it nought to ofte.
>
> (II.1023–29)

Troilus, already possessing great intellectual skill and cunning, must moderate the expression of such virtue so as not to appear overambitious.[57] Like Pandarus, the narrator,

[57] These lines reiterate the process of *endytyng* Pandarus himself employed earlier during his encounter with Criseyde: "Than thought he thus: 'If I my tale endite / Aught harde, or make a proces any whyle, / She shal no savour have therein but lite, / And I trowe I wolde hire in my wil bigyle; / For tendre wites wene al be wyle / Theras thei kan nought pleynly understone; /Forthi

and even Chaucer himself, Troilus must humble himself before his audience, denying and obscuring artifice and grandeur. To be an artist demands first a denial of artistry.[58] The primary variable comprising Pandarus's formula for effective compositional beauty is thus proportion, measure, ratio, reason. Such reason is of function and not of virtue. The go-between puts reason to work and transforms it from a vehicle of self-realization into one of self-concealment. Within Pandarus's mode of authorship, reason fills the place of artifice or craft, but by veiling desire with the rhetoric of temperance it becomes artifice itself, made operative and marshaled toward the passionate ends of its apparent opposite.

The system of poetics Pandarus lays out in Book II builds from his earlier citation of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's analogy equating the poet to the house-builder. Following his warning against "scryvenyssh or craftyly" written compositions, Pandarus reminds Troilus to "hold of thi matere / the forme alwey and do that it be like" (II.1039–40). Both theorists promote an imaginative writing whose discursive expression is governed by a clear framework. A poem or letter is akin to a living organism: for it to be considered aesthetically sound it must grow naturally, proportionally, and therefore rationally. Pandarus develops such organic implications by adding Horace to his pantheon of authorial masters, and tells Troilus "for if a peyntour wolde peynte a pyk, / with asses feet and heede it as an ape / it cordeth naught, so nere it but a jape" (II.1041–43). In a striking reconfiguration, Pandarus transforms Horace's theory of mimesis, which dealt originally

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hire wit to serven wol I fonde" (II.267–73). Pandarus thus puts into practice the theories he espouses.

[58] This refusal of agency and artistry is also central to Chaucer's representation of his own brand of authorship. See, Robert R. Edwards, "Authorship, Imitation, and Refusal in Late-Medieval England," in *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship*, ed. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (Tubingen: Narr Verlag, 2011), 51–74.

with proper representation, into a comprehensive theory of written form. Instead of simply avoiding chimeras or mutant pike at the level of content, the poem, in Pandarus's reckoning, cannot itself take such abominable form. This aesthetic, though undoubtedly beholden to Horace, is also a *Raison*-able one, for it follows the logic governing the lady in the tower's condemnation of euphemistic language. Like the ass-headed fish or Amant's *coilles*, the chimeric poem stands outside standard representational correspondence; its irrational combination of unlike parts results in the disruption, or perhaps corruption, of interpretation.

But where Geoffrey of Vinsauf sees the poet plotting, shaping, and forming his text as leading to the expression of a clearly imagined and *sententia* or idea, Pandarus sees the author's craft as directed to a pleasure pure, simple, and comfortably fleeting. Such a poetics finds realization in the figure of the "beste harpour," who comes to represent an ideal model of authorship. Pandarus advises Troilus to follow the prepared *harpour*, the one with "nayles pointed nevere so sharpe" (II.1034). The sharpened nails indicate forethought, preparation, the skilled honing that precedes the materialization of sound and lyric. Without this instrumental stage of composition, the *harpour* "should maken every wight to dulle / to here his glee and of his strokes fulle" (II.1035). Playing on the sonic interchangeability between "wight" and "wit," Pandarus emphasizes the place of cognition within the aesthetic experience: dull nails dull an audience *and* their minds, which effectively denies art its chance of success. It is especially interesting how Pandarus defines this success, however, because the mind takes a relatively limited role. The *harpour*'s song refuses to elevate the wit in any manner. There is no refashioning of the listener's ethical being. There is no instruction to digest or lesson to derive. Rather,

the wit serves the "wight" in comprehending the "glee" and "strokes fulle," the pleasure and skilled craft, of the artist. The aesthetic experience is one of vicarious and passing delight delivered through a highly wrought medium, something both Pandarus, in the joy drawn from the unfolding of his love drama, and the narrator, in the bliss brought to him by the first half of his author's excellent narrative, enact and confirm during their engagement with ecstatic art. The pleasure of the watching, listening, or reading audience is the pleasure of pleasure skillfully represented.

With Pandarus, Chaucer attempts to resolve what Guillaume and Jean—in Amant's twice-staged refusal—depict as an irreconcilable yet impossible divide between reason and desire. In the *Rose*'s narrative, Raison cannot rule while Amors holds his court, but neither can she extricate herself from his sway. She despises yet remains subject to passionate love. Her language arts seek to oust passion for philosophy, but in the end her attempted coup sputters out in miserable fashion. Rather than understanding the *Rose* as a satiric attack on courtly love whose ultimate message is that given voice by Lady Raison, Chaucer instead approaches the text more cognizant of its aporias and tensions. Chaucer reads Raison in the same fashion that Shakespeare would later read Pandarus—by picking up on the text's subtle contradictions and dark implications and then proceeding to amplify them to reach a vastly altered, nearly unrecognizable, end result.[59] Realizing and heightening the problematic nature of Raison's refutation of corporeal and textual delight, Pandarus brings reason and desire from discord to harmony

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[59] On Shakespeare's method of reading and rewriting of *Troilus* see, E. T. Donaldson *The Swan at the Well: Shakespeare Reading Chaucer* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press); Ann Thompson *Shakespeare's Chaucer: A Study in Literary Origins* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1978).

through the poetic arts. He invents, organizes, and delivers narrative through rational form and artifice to allow audiences to experience the temporary bliss of sensuality. And, in the end, his art does succeed, however transitory it may prove. He completes his "hous," that is, the lovers brought to a "blisful nyght" whose otherworldly "delit or joie" the narrator cannot communicate in the least (III.1310–11). Pandarus never promises more than a "casual pleasaunce," but what his art finally achieves is the experience of "as muche joie as herte may comprende" wherein the pressures of history, fortune, and literary determinism temporarily subside. The siege and the inevitability of betrayal drop out for a world of jousting, feasts, hawking, and poetry (III.1716–1820), a world of pure pleasure, where inspired songs bring audiences to "hevene" and where "Pride, Envye, Ire, and Avarice" are nowhere to be found.[60] Pandarus creates, through his foolish art, a heaven on earth, which, though destined like all good things to pass, is hardly a mean feat.

IV

The ending and its Boethian intertextuality reaffirm the narrator's decision to slight Lady Philosophy in the opening invocation by demonstrating the capabilities of a poetry that "destroyen the corn plentyvous of fruytes of resoun." Troilus's ascent to the eighth sphere, his looking down on "this wrecched world" and holding "al vanite / to respect of the pleyn felicite / that is in hevene above" serves as an example, for both the

[60] It should be noted that Chaucer does make brief mention of the "townes werre" during the closing bliss of Book III: because of his consummated love Troilus "was, and ay, the first in armes dyght, / And certeynly if that bokes erre, / Save Ector most ydred of any wight" (1772–75); however, rather than casting a grim shadow on the momentary perfection effected by Pandarus's art, Chaucer shows the opposite to occur—the love transforms war from violence, aggression, and horror to a simple means of "his ladies thank to wynne" (1777).

narrator and his audience, to follow suit and recognize the "false worldes brotelnesse" and to "casteth up the visage to thilke God" (V.1817–39).[61] In this regard, a tale of rational transgression invented through rational transgression has attempted and achieved—a success dramatized in the affective response of the narrator to his own work—an end preached but never accomplished by Lady Raison. This Boethian turn from the material world, while certainly advanced by the narrator, steps away from a poetics of misrule in its trajectory of ethereal edification. Such a literary experience precipitates transcendence, which strips passion, transience, and worldly attachment of intrinsic value.

Although the casting off of the mundane is essential to the departing *sentence*, the incompleteness of the narrator's consolation in philosophy quietly hints at an incompleteness in poetic method. The allusive cues at the poem's inception suggest that the narrator, like Boethius, will cast off his initial anxiety, fear, and sorrow through the attainment of higher understanding. Chaucer's ending, however, upsets this expectation: the narrator, still wracked with sorrow over his narrative's tragic end ("weilaway"), now

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[61] For Robertson, this moment represents "what Chaucer has to tell us about love, not only here but in *The Canterbury Tales*, and in all the major allegories as well. It is his 'o sentence.' It is, of course, also the message of the Bible, of the *Consolation of Philosophy*" (*A Preface to Chaucer*, 501). Pushing back against the Roberstonian exegetes, other early readers such as E. Talbot Donaldson (*Speaking of Chaucer*, 100) build from C. S. Lewis's assessment (*The Allegory of Love*, 43) of the closing as a palinode and saw unresolvable contradiction in its condemnation of the worldly joy that seemed so celebrated but a short space prior. More recent readings have attempted to embrace the manifold discourses of love operative throughout the poem and understand, as Barry Windeatt does, "the poem's conclusion itself to be included as not more than one among that multiplicity" ("*Troilus and Criseyde*: Love in a Manner of Speaking," in *Writings on Love in the English Middle Ages*, ed. Helen Cooney [New York: Palgrave-McMillan, 2006], 95).

finds his concern compounded by uncertain conditions of transmission, the possible blame of misreading, and a retrospective scorn for his very own poetic medium ("Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche / In poetrie if ye hire bokes seche" V.1854–55). The narrator, in fact, seems worse off than when he began his writing.[62]

This is not to say, however, that he never reaches consolation during the course of his poem's composition. What brings him solace is not the abstract and detached promise of the spheres, but the vicarious, textual delight of an amorous fiction that erases memory, momentarily stepping outside of the demands of history and into a delay of the senses.[63] The proem to Book III testifies to the consolation the narrator attains in irrational love. In appropriating for the narrator Troilo's love song, which Boccaccio originally drew from Book II, Metrum VIII of Boethius's *Consolation* (and perhaps inflected by Dante), Chaucer shows his narrator experiencing, through fiction, the same rapture felt by the characters in his source and gaining, through overwhelming textual pleasure, an awareness of the cosmic being Lady Philosophy allows only to philosophical introspection. The narrator has completely forgotten his tale's tragic conclusion. Immersed in the "blissful light of which the bemes clere / adorneth al the thridde heven faire," the poet finds his Boethian sorrow expelled by a realization of love's joining of

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[62] On the narrator's miserable suffering throughout Book V, see Mark Lambert, "Telling the Story," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 91–92.

[63] This literary delay, what Erasmus would call *mora*, is central to Chaucer's poetic strategy following Book III. As A. C. Spearing note, "Chaucer writes with increasing diffuseness in books 4 and 5 in order to take up time, so as to put off getting to a conclusion he knows to be inevitable" ("Time in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Traditions and Innovations in the Study of Medieval English Literature: The Influence of Derek Brewer*, 64). Also see, Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 206.

"heven and helle," "earthe and salte see," "man, brid, best, fissh, herb and grene tree" (III.1–10). The poetry of "heele and gladnesse," which is also the poetry of Pandarus, has brought the narrator to consolation through worldly connectivity.

The narrator ostensibly seeks bring resolution to his poem by rejecting Pandarus and his sense-oriented literary doctrine to imply that pleasure belongs in poetry only so long as it leads to intellectual elevation. Once audiences reach a higher awareness, pleasure, like Pandarus, must be silenced and displaced. The intense connections between the two figures, particularly in methods of authorship, negate a complete excision of the go-between's poetics of "pleasaunce" from the *Troilus*'s literary tectonics.[64] Even as the narrator condemns "thise wrecched worldes appetites," he does so through what may very well be the most highly wrought language in the entire poem.[65] Warren Ginsberg notes that both the narrator's plea for lovers "to repeyreth home from worldes vanytee" and his closing prayer to the Trinity depend on language and imagery that recall that the passing pleasure of the love affair.[66] Try as the narrator might to distance his text from the pull of worldly sensuality, the literary bliss of Venus's and Pandarus's art—its

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[64] The parallels between Pandarus and the narrator are vast and well-documented. See, for instance, Adrianne Lockhart, "Semantic, Moral, and Aesthetic Degeneration in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Chaucer Review* 2 (1973), 100–118; E. Talbot Donaldson, "Chaucer's Three P's: Pandarus, Pardoner, Poet," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 14 (1975), 289–90; John J. McGavin, *Chaucer and Dissimilarity: Literary Comparisons in Chaucer and Other Late-Medieval Writing* (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2000), 162–167; Rosemarie P. McGerr, "Meaning and Ending in a 'Painted Proces': Resistance to Closure in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *"Subgit to alle Poesye"*, 195.

[65] See James Dean, "Chaucer's *Troilus*, Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, and the Poetics of Closure," *Philological Quarterly* 64 (1985), 181–83.

[66] Warren Ginsberg, "Aesthetics *Sine Nomine*," *Chaucer Review* 39 (2005), 238–39.

relishing of artifice and form, its appeal to the pleasure of sense—lingers even through the promised end. In comparison with this transient sublime, contempt can only prove an insufficient substitute.

Although the narrator clearly acknowledges "that Criseyde was untrewe," and rejects, in his firm imposition onto the narrative of a Boethian morality, the ambiguity of Criseyde's textuality, much of her authorial model emerges finally as desirable and even exemplary. Criseyde's final letter to Troilus and her last appearance within the poem create a fiction where she remains true, where her name is not published far as a synonym for unfaithfulness. Her refusal to textualize the reason of her abandoning Troy enables the imaginative composition of the narrator's desired narrative, something explicitly recognized at the poem's close. The narrator will not blame Criseyde, but tells his audience that they "may hire gilt in other bokes se" (V.1776), and focuses not on the lack of feminine steadfastness, as Boccaccio does, but broadens his critique to target mutability in general.[67] He has reached this dark finale with reluctance and would rather have written another tale altogether: "And gladlier I wol write, yif yow lese / Penelopees trouthe and good Alceste" (V.1777). He would rather have written a story of love's stability; he would have rather written Criseyde's fiction.

This desire to imitate Criseyde's authorship complicates the standard reading of the narrator's writerly journey, which sees across the poem's composition a transition from courtly maker reveling in the false heights of terrestrial lust to a Dantean poet whose newfound empyrean orientation allows entrance into the *bella scola*. In this reading, what enables literary apotheosis is a rejection of literary misrule for the

[67] James Dean, "Chaucer's *Troilus*, Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, and the Poetics of Closure," 179.

stabilizing potential of moral edification. The poetics of Pandarus and Criseyde are not cast off so easily and this closing transformation is far from stable in itself. When the narrator sends off his "litel myn tragedye," he also sends off the narrative conditions that brought about his Boethian epiphany in the first place. He prays that in the future he be sent "some myght to make in som comedye" (V.1788). What he hopes to compose is *Troilus and Criseyde* without the last two books, to follow Pandarus's craft without the unfortunately tragic consequences.[68] Through this desire, Chaucer shows the narrator's apparent ascent to the Dantean literary cosmos to "passeth soone as floures," just like the worldliness he denies. In the end, all that remains firm is the lasting appeal of a poetry whose end is a delight in form and a heavenly pleasure unrestrained.

[68] Rather than a form of writing with firmly established generic markers, Middle English "comedye" denoted more broadly "a narrative with a happy ending" or "any composition intended for amusement" (*MED* s. v. "comedie"). As Lydgate defines it in *Troy Book*, "A comedie hath in his gynnyng [. . .] a maner compleynyng, / And afterward endeth in gladnes" (2.847).

Chapter Three

Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the Aftermath of Literary Passion

John Gower's *Confesso Amantis* is a poem that builds from and plays on the irresolution that remained in the silence of Guillaume de Lorris. Guillaume's portion of the *Rose* left its readers with a stark divide between reason and sensuality that Jean's satiric amplification only widened. A work deeply influenced by the *Rose*, the *Confessio* repeatedly gestures toward a solution to the dilemma precipitated by Guillaume's absence, hinting at the possibility of "a weie / As love and reson wolde accord" (VIII.2022–23), only to show the potential solution to be partial and wanting.[1] And although Gower puts much of the *Confessio*'s frame-tale and many of its stories to work in underscoring the often dangerous effects of passionate love on the rational faculty, the condemnations of a "love, which is unbesein / Of alle reson" do not extend, at least not in full, to the literary arts (VIII.153–54). As I will suggest in this chapter, it is when the *Confessio* turns the

[1] On the *Rose*'s influence, see James Dean, "Gather Ye Rosebuds: Gower's Comic Reply to Jean de Meun," in *John Gower: Recent Readings*, ed. R. F. Yeager (Kalamazoo, MI: Western Michigan University, 1989), 21–37; Ardis Butterfield, "Articulating the Author: Gower and the French Vernacular Codex," *Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003), 80–96; María Bullón-Fernández, "Gower and Ovid: Pygmalion and the (Dis)illusion of the Word," in *Through a Classical Eye: Transcultural and Transhistorical Visions in Medieval English, Italian and Latin Literature in Honour of Winthrop Wetherbee*, ed. Andrew Galloway and R. F. Yeager (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 363–80. Quotations from the *Confessio* are drawn from *The Complete Works of John Gower*, 4 vols., ed. G. C. Macaulay, EETS e.s. 81–82 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1899–1901).

topic of foolish love inward during its fictions of authorship and discussions of writing that impossibility of mending the *Rose*'s division becomes most fruitfully apparent.

Authorship and poetics have been and still are a central topic for scholarship on the *Confessio*. In his seminal study of medieval authorship, A. J. Minnis demonstrates how Gower, in assuming the role of the politically and ethically savvy philosopher, carefully manipulates the academic tropes of the *auctor* to create the impression for his work of "a verifiable English classic."[2] Reading Gower's tales of fathers and daughters as fictions of authorship—narratives that reflect back upon the poet's purpose and relation to his material—María Bullón-Fernández asserts that Gower defines his authorial project through multiplicity. As emblems of literary practice, the *Confessio*'s narratives of incest make the claim that "the author of a work abuses his power when he tries to impose a one-sided interpretation upon his work, trying to prevent it from producing meaning beyond his control."[3] J. Allen Mitchell similarly recognizes Gower as a poet of opacity who refuses to subscribe to or represent a singular perspective. For Mitchell, "Gower's work is a *liber exemplorum* that is comprehensive rather than coherent."[4] Robert R. Edwards, examining Gower's "poetics of the literal," shows that "Gower's literalism operates as a project to recover signification so that words align with ideas and ideas align with things in

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[2] A. J. Minnis, *Medieval Theories of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (London: Scolar Press, 1984), 177–90, here 177.

[3] Bullón-Fernández, *Fathers and Daughters in Gower's Confessio Amantis: Authority, Family, State, and Writing* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000), 2.

[4] J. Allen Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 37; Also see James Simpson, *Sciences and the Self in Medieval Poetry: Alan of Lille's Anticlaudianus and John Gower's Confessio amantis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 7.

order to advance a project of reform."[5] Malte Urban sees Gower in the *Confessio* as a poet of extremes: he writes on the fringes of language and morality, interpretation and ambiguity, challenging the normative and the acceptable through the creative imagination.[6]

In this chapter, I aim to demonstrate how the great medieval debate between reason and sensuality enters into this critical conversation and provides an important lens for understanding Gower's authorship and poetics. I argue that irrational passion offers to Gower an epistemology, an aesthetic, and a lexicon for imagining and describing his role as an author and the nature of poetry. A love outside of reason structures the way Gower thinks about and talks about poetry's ability to shape knowledge and represent beauty. A love outside of reason patterns Gower's authorial self-fashioning and drives the creative mechanisms—namely invention and style—put to use in bringing the *Confessio* from nebulous idea to material text. As a moral poet, one who hopes to better king or country through poetic making, Gower does, of course, express some reservation about an unproductive poetry based on unmeasured emotion and at times works to couple language to reason.[7] Even at these moments, Gower never dismisses the function of desire within the literary arts but depicts them as intrinsic aspects of ethical instruction. Reason, as the *Confessio* shows, is a belated and external byproduct of the irrational poet's productions.

To support these claims, I will separate this chapter into four sections. My first examines the two different presentations of authorship Gower posits at the beginning of Book I for his

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[5] Robert R. Edwards, "Gower's Poetics of the Literal," in *John Gower: Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation, Tradition*, ed. Elisabeth Dutton with John Hines and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 63.

[6] Malte Urban, "Cracks and Fissures: Gower's Poetics on the Edge," *ES: Revista de Filología Inglesa* 33.1 (2012), 155–70.

[7] Depending on the recension, the *Confessio* is either "A bok for Engelondes sake" (Pro.24) or "A book for King Richardes sake" (Pro.*24).

fictional self and for Amans, the figure who will by the poem's close develop into that fictional self. Through the juxtaposition between these figures and their abilities and methods of generating discourse, Gower casts the *Confessio*'s frame as the story of a poet coming to appreciate and employ the imaginative capacities of a love that cannot be known by rule. My next section analyzes the mode of authorship embodied by Genius. As a priest of Venus, Genius seems finally to unite passion with rationality and authors a confessional discourse—one built on narrative and interpretation—to the teaching of this union. With Genius's poetic shortcomings, however, Gower shows such resolution to be futile, and this in turn couches the *Confessio* in the imagination rather than in the reason. My third section looks at Gower's discussion of rhetoric in Book VII. Here, Gower departs from his source material to define rhetoric as a rational aesthetic, a method of identifying and revering the accord between word and reason. While Gower presents such a rhetoric as an ideal, he goes on to show himself either unable or unwanting to attain that ideal himself. In my fourth and final section, I turn to the closing of Book VIII where Gower, in a dramatic reimagination of the *Rose*, depicts poetry as incapable of effecting the regeneration of an audience's reason. Imaginative composition functions as misruled desire, a sensual longing for a reason that can resurface only in the wake of the literary.

I

The opening to Book I imagines a scene of authorship radically detached from reason's guiding measure. Whereas the *Rose*, in both Guillaume's and Jean's incarnations, had the failing and faltering doctrine (both ethical and poetical) of Lady Raison to work in counterpoint to Amant's overriding passion, Gower refuses to offer Amans such an apparently stable center to which he might moor his response to desire or his compositional practices. In a fashion similar to that of Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Gower begins the *Confessio*-proper with the expectation of a

shining decent from a Lady on high: not only does Amans find himself in the precise position as Amant preceding Lady Raison's twice-repeated arrival—"Wisshinge and wepinge al myn one" (I.115), in need of "the rihte salve of such a sor," hoping for someone to "ordeine a medicine"(I.30–33)—but the Latin headnote anticipates such a heavenly entrance by making use of the almost exact contradictory definition of love given voice by Jean's Raison.[8] When Amans finally does "caste up many a pitous lok / Unto the hevene," the only succor he finds is that offered by Venus and her maliciously overzealous king (I.122–23).[9] To a certain extent, the replacement of Raison with Venus resuscitates passionate love as a medium for ethical instruction.[10] Venus shows that Lady Raison no longer holds monopoly over the instillation of wisdom.

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[8] The definition in Gower's Latin proem reads, "Love is sharp salvation, a troubled quiet, a pious error, a warring peace, a sweet wound, a soothing ill" ["Est amor egra salus, vexata quies, pius error / Bellica pax, vulnus dulce, suaue malum"]. Compare this to that given by Jean's Raison: "Love is hateful peace and loving hate. [. . .] It is a healthful languor and diseased health [. . .] False delight, joyous sorrow, enraged happiness, sweet ill, malicious sweetness, and a foul smelling sweet perfume, love is a sin touched by pardon but a pardon stained by sin" ["Amors, ce est pez haineuse, / Amors, c'est haine amoureuse; [. . .] c'est langueur toute santeive, / c'est santé toute maladive; [. . .] c'est faus deliz, c'est tristeur liee, / c'est leesce la courrouciee; / douz mal, douceur malicieuse, / douce saveur mal savoreuse; / entechiez de pardon pechiez, / de pechiez pardon entechiez" (4263–85). Jean derived this a definition from Alan of Lille's *Plaint of Nature* (9.1–2).

[9] Described by Gower as Venus's "king" (I.9, 40), Cupid, with "yhen wrothe," takes note of the already lovesick Amans and opts for overkill, needlessly and wrathfully piercing the lover's chest with "firy dart" (I.40–44). Cupid's excess further distances the love that both afflicts and assists Amans from rational moderation.

[10] Peter Nicholson, *Love and Ethics in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 3–30, sees the *Confessio* as "[setting] out to devise an ethics of love using the framework of traditional morality but grounded in the experiences of the world and in the nature of love itself, and to make these compatible" (8). Also see J. A. Burrow, "Sinning against Love in Confessio

This resuscitation, however, does not entail replacement in full. Love and her compositional sway still retain in Gower's formulation a measure of immeasurability, an aesthetically indispensable nature of irrationality. As Book I goes on to make clear, the *Confessio*, in proceeding from Venus's font of counter-rational invention, shows much of its poetry to be based in the pleasure of misrule—in the display, acceptance, and enjoyment of heightened emotion—and in a compositional trajectory aimed at reproduction and affect before (and perhaps even above) edification.

Book I's opening (lines 1–92) takes place in the post-history of Amans's "wonder hap" (I.67). The author-figure who sets forth in these initiating verses to "proven" his "matiere" has already undergone Genius's confessional program and has already born witness to Venus's geriatric revelation. Given the *Confessio*'s rather surprising close, one might expect an altogether different sort of writer with an altogether different stance regarding his amorous topic.[11] The author Gower presents us with in the opening lines, however, locates his topic without apology firmly in the disproportionate mundane:

> I may nought strecche up to the hevene
>
> Min hand, ne setten al in evene
>
> This world, which evere is in balance:
>
> It stant noght in my sufficance
>
> So grete things to compasse,

Amantis," in *John Gower, Trilingual Poet*, 217–29. For Genius's role in such a project, see Matthew Irvin, "Genius and Sensual Reading in the Vox Clamantis," in *John Gower, Trilingual* Poet, 196–205.

[11] As James Dean notes, at the end of the *Confessio*, Amans presumably has attained a realization not open to Amant: "And though Amans might have wished, like Amant of Jean's *Roman*, to participate in the ostensibly gladsome world of youthful love, with its surface allures, he discovers—as Jean's Amant does not—that he is a source of error and folly rather than of truth and wisdom" (*The World Grown Old in Later Medieval Literature* [Cambridge, MA: The Medieval Academy of America, 1997], 169).

Bot I mot lete it overpasse

And treten upon othre thinges. (I.1–7).

Making use of a rather restrained humility topos, one likely inflected by Ovid's *Amores*, the author admits his inability to attain the mystery of matters celestial and the futility of evening that which is already in balance.[12] Thus outlined, the topic that must follow—that of the author's coming fiction—stands removed from the divine and strives not toward a vain equilibrium. Already we see Gower beginning to deconstruct reason's register: he invokes the tropes of rationality, balance and divine connectivity, only to set the ensuing artistic product as emerging in opposition to such tropes. This is not to say, of course, that the *Confessio* does not concern itself with issues of social order or metaphysical reflection. Rather, the fiction that Gower gives of the work's origins sets such concerns as attaining expression laterally through the treatment of "othre thinges."

These "othre thinges" are as equally timeless as the heavens and equally as encompassing as the world's sphere: they are that "Which every kinde hath upon honde, / and wherupon the world mot stande, / And hath don sithen it began" (I.11–13). The author may be unable "so grete things to compass" directly, but the topic he finds himself now wanting to address with his new "stile of [. . .] wrytinges"—the topic "that is love"—still rings with planetary resonance (I.8, 15).

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[12] See the opening to the *Amores* (1–30), where Ovid presents himself as preparing to follow Virgil in the writing of arms and war (*arma* and *violentum bellum*) in an elevated verse form (*graves numeri*), but then finds himself shot by Cupid's arrow and given a new topic: "Such was my complaint—when forthwith he loosed his quiver, and chose from it shafts that were made for my undoing. Against his knee he stoutly bent moonshape the sinuous bow, and 'Singer,' he said, 'here, take that will be matter for thy song!'" ["Questus eram, pharetra cum protinus ille soluta / legit in exitium spicula facta meum, / lunavitque genu sinuosum fortiter arcum, / 'quod' que 'canas, vates, accipe' dixit 'opus!'"] (21–24). Quotations from the *Amores* are drawn from Ovid, *Ovid Vol. I: Heroides / Amores*, trans. by Grant Showerman and rev. by G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914).

This promised love hardly replicates the harmony of the spheres. As the author readily admits, love is a principle of wild unreason: "ther can no man him reule / For loves lawe is out of reule" (I.17–18); "ther is no man / In al this world so wys, that can / Of love tempre the measure" (I.21–23); "love hath that balance on honde / Which wol no reson understonde" (I.45–46).[13] Like the opening to Book I, Gower's wording draws heavily on reason's lexicon: all descriptors conventionally attached to the faculty—"reule," "balance," "measure" and *understondynge*—each stand in stark opposition to the author's purported topic. Love submits to no doctrine, and therefore cannot be controlled (or perhaps even anatomized); love knows no limits, and therefore cannot be contained; love cannot be comprehended, and therefore must be felt. Love is unknowable, unrestrained affect. Such a formulation builds from the earlier representation of love as a minor topic able to encompass "grete thinges" but goes on to shatter any intimations of balance. Love may transcend time and space but its sheer vastness precludes the intervention of reason. As such, the love that serves as the inventional nucleus for the author's composition is hardly idealized: it is the love of Amors and Amant, the untethered force of *folece et musardie*, and emphatically not that of Lady Raison.

In turning his stylus to such an unruly and inestimable theme, the author seems to have set before himself an impossible task. After all, how exactly does one go about describing,

[13] As earlier readers have shown, the author's aim of putting to poetry such an unreasonable love comes into significant tension with the Prologue's vision of poetry, especially that embodied by Arion. The precise effect of this tension is a subject of some debate. Matthew Irvin, for instance, reads the contrast between the Prologue and Book I as evidence of the author-figure's limited perspective and ability, failings that come to be corrected over the course of the confession (*The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, 81–82). Isabel Davis argues instead that here Gower calls into question the Prologue's aims by describing his earlier writing as "a vain attempt to reach into the sky and right a world askew" (*Writing Masculinities in the Later Middle Ages* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 100).

defining, exemplifying, or analyzing that which cannot be grasped by human understanding? What could possibly be gained, for both author and audience, in the attempt? One method the author suggests of capturing unknowable love in discourse is to show its very unknowability, to show how love is like playing "dees," where "what shal befalle / He not, til that the chance falle / Wher he shal lese or he schal winne" (I.54–57). If delivered, this knowledge of love's fickleness might, theoretically, aid audiences in reconsidering passionate engagement: "if thei wisten what it mente / Thei wolde change al here entente" (I.59–60). Here, the writer submits a faulty proposition based on preposterous reasoning. Love, as that "whos reule stant out of the weie," of course cannot be "wisten" in full, and "entente" enters not into its equation for, as pointed out but a few lines earlier, with love "wit ne strenghte may noght helpe" (I.25). The poem's entire literary project couches itself on a futile premise. Such futility hardly goes unrecognized, and, as I shall go onto argue, functions as power as well as paradox. Initially, the author plans to achieve his desire "to wryte and shewe al openly" through a *modus agendi* that imitates that of Ovid and Solomon: "wherof the world ensample fette / Mai after this, whan I am go" (I.86–87).[14] As this opening section comes to a close, the discursive viability of such an enterprise—the ability of poetic language to contain and express his intended "ensample"—becomes a topic of contention. In the opening's final lines, the author underscores the fact that his *materia* "may noght be withstonde / For oght that men may understonde" (I.92–93). The "ensample" he finally offers is one of insuppressible incomprehensibility.

The ensuing text, in attempting to express the ineffable, troubles the conditions of its reception. When the author finally proceeds to "wryten of my woful care," he does so in the hope

[14] A. J. Minnis, "John Gower, Sapiens in Ethics and Politics," *Medium Aevum* 49 (1980): 207–30; reprinted in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Peter Nichols (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), 158–80, here 174.

"That men mowe take remembrance / Of that thei shall hierafter rede" (I.74–76). Even with such an irrational topic, the promised poetry is not without aspirations of readerly self-fashioning, the writing of love working to rewrite memory.[15] The author clarifies remembrance's material by urging audiences toward imitation:

> For in good feith this wolde I rede,
>
> That every man ensample take
>
> Of wisdom which him is betake,
>
> And that he wot of good aprise
>
> To teche it forth, for such emprise
>
> Is for to preise. (I.78–83)

With these lines, the author lays bare a program of both composition and interpretation.[16] The writer works from a desire to perpetuate given wisdom. After the wisdom is committed to text, readers should then take up the knowledge contained within and follow in the writer's yearning "to teche it forth." The author's sense of writing's purpose and reading's end is suffused by the irrational passion that is his topic: the author predicates the literary experience on reproduction.[17]

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[15] In this regard, the author's compositional plan continues to follow that of Venus whose confessional program culminates with dramatic mnemonic epiphany. See Katherine R Chandler, "Memory and Unity in Gower's Confessio Amantis," *Philological Quarterly* 71 (1992), 15–30.

[16] On the intimate connections between composition and hermeneutics in the Middle Ages, see Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation*; Robert R. Edwards, *Ratio and Invention: A Study of Medieval Lyric and Narrative* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1989), 75–87.

[17] He thus predicates the literary experience on the practice Genius traditionally embodies. During Genius's speech before the barons in Jean's *Rose*, the love-priest conflates, in thinly veiled euphemism, the act of writing with the act of reproduction: "But those who do not write with their styluses, by which mortals live forever, on the precious tablets that Nature did not prepare for them to leave idle, but instead loaned to them in order that everyone might be a writer and that we all, men and women, might live [. . .]

Love enters into the fiction not just as a topic, content, or material, but also as a force driving textual formation and structuring hermeneutics.

As we have seen, however, the wisdom the author hopes to transmit—an understanding of that which cannot be understood, "of thilke unsely jolif wo"—entails something other than prudence or common sense (I.89). By taking up the topic of irrational love, the author has committed himself and his work to expressing and containing a knowledge of knowledge's lack that is also without practical application. To know that love cannot be known is not to know nothing; rather, it is to know something which, because love "may noght be withstonde," cannot hope to effect any real or meaningful change. In other words, the author imagines his poetry as containing a wisdom removed from earthly profit, a wisdom for wisdom's sake, which he then shows as attaining discursive form through contradiction and paradox. The irrationality of the poetic *materia* infuses that *materia*'s communication: like love, which operates without comprehensible rule, the writer's compositional procedures—the structures of thought and systems of language which enclose the fruits of invention—refuse to bend to the clarity and order of direct logic.

This formulation of the literary enterprise as based in an unreasonable impracticality initially may seem opposed to the moral authorship typically attached to Gower himself, as if the poetics espoused in this preamble to Book I deliberately represent an imaginative system whose limitations become clearer and progressively corrected as the *Confessio* pushes forward. I would argue, however, that such is hardly the case, that the models of literature and writing that appear at the outset of Book I in fact embody and anticipate that which Gower puts into practice across the *Confessio* as a whole. Critics, many and frequent, have drawn attention to the contradictions,

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may they, in addition to the excommunication that sends them all to damnation, suffer, before their death, the loss of their purse and testicles, the signs that they are male!" (19629–69).

incongruities, and tensions that pervade Gower's work within and across Genius's teachings and tales.[18] At the level of the individual tales, the closing moralities Genius attempts to impose rarely account for the nuance and breadth of his narratives and occasionally even fail to align with basic plot details, the departing lesson descending into the disjointed incoherence of non sequitur.

When these grafted ethical lessons enter into the larger interpretive matrix of the *Confessio*'s whole, they regularly conflict with precepts espoused elsewhere and prohibit the materialization of a unified doctrine. It would be possible to read such interpretive contradiction or collapse as an effort to expose the limits of exemplarity: in Genius's failure to make intelligible the purpose of his tale—a failing emphasized by Amans's vocal detractions as well as in the disharmony of such messages across sections and books—Gower dissociates poetry from the delivery of simple *sentence* and locates pleasure in narrative action and textual surfaces. A number of scholars understand Gower's lack of hermeneutic unity not as disharmony but as amplitude. Gower collects and categorizes morality but refuses homogenization, thus creating a wide-ranging ethical program applicable to persons and circumstances variable.[19] In this reading, Genius is hardly an inept author-figure; he simply concerns himself with matters far more

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[18] To name but a few examples, see Kurt Olsson, "Reading, Transgression, and Judgment: Gower's Case of Paris and Helen," In *Re-visioning Gower*, ed. R. F. Yeager, R.F (Charlotte, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998), 67–92; Elizabeth Allen, "Chaucer Answers Gower: Constance and the Trouble with Reading," *ELH* 63 (1997), 627–655; William Robbins, "Romance, Exemplum, and the Subject of the Confessio Amantis," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 19 (1997), 157–181; James Simpson, "Genius's 'Enformacioun' in Book III of the Confessio Amantis," *Mediaevalia* 16 (1993), 159–195; Annika Farber, "Genius and the Practice of Ethical Reading," *ES: Revista de Filología Inglesa* 33.1 (2012), 137–53.

[19] See Nicholson, *Love and Ethics*; Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplarity*, 36–60; Elizabeth Allen, *False Fables and Exemplary Truth in Later Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 53–82.

pressing than loose threads. Regardless of how one might imagine the *Confessio*'s intended reception, incoherence, enigma, and paradox are the factors that finally enable both readings, factors that the author in Book I's preamble puts into practice and theory. Gower might fashion himself a persona following the prologue, but even in doing so he cannot, does not, and perhaps wants not to separate his poetics fully from those of the lover, from those impelled and shaped by reason spurned and passion embraced.

II

When Gower takes up the persona of the lover following the prologue, he anchors his overarching frame in both perspective and plot movement to the authorship of Amans. The *Confessio*—all its tales, events, and dialogue—is contained within an account of its own inception and development. Yet while Amans may be the author *of* his fiction, the one who at the end of the *Confessio*'s action takes up stylus and commits story to text, he is not the only author *in* his fiction. Indeed, as soon as the previously discussed preamble gives way to the frame of a pseudo-dream vision and the lovesickness which precipitates the main storyline, Amans renounces much of his poetic agency by allowing another to dictate the structural, thematic, and narrative shape of his literary product.[20] The *Confessio* becomes a poem of an author's encounter with another author.

[20] The *Confessio* contains many, if not most, of the dream-vision's defining motifs—the ailing narrator, the melancholy complaint, the springtime setting, the wandering through wood and field—but lacks, at least until its very close, an actual dream. As Andrew Galloway points out, Gower's engagement with the dream-vision over his career is defined by "complex attention to the powers of appetite and need, shaping and distorting the body politic as much as the individual lover and even the rational mind" ("Reassessing Gower's Dream-Visions," in *John Gower: Trilingual Poet*, 288–303, here 292.

The author encountered by Amans is, of course, Genius, a figure traditionally associated with the poetic arts.[21] Unlike Jean's imagining of Genius—the figure who lights the fire allowing the lover to penetrate the Rose's defenses—Gower's version occupies unsteadily a medial position between reason and sensuality.[22] A priest of Venus, Genius holds obligations both to his order and to the deity whose order he serves. He bases his method of literary production on this dual occupational footing: his discourse aims to reveal the nature of love and of vice. This balancing act would seem to stand as corrective to the unreasonable poetics that the author Amans uttered but a short while earlier. If we recall, though, that the author who speaks during Book I's opening lines has already listened to and participated in Genius's production—the "wonder hap" having already befallen—intimations of poetic failure start to emerge even before Genius initiates his confession. Genius's project is doomed before it can begin.

The central authorial role Genius comes to play in the creation of Amans's tale is something of an extemporaneous development, one directly related to reason's failure. Initially, Venus plans for Amans himself to act as the primary author of discourse, telling

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[21] On Genius and authorship, see Winthrop Wetherbee, "The Theme of Imagination in Medieval Poetry and the Allegorical Figure of Genius," *Medieavalia et Humanistica* 7 (1976), 45–64; Alastair Minnis, *Magister Amoris: The Roman de la Rose and Vernacular Hermeneutics*, 108–118. For a literary history of the Genius figure, see George D. Economou, "The Character of Genius in Alain de Lille, Jean de Meun, and John Gower," *The Chaucer Review* (1970), 203–10; Jane Chance Nitzsche, *The Genius Figure in Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975).

[22] Gower's depiction of Genius as a figure of both love and reason has precedent in Alan of Lille's *Plaint of Nature*. Alan describes Genius much like Guillaume and Jean later come to describe Lady Raison and Chaucer Criseyde: "His stature, governed by the standard of the mean, neither complained about the aphairesis of shortness nor lamented superflous elongation" ["Cuius statura, mediocritatis canone modificata decenter, nec diminutione quaerebatur affaeresim nec de superfluitatis prothesi tristabatur"] (18.6). The love Alan's Genius promotes is also one governed by measure (see 18.17).

him that, "Unto my prest, which comth anon, / I woll thou telle it on and on, / Both all thi thoght and al thi werk" (I.193–95). Venus summons Genius so that he might "Com forth and hier this mannes schrifte" (I.197). She imagines her "oghne clerk" as a passive listener and Amans as the one responsible for the creation and delivery of a love narrative (I.196).[23] Amans upsets these expectations following her departure, imploring Genius to take up a new method of confession, one more in tune with developments in pastoral proceedings:[24]

> I prai thee let me noght mistime
> Mi schrifte, for I am destourbed
> In al myn herte, and so contourbed,
> That I ne may my wittes gete,
> So schal I moche thing forgete.
> Bot if thou wolt my schrifte oppose,
> Fro point to point, thanne, I suppose,
> Ther shal nothing be left behinde.
> Bot now my wittes ben so blinde,
> That I ne can miselven teche. (I.220–29)

"Destourbed," "contourbed," wits flown and blinded, Amans fears his confession will be misspent and without profit if left to his own devices. The narrative produced in this

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[23] In the first recension, Gower goes on to describe Chaucer in precisely the same terms he describes Genius: Venus, speaking to Amans, who has just revealed himself as John Gower, praises Chaucer "As mi disciple and mi poete," "myn owne clerk" (VIII.*2942, 54).

[24] Edwin David Craun, *Lies, Slander, and Obscenity in Medieval English Literature: Pastoral Rhetoric and the Deviant Speaker* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) argues that Gower structures Amans's request from Genius to align with an "interrogatory type of confessional literature" that emerged in the thirteenth century (154).

undesirable scenario will be fragmented and incomplete due to his inability to reverse the process of sense impression, to draw now from memory and make specific experiences tangible to the imagination of his audience. To bring himself out of these this cognitive doldrums, Amans requires of Genius what Troilus required of Pandarus, that Genius not just be an interlocutor of love but that he step into the intellectual void left by reason's ousting, that the priest of Venus become also reason's proxy. Doing so entails Amans and Genius working in inventional counterpoint. The confession that follows transpires from an authorship that extends across and between literary agents.

This model of textual production, where meaning is not delivered univocally but is generated instead by negotiation among authoritative positions, finds analogue in the medley of authorial voices Gower embeds throughout the *Confessio* in prologue, narrative frame, and paratexual apparatus.[25] Often competing and occasionally contradictory, the *Confessio*'s multiplicity of speakers piles up content and perspective to ensure, much like Amans and Genius, that "nothing be lefte behinde."[26] In this action,

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[25] On the multiple authors in the *Confessio*, see Watt, *Amoral Gower*, 24.

[26] Siân Echard, "With Carmen's Help: Latin Authorities in the *Confessio Amantis*," *Studies in Philology* 95 (1998), 1–40; Winthrop Wetherbee, "Latin Structure and Vernacular Space: Gower, Chaucer and the Boethian Tradition," in *Chaucer and Gower: Difference, Mutuality, Exchange,* ed. R. F. Yeager (Victoria, B.C.: English Literary Studies, 1991), 7–35; Wetherbee, "Classical and Boethian Tradition in the *Confessio Amantis*," in *A Companion to Gower* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 181–196; Derek Pearsall, "Gower's Latin in the *Confessio Amantis*," in *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*," ed. A. J. Minnis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 13–25; Robert F. Yeager, "English, Latin, and the Text as 'Other': The Page as Sign in the Work of John Gower," *Text* 3 (1987), 259–64; Lynn Arner, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Vernacular Rising: Poetry and the Problem of the Populace after 1381* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press), 63–71.

however, something ultimately is and perhaps must be left behind—the stability, clarity, and measure of a singular discourse and doctrine.

In the previously quoted lines where Amans describes the alterations he desires Genius make to Venus's compositional program, the lack of reason takes on an opposite affiliation with discourse production than what we saw earlier in the preamble to Book I. Rather than a stimulus to composition, irrationality now prohibits the discovery of *materia*. The dichotomy between the speaker of Book I's outset—an author who realizes the unknowability, absurdity, and contradiction of love and assimilates such folly into his poetics—and the Amans whose passion now precludes authorship outlines in brief the narrative arc of the *Confessio*'s whole. Beginning Book I with the aftermath of Book VIII, Gower opens with an Amans ready and able to compose after the reordering effected through his confession, before then initiating the saga of how Amans arrived at such compositional capacities. The *Confessio* is a story of an author recognizing passionate love as literary impetus instead of impediment.

When Amans invokes Genius's assistance in crafting his confession, he invokes an authority torn between the poles of reason and sensuality.[27] After Genius consents to Amans's requests, he makes clear the method and direction his discourse will take. Genius plans to create a confessional text that both "touchende of love"—which follows

[27] The tension Genius embodies can be seen the widely divergent critical responses to his symbolic status. Michael D. Cherniss, for instance, argues that "Genius is more fully the champion of Reason and Christianity than of Nature and Venus" (*Boethian Apocalypse*: *Studies in Middle English Vision Poetry*, [Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1987], 110), while Kathryn Lynch reads the love-priest as a figure of the imagination (ingenium) who lacks access to reason's guiding light, an aspect of his character, Lynch argues, that appears most concretely in his habitual misreadings (*The High Medieval Dream Vision: Poetry, Philosophy, and Literary Form*, [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988], 163–200).

from his being "assigned hiere / Be Venus the godesse above"—and "That touchen to the cause of vice / For that belongeth to th' office / Of prest" (I.234–43). Stemming from an expansive occupational footing, ethics and eros converge in Genius's prospective design. The purported harmony of Genius's twofold topic, however, must sound from a dissonant source. Genius emphasizes his discomfort with his double role as ecclesiastic and Venusian disciple, and the restraints such a role brings to his discursive project:

> For I with love am al withholde,
> So that the lasse I am to wyte,
> Thogh I ne conne bot a lyte
> Of othre thinges that ben wise:
> I am noght tawht in such a wise;
> For it is noght my comun us
> To speke of vices and vertus. (I.262–68)

Genius is in the same position as Amans—bound by love. The principal difference between the two is that Genius remains compositionally able. Genius can generate discourse whereas Amans cannot unless shored up intellectually. As Genius points out here, though, the discourse he finds himself able to author is hardly authoritative and not necessarily that requested by Amans, who, as Wetherbee notes, "has little need of moral instruction."[28] Genius may speak of love *and* reason, but in the end he speaks from a position of love *not* reason. Obviously, this admission of inexpertise hardly discounts the potential of his promised teachings to instill knowledge. A lack of familiarity and practice does not divest his confessional medium of use-value. By troubling Genius's authority,

[28] Winthrop Wetherbee, "Gower and the Epic Past," in *John Gower in England and Iberia: Manuscripts, Influences,* Reception, ed. Ana Sáez-Hidalgo and R. F. Yeager (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), 170

though, Gower presents his audience, both Amans and his readers, with a compromised source of knowledge, one whose word cannot be necessarily taken for wisdom.[29]

With a destabilized center, the *Confessio* imagines a literary experience where knowledge derives not from internal transmission but from external fabrication. While the engendering of wisdom is fundamental to the ideal poetry suggested here, Gower effectively frees the writer from dispensing a coherent doctrine or rule.[30] Authors deal in nebulous potential rather than concretized dogma.

Gower further undermines Genius's mode of authorship in the contradictions that emerge in how the love-priest specifies his heuristic method. When put into conversation with the desires of the author at the opening of Book I, Genius's project emerges all the more suspect. The goal of Genius's showing to Amans "everychon" of "the vices on and on" is to amend love's banishment of reason: the priest hopes that Amans "myght take evidence / to reule with thi conscience" (I.246–47). Due to Amans's rational and subsequently authorial ineptitude, Genius cannot target with precision the vices currently afflicting the witless lover. Instead, he must saturate Amans with the fullness of his priestly knowledge so that nothing may be left behind in the re-fashioning of the lover's

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[29] As Matthew Irvin points out, the dialogue across the *Confessio* between Latin and vernacular voices parallels the dialogue between Genius and Amans, and this "allows the text itself to act a model" for reading and its objectives (*The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, 90).

[30] To a certain extent, this reading follows that of Mitchell, who sees the *Confessio* as dealing in ambiguous query rather than resolved doctrine: "Gower provokes us to doubt, so that by doubting we come to questioning, whereby we might arrive at answers" (*Ethics and Exemplary Narrative*, 66). Where my interpretation differs, however, is that I see Gower not as offloading rationalization onto the reader but as positing a system of literature and knowledge-creation that stands outside of reason altogether.

moral agency. Genius necessarily employs a poetics of categorical exhaustion and in doing so abandons measure to attain "reule."

Such slipperiness between reason and desire within the planned enterprise continues into the second half of Genius's program. Venus's priest proposes to describe the throes of passion using an orderly analytical frame:

> Bot next above alle othre schewe
> Of love I wol the propretes,
> How that thei stonde be degrees
> After the disposicioun
> Of Venus. (I.256–60)

For being described as something that "wol no reson understand," love in Genius's reckoning seems oddly comprehensible. It holds distinct "propretes" and "degrees" that can be precisely located in relation to the "disposicioun" of the patron goddess.[31] Love, at least for Genius, borders on the empirically verifiable. Where the explication of vice and virtue will function as evidence to assist Amans in attaining a measure of self-mastery, the anatomization and cataloguing of love turns such mastery inward onto its topic of inquiry. The aim of Genius's amorous reporting is not to bring "reule" to Amans, but to bring "reule" to love. He indicates little profit for knowing love's properties corollary to the profit engendered by ethical wisdom. Indeed, the only explanation he provides bases itself in somewhat circular reasoning: "to thi matiere / Of love I schal hem so remene, / That thou schalt knowe what thei mene" (I.278–80). The value of knowing love, in other words, is simply knowing love. Gower casts half of Genius's planned confessional

[31] As the *Middle English Dictionary* points out, "disposicioun" denotes not only something's character or essential nature, but also "the power to ordain, dispose, rule, control, or regulate" (s. v. "wille" 3a).

composition, which ultimately comes to comprise much of the *Confessio*'s own *materia*—as lacking immediate corporeal application, as lacking that profit motive Guillaume de Lorris makes so central to his imagining of Lady Raison in the *Rose*.[32]

Genius closes his compositional blueprint—what the Latin marginalia designates the "sermo Genii sacerdotis super confessione ad Amantem"—with a promise to the lover that underscores both the subversively imitative nature of Amans's future writing as well as the impracticality of the ensuing exchange. In the final lines before the confession proper commences ("Hic incipit confessio Amantis"), Genius, vowing that "hise wordes wol noght peinte," speaks without flourish but in language largely recycled: "My sone, it schal be so pleinly, / That thou schalt knowe and understonde / The pointz of schrifte and how that thei stonde" (I.286–88).[33] These lines recall rather precisely the departing caveat the author-Amans gives regarding passion before turning to the initiating action of the frame-tale: "And yet it may noght be withstonde / For oght that men may understonde" (I.91–92). Gower creates through these parallels (in theme, diction, and structural positioning) a fiction of authorship that highlights the acts of imitation and refusal which

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[32] See Guillaume's Lady Raison: "A man who loves can do nothing well nor attend to any worldly gain: if he is a clerk, he loses his learning, and if he follows some other trade, he can hardly accomplish it." ["Hons qui aime ne puet bien fere / ne a nul preu dou monde entendre: / s'il est clers, i piart son aprendre; et se il fet autre mestier, / il n'em puet gaires espoitier"] (3022–32).

[33] Watt understands Genius's promise of plain-speaking not only as indicating the avoidance of rhetorical flourish but as outlining a *forma tractandi* that speaks directly of doctrine without the frills of narrative pleasure (*Amoral Gower*, 79). While Gower does, on occasion, work to elevate the *Confessio*'s diction with French loanwords (see L. F. Casson, "Studies in the Diction of the Confessio Amantis," *Englische Studien* 69 [1932], 186–6), his more typical style throughout is, as J. A. Burrow notes, largely without wordplay, lexical idiosyncrasies, or penetrating symbolism ("Gower's Poetic Styles," in *A Companion to Gower*, 239–50).

enable and undergird invention and textualization.[34] As Amans's rehearsal of past language makes clear, Genius has succeeded in securing survival and succession for his discourse. This lineage is not without complication. Amans does not deny (at least not fully) the possibility of Genius's proffered *understondynge*, but he does deny the efficacy of such *understondynge*.[35] Amans reproduces Genius's teachings, and then proceeds to recontextualize them, so as to indicate that even if the "pointz of schrifte" could be "understonde"—a highly unlikely possibility given their refusal to be processed by reason—they are of little avail in attempting to "withstonde" love's force.

The troubling of the *Confessio*'s primary speaker, the agent in charge of devising the bulk of the poem's material, bears significantly on the overarching literary experience that emerges in consequence. Initially, Genius manifests as discursive physician to the love-sick Amans, proffering curative in the form of narrative and interpretation. A priest of Venus, Genius pledges loyalty to the houses of both reason and sensuality. This facade deteriorates with speed as Genius reveals himself partisan and his authorial plan problematic. These shortcomings look beyond Genius's poetic mode to new ways of reading and writing which are detached from the understanding and profit of rationality and inclusive of love's pleasures. By presenting Genius as a faltering but not wholly

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[34] I draw this frame from Robert R. Edwards, "Authorship, Imitation, and Refusal in Late-Medieval England," in *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship*, ed. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (Tübingen: Narr, 2011), 51–73.

[35] "Understondynge," as the *Middle English Dictionary* notes, is synonymous with the faculty of reason (s. v. "understonding" 1a). Or, as Reginald Pecock writes in the late 15th century, "Þis same now seid power of oure soule whiche is now clepid 'resoun,' is also ful ofte clepid 'vndirstonding,' so þat resoun and vndirstonding is al oon" (*The Donet by Reginald Pecock*, ed. E. V. Hitchcock, EETS 156 [London: The Early English Text Society,1921; reprint 1996], 12.21–22).

failing maker of discourse, Gower highlights the fiction and fault of the proceeding tales' authorial signature. This effectively unmoors the tales from the meanings Genius later imposes, the narratives becoming free-floating embodiments of pure hermeneutic and affective potential. As the author behind the author, Gower implicitly posits for himself a poetics of the imagination: the texts made by the writer are foremost a sensory experience conditioned by rhetoric and distributing affect but without a conclusive reckoning imposed upon them by an all-knowing authority. Authors, Gower seems to imply, must make sense but they need not make reason.

III

In Book VII, Gower imagines rhetoric as inseparable from reason. Rhetoric is an art of aligning the unruly word with reason, and this alignment occurs through the rational faculty. Rhetoric, in other words, is reason bringing language to reason. Critics have long seen Gower's engagement with rhetoric as self-reflexive and central to our understanding of his own theory of poetry. Reading the *Confessio* as an instance of "secondary translation," Rita Copeland sees Book VII as "the poem's own hermeneutic key" and as presenting a model of rhetoric that seeks to yoke the amoral yet immeasurable power of language to strictly ethical causes.[36] Diane Watt sees Gower as skeptic rather than true believer: the poet's appraisal of rhetoric is a highly ambivalent one, tempered by the Dante's representation of Brunetto Latini, from whom Gower drew much of Book VII's material, as a sodomite.[37] Kurt Olsson argues that Book VII creates an "issue based

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[36] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 202–220, here 211.

[37] Diane Watt, *Amoral Gower*, 38–60; also Watt, "Literary Genealogy, Virile Rhetoric, and John Gower's Confessio Amantis," *Philological Quarterly* 79 (1999), 389–415.

rhetoric" that attempts to respond to the turmoil of Richard II's late rule.[38] In this section, I contend that Gower's discussion of rhetoric devises, through implied contrast, a counter-rational mode of discourse production that the poet comes to assume even while working to expel Venus from the discipline.

Gower's theorization of rhetoric here largely accords with the presentation of Book VII's relationship to the *Confessio*'s broader structure. A rhetoric of reason emerges from within a book devoted to wisdom, to doctrine, to rationality. Amans, having heard earlier in Book VI "Hou Alisandre was betawht / To Aristotle" asks that Genius continue expanding upon "al that to a king belongeth" so that he might be drawn away from Venusian desire: "For be reson I wolde wene / That if I herde of thinges strange, / Yit for a time it scholde change / Mi peine" (VI.2411–19). Amans's want from Genius of "thinges strange"—material distant from that which has come before—stems from his "reson." He would have a fresh topic that appeals to his higher faculty in hopes of distraction; he would rather hear tell a sermon on wisdom instead of love. In this generic demand, Amans conflates rationality and the book to come, but figures both as a passing fancy, a brief respite, something that would "lisse me somdiel" (VI.2419).[39]

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[38] Kurt Olsson, "Composing the King, 1390–1391: Gower's Ricardian Rhetoric," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 31 (2009), 41–73. On Book VII and rhetoric, also see Gotz Schmitz, "Rhetoric and Fiction: Gower's Comments on Eloquence and Courtly Poetry," in *Gower's Confessio Amantis: A Critical Anthology*, 117–42; Ann W. Astell, *Political Allegory in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 83–91. For a questioning of Gower's actual knowledge of rhetoric, see James J. Murphy, "John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* and the First Discussion of Rhetoric in the English Language," *Philological Quarterly* 41 (1962), 401–411.

[39] Thomas Hoccleve, who describes Gower as "my maistir" (1975), later goes onto restage Book VII's opening exchange between Amans and Genius in his representation of the *Regiment of Prince*'s presentation to Prince Henry (the future Henry V). Much like Genius will "declare / Of Aristotle" to

Genius consents to Amans's compositional mandate and proceeds to "declare / Of Aristotle" so that his pupil "myght the time lisse" but repeatedly admits the contested and fraught nature of his telling (VII.4–13): "bot touchende of so hih aprise, / Which is noght unto Venus knowe, / I mai it noght miselve knowe" (VI.2424–26); "it is nought to the matiere / Of love" (VII.7–8); "it be noght in the registre of Venus" (VII.19–20). These recurrent admissions of unknowing and disconnect remove Book VII's focus from matters of passion and emphasize the Book's thematic turn to that which will come to comprise Gower's presentation of rhetorical doctrine.[40]

Genius's Pandarus-like proposal to teach that which he does not know for himself draws to the fore reason's critical role in composition, but it also simultaneously demonstrates the impossibility and undesirability of extricating sensuality from the literary endeavor. Uneasily entering into the uncharted waters of the *speculum principis*, Genius shows his re-authoring of Aristotle's instruction to proceed from an unreasonable

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"lissen" Amans, so does Hoccleve present to the Prince "Aristotle, moost famous philosophre, / His epistles to Alisaundre sent" (2038–39) as a means of pleasantly passing the time (2141). Quotations from the *Regiment* are drawn from Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications for TEAMS, 1999).

[40] This is not to say, of course, that Book VII is detached from the rest of the poem or that it shares none of the poem's broader themes or concerns. A number of critics have persuasively demonstrated the intimate connections between Gower's *speculum pricinpis* and the *Confessio* whole. See Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation*, 202–220; M. A. Manzalaoui, "'Noght for the Registre of Venus': Gower's English Mirror for Princes," in *Medieval Studies for J. A. W. Bennett: Aetatis Suae LXX*, ed. P. L. Heyworthy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 159–83; Kathryn McKinley, "Kingship and the Body Politic: Classical Ecphrasis and Confessio Amantis VII," *Mediaevalia* 21 (1996), 161–187; Matthew N. McCabe, *Gower's Vulgar Tongue: Ovid, Lay Religion, and English Poetry in the "Confessio Amantis"*, (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011). I argue that drawing attention to the shaky relationship between unreasonable author and reasonable content conforms to a broader pattern of skepticism Gower had established earlier at the poem's opening regarding a fully rational poetics.

love: "I am somdel therof destrauht, / For it is noght to the matiere of love" (VII.6–7). Here, Genius characterizes the telling of Book VII along the same lines as the content of Book VII: the rupture between the material to come and the material now passed has ruptured Genius's psyche, making him "destrauht" at his new authorial project, a state that can border on the shattered reaches of insanity.[41] On the one hand, Genius's irrational condition in composing his book of reason illustrates the potential for measured doctrine to flow from a disordered font, that the status of the author does not necessarily determine reception.[42] On the other hand, with Genius's distraught authorship, Gower shows the *Confessio*, even at what is perhaps its most reasonable, to issue from a site of irrationality. The literary production of philosophy must avail itself in invention of philosophy's opposite. This counter-rational sensibility not only characterizes the delivery of doctrine but also colors the desired reception of such wisdom. Although Genius instructs Amans to commit what "the Philosophre tolde" to memory, to "kep that thou it holde," such learning is secondary to the material's affective potential (VII. 59–60). Genius designs Book VII to *lissen* his audience, to bring Amans a modicum of relief by lessening pain through distraction. Transient pleasure is the desired effect of learned teaching, and the ethical self-fashioning that can potentially follow but an agreeable side-effect.

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[41] *Middle English Dictionary*, s. v. "destraught." Lydgate, in *The Prayer to Saint Leonard*, makes explicit the connection between the state of distress and irrationality: "Suych as be [. . .] Distraut in thouht, reforme hem to resoun." Quoted from *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate*, ed. H. N. MacCracken, vol. 1, EETS e.s. 107 (London: Early English Text Society, 1911; reprint 1961).

[42] The discussion regarding the potential for an inadequate or even evil instructor to effect good learning finds precedent in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana,* Chapter 29.

Gower's frustratingly curtailed section on rhetoric attempts to leave behind the implications of literary misrule present in Genius's prologue by uniting the discipline in nature and application with rationality. Following Brunetto Latini's *Tresor*, which follows Cicero's *De inventionne*, Gower describes language as a setting man apart as a species: "Above alle erthli creatures / The hihe makere of natures / The word to man hath gove alone" (VII.1507–08).[43] Though commonplace, this claim, as Nicholson notes, recalls the reckoning of *reson* that appears repeatedly across the *Confessio* describing the cognitive faculty as that which distinguishes man from brute.[44] The shared super-bestial nature of word and reason looks forward to the harmony demanded between the two by Gower's definition of "Rethorique" as "the science / Appropred to the reverence / Of wordes that ben resonable" (VII.1522–25). Language and rationality elevate man above the animal but it is rhetoric that brings the two into alignment.

This reasonable understanding of language's craft differs substantially from the definition Gower would have encountered in the *Tresor*. *Raison* does not enter (at least not directly) into Brunetto's understanding:

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[43] As Latini writes, "For Cicero says: man, who in many respects is inferior to and weaker than the other animals, surpasses them in one thing, which is that he can speak" (280) ["Car Tulle dit que li hom, qui en mult de choses est maindres, et plus foibles des autres animaus, les devance de ceste chose, qu'il puet parler" (469)]. Quotations from the *Tresor* are drawn from Brunetto Latini, *Li livres dou tresor*, ed. Polycarpe Chabaille (Paris: Imprimeire imperiale, 1863); translations are drawn from Brunetto Latini, *The Book of the Treasure (Li Livres dou Tresor)*, trans. Paul Barrette and Spurgeon Baldwin (New York: Garland Publishing, 1993).

[44] Nicholson, *Love and Ethics*, 346. In the discussion of "Theorique" that precedes "Rhetorique," Gower, following medieval commonplace, writes that humans are defined as a species by their rationality: they are those "To whom reson in special / Is yove as for the goverance" (7.7488–89).

> Rhetoric is a science which teaches us fully and perfectly to express ourselves in public and private matters, and its whole purpose is to say words in such a way that those who hear the words will believe them (281).
>
> [Rectorique est une science qui nos enseigne bien pleinement et parfetement fire es choses communes et es privées; et toute s'entention est à dire paroles en tel maniere que on face croire ses diz à ceulx qui les oient (470).]

Rhetoric, for Brunetto, is the translation of self into language, a practical means of believably externalizing the inner man. As a medium of self-expression, rhetoric is also, then, inherently steeped in self-interest. It strives for the advancement of its user, which depends on an audience investing faith into speech. Brunetto's rhetoric cannot abide the appearance of fiction.

Gower's definition removes from rhetoric the immediacy of practical application and fashions it instead as a method of appreciation. Rather than a system of authoring plausible discourse, Gower's rhetoric primarily enables its users to observe the congruence of words to reason and from there to bestow "reverence" appropriately.[45] Gower's rhetoric is aesthetic before practice. This sense of the discursive craft plays out

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[45] Gower's sense of rhetoric as a means of giving "reverence" parallels the definition given by Aristotle: "Rhetoric then may be deemed as the faculty of discovering the possible means of persuasion in reference to any subject whatever" ["Ἔστω δὴ ῥητορικὴ δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν"]. Quotation drawn from Aristotle, *Art of Rhetoric*, trans. J. H. Freese (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926). While it is highly unlikely that Gower would have been exposed to Aristotle's definition directly, Georgiana Donavin argues that the Greek philosopher's teachings nevertheless may have inflected Book VII ("Rhetorical Gower: Aristotelianism in the Confessio Amantis's Treatment of 'Rhetorique'," in *John Gower: Manuscripts, Readers, Contexts,* ed. Malte Urban [Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2009], 155–73).

across Gower's descriptive approach. Unlike Brunetto, who devotes significant space to specific persuasive technique—"the four things the speaker must consider in his subject matter before speaking or before writing his narrative"; "the seven vices of the prologue"; or "How one must refute the argument which was fallacious," to name but a few—Gower instead chooses to outline the field broadly—briefly expounding upon its relation to grammar and logic, the amoral but vast power of the word, the virtue of a style plain and direct—but he provides no detailed example or instruction for practical application.[46] What Gower offers in Book VII's theorization of rhetoric is not handbook but hermeneutic. By showing how rhetoric is "appropred," Gower gives his audience the perceptual means to give reverence to that which gives reverence to reason.

Such a rhetoric of reverential comprehension likely finds its origins in its intimate bond with reason, particularly with reason's more cognitive formulation—as that which "surmountith the ymaginacioun and comprehendith by an universel lokynge the comune spece that is in the singuler peces" (Bk. V, pr. iv, 159–61). Reason, like rhetoric, functions as an interpretive procedure of stellification. It raises the specifics of sensory input to the heights of universality in the same way that rhetoric draws the earthbound word to an almost spiritual "reverence." This is not to say, however, that Gower entirely

[46] The dichotomy between the practical application of the *Tresor* and the theoretical trajectory of Book VII perhaps finds its fullest realization in the divergent approaches each author takes in handling the Cataline conspiracy. Brunetto gives complete transcriptions of Cato's and Caesar's speeches with subsequent exposition and explication. The language of the ancients provides material for modern imitation. Gower provides only the briefest of paraphrases for Cillenus and Cato and only a marginally longer summary of Caesar's "wordes wise." For more on Gower's changes to his source material, see Gotz Schmitz, *The Middle Weie: Stil- und Aufbauformen in John Gower's "Confessio Amantis"* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1974), 28–37, 168–97.

overlaps the intellectual faculty with the discursive discipline. Rather, in diverging from Brunetto and developing his own more rationally-based sense of the language arts, Gower enfolds components of reason, the standard by which language must be judged, into rhetoric's epistemological fabric. Rhetoric venerates the rational word, doing so through an operation that correlates with the aesthetic quality to which it would give veneration. The slipperiness of functional boundaries illustrates the inextricability of reason from the ideal linguistic form. At least in theory, to achieve the status of art, science, or knowledge, an instance of discourse must also achieve the status of the reasonable. Though having brought this disciplinary discussion to being (at least within the fiction of the confessional frame), Genius's distraught and divided literary procedure begins to ring all the more dissonant when put into measure against this theoretical strain.

Gower's inclusion of grammar and logic under the disciplinary aegis of rhetoric, which constitutes what Rita Copeland describes as "the most radical revision of the place of rhetoric within the system of the sciences," further rationalizes discourse production and clarifies the stylistic implications of such a formulation.[47] Where most medieval epistemologies locate rhetoric as a subdivision typically of logic but occasionally of grammar, Gower charts a reverse course: "It hath Gramaire, it hath Logiqe, / That serven bothe unto the speche" (VII.1528–29). Grammar's service to the rhetorical situation is one of order as "Gramaire ferste hath for to teche / To speke upon congruité" (VII.1530–31). This rendering presupposes an existing "congruité" upon which language must unfold. The rhetor brings words to order rather than order to words. This distinction, though seemingly slight, builds on Gower's overall sense of the reasonable project of

[47] Rita Copeland, "Lydgate, Hawes, and the Science of Rhetoric in the Late Middle Ages," *Modern Language Quaterly* 53 (1992), 67.

rhetoric. Much like grammar, rationality generates order by delivering the "singuler" to the "comune," by receiving specific impression and then transferring that impression to a form collectively comprehensible. Grammar is, to a certain extent, reason in discursive microcosm.

Reason too envelopes the activity of logic, a topic Brunetto leaves largely undeveloped.[48] Where grammar determines propriety among and between words and sentence structures, logic determines content and expression: "Logique hath eke in his degré / Betwen the trouthe and the falshode / The pleine wordes for to schode" (VII.1532–34). Logic parses truth from falsehood thus enabling the rhetor to discover the material to translate into linguistic being.[49] Logic, in other words, fulfills the needs of invention. By limiting rhetoric to the *enformynge* of "the pleine trouthe," Gower pushes back against the implied self-interest of Brunetto's definition and imposes strict checks against the capacity of desire to affect the creation and delivery of language (VII.1638). An ideal rhetoric bespeaks but one topic—*trouthe*. By presenting logic, and by extension rhetoric, as the discovery and subsequent discursive manifestation of *trouthe*, which exists largely beyond the appetites and wants of the rhetor, Gower ensures that the language arts conform to a transcendent rather than earthbound standard. The interests of rhetoric lie in the veracious before the self. As such, Gower's logic adopts the same purpose as the *Rose*'s Lady Raison in its working to void (or at least regulate) self-

[48] Copeland, "Lydgate, Hawes and the Science of Rhetoric," 65.

[49] Jonathan M. Newman, "The Rhetoric of Logic in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis* Book 7," *Medievalia et Humanistica* 38 (2013), 37–58, argues that the truth that Gower's sense of logic strives to uncover is not a transcendental truth but contingent and determined by context.

serving desire, for to give voice to truth is to give voice to a position that, at least in most cases, stands independent of him who gives voice.

The task of the rhetor following this inventive logic becomes one of steady and simple transcription. The limitations Gower prescribes for the discovery of material spill out onto the linguistic medium assigned to give expression to that material. For just as logic allows authors of language to come into contact with an infallible point of compositional genesis, so too do the "plein wordes" that convey this concept facilitate an audience's reception of the *trouthe* within contained. Gower, much like Lady Raison, longs for a purely mimetic language, a semantic system where words relate directly to objects without human appetites, desires, or misunderstandings to muddy the interpretive waters: "For whan the worde to the concepite / Descordeth in so double a wise, / Such Rethorique is to despise" (VII.1554–56). A representation without color and ambiguity, or a "tale plein wihoute frounce," delivers audiences to truthful content with as little mediation as possible (VII.1594).[50] In such a system, the role of the author becomes primarily that of exhibitionist, presenting a preexisting material of cosmic origin rather than intervening into material of the creative imagination.

If achieved—if language embodies *trouthe* in full— persuasion and concord, rhetoric's ultimate goals, arrive with ease:

> Wherof full many a gret debat
>
> Reformed is to good astat,
>
> And pes sustiened up alofte
>
> With esy wordes and with softe. (VII.1537–40)

[50] On the links between "a tale without frounce" and a legal defense "without frounce," see Conrad van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of the Law* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), 93.

Here, Gower refines his rhetorical aesthetic slightly by including "esy" and "softe" words among his styles acceptable and effective."Esy" gestures toward a comfortable pleasure of moderation.[51] Rhetoric is not without affective indulgence so long as that indulgence remain under strict regulation, subordinated always to the cessation of conflict and the acquisition of the actual. The soft-spoken language, while indicative of a speech without furor, without passionate overflow, also strives principally for equilibrium: "the softe word the loud stilleth" (VII.1583). The convergence of opposing extremes produces harmonious stillness. Following his earlier removal of self-interest from rhetoric's aim, Gower continues to mute his source's emphasis on social and political elevation by depicting the language art's end not as the winning of *debat* but of *debat*'s reformation and "pes sustiened."[52] Rhetoric is not the static delivery of a singular meaning but a process of meaning-making that unfolds across multiple agents.

Gower's handling of "the tresoun of Cataline" testifies to the extended authorship suggested by the equilibrium necessary for attaining *pes* and fictionalizes in small much of the poetics operative across the *Confessio*. An exercise in abbreviation, Gower's treatment dramatically curtails Brunetto's and shifts its conditions of reception. Where Brunetto uses the debate between Cato and Julius as evidence for the virtue of the high style, Gower takes a far more ambiguous approach.[53] Focusing the consular debate on Cillenus rather than Cato, Gower represents the initial speaker in a plainly familiar register: Cillenus tells his tale "To trouthe and as he was beholde, / The comun profit for

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[51] *Middle English Dictionary*, s. v. "esy."

[52] On Gower's revisions to Brunetto's "secular art, divorced from ethics," see Elizabeth Porter, "Gower's Ethical Microcosm and Political Macrocosm," in *Gower's "Confessio Amantis": Responses and Reassessments*, 132–62, here 154.

[53] Olsson, "Composing the King," 163.

to save" (VII.1608–09). Cillenus's speech flows from the doctrine immediately preceding the *exemplum* and from that which both Gower and Genius espouse. Equipped with this truth-speaking, common profit seeking method, Cillenus finds himself confronted by the "wordes wise" of Julius, who "his tale tolde al otherwise, / and fondeth hou he mihte excite / The jugges thurgh his eloquence" where the rest of the orators had only "speiken plein after the lawe" (VII.1615–23). Using *coloured* language, Julius aims to "excite" emotion before demonstrating transcendent truth (VII.1625). His rhetoric stands in stark contrast to the idealized formulation of the science as that which gives reverence to "wordes reasonable," yet Gower still codes "the wordes of his sawe" as exemplary: "Ther mai a man the scole liere / Of Rhetoriques eloquence" (VII.1630). The wording of this closing hermeneutic stance seems to imply that it is Julius who embodies the wisdom of rhetoric—he is, after all, the only speaker to make use of eloquence—that Julius serves as the exemplary model.[54] The possibility of such a scenario increases given that Gower omits a crucial detail of the Roman narrative: Julius loses and the senate adopts Cato's recommendation.[55] Why would Gower forgo the opportunity to demonstrate clearly and "without frounce" the success and power of the plain and reasonable style? Why would he allow the speech of Julius to appear not only virtuous but victorious?

An all too obvious answer to this question would be simple irony, that the "scole" of "Rhetoriques eloquence" is no "scole" at all. Gower counts on his audience's foreknowledge of the Cataline conspiracy's outcome to ward off implications of excitable

[54] Olsson demonstrates that later when discussing *trouthe* "Gower adopts Caesar's strategy because the questions he is addressing demand it" ("Composing the King," 164).

[55] While Brunetto too omits the conclusion to the Cataline conspiracy, Gower likely knew of its conclusion. See Beryl Smalley, "Sallust in the Middle Ages," in *Classical Influences on European Culture*, ed. R. R. Bolgar (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, 165–75.

eloquence's exemplarity.[56] Such a reading, however, would ignore the desire of Cillenus to inflict "cruel deth," the virtue in turning "hertes to pité," and the fact that Julius ultimately does speak "wordes wise" (VII.1611–21). I would argue that the effect of Gower's treatment is twofold. First, by refusing to give account to the debate's conclusion, Gower shows the ends of rhetoric to lie not in the assignation of intellectual or aesthetic supremacy but in the cessation of conflict. The peaceful lull at debate's close contains competing perspectives so long as those perspectives contain *trouthe*. A consequence of extended authorship, meaning is made in the convergence of truthful discourse. Second, Gower, in highlighting the virtue of Julius's appeal to exciting passion, reveals his hesitancy to dismiss an irrational poetic.[57] Not only does Gower refuse to condemn Julius's language, but his refusal to do so puts into effect the very interpretive ambiguity that a rhetoric of reason seeks to avoid. Gower may follow Cillenus in plain speech, but he follows Julius in the employ of a language whose meaning occurs at a semantic remove.[58] In effect, Gower follows the distraught poetics of Genius by praising rationality through a discursive mode supposedly deemed folly. In doing so, he shows that the reverence rhetoric gives to reasonable language extends, on occasion, to reason's opposite.

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[56] Ann Astell has suggested that Gower avoids the conclusion of the Cataline conspiracy primarily out of political necessity, that he wanted to avoid reminding his audiences of the turmoil of 1387–88 (*Political Allegory in Late Medieval England*, 83–89).

[57] Matthew Irvin reads Gower's handling of the Cataline conspiracy as working not only to show audiences how to recognize what constitutes good rule but also to allow those reader to experience the greatest pleasure as well (*The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, 241).

[58] Brunetto describes Julius as having "spoke masterfully in a concealed fashion" ["parla par coverture maistrielment"] (506).

IV

Book VIII of the *Confessio* stages what is perhaps the most dramatic rewriting of the *Roman de la Rose* in all of English literature. In concluding Book VIII's only tale and culminating the *Confessio*'s exemplary collection, Genius offers an interpretation of Apollonius's narrative that initially seems to suggest a possible elixir for Amans's pestilential irrationality: "I wolde rede / To lete al other love aweie, / Bot if it be thurgh such a weie / As love and reson wolde acorde" (VIII.2022–23).[59] In advising Amans to find a love that accords with rationality, Genius hopes to succeed where Lady Raison failed with Amant. This gesture toward harmony, however, proves a red herring. For rather than attempting to resolve the *Rose*'s fundamental tension, Gower revels in it, showing love and reason to be humorously irreconcilable not only in nature and psychology but in poetic practice as well.[60] One cannot simultaneously be an author of

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[59] While recent critics are far less willing to take Genius's interpretation as gospel, most see the Tale of Apollonius as a meditation on the links between authorship and reason. Elizabeth Allen sees the tale of Apollonius as functioning as sort of guide to interpretation, as exposing, through its representation of incest, the forms of reading demanded by the *Confessio* itself: "far from modeling exactly how readers should conduct themselves, subjecting them to morals, the story mediates [sic] on how readers garner authority and make therapeutic contributions to meaning" ("Newfangled Readers in Gower's 'Apollonius of Tyre,'" *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 29 [2007], 419–64, here 463). J. Allen Mitchell sees the tale and its concerns with rationality as dealing primarily with literary matters and argues that Apollonius, like Arion, embodies an ideal form of rhetorical practice ("John Gower and John Lydgate: Forms and Norms of Rhetorical Culture," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350–c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown [Oxford: Blackwell, 2007], 569–84). Andrew Galloway reads the mercantilism of the tale as reflecting on the *Confessio*'s overarching poetic structure which Gower models on Brunetto's *Tresor* ("The Account Book and the Treasure: Gilbert Maghfeld's Textual Economy and the Poetics of Mercantile Accounting in Ricardian Literature," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 33 [2011], 65–124).

[60] My reading of Gower's transformation of the *Rose* in Book VIII draws on James Dean, "Gather Ye Rosebuds: Gower's Comic Reply to Jean de Meun," 21–37. Dean, in identifying specific moments of

reason and of sensuality; a choice need be made. As Book VIII goes on to make clear, Gower, at least in the *Confessio*, has decided on the latter option.

The *sentence* Genius extrapolates from the tale of Apollonius comes to circumscribe the overarching message he would impart to Amans before retiring. To "knette" together his confession "and make an ende of that is spoke" (VIII.2072–73), Genius would distill all of the narratives and doctrine he has shown to the lover into a final piece of climactic advice, a practical solution to Amans's lovelorn intellectual paralysis:

> My sone, and if thou have be so,
> Yit is it time to withdrawe
> And set thin herte under that lawe,
> The which of reson is governed
> And noght of will. And to be lerned,
> Ensamples thou has many on
> Of now and ek of time gon,
> That every lust is bot a while. (VIII.432–40)

This is a critical act of definition both for Genius as an author and for the intended reception of his text.[61] All of the love-priest's "pointz of schrifte" have led this moment of curative revelation. Genius lays bare what his audience should take away from his

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intertextuality, argues that, in many ways, Gower does to Jean what Jean had already done to Guillaume: Gower modernizes a past text through subversion and the addition of humor. Gower's humor, Dean argues, is not one of "unqualified mirth" but designed rather for meditation and reflection (34).

[61] Kathryn McKinley suggests that this moment of authorial definition is cast in an Ovidian mold ("Lessons for a King from Gower's *Confessio Amantis* 5," in *Metamorphosis: The Changing Face of Ovid in Medieval and Early Modern* Europe, ed. Alison Keith and Stephen Rupp, [Toronto: Center for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2007], 107–130, here 128).

ensamples many and in doing so inscribes his interpretive signature onto that *materia*. His narrative collection may hold (and undoubtedly does) a more expansive meaning than the summation offered above, but it is through such summation that Genius might impose poetic agency. He has collected a vast swathe of narrative and now seeks to unite those materials and their accompanying readings in shared hermeneutic. The love-priest seems to have switched camps entirely, abandoning the unruly, earthly passion of Venus for the timeless harmony of the stars above.

In this sense, his authorship follows that of those celestial demi-goddesses of the *Consolatio* and the *Rose*, and works to impart the same message: "Tak love where it may noght faile" (VIII.2086). The Ladies Philosophia and Raison were never against love in general but a love in type: they oppose the passionate overflow embodied by the *carminae lacerae* and Amors. Theirs, and now apparently Genius's as well, is but a love of higher things. Though noble in theory, the promotion of such a sturdy rational love is finally of the same nature as the passion that Genius sees as lacking "pris" and "profit" (VIII.2091, 93). For Genius does not answer the most vital question of all: how exactly does one obtain the will to overrule a will already bound by desire?

Immediately, Amans recognizes the glaring flaw in Genius's *sentence*. He accuses the love-priest of engaging in malicious sport ("Mi wo to you is bot a game"), questions the foundation of his authority ("ye be al fre from al the peine / Of love, wherof I pleine"), and notes of the message Genius struggles to transmit that "It is riht esi to comaunde" but far more difficult, if not impossible, to enact (VIII.2151–59).[62] By

[62] As Nicholson points out, Amans's exasperation is quite warranted given that Genius has completely ignored "every particular of Amans's situation as well as the request that occasions this reply, and thus he fails to address any of Amans's real experiences with love, including his disappointed hopes and his

challenging the reading Genius would lay upon his composition, Amans also challenges Genius's claim to authorship. Genius has compiled admirably disparate and distant tales, but his bid to bring them under his own interpretive control has sputtered miserably. The practical bankruptcy of Genius's project forces Amans to reframe the conditions of his plight. The lover asserts that what he faces is a crisis of the will that base platitudes cannot hope to mend:

> Mi resoun understod him wel,
>
> And knew it was soth everydel
>
> That he hath seid, bot noght forthi
>
> My will hath nothing set therby. (VIII.2191–94)

Love, it turns out, has dethroned but not exiled Amans's reason. He has rationally processed Genius's teachings, turning narrative into knowledge, and sees the virtue in their truth. Genius's failure as a confessor and as a creator of discourse, then, lies less in the thematic binding of his narrative material—he has not attempted to impose a completely invalid reading across his tales—and more in his inability to address the specified demands of the audience to whom that discourse would be directed. In Amans's response to Genius's contested and static discursive practice, Gower raises a new question that aligns its terms of inquiry with the literary over the psychological: what is a reader to do when their author has failed them?

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suffering" (*Love and Ethics*, 382). In this reading, Genius has modeled his poetics entirely on the faculty he comes to venerate. The love-priest deals not in the earthiness of specifics—the domain of imagination—but hovers above in the abstraction of reason. Ardis Butterfield sees this quarrel as a result of discord and discomfort inherent to Genius's imposition of meaning. Amans's final turn from reason to rage is thus an inherent component of the created literary experience ("French Culture and the Ricardian Court," in *Essays on Ricardian Poetry in Honour of J. A. Burrow*, ed. A. J. Minnis, Charlotte C. Morse, and Thorlac Turville-Petre [Oxford: Oxford University press, 1997], 82–120).

The solution Gower suggests for frustrated audiences is to turn to the literary, to become poets themselves.[63] Amans, representing this response, renders Genius mute through critique and seeks to take up ink and stylus:

> I thenke a supplicacioun
>
> With pleine wordes and expresse
>
> Wryte unto Venus the goddesse,
>
> The which I preie you to bere
>
> And bringe agein a good ansuere. (VIII.2814–88)

Here is the point of Amans's authorial genesis. The formerly compositionally incapacitated lover, who, so "contourbed," required that Genius his "schrifte oppose / Fro point to point," now casts off his discursive crutch and becomes the primary author Venus originally intended, the figure we see at the outset of Book I ready to record his "wonder hap." Amans, in finally accepting the Venusian program, usurps Genius's poetic agency and subordinates the priest to a position of mediation within the written endeavor. Amans desires that Genius "bere and bringe agein" the "plein wordes" that he would "wryte unto Venus."[64] In this regard, Genius's function as medium is two-fold: he both

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[63] The decision of Amans to take up the pen draws a number of parallels with the situation Jean describes himself in prior to writing his portion of the *Rose*. Having experienced the amorous lessons of a dream-vision, both are abandoned without narrative or doctrinal resolution, left only with the shaky teachings of a representative of reason. Rather than bringing hermeneutic resolution themselves, both authors proceed to compose a text fraught with ambiguity and competing voices. On Jean's engagement with Guillaume, his representation of this engagement within the *Rose*, and his polyphonous poetics, see Noah D. Guynn, *Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), 137–70; "*Le Roman de la Rose*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 48–62.

[64] On the close link between letter writing (*ars dicatminis*) and the literary for medieval authors and audiences, see Martin Camargo, "Toward a Comprehensive Art of Written Discourse: Geoffrey of

physically contains Amans's "supplicacioun," carrying language between writer and patron; and he proffers to that language's compositor the stylistic mode that would enclose its meaning. Amans's "pleine wordes" follow Genius's promotion and practice of a "schrifte" that "mot be plein" and a confessor who "his wordes wol noght peinte."

Amans's ascent to authorship and his handling of Genius fictionalize literary composition as a process of corrective imitation founded in skepticism. This process begins with a predatory close reading. When the future-poet encounters the discourse of a past authority, he takes note not only of stylistic mode and inventional abscesses—suppressed topics or latent themes not yet brought to linguistic being—but also of weaknesses in logic or form that could be exploited in the displacement of that authority. Amans embodies the fraught nature of this act of reading. The future-poet approaches his source reverential and appreciative of its efforts and the wisdom contained within, while remaining in constant skepticism with regards to the currency of its application. Poetry is the carrying of past works into modernity through correction. Once invention has thus identified points of displacement, the reader becomes a writer by framing his modernized idea (*forma tractatus*) in the general form and style (*forma tractandi*) of him that would be displaced.

As Amans goes on to show, the moment of textualization that follows invention's skeptical discovery is far from a simple reproduction of a prior rhetorical mode. Unlike

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Vinsauf and the 'Ars Dictaminis'," *Rhetorica* 6 (1988), 167–95; R. F. Yeager, "Gowerian Laughter," in *Traditions and Innovations in the Study of Medieval English Literature: The Influence of Derek Brewer*, ed. Charolette Brewer and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2013), 146. Ovid's *Heroides*, widely circulated in the Middle Ages and a principal source for Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women* and a number of Gower's own tales in the *Confessio*, stands as perhaps the premiere example of letters folded into literature.

Genius, who, throughout the confession, speaks entirely in rhymed couplets, Amans turns instead to rhyme royal for his "supplicacioun." The movement from a sonic pattern standardized over thousands of lines into a highly wrought rhyme scheme and stanzaic structure represents a conscious movement into the rivalrous literary. Amans professes to follow Genius in plain-speaking and then even carries out this claim by using in his letter a relatively unadorned diction and syntax. This supposed adherence to a muted style, however, is undercut by Amans couching such language in the formal model likely invented by Chaucer as a response to Petrarch's classicism.[65] In its stanzaic arrangement, Amans's rhyme royal bespeaks a desire to outdo his literary forebear. Gower shows the intended product of imitative composition to be a deepening excursion into the literary, which is itself of a highly unreasonable nature: it is in imaginative impression— in sonic and visual pattern— that a text attains the status of literary work. Like Amans, the poet generates a subversively corrective copy that amplifies the sensory pleasures of language so as to move beyond a predecessor's sway. This transcendence demands the abandonment of equilibrium between textual authorities past and future. Seeking elevation through the deployment of the literary, the author strives for the unreasonable through the unreasonable.

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[65] William T. Rossiter, *Chaucer and Petrarch* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010), 112–16. On the development of rhyme royal and its use as a mode for addressing aristocratic audiences, see Martin Stevens, "The Royal Stanza in English Literature," *PMLA* 94 (1979), 62–76; also, Donald R. Howard, "Rhyme Royal and the London Puy," in *Chaucer: His Life, His Works, His World* (New York: Dutton, 1987), 266–68. On Gower's use of Rhyme Royal in the *Confessio*, the *Cinkante balades*, the *Traitié*, and *In Praise of Peace*, see James Dean, "Chaucer, Gower, and Rhyme Royal," *Studies in Philology* 88 (1991), 251–76.

The sensuality implicit in Gower's figuring of the literary experience appears in the form of Amans's letter and then proceeds to envelopes its content as well. Turning to a writing of pure affect, Amans's missive to Venus documents in striking concentration reason's fall:[66] "Min herte hath so bewhaped with sotie, / That wher so that I reste or travaile, / I finde it evere redy to assaile / My resoun, which that can him noght defende"; "The resoun of my wite it overpasseth"; "So fer mi wit with love is overthrowe"; "For thogh reson agein my will debate, / I mai noght fle, that I ne love algate"; "Pleinly thurghsoght my wittes alle I have, / Bot non of hem can helpe after mi wille" (VIII.2219–48). Amans's post-confessional situation remains unchanged from that which preceded Genius's intervention, save one key difference: he can now turn spoken complaint into written. Genius may have floundered in joining Amans's love with his reason, but the love-priest has at least managed to produce an author. The author produced is one whose unruly passion furnishes compositional impetus but whose poetic creation then goes on to seek rational reconciliation. In this regard, Gower imagines reason as related but apart from the literary, an extrinsic component, an after-product. Prompted by misrule, the poet of the *Confessio* writes sensually of love to effect later self-regulation. Invention, form, and content are incomprehensibly ordered by love's "lawe," which "is out of reule"—by the paradox of sensuality—yet, in the aftermath of their convergence in verse, emotional and ethical measure ideally remain. Reason materializes only in the posthistory of the literary.

With the love-goddess's second arrival following Genius's epistolary delivery, Gower has brought Amans's tale to the exact point in the *Rose* where Amant's

[66] Irvin, *Gower's Poetics Voices*, 282.

consummation was near at hand.[67] The circumstantial parallels generate for the *Confessio* narrative expectations that Gower delights in subverting. Where readers might expect a castle storming and penetration, Gower offers geriatric deflation. Venus appears with little warning and seems to toy with the lover: "And as it were halvinge a game / Sche axeth me what is mi name. / 'Ma Dame,' I seide, 'John Gower'" (VIII.2319–21). Venus pulls back Gower's disguise "that outward feignen youthe so," collapsing and confusing authors fictional and real.[68] While this "John Gower" remains a fiction too, just another mask behind the mask, the conflation of Amans with Gower's historic and authorial personage implies a certain congruity in poetics and authorship. The *Confessio*, with this appellatory revelation, becomes a poem not only about how Amans came to record his "wonder hap" but also poem about Amans came to be "John Gower" who in turn came write the *Confessio*.

In this self-reflexive account of literary genesis, Gower represents his work as spurning the behest of Venus, who, in response to the somewhat unnatural nature of his love, takes up the cause of her apparent opposite.[69] The *Confessio* wallows in love's unreason even after Love demands rational return. Having heard Amans's true name, Venus vows to remove from the lover exactly that which he later brings to discourse: "thilke unsely jolif wo" (I.97; VIII. 2360).[70] Of such "wo," Venus tells Gower that "Thou

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[67] See James Dean, "Gather Ye Rosebuds"; Irvin, *The Poetic Voices of John Gower*, 280–83.

[68] Russell Peck, "The Phenomenology of Make Believe," *Studies in Philology* 91 (1994), 267.

[69] On Venus's rational suggestions, see Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2000), 155.

[70] Gower goes on to bring the "unsely jolif wo" to discourse not only in the narrative arc of the *Confessio* but also, as Nicholson points out, in the balade LXVIII and the Latin verse appended to the *Traité* as well ("Irony vs. Paradox in the *Confessio Amantis*," in *John Gower: Trilingual Poet*, 214).

shalt ben esed er thi go" (VIII.2359); of such "wo," Gower tells his readers that within his text they may "ensample fette" (I.87). Gower's declaration of *ensampling* postdates Venus's declaration of easement within the narrative's established temporality. As such, the opening to Book I shows Gower continuing to perpetuate the irrationality of desire against the will of desire's mistress and even presuming to use her own language in doing so. An imitation and a denial, the larger literary project outlined in Book I thus emerges here (through its contrast with Venus's behest) as analogue to that which Amans undertakes in the making of his letter to Venus when he follows and furthers Genius's style and authorship. Amans missive serves as preparation for Gower's textual rending of the "wonder hap."

Gower depicts the (attempted) resuscitation of Aman's rationality through a revelatory event coded as distinctly anti-*Raisonable*. The appall that Jean's heavenly lady would undoubtedly feel toward Gower's method shows the *Confessio*'s author to be of Jean's ilk—a poet of *folece et musardie*. Unfortunately for Amans, the "Gower" Venus reveals him to be is a figure who lacks the vigor necessary to put desire to practice. She issues to Gower a Delphic command, imploring him to know thyself: "remembre wel hou thou art old" (VIII.2339).[71] She then goes on—in what is perhaps the most effective

[71] Noting that the poet only would have been in his mid-40s or 50s when he completed the *Confessio*, R. F. Yeager understands Gower's old age as a performance of authorship, a means of positioning himself as an author of sagely wisdom, one capable of speaking to kings ("Gower in Winter: Last Poems," in *The Medieval Python: The Purposive and Provocative Work of Terry Jones*," ed. R. F. Yeager and Toshiyuki Takamiya, [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012], 87–103). Also see Dieter Mehl, "Old Age in Middle English Literature: Chaucer, Gower, Langland and the Gawain-Poet," in *Old Age and Ageing in British and American Culture and Literature*, ed. Christa Jansohn (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2004), 29–38.

moment of Gower's very restrained application of humor across the *Confessio*—to make euphemistic sport of the supplicant's shortcomings of seniority:[72]

> I wot and have it wel conceived;
>
> Hou that thi will is good ynowh;
>
> Bot mor behoveth to the plowh,
>
> Wherof thee lacketh, as I trowe. (VIII.2426–27)

Gower draws his language here from the battle hymn that Jean's Genius delivers right before lighting the fire that no female can resist ("There is no lady who might protect herself from it" 338) and that finally enables Amant's plucking of the Rose "with great delight": "Plow, for God's sake, my barons, plow and restore your lineages" (324). Genius's command forcefully recalls Lady Raison, who made her stance regarding euphemism quite clear during the *coilles*/*reliques* episode: while she would "never make an issue of it," she instead values a language that "might name the things themselves by their names" (136). Gower's appropriation of the *Rose* reverses the ends of Genius's un-*Raisonable* speech, calling on the lover to leave up rather than take to "the plowh." Besides enabling a scene of intertextual humor, though, Gower's deployment of euphemism through Venus's bidding also encapsulates the broader sense of the literary endeavor that surfaces across the *Confessio*: an agent of passion marshals the powers of an unreasonable discursive medium to effect rational accord in futurity.[73] By using un-

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[72] See James Dean, "Gather Ye Rosebuds"; William Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 395–96.

[73] On Gower's wider use of euphemism, see Karla Taylor, "Inside Out in Gower's Republic of Letters," *John Gower: Trilingual Poet*, 177–78; Conrad van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of the Law*, 71; Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic*, 13; Steve Guthrie, "Dialogics and Prosody in Chaucer," in *Bahktin and Medieval Voices*, ed. Thomas J. Farrell (Gainsville, FL: University of Florida Press, 1995), 101;

Raisonable euphemism to bring the lover back to reason, Venus follows Gower in modeling a theory of writing that sees imaginative composition as irrational until its very end.

What follows from this geriatric revelation is not only the most fantastic and inspired scene of the *Confessio*'s frame, but also a resounding articulation of the artistically fruitful relationship between misrule and authorship. Venus, whom Gower presents as having taken up the mantle of authorship ("Whan Venus hath hir tale told" VIII.2440), has delivered an aged tale designed to remove its audience from passion's grip. Instead, what she achieves is a cessation of reason in its entirety with her audience possessed now by imaginary vision. Denied by Venus his salve ("Mi medicine is noght to sieke / For thee" VIII.2367–68), Amans falls deeper into affliction ("A cold me cawthe sodeinly"; "Ne fully quik ne fully ded" (VIII.2446, 2451) and into a "swoune" (VIII.2459). Across his mind's stage ("Me thoghte I sih tofor myn hed" VIII.2452), marches a parade of lovers, all intimately tied to the literary arts. The first group to appear is the young, tragic lovers—Tristan, Isolde, Theseus, Phaedra, Troilus, Criseyde, among others—many of whom, such as Canace and Machaire, Aeneas and Dido, Procne and Philomel, have already appeared within the *Confessio*'s textual bounds. Simultaneously narrative resource, *materia*, and authors, they arrive in a flood of poetry: "Ther was no song that I ne herde / Which unto love was touchende" (VIII.2474–65). The united front of their conclusive misery seems to exemplify the danger of

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Samantha J. Rayner, "'How Love and I togedre met': Gower, Amans and the Lessons of Venus in the *Confessio Amantis*," in *Sexual Culture in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, ed. Amanda Hopkins, Robert Allen Rouse, and Cory James Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2014), 78.

overwhelming desire.[74] Gower allows their procession a slightly more nuanced interpretive effect:

> And over this I understod,
>
> So as myn ere it myhte areche,
>
> The most matiere of her speche
>
> Was al of knyghthod and of armes,
>
> And what it is to ligge in armes
>
> With love, whanne it is achieved. (VIII.2494–99)

Obviously, these lines are laden with irony given Gower's selection of unfortunate lovers. "What it is to ligge in armes with love" turns out to be rather unsavory in the end. Their "matiere," however, speaks around its conclusion, dealing instead primarily with the interconnectivity of love and war, of epic and romance, which Gower emphasizes in the semantic shifts "armes" takes across two lines.

Although these amorous songsters sing suggestively of the epic's darkly romantic underbelly, the effect of their song is nothing short of ecstatic: "It was as thogh the hevene cride [. . .] That it was half a manner here / So glad a noise it was to hire" (VIII.2480–85).[75] Tragic in its finitude, their composition generates for both authors and

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[74] Paul Strohm, for instance, reads the parade of young lovers both as a response to Chaucer's *Troilus* and as evidence of "Gower's persistent skepticism of earthly love" (*Social Chaucer* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994], 58). Viewing the lover's with slightly less skepticism, Helen Cooper understands them instead as a *memento mori*, "a reminder that all lovers [. . .] finally encounter mortality" ("The Ends of Storytelling," in *Traditions and Innovations in the Study of Medieval English Literature*, 198).

[75] On the medieval sublime, see Stephen Jaeger, ed., *Magnificence and the Sublime in Medieval Aesthetics: Art, Architecture, Literature, Music* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); Jaeger, *Enchantment: On Charisma and the Sublime in the Arts of the West* (Philadelphia: University of

audiences a timeless pleasure that stands outside the narrative compulsion of history and myth:

> Ther was ynowh of joie and feste,
>
> For evere among thei laghe and pleie,
>
> And putten care out of the weie,
>
> That he with hem ne sat ne stod. (VIII.2490–93)

Some see in this passage evidence of the Lover's flawed interpretive skills.[76] A poor reader indeed, he should know better than to understand the lovers' song as anything other than tragically shortsighted having just heard from Genius what it is many of them ultimately achieve. I would argue, however, that this scene is not a critique of foolish passion and its potential for tragic consequence but a rather display of its literary potency. Held tight by desire, the lovers author a verse of pure sensory delight ("such a soon / Of bombard and of clarion / With cornemuse and schallemele" VIII.2481–83) that causes authors and listeners alike to neither sit nor stand but soar. The elderly Gower, an outside observer rather than direct participant, may not experience himself the full effect of passion's song, but he still bears witness to its power and shudders from its outward tremors. For the young lovers, the composition removes "care," for Gower, memory: both are brought to a state where intellectual failing precipitates sensual bliss.[77] In the young lovers' song and in the elder lover's response, then, Gower recognizes the capacities of

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Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Piero Boitani, *The Tragic and the Sublime in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[76] Kathryn Lynch, *The High Medieval Dream Vision*, 187; Lynn Arner, *Chaucer, Gower, and the Vernacular Rising*, 52.

[77] On the productive role of forgetting in the *Confessio*, see Paul Stegner, "'Foryet it thou, and so wol I': Absolving Memory in 'Confessio Amantis'," *Studies in Philology* 108 (2011), 488–507.

overwhelming desire in producing a song of itself even if such powers ultimately prove out of reach for his aged arms.

Whereas the first half of the lovers' parade helps to define Gower's authorship through envious contrast, the second half represents a poetics and generic mode that the elder literary craftsman can more easily claim for his own. After the tragic youth have crossed the parade grounds, allegorical Elde arrives leading David and Bersabee, Salmon and his hundred "wyves and concubines," Sampson, Aristotle, Virgil, Socrates, Plato, and Ovid (VIII.2669–719). Gower depicts this group much like he did the first—as creators and performers of love's song—though their connection to a distinctly authorial (as opposed to minstrel) mode of production, in both imaginative and philosophical iterations, is much amplified by the inclusion of historically recognizable makers.[78] The song made by this collection of hoary authorities differs much in timbre, topic, and delivery. Gower hears "no pipe there / to make noise in mannes ere," but only instruments "For olde men which souneth lowe" (VIII.2675–78). Their step is subdued and lacking flair ("A softe pas thei dance and trede" VIII.2682), and they express with and through their art a restrained pleasure ("With sobre chier among thei smyle, / For laghtre was ther non on hyh" VIII.2684–85). Formally, their song is of reason's measure. Sight and sound converge in a sensory analogue to rational order.

Symbolically, though, for Gower they represent what the young lovers could obscure with rapturous verse form—the folly of love: "I thoghte thanne how love is

[78] There is some uncertainty over the appearance of Socrates among the older lovers. Gower's text reads "Sortes." Macaulay asserts that "it is impossible that this can be for 'Socrates," with whose name Gower was well acquainted" (vol. 2, 547). Peck takes the opposite position, citing *Piers Plowman*, *Amoryus and Cleopes*, and Roger Bacon's *Communium naturalium* as evidence for the spelling of Socrates as "Sortes."

swete, / Which hath so wise men reclaimed" (VIII.2720–21).[79] Both sets of lovers embody the effects of reason's flight, but these flights are ultimately of two distinct trajectories. First, the young lovers oppose reason in a matter of scale: tragedy stems from love putting away measure. Second, the old lovers oppose reason in a matter of production: comedy arises from their inability participate fruitfully in an erotic economy. In the divergence among the parading lovers, Gower effectively posits a theory of genre that shows the difference between tragedy and comedy to lie in irrational typology. In other words, genre depends upon how exactly love forces narrative agents to divest themselves of rational conduct. By situating himself among the likes of Salomon, who "for al his wit" might not remove himself from a "love with his hond enseleth, / Fro whom non erthly man appeleth," and Aristotle, who "bridled" by desire "forgat al his logique," Gower draws heightened attention to *Confessio*'s own generic boundaries, casting the poem as a confessional story-collection bound by a humorous tale of how love "hath so wise men reclaimed," and implicitly holding up the aged authors' sober poetics as a potential and perhaps necessary model for imitation.[80] Here, Gower presents a work's *forma tractandi* as a function of nature and not of the intellect. Vitality rather than reasoned choice determines the modes of representation and reception—whether a poetic

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[79] Marilynn Desmond reads the elder lovers as an emblem of erotic mastery (*Ovid's Art and the Wife of Bath: The Ethics of Erotic Violence* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006], 26–27). I would extend her argument here and argue that the lovers represent not only love's ability to dominate those who come under its spell but also love-poetry's ability to assert mastery over authors and readers alike. The representation of love, therefore, is as much a form of mastery as love itself.

[80] On Gower's use of legal diction to describe Salomon and Aristotle, see Conrad van Dijk, *John Gower and the Limits of Law*, 41; also M. A. Manzalaoui, "'Noght in the registre of venus'," 167.

work gives expression through "sober chiere" to bring audiences bemused relief or through heavenly cries of ecstasy that transport audiences beyond worldly care.

Gower goes on to show the old lovers as quite capable of changing their tune, and in doing so offloads the responsibility of rational self-fashioning from the literary to the metaphysical. When the band of elder statesmen, philosophers, and poets finally recognizes Gower as one of their own, they do away with their measured disposition and melody and turn their compositional powers from a sober song of absurd love to a new topic and aesthetic:

> And whan thei comen to the place
> Wher Venus stod and I was falle,
> These olde men with o vois alle
> To Venus preiden for my sake.
> And sche, that myhte noght forsake
> So gret a clamour as was there. (VIII.2726–31)

In their poetic transition, the old lovers act out the *Confessio*'s narrative arc, moving from a tale of foolish love to a tale of foolish love's banishment and the redemptive return of reason. To make this transition, they must give up their previously regulated and sober method of expression. They might speak now in "o vois alle" but they speak not in one key. Harmony devolves to "clamour."[81] A reversal has occurred in their authorial

[81] Andrew Galloway sees in this devolution parallels to the Parliament of 1388 that anticipate "the punishment of castration, effectively if crudely carried out by the blind, 'groping' Cupid" ("Literature of 1388 and the Politics of Pity in Gower's Confessio Amantis," in *Letter of the Law: Legal Practice and Literary Production in Medieval England,* ed. Emily Steiner and Candace Barrington [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002], 67–104, here 102). The turn to "clamour" also connects the elder lovers

enterprise: where before they spoke reasonably of unreasonable subject matter, now they speak unreasonably of a reasonable subject. Through this poetic incongruity, sustained across both of the old lovers' creations, Gower shows the impossibility of ever reaching a purely rational literary mode, a writing that unites the form and content of imaginative composition within reason's measured doctrine.

With the old lovers' new song, Gower troubles the potential for literature to effect meaningful intellectual amendment by couching reason's restoration in the clamorously poetic appeal for a whimsical grace. Reiterating with some precision the terms of the complaint Amans had sent earlier to Venus at the opening of Book I ("O Venus, queene of loves cure [. . .] yif me som part of thi grace" I.132–35), the old lovers' prayer anticipates, although secularly, the hymn which Gower goes on to deliver at the close of the *Confessio* upon dropping his persona and stepping outside the frame tale: "The hyhe God such love ous send / Forthwith the remenant of grace" (VIII.3168–69). While the switching of the prayer's addressee from Venus and Cupid to the Christian God follows the progression typically expected of medieval authors—the abandonment of transient, earthly love for that of the timeless divine—in each instance the desired accord between reason and sensuality is a possible (and far from guaranteed) effect rather than constituent element of poetic discourse. In this sense, the ability of a literary work to amend the moment "whan reson torneth into rage," lies not in the accretion of wisdom through narrative but in the chance intervention of ethereal benevolence summoned by authorial will.

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with the often problematic voice of the commons that Gower marshals repeatedly throughout his works: "And thus the comun clamour is / In every lond wher poeple dwelleth" (Pro.514–15).

Through the twin powers of reflection and representation, Venus returns Gower to the light of reason and proceeds to chart for the poet a literary career. In a scene that reimagines the myth of Narcissus, particularly as recounted in the *Rose*, Venus draws Gower before "a wonder mirrour" that allows a resurgence of his intellectual faculties: "I drowh my olde daies passed, / And as reson hath it compassed / I made a liknesse of miselve" (VIII.2835–37).[82] Apprehending images of "elde"—"yhen dymme," "chiekes thinne," "heres hor"—and comprehending their implications for his love, Gower makes a mirror of his mind, the reflection of the looking glass folding into self-representation through reason renewed.[83] Venus commands Gower "no more of love to seek" and issues to him a new form of authorship:

> Forthi to thee nys bot o weie,
> In which let reson be thi guide;
> For he may sone himself misguide,
> That seth noght the peril tofore.
> Mi sone, be wel war therfore,
> And kep the sentence of my lore
> And tarie thou mi court no more,
> Bot go ther vertu moral duelleth,
> Wher ben thi bokes as men telleth,
> Whiche of long time thou has writ. (VIII.2918–27)

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[82] Andrea Schutz, "Absent and Present Images: Mirrors and Mirroring in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *The Chaucer Review* 34 (1999), 107–24.

[83] Gower underscores the return of his rationality with the appearance of an allegorical Resoun: "And whan Resoun it herde sein, / That loves rage was aweie, / He cam to me the riht weie, / And hath remue the sotie / Of thilke unwise fantasie" (VIII.2862–66). Resoun slinks back to Amans only after having heard of the departure of rage; he had no hand in love's expulsion.

As a poet, Gower's way forward is backward. He must return to crafting works of "vertu moral" of the sort he had been completing before he took up love and lost the direction of rationality. He must become once more a poet of reason. As I have argued earlier, however, this is not quite the full story. Gower ultimately refuses to heed Venus's behest and returns home to write of that "which wol no reson understonde" (I.46); he returns to write the *Confessio*. This is not to say, of course, that Gower abandons Venus's plan in its entirety. The works he authors following the *Confessio* do endeavor, in fact, to lead the body politic from "the peril tofore." In the fiction the poem imagines for its creation, however, this later project occurs in a distant and nearly denied future when love's pull demands first from Gower textualization. Venus's promoted literary career functions in retrospect and works to characterize the *Confessio* in contrast to the moral virtue to come in future compositions. The *Confessio* closes with simultaneous reunion and farewell, a return to reason colored by the knowledge of its impending departure upon literary genesis.

The fictions of authorship Gower presents in the frame-tale along with Book VII's theory of writing challenge reason's premiere status within the project of imaginative composition without entirely displacing or dismantling the faculty's application. At first glance, the form of poetry I have been describing may seem drastically removed from the vision of authorship that surrounds the *Confessio* proper on both sides. The Prologus and the poem's departing prayer (VIII.2971–3172) offer us a Gower without the persona, a voice that readers such as Russell Peck understand

as granting unmediated access to the perspective and thoughts of the historical author himself.[84] In both sections, Gower laments society's decayed intellect: at the Prologus, he decries how across the land "wisdom waxeth wod, / And reson torneth into rage" (Pro.1078–79), and in the closing prayer he laments how love "many an herte hath overtake, / And ovyrturnyd as the blynd / Fro reson into lawe of kynde" (VIII.3144–45).

Gower sees authorship as the remedy to this sorry state, specifically that form of authorship embodied by Arion in the Prologus. R. F. Yeager argues that the figure of Arion gives structure to the entire poem, that the *Confessio* traces Gower's becoming the new Arion by reorienting his understanding of love from *cupiditas* to *caritas*.[85] More recently, Maura Nolan has seen Arion as representing "a poetics of harmony and love" that allows the "possibility for forging attachments to the world and in the world, both politically and individually, through love of others and a commitment to peace."[86] Arion's verse is very much sounded through a reasonable strain: he plays "a harpe of temprure" and sings a song "of so good mesure" (Pro.1055–56).[87] But while his sonic harmony is guided by ratio, his "lusti melodie" is a highly unreasonable aesthetic experience (Pro.1070). Arion's song is of pure sense: it affects rather than instructs. Indeed, many of Arion's principal audience members completely lack that near-divine

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[84] Russell Peck, "The Problematics of Irony in Gower's Confessio Amantis," *Mediaevalia* 15 (1993), 207–229.

[85] R. F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1990), 275. Also see, John H. Fisher, *John Gower: Moral Philosopher and Friend of Chaucer* (New York: New York University Press, 1964).

[86] Maura Nolan, "The Poetics of Catastrophe: Ovidian Allusion in Gower's *Vox Clamantis*," in *Medieval Latin and Middle English Literature: Essays in Honour of Jill Mann*, ed. Christopher Cannon and Maura Nolan (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011), 128.

[87] The Middle English dictionary defines "temprure" as "moderation, temperance, self-control" (1a) and proportionate, both standard tropes of rationality. Peck glosses "mesure" as "meter/harmonic ratio."

cognitive faculty. He sings to "the bestes wilde"—"the hinde," "the leoun," "the wolf," "the moltoun," "the hare," "the hound"—bringing them to the same state of "pes" that he brings to both lord and shepherd (Pro.1057–64). Arion does not inspire a love of higher things; he inspires a love of earthly connection. He brings pleasurable union by affecting his audience's imagination, the faculty shared by man and beast alike. Reason and its heavenward sight do not enter into his gloriously bestial melodies.

The vision of Arion anticipates, in its somewhat fraught engagement reason, the poetics and authorship that Amans finally comes to practice on his journey to becoming John Gower, that Gower theorizes without necessarily embracing in Book VII, and that Genius haltingly undertakes. Reason is a belated effect of literary misrule—a form of poetry invented through desire and styled by paradox and uncertainty one realizes that true ethical self-fashioning occurs through metaphysical chance. Gower may be above all a moral poet hoping to return rational order to a world turned upside down, but to accomplish this feat, to bring a measure of harmony to man and beast alike, he must invest readers with an intense love of the mundane by relying on a poetry founded in reason's other.

Chapter Four

The Fragmented Accord of Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuallyte* and the *Assembly of the Gods*

John Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuallyte* and the anonymous *Assembly of the Gods* deliver the narrative desired, dreamed, yet finally denied by Gower's *Confessio Amantis*: they tell at last of "such a weie / As love and reson wolde accord" (VIII.8023). *Reson and Sensuallyte* accomplishes such solidarity by rationalizing passion, by transforming Venus and Deduit from Reason's bitter nemeses to staunch evangelicals of a measured doctrine. The *Assembly* too reaches a concrete solution to the *Rose*'s seminal divide, but the unity it proffers is a grim one indeed. Reason and Sensuality agree only in a mutual fear of death. While both authors craft narratives that bring writers and readers to a firm conclusion regarding the matter of rational love, the medium through which they would do so recurrently appears within their texts as working at cross-purposes.

In *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Lydgate's formulation of an intellectually sound passion attempts to systematize its users' modes of discourse. Such a system, however, proves antithetical to the literary enterprise as it forecloses the production of beautiful verse as well as affective response. The counter-poetics of Lydgate's idealized love go on to elevate and emphasize the fruitful viability of the model of imaginative composition embodied by the text's competing author-figure—the unthinking natural world. *Reson and Sensuallyte* promotes

restraint among lovers at the same time as it memorializes the effusive rapture of the purely sensory text.

The author of the *Assembly* does not share Lydgate's predilection for a natural verse. In fact, this author aligns his literary project instead with him who forcibly carries all natural beings into forgetful decay. Atropos, later becoming Death, demands from authors a literal, unambiguous composition and goes on to create for himself a catalogue of works that strives to blast from memory the authority of the ancients. In this role, Atropos mirrors precisely that of the *Assembly*'s author, who likewise seeks, through overwriting and critique, the removal of his intertextual predecessors. The *Assembly*'s author casts his poem as a tale describing the accord between reason and sensuality and delivers that tale through the creative mechanics embodied and employed by the accord's figurehead. As a work that writes of Death through Death, the *Assembly* must finally write against the joint counsel of Reason and Sensuality to flee always before the destroyer's darts.

The reasons for examining in conjunction both *Reson and Sensuallyte* and the *Assembly of the Gods* are many. Although we recognize today the works' disparate authorship, early editors and audiences understood the poems as emerging from the same creative font.[1]

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[1] While the poem's early editor, Oscar Triggs, accepted Lydgatean authorship, later scholars have since rejected the poem's membership within the Monk of Bury's canon. See Jane Chance, "Introduction," *The Assembly of the Gods*; Josef Schick, "Introduction," in *Lydgate's Temple of Glas*, EETS e.s. 60 (London: Oxford University Press, 1891); Albert Rudolph, *Lydgate und die Assembly of Gods: Eine Untersuchung über die Autorschaft dieses Werkes auf Grund einer Stilvergleichung* (Berlin: R. Trenkel, 1909); Henry Noble MacCracken, ed., *The Minor Poems of John Lydgate, Edited from All Available Manuscripts, with an Attempt to Establish the Lydgate Canon*, 2 vols., EETS e.s. 107 and o.s. 192 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner; New York: H. Frowde/Oxford University Press, 1911 [for 1910]; London: Humphrey Milford/Oxford University Press, 1934 [for 1933]); and Alan Renoir and C. David Benson, "XVI. John

Completed in 1498 by Wynken de Worde, the *Assembly*'s first printing attaches a colophon to the poem that makes clear its presumed origins: "Thus endeth this lytll moralized treatyse compiled by dan Iohn Lydgate." John Bale's *Illustrium majoris Britanniae scriptorum* also includes the *Assembly* among Lydgate's canon. The two works have, in fact, held the same title as well. British Library Royal MS 18.D.ii designates the *Assembly* as the *Discord between Reason and Sensualitie*, while the catalogue of Lydgate's works printed by Adam Islip in 1598 and 1602 describes the poem as the *Banket of Gods and Goddesses with a discourse of Reason and Sensualitie*. Besides similarities in early attribution and appellation, both poems share an intense desire, inflected by the works of Chaucer and Gower, to rewrite the *Roman de la Rose* by excising that work's authors so that Amant's desertion of Lady Raison might be amended. The authors engage in a deconstructive imitation of the *Rose* that corrects and subsequently usurps its literary authority.

I

A vastly expanded translation of the anonymous *Les Echecs Amoureux*, John Lydgate's *Reson and Sensuallyte* details an author's visionary experiences in the eternally pleasurable posthistory of the *Roman de la Rose*.[2] The poem opens with its narrator—designated by the manuscript as the *auctor*—encountering Dame Nature, who sends him from his springtime slumber out into the

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Lydgate," in *A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050–1500* (New Haven: The Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1980), 2079. On the poem's late-medieval and early modern inclusion among the Chaucer apocrypha, see F. W. Bonner, "The Genesis of the Chaucer Apocrypha," *Studies in Philology* 48 (1951), 461

[2] As Ernst Sieper points out, Lydgate takes the first 4873 lines of *Les Échecs amourex* and expands them into 7042 ("Studies and Notes," in *Lydgate's Reson and Sensuallyte*, vol. 2 EETS ES 89 [London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1903], 59).

world to judge and reflect upon the beauty of her works. The *auctor* eventually makes his way to the Garden of Deduit and into a landscape once inhabited by Guillaume de Lorris on his earlier quest to attain the lovely Rose. There the *auctor*, after gazing into Narcissus's well, witnesses a game of chess between Deduit and a beautiful Maiden. Once Deduit realizes the *auctor*'s presence, the pleasure-deity demands that he take part in the game as it will teach him the rules of love. From here, the poem proceeds to define the allegorical significance of each piece before abruptly ending in incompletion. The poem exists in two manuscript witnesses, one belonging to John Stowe who first ascribed the work to Lydgate, an attribution generally accepted by most scholars today.[3]

Reson and Sensuallyte is a hugely understudied work. There have been no articles or book chapters fully devoted to its analysis. The attention the poem has received typically occurs in passing, a brief mention that fades with speed as the author turns to one of Lydgate's more canonical texts such as *Troy Book* or the *Fall of Princes*. Such disregard likely stems from the poem's lack of completion or the tendency to view the work as "merely a translation" rather than from any lack of interpretive depth or conceptual nuance.[4] C. S. Lewis, himself lamenting long ago the text's dearth of scholarly work, described *Reson and Sensuallyte* as "one of the most

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[3] *Reson and Sensuallyte* appears in the Bodleian library's Fairfax MS. 16. and the British Museum's Additional MS. 29, 297, a volume copied from Fairfax MS. 16. Compiled in the 1450s, the Fairfax manuscript collects numerous vernacular poems on the theme of love, many by Chaucer, Hoccleve, and Clanvowe. John Norton-Smith has described Fairfax MS. 16 as "the most beautifully produced and textually responsible example of the fifteenth century's desire to collect Chaucer and his disciples" (*A Facsimile Edition of Bodleian MS Fairfax 16* [London: Scolar Press, 1979], ix). The manuscript's sleek presentation, professional production, as well as the detailed set of annotations accompanying *Reson and Sensuallyte* make visually concrete the literary ambitions embedded within and fictionalized by Lydgate's text.

[4] A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 1.

important and beautiful pieces of poetry" of the late medieval period, while James Simpson understands Lydgate's poem as nothing short of "brilliant."[5] Reading the poem as a "moralistic allegory," Walter Schirmer argues that Lydgate imagines his poetry as a vehicle for transmitting the knowledge of the ancients and not as a means of bringing audiences to delight through narrative.[6] Peter Travis identifies the work as an instance of pilgrimage writing and claims that the poem represents "a paradigm of the reader's progress through many medieval works."[7] Theresa Tinkle reads the work as evidence for Lydgate's attempts to regulate reception by regulating sensuality: Lydgate asserts his poetic agency by restricting Venus to the domain of the literary; literary authority derives from how an author chooses to handle the issue of love.[8]

Though strikingly limited in scope, modern scholarship has recognized passingly authorship and poetics as two of the poem's principal concerns. *Reson and Sensuallyte* meditates on what it means to be an author and dwells upon the creative mediums and methods one must employ when taking up such an occupation. With this chapter, I hope to expand and develop this somewhat nascent topic of inquiry while situating the text within its broader medieval tradition. Lydgate's poem presents a narrative landscape where reason is both absent and unnecessary. Its setting is at once the fantastically idealized domain of allegorized myth and the highly

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[5] C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), 277; James Simpson, "Bulldozing the Middle Ages: the Case of John Lydgate," in *New Medieval Literatures*, vol. 4, ed. Wendy Scase, Rita Copeland, and David Lawton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 234.

[6] Walter Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth* Century, trans. Ann E. Keep (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1961), 39–40.

[7] Peter Travis, "Affective Criticism, the Pilgrimage of Reading, and Medieval English Literature," in *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, ed. Laurie Finke and Martin B. Shictman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987).

[8] Theresa Tinkle, *Medieval Venuses and Cupids: Sexuality, Hermeneutics, and English Poetry* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 129–32.

intertextual world of literary history. As the *auctor* journeys to and through the Garden of Deduit he traverses the same paths once trodden by Amant, encountering and engaging with the relics of a storied literary past. The poem thus fictionalizes its imitative origins. It tells a story of how a lover becomes an *auctor* by occupying the still vibrant but authorially empty narrative domain of a vaunted predecessor.

The space the *auctor* chooses to occupy, though, is selective, contingent, and subversive. *Reson and Sensuallyte* rewrites the *Rose* by writing out Jean de Meun, whose appetitive energies represent a danger to the poem's project of containing rational virtue within amorous desire. As the text shows, the only way to harmonize sensuality and rationality is through the deconstruction of authorship: the *Rose* must be broken down into its constituent parts with the latter forgotten lest love descend to permanent carnality. Jean, however, menaces from the shadows and conspicuously undercuts any efforts to rehabilitate the courtliness of Guillaume's love. Lydgate may attempt to demonstrate how amorous love can potentially coopt reason's stable measure, but the medium he uses to express such a doctrine cannot itself hope to attain such harmony. *Reson and Sensualltye* advances a model of poetry that imitates and attempts to capture in language the rapture of the beastly and unreasoning natural world. In representing authorship as paradoxically couched in destruction and continuation, Lydgate also proves that the unruly passions Jean puts into poetry cannot be erased but merely redirected.

Lydgate's opening representation of the natural world testifies to the ecstatic potential of literary history. Upon commencing his "trayte," the *auctor* situates his tale solidly in the domain of well-

worn poetic convention.[9] Set in the "prime temps," Lydgate's narrative landscape contains all the hallmarks of the dream vision: the *auctor* awakens to "the lusty seson newe / which euery thing causeth renewe," and "reioyssheth" in "these herbes white and rede," "the grene mede," "euery bough, braunch, and tre, / Clad newe in grene," the "wellys [. . .] As cristal or quyk syluer clere," and the "briddes" that "chaunte and synge / on fresshe braunches" (101–97). Lydgate then shores up this generic frame with Chaucerian citation: the "sondry floures" are "with bavme dewed and soote shoures," while "Zepherus, the wynde moost soote, / Enspired bothe croope and roote" (109–10; 135–36). The stock imagery and recycled language here could, of course, be taken simply as more evidence of the "literary decay of the fifteenth century, when the creative art of Chaucer began to crumble down into the dead formulas in the hands of his successors."[10] I would argue, however, that Lydgate's poetic concerns lie outside of realism. These opening 250 lines of convention and appropriation create not a mimetic world, where descriptions correspond to an external physical actuality, but an intertexual world, where Lydgate's object of representation is representation itself. Lydgate, in other words, writes of reality already written, gathering and capturing in dramatic derivation the trappings of a canon into which he himself would write. The

[9] Lydgate also describes the poem as a a "scripture" (45). As the *MED* shows, both labels connote not simply writing, but written authority (s. v. "scriptur," 2; s. v. "trate," 3). Compare, for example, Gower's use of "scripture" in Book IV of the *Confessio*—"Thei that writen the scripture Of Grek, Arabe, and of Caldee [. . .] were of [. . .] Auctorite" (4.2626)—or the anonymous *Destruction of Troy*'s use of "trayte": "Þe hend lay In honerable Ylion [. . .] Of whiche fairehed & fourme, the fynest clerke Dares Tellys in his trety" (8383). Lydgate might dwell in convention here at the poem's opening, but it is the convention of literary greatness after which he aspires. All quotations are drawn from John Lydgate, *Lydgate's Reson and Sensuallyte*, vol. 2, ed. Ernst Sieper (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1901).

[10] Sieper, "Studies and Notes," 1.

fictional *auctor* of Lydgate's poem inhabits the storyworld of poetic tradition; he walks an imaginative expanse of nature already authoritatively textualized.

While some modern readers might see initially Lydgate's conventional springtime setting as an aesthetic stain, the response elicited within the text by this landscape of literary history is divinely and unreasonably affective. Lying in his chamber "Nouther in slombre nor a-slepe," the *auctor* hears through his windows "the briddes chaunte and synge," delivering, through their melody, the enchantment of the stylized natural world:

> I was so ententyf for to here
>
> Her wherbles and her notys clere
>
> That myn ymagynacion
>
> So strong was in conclusion,
>
> I was ravysshed, as thoughte me,
>
> Bothe to here hem and to se. (199–204)

The birds carry literary history in their song. Their "wherbles" represent the "lusty seson" and its "soote shoures" and in turn embody the poetic tradition which Lydgate writes of and through. In this sense, the birds also act as an analogue for the *auctor* himself, modeling in "notys clere" the same song of spring that the *auctor* later transposes to parchment.[11] Through the birdsong and

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[11] For Augustine, birdsong represented unreasoning and purely instinctual sound, and, as such, did not qualify for the status of *musica*. See *De Musica*, 14. As Elizabeth Eva Leach points out, for Augustine and for many medieval writers and readers, "the performer of music is under an obligation not just to make musical sounds but to understand them as *musica*, that is as proportions that are rational" (*Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007], 3). By establishing the birds as imitable artisans, Lydgate challenges, though indirectly, such an aesthetic mandate, allowing a place for irrational delight within the literary enterprise. Also see Phillip Jeserich, *Musica Naturalis: Speculative Music Theory and Poetics from Saint Augustine to the Late Middle Ages in*

the *auctor*'s response, then, Lydgate shows the conventions established by the old masters to retain a vital spark while simultaneously advancing the virtue of a poetics of the imagination. The birdsong, which later becomes Lydgate's song, is of the sensual world. Their beastly and unthinking harmony carries its listeners to *ravysshment*, a state often associated with ethereal transcendence.[12] A poetry steeped in tradition plays on its audiences' sub-rational faculties to simulate celestial rapture without ever truly leaving the earthly plane.

With the arrival of Dame Nature into this vernal countryside, Lydgate introduces an author-figure who challenges the virtue of the natural world's sensual ravishing.[13] The *auctor*, struck with a "sodeyn drede" of Nature's terrible beauty, takes note immediately of her cosmic artistry. Nature "Hath sothly syttynge in hir stalle / Power of planetes alle / And of the brighte sterrys clere," which produce a "heuenly armonye" and "so soote a melodye" that act as "bothe crop and roote / Of musyk and of songis soote" (267–83). This lady of great "Auctoritie" authors the music of the spheres, the source, inspiration, and model for the mundane works wrought by Lydgate and those of his artisanal ilk (252). Unlike the birds who sing of sense, Nature founds her poetics, the creative mechanisms that structure and enable her productions, on the higher

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France, trans. Michael J. Curley and Steven Rendall (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2013), 270–92.

[12] See, for instance, the Prioress's invocation: "O bussh unbrent, / Brennynge in Moyses sight, / That ravyshedest doun fro the Deitee, / [. . .] Help me to telle it in thy reverence" (VII.467–74); or also Richard Rolle's *Luf es Lyf*: "Luf ravuysches Cryste intyl our herte" (16).

[13] The presentation of Nature as an author-figure was a trope well known to medieval authors and audiences. See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books for the Bolligen Foundation, 1953).

faculty separating man and animal.[14] Nature knows no chaos, only rational order. She is "just and agreable, / And passyngly so resonable" and because of this "No man may contrarie nor with-seye / Nor hir lawes disobeye" (261–64). Nature envelopes reason so in the formulating of her laws that the will becomes extraneous. The reason of Nature does not requires conscious assent; its very presence enforces obedience. It is through this overpowering rationality, through these laws "so reasonable," that Nature composes her "heuenly armonye." She is an author of a well ordered cosmos, one whose star-song presumably lays the groundwork for compositional disciples who would, through imitation, try themselves to turn audiences' eyes from the unthinking soil.

While Dame Nature's mode and model of authorship might initially seem fully idealized, Lydgate embeds within her construction a number of dissonant notes that mars her otherwise heavenly harmony. Her affinity with reason puts her at odds with herself and with the imaginatively charged rhetoric she crafts within the poem's narrative frame. When Nature first speaks to the *auctor*, she condemns him for succumbing to the springtime melody. He has languished too long in the sensuality of her creations, lulled into "verray wilful ydelnesse" by the enchanting song of the unreasoning environment. Like Guillaume's Lady Raison, Nature demands from the *auctor* production: "Wherfore arys and take good hede / [. . .] To do somme occupacion" (466–68).[15] Even within her admonition to take up reason's toil once more, Lydgate

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[14] Even her age, which builds on the *Rose*'s description of Lady Raison, belies the mode of thought that gives her works their form: "Though she sempt flouryng in youthe, / She was ful fer y-ronne in age," which "sat wel, as by reson" (334–41). Cf. the *Rose*, lines 2971–91.

[15] Cf. the *Rose*, 3033–72. Lydgate also sees Nature as an emblem of production in his translation of Guillaume de DeGuileville's *Le Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine.* As Lisa H. Cooper observes, there, Lydgate goes to great lengths to amplify the economic implications already present in DeGuileville's

shows Nature to be as equally captivated as the *auctor* by the earthly bliss of the senses. Her language dwells in detail upon the marvels of the environment, reiterating with some precision the wording used but a few lines by the author to describe his idling in the mede. She lingers upon the imagery of the "glade morwe fresh and lyght," its "bemys bryght," its "herbes tendre and softe," "the bawymy dropes siluer and fair / Vapoured hath vp in the ayre," how the "leves white and rede, / Doth upon her stalke to sprede," and "how the briddes synge" (449–60). Of her diatribe against the *auctor*'s sloth, more than half of her lines are devoted to recreating the imaginative impressions from which she would turn her awestruck listener.

Lydgate thus presents an author-figure of reason who cannot author reason. Even the immediate effect of Dame Nature's image-laden critique is of intellectual hinderance. After Nature "had shewyd hir sentence," the *auctor* is "Astonyed first ful still" and "Desirous to knowe her name" (473–480). Nature inspires, through her sense based rhetoric, mental paralysis and passion, states hardly conducive to taking "good hede / Of wyt and of discrecion" (467–68). Nature's inability to put into compositional practice her rational doctrine holds two essential implications. First, Lydgate's imagining of Nature as engaging in a poetics at odds with her apparently reasonable nature highlights the impossibility of reaching a verse absolutely detached from terrestrial sensuality. Not even she who is "vnder god the chefe goddesse" can extricate herself from the enchantment of a literary environment. Second, the blame Nature heaps upon the *auctor* for falling victim to her marvelous spell detaches from authorship receptional responsibility. Authors can and should follow Nature in creating songs of sensuality; the onus for

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language by introducing a new vocabulary that emphasizes Nature's role "as a participant in a system of small commodity production and exchange" (*Artisans and Narrative Craft in Late Medieval England* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 135).

the reasonable appreciation of that song falls squarely with the audience. Poetry contains and provokes desire through the imagination but leaves the decision to its listeners and readers of whether to take its lessons with "good hede" or to revel idly in its sensory grandeur.

The aesthetic journey outlined by Nature and then undertaken by the *auctor* shows objects of beauty to be without intrinsic value and devoid of rationality. The function of beauty is at once and ever to look beyond beauty. Once Dame Nature has managed, much like the eagle in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, to snap the *auctor* out of his environmentally inspired "slombre," she speaks in the register of authorship, promising to reveal her "sentence" and "entente" if he "yive me audience" (512–16).[16] The "sentence" she puts forth then goes on to structure *Reson and Sensuallyte*'s narrative structure. Dame Nature's idea becomes the idea of the poem itself:

> But that thou go for to visyte
> Rounde thys worlde in lengthe and brede,
> And considre, and take good hede,
> Yf ther fayle in my wirkynge
> Of fairnesse any thyng
> Or of beaute wanteth ought
> And of wyssdome that may be sought;
> To fyn, that thou maist comprehende
> The mater, and thy self amende,
> To preyse the lorde eternal. (518–27)

[16] In the poem's opening lines, when the *auctor* lays out the purpose of his "scripture," he ask that his readers "felen fully the sentence" (34–35). Shortly after, when going on to describe Dame Nature, he promises to "descryve hir excellence / Yif ye will yive me audience" (245–46).

Dame Nature fashions the *auctor* into an aesthetic arbiter whose principal criterion for evaluation is reason. The *auctor* must venture into a world of sense to bring impression into line with divine universality. The structuring odyssey proposed by Nature functions as a blueprint for reading, a hermeneutic key. She who authors the "croppe and roote" of all "songes soote" describes how one should read her works, which in turn describes how one should read those works that follow in her mold. This model of interpretation casts the art object as productive only in mediation. The true pleasure of an artwork lies outside and above its material or textual form, in what the aesthetic object can intimate but not capture. In this sense, then, art is itself reasonless; it is a sensory and worldly simulacrum that can initiate transcendence if coupled properly with an externally imposed rationality.

Dame Nature's theory of an art of upward ends is not necessarily that to which the poem itself wholly subscribes. The *auctor*'s initial response of stupefied transport to environmental and literary wonder as well as Nature's own poetic propensity to succumb in discourse to the shimmer of her marvels both highlight the difficulty, if not impossibility, of an audience responding and an author authoring with right reason. The attainment of celestial heights through discourse is no mean proposition. Shorty after Dame Nature departs and the *auctor* sets out upon his quest, he encounters yet another emblem of rationality, Pallas.[17] Much like Nature, Pallas meditates upon the nature and purpose of poetry in a manner that comes into tension with her apparent allegorical referent. For Pallas, the swan embodies the ideal literary maker:

[17] Representing *sapiencia* and *prudencia* (as indicated by the accompanying marginalia), Pallas helps men to "avoydeth ydelnesse" and gives them the power through "hir wyt to comprehende / Secretys which that be dyvyne" (1076, 80–81). Compare this function to the definition Dame Nature gives for reason as a "secret ynwarde syght" (755) that "makes hyss wytt to encylne / To knowe thinges that be deynve" (743–44).

So as the **Swan**, this is no nay

Syngeth to forn his fatal day,

With werbles ful of melodye,

To shewen in her armonye,

Of kynde as she is enclyned

How the threde shal be vntwyned

Of hir lyf. (1247–53)

Through unthinking instinct alone, the swan crafts a *memento mori* founded on the dulcet strains of the sense.[18] The topic of the swan's composition is antitype to that of the springtime songbirds, but much like with those earlier "wherbles" of regeneration, Lydgate holds the doomed, winged songstress up as an example ("so euery man in case semblable" 1255). In doing so, Lydgate again proves that rationality is hardly an essential cog within the mechanics of literary composition. The swan's dying melody represents a viable and desirable poetic method: an invention of instinct determines the material that then finds expression in an emotive but unintelligible bestial cry. Listeners are moved to the realization that "he the dethe may nat eskape" through the apprehension of savage affect rather than through the reasoned comprehension of intended doctrine (1259).

Lydgate's opening engagement with the poetics of the natural world establishes the virtue of unthinking authors and irrational texts. This concern with the imitation of an unreasonable song is extended and complicated by the *auctor*'s arrival at the Garden of Deduit, which Lydgate

[18] Following medieval commonplace, Lydgate repeatedly emphasizes the irrationality of beasts. The animal world is defined by "the vertu sensytif / By which he feleth and doth knowe, / Thinges, bothen high and lowe, / Which to forn him be present" (698–700). It is man's "Vnderstondynge and reson" that "Fro bestes bereth the difference" (724–28).

uses as a means of entering into, rewriting, and mastering literary history. When the *auctor*'s path finally leads him to "this lusty herber delytable," he readily admits to the belated nature of his coming. An oft-visited locale, Deduit's Garden "Is remembred, in soothness, / Of many clerkes as be writyng," the most important being, of course, "hym, with-out[e] glose, / That gan the romaunce of the rose" (4812–19). Following this citation, Lydgate goes on to rehearse a selective summary of the *Rose* which the marginal commentary glosses as the *historia de Rosa*.[19] Likely authoritative, the marginalia describes the proceeding material as comprehensive of the *Rose* in total and not simply that material of him who "gan" the poem.[20] The *historia* describes how Guillaume, and notably not Amant, enters into this "place of grete delyte" and becomes taken by "so gret affeccion / To han yt in possession / Oonly for beaute of A roose" (4833–39). It is Guillaume's possessive desire that leads to the creation of "that book moste notable" (4859): "For love of which, in substance, / He compiled the romaunce / Callyd the **Romaunce** of the Rose" (4847–49). Lydgate's *Rose* is Guillaume's *Rose*, albeit in a highly and purposefully distorted version. In a certain sense, Lydgate fashions the *Rose* into a sort of compendious love letter similar to the project described by Boccaccio during the proem to *Il Filostrato*: Guillaume hopes to possess finally his object of desire through the creation and sending off of a literary

[19] The full marginal commentary reads, "Nota quomodo auctor allegat historiam de Rosa." Lewis and Short define *allegere* both as "to bring forward, to relate, recount, mention, adduce" (1.b) and as "to select" or "to choose." While the first sense of "to relate" seems most active here, it is equally possible that the marginalia shows an awareness of the following *historia*'s highly selective nature.

[20] While *Reson and Sensuallyte* maintains much of the commentary appended to *Les Échecs Amoureux*, its marginalia, much like the poem itself, is much amplified. As Sieper points out, "The annotator in most cases starts his remarks when Lydgate leaves the ground of his original. The sources followed in his deviations are correctly pointed out. These facts permit the conclusion that if Lydgate did not write the marginal notes himself, they originated from a man who knew perfectly all the conditions of his work ("Studies and Notes," 4).

translation. Passionate love acts as the impetus to composition, subordinating "philosophie" and "profounde poetrye" to the satiation of "appetyte" (4855–56, 4834). It is by writing the *Rose*—and not by seeking Genius's and Nature's counsel and then storming the Castle of Jealousy aided by Amors and his love barons—that Guillaume "bekan a trew[e] homager / Vnto Cupide" and at last gained his "mede" ("He had it at his owne wil") (4864–69, 4876). Lydgate reads the *Rose* both as a circular metafiction—a story of how passion inspired Guillaume to write a story about passion inspiring him to write a story—and as an amorous poem of occasional persuasion—a sensual verse motivated by a specific desire that hopes to achieve through discourse and later record the consummation of that desire.

Lydgate's treatment of the *Rose* is an act of usurpation that is at once subtle and sterilizing. By quietly excising Jean from the *Rose*'s *historia*, Lydgate can go on to create a far less problematic source from which to trace a literary genealogy. Without the misrule of Jean—his penchant for euphemism, his explosive rendering of desire's end—Lydgate avoids entirely the material taken issue by readers like Christine de Pisan, who describes Jean as an author inspired by a "grant charnalite."[21] Lydgate's renovation of the *Rose* also enables replacement. *Reson and Sensuallyte*'s true source, *Les Échecs amoureux*, never receives direct mention. By instead drawing attention to his source's source, heaping praise upon its style and content, making explicit mention of direct parallels, Lydgate seems to indicate that the *auctor* the *auctor* infrequently invokes is the author of the *Rose* rather than the anonymous compositor of *Les Échecs amoureux.* Lydgate shifts the implied locus of his source to an imagined point of origin. The *Rose* to which Lydgate would refer his readers exists only in the textual bounds of his poem.

[21] *Debating the Roman de la Rose: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Christine McWebb (New York: Routledge, 2007), 130.

It is a *Rose* half-written yet strangely conclusive: Jean may be gone but his ending remains in sanitized form. It is a *Rose* venerated but mastered, lauded for those components that just so happen to align with those present in Lydgate's own re-creation.

The world through which the *auctor* travels is an archive of literary artifact, one that Lydgate demands be read in competitive conjunction with Guillaume's *Rose*. As soon as the *auctor* realizes that he follows the literal steps of his master, he reshapes Nature's initiating command to go forth and judge the beauty of her works. Rather than assessing the aesthetic quality of natural works, the *auctor* will instead focus on the beauty of the literary:

> And first gan in my self recorde,
> Wher the beaute dyde acorde
> By any maner Resemblaunce,
> Touching my drem in substaunce,
> Wher yt be lyke in any thing,
> I mene as thus, wher my dremyng,
> Which in this book I shal disclose,
> Be lyke the Romaunce of the Rose. (4911–18)

Here, Lydgate reveals the creative methods applied in bringing the *auctor*'s narrative from "avysion" to "book," and in doing so establishes a hermeneutic that works to condition reception. The *auctor* actively directs his memory—the recollective pool from which he must later draw when bringing experienced past to textual present—to recording specifically how the substance of his dream compares with that of Guillaume's. The poem he goes on to produce is a disclosure of likeness built from a memory manipulated. The production of such a comparative work entails the *auctor* shifting allegiances. The *auctor* refocuses the aesthetic inquiry demanded by Dame Nature to examine now "wher the beaute dyde acorde" with Guillaume's *Rose*. The form of the

quest remains—the *auctor* still aims to judge objects of beauty—but these objects no longer can be attributed primarily to Dame Nature. While Lydgate does not go so far as to separate the *Rose* from Nature, the *auctor*'s taking up of a new aesthetic master speaks to the capacity of the literary, works of great authority "Ful of mystery and secres," to enchant audiences into forgetting or at least revising the doctrine of a transcendent power. The literary grounds its readers on the textual rather than the ethereal world. It turns attention from the cosmic song of the stars to the visionary delights bound within the material page.

The Garden of Deduit through which the *auctor* must travel is not like Guillaume's version. It is Guillaume's version. Lydgate's appropriation of setting, though, acts as challenge as much as it does allusion. Lydgate carefully punctuates his description of the lush arbor with citation. The "herber most renomed [. . .] / hath be descryved her to forn / Both in metre and in prose," but the *auctor* only names one source in particular: "I take recorde of the rose" (5137–43). The *auctor* also directs readers to the *Rose* to learn more of Cupid's arrows: "In the *Rose*, who taketh hede, / In ordre ther ye may hem rede, / Her names and condicion, / Her force, her power, and renoun" (5443–46). The *Rose* here functions as something of an appendix, an additional but finally unessential container of peripheral trivia. Citation marking reliance gives way to belated reenactment as the *auctor* comes across the relics of Guillaume's earlier visit. The *auctor* glimpses "the **Rosys** soote / And the famous fressh **Roser** / Whilom y-kept by **Daunger** / Whan the Lover was I-blamed" (5632–35); he sees "The place, wher that Ialousye / In a mighty strong **Dongon** / Put byalacoyl in prison" (5468–69); and then at last comes to "the welle amorous" of Narcissus (5669). These material remnants of the *Rose* evoke through their presence

the absence of their author. With the Lover who is also Guillaume emphatically departed, Lydgate can then install himself as steward of the *Rose*'s unclaimed imaginative capital.[22]

Lydgate asserts his authority most directly over Guillaume's *materia* in his reimagining of Amant's encounter with the Well of Narcissus. Like Amant, the *auctor* approaches the well and comprehends its meaning "by lettres graven in the stoon" (4865). But where Amant reads on the marble tablet a tale of reason's contradictory failings, as I have argued in an earlier chapter, the auctor reads simply "How **Narcisus** slay[e]n was / And his woful Aventure," which he glosses in brief as "folye" (5688–89). For the *auctor*, Narcissus exemplifies avoidable stupidity ("But I, in sooth, no pereil caste," 5701) and chance rather than the irrationality of desire. In the *Rose*, the Fountain of Love penetrates Amant with its "madness" and generates the passion that spurns reason but produces poetry. What the *auctor* of *Reson and Sensuallyte* witnesses in the depths of the well is of another matter altogether:

> And I beheld therin alsoo
>
> With many dyuers circumstaunces
>
> Ryght wonder vnkouth resemblaunces,
>
> In the cristal stoonys clere,

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[22] In many ways, Lydgate's treatment of Guillaume parallels his treatment of Chaucer in the *Siege of Thebes.* As A. C. Spearing writes concerning the *Siege*, "In order to live as a poet, [Lydgate] had to kill Chaucer—unknowingly of course, but then Oedipus did not know that it was Laius whom he had killed at the crossroads" (*Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984], 109). See also Scott-Morgan Straker, "Deference and Difference: Lydgate, Chaucer, and The Siege of Thebes," *Review of English Studies* 52 (2001), 1–21; Daniel T. Kline, "Father Chaucer and the Siege of Thebes: Literary Paternity, Aggressive Deference, and the Prologue to Lydgate's Oedipal Canterbury Tale," *The Chaucer Review* 34 (1999), 217–35; Spearing, "Lydgate's Canterbury Tale: The Siege of Thebes and Fifteenth-Century Chaucerianism," in *Fifteenth Century Studies: Recent Essays*, ed. Robert Yeager (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1984), 333–64.

And many figure eke appere:

Of Cupid the lyknesse,

Of Deduit and of gladnesse,

Of youthe also and of beaute,

Arrayed lyche to hir degre,

With al that other companye

Whiche ye haue herde me specifye. (5776–86)

Unlike Amant, the *auctor* does not fall victim from his gazing, at least not initially, to love's "noveile rage" (1581).[23] But while the *auctor* may resist at first love's pull, he does still take on the water's foolish character. Not a self-image and not a love object, the reflection in the well is instead the *auctor*'s preceding poetic materials, that "whiche ye haue herde me specifye." The *auctor* becomes a reader of his own text, experiencing with awe the same narrative, fantastic images, and allegorical figures that his poem has already delivered unto its audiences. Lydgate's substitution of auto-citation for the overwhelming love-object glimpsed by Guillaume at once casts *Reson and Sensuallyte* as an analogous container of ephemeral narcissism while also putting on display his rivalrous poetics, an imitative mode of composition that outdoes by redoing.[24] Guillaume could not look into the well of classical antiquity without succumbing to its absurdly captivating pull. Lydgate stares into its crystalline waters and, seeing within his own

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[23] All quotations from the *Rose* are drawn from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Libraire Honoré Champion, 1970).

[24] Claire Nouvet sees a similar narcissistic rivalry at work in Guillaume's own handling of Ovid. In detaching the mythological narrative from its original context, Guillaume uses the well as "the site where the text reflects its own allegorical 'vision'" ("An Allegorical Mirror: The Pool of Narcissus in Guillaume de Lorris' *Romance of the Rose*," *The Romantic Review* 91 [2000]: 353–74, here 354). In a certain sense, then, Lydgate does unto Guillaume what Guillaume had already done unto Ovid.

text in place of Ovid's and of Guillaume's, feel only curiosity for what more may come. The *auctor*'s resistance to the well is also Lydgate's resistance to the authority of his purported source.

Such authorial resistance is a product not only of Lydgate's desire to outmatch but of his urge to correct as well. The apparently irreconcilable divide between courtly love and rationality portrayed by Guillaume does not sit well with the Monk of Bury. The *auctor* does not submerge himself in the maddening love of the well's waters in part because he cannot: in the poem's narrative world love is not counter-rational. *Reson and Sensuallyte* strives to flatten the distinction between its titular abstractions; the conjunction between them connotes not separation but idealized unity. The poem outlines its rationalized sense of love most clearly during the game of chess between the beautiful "mayde" and the *auctor*, a contest Lydgate glosses as an "art," a "crafte," and a means of learning the laws of Venus—thus an *ars amatoria*.[25] A somewhat exhausting and much amplified section (thankfully cut short by the poem's sudden completion of incompletion), here the author moves piece by piece describing each's symbolic import and relation to the game of love.[26] As the author moves across the board revealing the allegorical virtues and vices comprising both female and male sides, it quickly becomes clear that the game

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[25] On the deep relationship between chess and medieval literary aesthetics, see Daniel E. O'Sullivan, "Introduction: 'le beau je nottable,'" in *Chess in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Age: A Fundamental Thought Paradigm of the Premodern World*, ed. Daniel E. O'Sullivan (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH and Co., 2011), 1–16.

[26] Lydgate vastly expands *Les Echecs Amoureux*'s description and interpretation of the chess pieces. The section of *Les Echecs Amoureux* detailing the Lady's pieces (4759–4850) explicates the significance of her chessly array in a quick 91 lines. Lydgate, however, chooses to break this section into multiple subsections and dissects the minutiae of the pieces' allegorically charged appearances, and, in doing so, draws out those original 91 lines to a sprawling 775.

is rigged. The lovely maid plays with pawns of Providence and Bounty, a queen of Grace, and a king of Everlasting Trouthe, while the *auctor* must rely on the grim prospects presented by a pawn of idleness that "kyndeleth eke the fyres / Of Venus bronde by fals delyte" (6948–49), a pawn of sight that finds itself easily led astray by "worldly vanyte" and "fals collusion" (6966–67), and a pawn of sweet thought that has a tendency to make "merours of fals pleasavnce" (7027). And although Lydgate's poem never reaches the inevitable check-mating of the *auctor* detailed in his source, the described disparity in symbolic virtue as well as the poem's opening lines make clear the match's conclusion.[27] Through this formulation of love's game, the implied *moralyte* of *Reson and Sensuallyte* becomes that of the Wife of Bath: in a contest with but one possible result, men must submit themselves, like Jankin and the knight of the Wife's tale, unto the "maistre" and "wise governance" of their ladies.

With masculine desire hopelessly defective, Lydgate shows its feminine counterpart to be the master template for erotic engagement. The love embodied by the Lady's pieces represents an idealized yet still-worldly passion with which even Lady Raison would find difficulty taking issue. The Lady's fifth pawn, for instance, "bereth eke a ryng / Myd hys sheedle," not "to streyt nor large," which signifies the need for lovers "In euery thing to kepe a Mene, / To refuse and voyde clene / of excesse all surplusage" (6332–42). Her sixth pawn, "Purveyaunce or providence," allows her to recognize "the galle / Of worldly mutabylyte" and "the sodeyn transmutacion / Of al erthely felycite" (6375–85). And her king, "With-Out[e] Mutabilyte," allows her to actualize such recognition so that "Trouthe sholde lasten euere / In her herte" (6855–58). By enfolding such virtues into the figure analogous to the *Rose*'s Rose, Lydgate

[27] See lines 5–11: "To hem thys boke y wil presente; / Where they shal fynde and sen Anoon, / How that I, nat yore agoon, / Was of a Fers so Fortunat / In-to a corner dryve and maat."

contradicts the dismissal made by Jean's Amant of Lady Raison's seemingly nonexistent brand of love ("I would be a stupid fool indeed if I wanted to seek such loves, since there are no more of them on earth" [5388–90]). For Lydgate, such a love not only exists but it can be contained by the trappings of the courtly world outlined initially by Guillaume. A reasonable love materializes even within Deduit's dome of pleasure. *Reson and Sensuallyte* has no need of an allegorical lady representative of pure rationality. Her presence would be extraneous given Cupid's assimilation of measure and star-bound sight. Lydgate, in this sense, authors an unreasonable tale of reasonable love.

In defining a love that would with reason accord, Lydgate also posits a poetics and hermeneutic that govern, respectively, how one should create and understand amorous discourse. Writing about love entails writing about how love should be read and written. The Maid's sixth pawn, Providence, represents not only the ability to transcend reason and see with divine intelligence, "to sen aforn what shal falle" (6379), but also an interpretive procedure of resistance.[28] It is the nature of this providential love "To eschewen al enchauntment" of "soote sugryd songe" "nor to emprynten in her herte / The sugryd wordys that they here" (6394–415).[29]

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[28] In *Les Echecs Amoureux*, the seventh pawn is described in the briefest of terms with only the painted panther receiving mention ("Li aultrez, qui estoit septiesme, / Une panthere y ot pourtraitte" 4788–89). Neither Providence nor its ability to resist sweet songs make any appearance. Quotations are drawn from *Les Eschéz d'Amours: A Critical Edition of the Poem and its Latin Glosses*, ed. Gregory Heyworth and Daniel E. O' Sullivan with Frank Coulson (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[29] Providence's aversion to discursive "enchauntment" parallels a number of points in the *Confessio* which highlight the danger of succumbing to linguistic allure. Book IV's Tale of Demophon and Phyllis, for instance, describes how Phyllis arrives at rather tragic end after listening to all that Demophons says, "And hou he swor and hou he preide / Which was as an enchauntment / To hire, that was innocent" (4.763–66). See J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 74.

Providence enables an unaffected aesthetic experience. Through it one may experience objects of enchantment without experiencing the effect of enchantment. Such a receptional procedure stands in stark contrast to that modeled by the *auctor*, who easily becomes "ravysshed" (201) by Nature's "heuenly armonye," the source and shape of all "songis soote," and finds himself spellbound by the "ravysshynge souns" "and sugryd melodye" of Deduit's arbor (5212–13).

It would be possible to read this affective discrepancy as encouraging a movement from the sensuous to rational understanding of "soote sugryd songe." The *auctor* who writes the poem—a figure whom we may or may not distinguish from the historical Lydgate and who emerges as a consequence of the doctrinal training described within the poem's narrative frame—calls such a reading into question with his lush attention to natural and intertextual detail, his desire to "shewen and magnifie" Nature, that "heuenly compass" and all her works. Like Gower in the *Confessio*, the *auctor* tells the story of how he came to write. The *auctor* who speaks at the poem's opening is an author who has already undergone the training provided by the vision. The manuscript layout emphasizes the *auctor*'s attachment (which borders on obsession) to beauty and its textualization. The frequent segmentation of *descriptio* introduced by bold, oversized headings ("Here speketh thaauctor of the beaute of Nature"; "Here descryueth the beaute and maner of Pallas"; "Her maketh thauctor A descripcion of hir beaute and of hir array," to name but a few instances) defines the poem's authorship partially, though substantially, as a product of its writer's ability to evoke the rapture of his narrative world. In this regard, *Reson and Sensuallyte* does not deny readerly and authorial enchantment but genders it. Lydgate's interpretation of the sixth pawn forecloses feminine participation in experiencing the sublimity of song, be that song a natural harmony, a lover's persuasion, or the profound poesy of the *Rose*.

The poetics of Lydgate's reasonable love—the methods for generating discourse prescribed and embodied within love's game—oscillate between the deployment of a perfectly representative language of plain-speaking and mute nothing. Nobleness, the Maiden's eighth pawn, outlines a mode of speaking in line with that described by Lady Raison during the *coilles* episode of Jean's *Rose*: "for mouth and hert / Ben al oon, who can adverte. / They varie neuer for word and thoght" (6579–91).[30] Rational love demands a form of speech that goes beyond mediation. It demands speech not only present thought but that it embody that thought without variance. The difference between speech and thought lies in form not content. There can be no doubleness, circumlocution, or ambiguity in this cognitive-linguistic system. Offering an alternative to the seeming impossibility of such unmediated discourse, the Maiden's third pawn, Simplicity, suggests that rational lovers instead "be as Muet as a ston. / A mouthe they han, her tonge ys gon [. . .] / They be professed to silence" (6267–70).[31] The methods for rational lovers to speak of love, then, are either speaking through thought or not speaking at all. Such discursive practices stand in opposition to the literary enterprise—to the thinly veiled allegorical figures of Lydgate's "scripture"—which works to represent and deliver meaning through indirection, and to the poet's production of colored and sensuous language and narrative. The poetics of passion rationalized are really a type of anti-poetics, a creative order whose implementation finally abolishes the literary.

While Lydgate does not critique or question directly the rationalized love embodied by the Maiden's pieces, he does undercut its viability by evoking the authorial presence that, at least

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[30] Cf. *Roman de la Rose*, 7051–106.

[31] Lydgate's interpretation of the Lady's Third Pawn as representative of the virtue of silence is almost entirely original. *Les Echecs Amoureux* briefly describes the pawn as resembling a beautiful yet simple angel ("a fourme et la samblance / D' un aignel simple et deboinaire" 4780–81).

up until this point, remained purposefully obscured. Though Jean's portion *Rose* appears without citation in *Reson and Sensuallyte*'s opening lines (the account of Jupiter's Two Tuns), it finds direct mention within the description of the Maiden's queen, Grace. Gazing upon the queen, the *auctor* is reminded of Genius—this time as Venus's rather than Nature's priest—as representing a component of grace—the absence of Daunger.[32] Drawing directly from Jean, the *auctor* describes how Genius lays "Hys curse vpon the folkys all / Which that in the sentence fall / From his lawes for to varie" and then lights the fire that no woman can resist (6629–31):[33]

> Anoon as he his torche hath quenyt
> The smoky air with curse yment
> Ran so fer in lengthe and brede
> That sodenly, or they took hede
> Women kaught it in her nose. (6637–41)

Lydgate does attempt to rationalize Genius's passionate blaze, later glossing the moment of ignition as exemplifying the feminine refusal of disdain: "For yt is not of reson nor skylle / To hate a man for his good will" (6656–57). This reading, however, fails to rein in the unreasonable implications of the allusion. Much like Gower's Genius's faltering interpretations, the narrative moment referenced here contains meaning that exceeds the gloss. The smoky air overcomes without warning or consent. It envelopes and overwhelms and looks forward to the moment of appetitive consummation initiated by Genius's arson. The affected, supposedly rational lovers

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[32] Prior to this moment, Lydgate had described Genius as aligned with Nature rather than Reason. See lines 47–100. Given the affinity Lydgate describes between Nature and Reason at the poem's opening, the discrepancy here might be more motivated than blundering, with Genius's blurred clerical allegiances working to emphasize the hazy but amiable division between his dual masters.

[33] Cf. *Roman de la Rose*, 20668–82.

may exile "daunger," "unmercy," and "dysdayn," but they do so without volition, giving themselves over to the earthbound carnality described with such doubleness at Jean's euphemistic finale.

The unnamed yet unmistakable presence of Jean de Meun plants seeds of misrule at the center of the poem's endeavor to find an accord between reason and sensuality, creating an inherent and unresolvable tension. Lydgate does to his chess game what Jean had done earlier with Lady Raison: he takes an allegorical construct that seemingly should stand for measure and temperance and draws out its disruptive elements to call into question the viability of rational love and rational writing about love. I would argue that such irresolution is hardly a poetic failing, another instance of Lydgate's oft-noted artistic ineptitude, but a consequence of the author's entrance into a literary tradition based in *folece et musardie*. Lydgate shows, through Jean's sudden entrance via allusion, the impossibility of writing into being a truly measured passion. The collapse into contradiction between reason and sensuality is itself a rejection of the order and unity requisite of a rational aesthetic. In effect, Lydgate implicitly accepts irresolution and disjunction as a core component of his poetics, an aesthetic frame that offers his work a structure of chaotic uncertainty. The irrationality of Lydgate's rational love thus looks back at the unreasoning enchantment felt and subsequently imitated by the *auctor*. The sensuous rapture of the natural and textual worlds, far from being corrected as the *Reson and Sensuallye* moves forward, appears at the poem's end as corollary to the enigmatic disunity that Lydgate writes into the game of love. Lydgate's poem thus begins and ends by fictionalizing the virtue of a poetry that gives itself over to the ravishment of the terrestrial and irrational world.

II

The anonymous author of the *Assembly of the Gods*—a shadowy figure long thought to be none other than Daun John, Monk of Bury—finds himself overwhelmed and captivated by the same topic that governs Lydgate's translation of *Les Échecs Amoureux*: "how that I myght make / Reason and Sensuallyte oon to acorde" (5–6).[34] Unlike *Reson and Sensuallyte*, the *Assembly* actually reaches a clear conclusion and posits a solution on the matter. The imagined accord, however, proves as tenuous as Lydgate's fragmented and paradoxical finale. Written in a highly wrought, alliterative Rhyme Royal stanza, the poem blends aspects of the *Rose*'s courtly dream vision with psychomachia and the morality play to create a curious and often rather compelling meditation on the nature of and relationships among earthly passions, classical authorities, and the writing of modern allegory.

The poem opens with its author musing lakeside on the seemingly incompatible characters of reason and sensuality. At his inability to uncover himself such "monacorde," the author falls into a "traunse" (7, 15). Morpheus then greets the author and bids him follow to the Court of Minos, where Eolus stands trial for his wanton desecration of Diana's and Neptune's realms. Before Minos can pass judgement, a messenger arrives from Apollo requesting the gods' prescence at a banquet. This invitation does not extend to Discord due to the "scisme odyous" that she created through her role in the Judgement of Paris. Discord, fuming, directs to the banquet Atropos, who arrives demanding that the gods uphold their vow "that my myght of noon shuld have be dyspysd" (483). The gods grant Atropos their aid in his war against Virtue, the only one to have avoided Atropos's snares, and Pluto sends his son Vice to lead the armies. The

[34] All quotations from the *Assembly* are drawn from *The Assembly of the Gods*, ed. Jane Chance (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999).

next third of the poem recounts the war between Vice and Virtue, replete with epic lists of captains, counsellors, and followers and descriptions of tactics, envoys, and maneuvers. Eventually, through the aid of allies such as Baptism, Perseverance, and Cunning (whose genealogy includes Grammar, Rhetoric, and Profound Poetry), Virtue wins the field, Macrocosm, capturing Vice's chief intelligence officer, Sensuality, whom Virtue then puts, along with the governance of Macrocosm, under the charge of Reason. In the final portion of the poem, Morpheus draws the author away from the battleground and into the Garden of Doctrine, where Dame Doctrine pulls back the veil of allegory for author and audience alike to disclose the vision's *sentence*. Before departing the arbor, the author recalls his initial query and pleads with Doctrine to reveal how reason with sensuality might accord. Doctrine summons the two figures who go on to confess their mutual fear of death. The author then awakens and begins to write of his visionary journey.

It is quite possible that the *Assembly of the Gods* has received even less critical attention than the already understudied *Reson and Sensuallyte*. The poem's first editor, Oscar Lovell Triggs, reads the poem as a "sermon in verse," which, besides standing as one of the "monuments of the bad taste of a low literary culture," serves as a "consummate expression" of the author's fear of death.[35] Jane Chance, introducing the text in its most recent edition, connects the *Assembly* with a late-fifteenth-century tradition of women's writing, a corpus containing works such as *The Floure and the Leafe* and the *Assembly of Ladies* which were composed either

[35] Oscar Lovell Triggs, "Introduction," in John Lydgate, *The Assembly of the Gods: or The Accord of Reason and Sensuality in the Fear of Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1895). On the poem's textual history, see Bradford Y. Fletcher, "The Textual Tradition of The Assembly of Gods," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 71 (1977), 191–94.

by or for females.[36] As far as I can tell, only one scholar, Curt F. Buhler, has analyzed the *Assembly* outside of one of the two critical editions' introductions, and that analysis is limited to a brief note demonstrating the *Assembly*'s reliance on Christine de Pisan's *Epistre Othea.*[37] But while this body of scholarly materials may be rather restrained in bulk, it has usefully drawn attention to the poem's corrective engagement with the *Rose*. Like *Reson and Sensuallyte*, the *Assembly*'s author draws on the imagery and tropes of Guillaume and (to a lesser extent) Jean, but in doing so seeks to muffle any intimations of misrule to a much more measured doctrine.

In this section, I hope to focus these few earlier discussions of the poem's intertextuality by examining how the author of the *Assembly* seeks to bring resolution to the troubling openness left by the *Rose* and its representations of the dynamic among reason, sensuality, and the literary. Here, I will go on to argue that the *Assembly of the Gods* intertwines its imagining of rationality and its own poetics with the figure of Atropos, who appears as an embodiment of the very discursive practices that the author himself would follow in his work's making. The *Assembly*'s author outlines an impossibly idealized version of the relationship between reason and sensuality where the will is wholly absent. In the *Assembly*'s allegorized landscape, reason dominates sensuality completely and without question. Rationality brooks no dissent because there is no agency to allow dissent. According this model, it is in the nature of reason to foreclose alternate patterns of thought, which puts this governing mechanism at odds with the literary masters of antiquity, whom the author positions within Vice's and Sensuality's ranks due to the doctrinally unstable character of their pagan works. Besides showing himself within the dream-vision frame

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[36] Jane Chance, "Introduction," in *The Assembly of the Gods*.

[37] Curt F. Buhler, "The 'Assembly of the Gods' and Christine de Pisan," *English Language Notes* 251 (1967), 251–54.

to be firmly allied with Virtue and Reason—and thus in opposition to writers such as Ovid and Virgil—the *Assembly*'s author further emphasizes the counter-classical rationality of his poetics in the reckoning imposed onto his dream by Dame Doctrine. The reading imparted by this authoritative figure works to rein in any wayward meaning, to make literal the *sentence* previously covered, albeit quite thinly, by the trappings of allegory. The author's drive to replace and erase the literary authorities of old as well as his final turn to the literal might ally him with Reason's mode of rule, but such compositional principles also indicate a more menacing affinity with Atropos, who, throughout the poem, desires nothing other than the obliteration of the pagan deities through a strict adherence to the letter. *The Assembly of the Gods* shows that a poetry of reason is ultimately a poetry of death.

The battle between Virtue and Vice at the center of the *Assembly* externalizes in tenebrous allegory the shattered internal mechanisms of human perception, understanding, and reaction. This psychomachia shows the abstract values structuring thought and action—in essence one's subjectivity—to be dispersed broadly across warring factions that compete for worldly agency. The battle takes place on the field of "Macrocosm," which the armies enter through "hygh weyes fyue" (939).[38] As Dame Doctrine later clarifies, Macrocosm stands for "the lesse worlde, to the

[38] To make sense of the poem in relation to its psychomachiac tradition, Triggs notes that the poet's use of "Macrocosm" is likely a scribal error and that the word should actually read "microcosm." While Chance seems to concurs with Trigg's reading, she goes on to note that the *Assembly*'s poet, following Bernardus Silvestris's *Cosmographia*, may be attempting to collapse the boundaries between "cosmological disturbance and human sin, or the ordering of the heavens and human society and the psychological hierarchy of the human soul" (n.932). Both to follow the extant textual evidence and to allow for the possibility of a such blurring, I have maintained "Macrocosm" within my reading of the poem. As I will go on to show, however, the *Assembly*'s author did not seem to place much value on slippery semantics.

comon entent, / Whyche appyled ys to man both nyght and day" (1829–30), while the "posterns fyue" "Sygnyfy nat ellys but whyle man ys on lyue / Hys v inwarde wyttes" (1849–52). Virtue and Vice arrive at Macrocosm as colonists hoping to subjugate its current ruler: "The Lord of Macrocosm and rewler of that fee / Was callyd Frewyll, chaunger of the chaunse" (995–96). Given the Lord of Macrocosm's name, one might expect Freewill to embody and enact within the narrative intent undetermined by divine premonition. One might expect Freewill to display a measure of agency, to act through informed (either by reason or sensuality) choice. Instead of acting, however, Freewill is acted upon, dominated and controlled at any given moment by whichever side seems most likely to emerge victorious. By picturing a subjugated will, the author implicitly denies the possibility of meaningful human agency: people do not choose to act virtuously or viciously; such acts are chosen for them. The *Assembly*'s author presents Freewill as a principle of unreasoning appetite whose lust for life impels him without thought toward self-preservation. Simply put, Freewill is survival instinct.

With such a sterilized representation of the will, Reason can and does take on an unprecedented level of control within the poem's psychomachiac landscape. The *Assembly*, unlike *Reson and Sensuallyte*, follows the *Rose* in rejecting Alan of Lille's subordination of Reason to Nature.[39] After Virtue's conquest of Macrocosm, Nature, Sensuality's closest ally, laments that Reason's installation as governor has severely limited her capacities: "For I may no

[39] The *Assembly*'s author does, however, reject Jean's sense of natural rationality. In the *Rose*, much like in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Nature is very much a spokesperson for Lady Raison: "It was never my intent to say that you should not hold women dear or that you should flee from them and not lie with them. Instead I recommend that you value them highly and improve their lot with reason" (11617–23). On bond between Nature and Reason in the *Rose*, see George D. Economou, *The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 72–111.

more but oonly kepe my course" (1356). With naturally transcendent powers, Reason has no difficulty in fulfilling Virtue's prime directive for ruling over the human realm—to keep closely in check Sensuality, who remains upon Macrocosm solely to ensure Nature's restrained perpetuation. Virtue's command to Reason is a self-fulfilling one. Before the conquering ideal departs, he sets his house in order by establishing the guardianship of Macrocosm's former rule: "Then made Vertu Frewyll bayll[e] vndyr Reson, / The felde for to occupy to hys behoue that seson" (1259–60). Reason, it seems, need expend little effort in monitoring of Sensuality. With Freewill committed under Reason's watchful gaze, the *Assembly*'s author suggests that any future engagement with sensuality must be a measured one. The dynamic between Reason and Sensuality posited here departs dramatically from that established earlier by Guillaume and Jean. In the *Rose*, Amant, occupying a role analogous to Freewill, finds himself sought after and torn between sensuality and rationality all while managing to retain the potential for choice. The *Assembly*'s psychomachia precludes the possibility reenacting the *Rose*'s narrative. Reason is not willed away; reason is obeyed.

The *Assembly*'s unwillful representation of Freewill directly connects with the mode of reception its author fictionalizes and promotes for his own text. Whereas a work like as the *Rose* delivers its tale through the voice of an contextually active authorial agent—an author-figure who takes direct part in the events of his narrative and who discriminates between the apparent figures of vice (Amors) and virtue (Raison) for himself—the *Assembly*'s speaker and later poetic maker passively observes, absorbs, and translates. In this role, the narrator models the hermeneutic for understanding the *Assembly*'s itself. He encounters the vision in the same way that his readers should encounter his text. He is led without resistance or motivation by Morpheus—a figure often employed by medieval authors as a cipher for the poet—through a

fantastic and self-consciously allegorical landscape.[40] The intervention of Dame Doctrine at the poem's close makes clear that the narrator should not take the sights and sounds of clashing gods and abstractions literally but figuratively: "Wherfore now I apply thy naturall reson / Vnto my wordys, and, er thow hens wende, / Thow shalt hit know, begynnyng and ende" (1622–24). Doctrine does not ask the narrator to apply his reason to interpret the vision; she undertakes that a role on her own. Doctrine forces reason onto readers. She reminds him that his visionary journey did not occur in a world of things but a world of texts, a domain to be understood not in itself but for the external meaning toward which its constituent objects point. The narrator's otherworldly journey is an allegorical fiction within an allegorical fiction, one which the central speaker both experiences and subsequently has interpreted.

The method of reading embodied by the narrator follows the psychic conditions laid out in the war between Virtue and Vice and suggested by the speaker's removal from the witnessed action. Rather than attempting to exercise a modicum of interpretive agency—like Gower's Amans does when occasionally voicing his skepticism toward Genius's imposed *sentence*—the *Assembly*'s narrator accepts Doctrine's analysis without question or concern.[41] Like Freewill, the

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[40] On the links between Morpheus and the Poet in Machaut's *Fonteinne Amoureuse*, see Jessica Rosenfeld, *Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry: Love After Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 89; in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, see Wolfgang Clemen, *Chaucer's Early Poetry*, trans. C. A. M. Sym, (New York: Routledge, 2013), 37. On the blurring of Morpheus and Orpheus, see Peter Dronke, *The Medieval Poet and His World* (Rome: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1984), 275.

[41] See, for instance, Amans's response to the Tale of Apollonius in Book VIII: "Mi fader, hou so that it stonde, / Youre tale is herd and understonde, / As thing which worthi is to hiere, / Of gret ensample and gret matiere, / Wherof, my fader, God you quyte. / Bot if this point miself aquite / I mai riht wel, that nevere yit / I was assoted in my wit, / Bot only in that worthi place / Wher alle lust and alle grace / Is set, if that Danger ne were" (VIII.2029–39). On Amans's rebuttals to Genius's interpretations, see William

narrator collapses under the weight of prevailing authority. The *Assembly* sets up its narrator as an ideal reader whose methods warrant imitation, and what finally emerges from his submission is form of readership without agency, without will. Imagining an ideal reader consequently entails imagining an ideal author well. If a reader is to attain passively meaning from a literary work, without hermeneutic dissent or intervention, it follows that the goal of the author is primarily the embedding, clarification, and emphasizing of a unified dogma. And indeed, this is precisely what the *Assembly*'s author strives to accomplish both with the largely unconcealed nature of his personages—naming his figures with the abstract virtue or vice rather than veiling them under another proper noun—and through the explicit revelation of the allegorical vision's doctrine by Doctrine. For the *Assembly*'s author, proper allegorical writing transmits a meaning that cannot be transformed.

It is the *Assembly*'s advancement of an unambiguous, plain-speaking brand of allegory that puts its author squarely at odds with the literature of antiquity. At Apollo's banquet, the poet shows Aristotle, Socrates, and Euclid along with "Virgyle, Orace, Ouyde, and Omere" as "Awaytyng on the boorde," while "berydyd Orpheus," "a poet musykall," makes melody as "Pan gan to carpe" (386–406). The poet largely seems to draw here on Dante's *bella scola* of *Inferno*, Canto 4 but then curiously includes Albertus Magnus into his selection of virtuous pagans.[42]

Robins, "Romance, Exemplum, and the Subject of the Confessio Amantis," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 19 (1997), 157–181.

[42] A possible explanation for Albert the Great's inclusion within the catalogue of pagan authors may be his occasional association with the dark arts. For instance, one legend recorded at the start of the fourteenth century in the first Bavarian continuation of the Saxon World Chronicle describes Albert as a Faust-like figure, summoning Devils so that they might impart him with supernatural knowledge. See Hubert Herkommer, "'Sächsische Weltchronik,'" in *Die deutsche Literatur des Mittelalters. Verfasserlexikon*, vol. 8, ed. Kurt Ruh et al. (Berlin: 1992), 473–500. On Albert's reputation as a

While it may be possible to read the addition of Albert as simply an error on the part of the *Assembly*'s author—perhaps a remnant of an earlier conceptualization that should have been excised as the poem developed over its creation—the interpretation Dame Doctrine later inscribes onto this servile assembly of philosophers, scientists, and poets suggests that the author takes issue with compositional methods, with poetics, before religious affiliation. According to Doctrine, these "polytyk philosophyrs and poetes" wait upon "goddys at that banket," who "Resemble false ydollys," because they "feyned the fables" that had the capacity to mislead audiences (1743, 1675–76):

> Thus all that poetys put vndyr couerture
>
> Of fable the rurall pepyll hit took
>
> Propyrly as acte, refusyng the fygure;
>
> Which errour som of hem neuer forsook.
>
> Oft a false myrrour deceyueth a mannys look,
>
> As thow mayst dayly proue at thyne ey. (1723–28)

The *Assembly*'s author might blame "the rurall pepyll" in these lines for mistaking the figural for the literal, but it is not the poor readers whom he situates among the allies of Vice. The "poetys" stand accused because their particular method of "couerture" allows the potential for misreading in the first place. The poets knew the truth of their material, that these so-called gods were but men, and the *Assembly*'s author readily admits that their works were even "To dyscrete reson ryght acceptable" (1687). Yet, because these early authors desired that their topics "should sownde / To the eares of hem the more pleasauntly / That they shuld reede or here, / they yaue

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magician in popular lore, see Dagmar Gottschall, "Albert's Contributions to or Influence on Vernacular Literatures," in *A Companion to Albert the Great: Theology, Philosophy, and the Sciences*, ed. Irven M. Resnick (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 723–57.

theym a grounde" (1688–90). The sensory delights of style seduced the poets into covering but not revealing truth. In the end, the poets' works reflect falsehood because they fail to acknowledge their status as fiction. Without such self-consciousness, texts allow readers to lead themselves into "errour"; stylistic flight and subsequent ambiguity force the exercise of a frail and faulty interpretive will. The rural folk read against their authors because their authors let themselves be read against. The *Assembly*, however, refuses to repeat the mistakes of murky antiquity. The passive readership modeled by its narrator as well as the explicit revelation of Doctrine ensures that readers not take the poem for a "false myrrour."

The *Assembly* not only critiques its literary forebears but seeks also to dissolve them into the oblivion of obsolescence. In the poem's representation of the Garden of Doctrine, it becomes apparent that Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun are included among those poets whom the author would supplant. As Triggs rightly points out, "the fouresquare herber wallyd round about" to which Morpheus leads the narrator is almost certainly designed to recall Guillaume's Garden of Deduit, which, as Chaucer translates, "enclosed was [. . .] With high walles enbatailled, / Portraied without and wel entailled / With many rich portraitures" (II.135–141).[43] The transformation of the Garden of Deduit into the Garden of Doctrine traces a movement from the bodily to the intellectual. Guillaume populates his well-tended pleasure palace with an overwhelming corporeal mass: there are countless creatures ("nyghtyngales, Alpes, fynches, wodewales," "many flokkes of turtles and laverokkes," "thrustles, terins, and mavys"), fields of anonymous folk ("mynstrales, and eke jogelours," "many a tymbestere, / And saillouris," "Ful

[43] Triggs, *The Assembly of the Gods*, n. p.44, 1479. Quotations from Chaucer are drawn from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1984).

fetys damysels two"), and numerous allegorical figures (Courtesy, Diversion, Beauty, Wealth, Generosity, Openness, to name but a few).

The Garden of Doctrine is quite barren in comparison. Where Amant enters into that pleasurable sanctuary through the beautiful porter Idleness and encounters his future lord and patron, Amors, surrounded by the singing and dancing masses, the *Assembly*'s narrator is instead granted admission by Wytt, "chyef porter of that herber gate," and sees only Dame Doctrine seated upon "a chayar, apparyald royally," exhorting an unnamed and undescribed group of "chyldren" with her agents Holy Texte, Glose, Moralyzacion, and Scripture helping to voice, interpret, and record her teachings (1483, 1499–1505). Dame Doctrine's attendants indicate that the garden's mistress represents not simply spiritual wisdom and ethical knowledge, but such learning as transmitted by a certain type of allegorical writing. The *Assembly*, in other words, defines Doctrine as the means and ends of the literary—as an instructive combination of a divinely inspired language (Holy Text) given tangible form (Scripture) with a clarifying apparatus (Gloss) and unambiguous explication (moralization). In this sense, Dame Doctrine stands for what the *Assembly* itself aspires to be; she is a fiction of the ideal fiction. The *Assembly*'s portrayal of Doctrine's depopulated, highly intertexual garden functions, therefore, as a meditation on the nature of the ideal allegory, which effectively emerges as a less accessible, intellectual alternative to the bodily pleasures of love. The *Assembly* hopes to replace passion with writing.

Perhaps the most radical change the *Assembly* makes to Guillaume's arbor appears in its much revised handling of the garden's walled portraiture. In the *Rose*, as Amant first approaches the garden's borders, he beholds on the exterior of the garden's walls an imposing mural that

puts on display the many evils that lurk outside of love.[44] He sees, for instance, Hate, who "Semede to ben a mynoresse, / An angry wight, a chidresse" (I.149–50); he sees Covetous, who "Ful fade and catyf was she eek, / And also grene as any leek" (I.211–12); he sees Poverty, who is "nakkid as a worm" (454). The *Assembly*'s author reverses the location of the painting, placing his impossibly epic imagery upon the inside of the Garden's walls, further delineating his sense of a Doctrinally sound mode of writing. The first wall holds the stories of the "Tyme of Deuyacion," beginning with God's first word and ending "When Myses receuyd that tables of stone" (1745); the second, depicts the "Tyme of Reuocation," when "began the Old Testament"; and the third shows "The Tyme of Reconsylyacion," which follows from the Incarnation and which "wyll dure from thens to the worldes ende" (1777). The fourth wall, however, moves away from the realms of Biblical history and foreseeable future and enters into prophetic infinity to illume "The Tyme of Pylgremage." What the narrator actually observes upon this wall is a rather curious sight indeed:

> Where I behelde in portrayture
>
> The maner of the felde, euyn as hit was
>
> Shewyd me before; and euery creature

[44] A number of scholars have read the images gracing Deduit's outside walls as an allegory about allegory and perception. The paintings of Hate, Covetous, and Poverty represent not only the abstractions to which their names would refer but also reflect back on the nature of representative writing and the nature of experiencing representative writing. See Christopher Braider, *Refiguring the Real: Picture and Modernity in Word and Image, 1400–1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 44; Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing Through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Thomas Hyde, *The Poetic Theology of Love: Cupid in Renaissance Literature* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1986), 43. The *Assembly*'s author seems to continue Guillaume's metafictional strategy in his revision of Deduit's walls, which, as I go on to show, reflects deeply upon the nature of allegorical composition.

On boothe sydes beyng drawyn in small space

So curyosly, in so lytell a compace,

In all thys world was neuer thyng wrought;

It were impossyble in erthe to be thought. (1877–83)

Rather than beholding the post-Apocalyptic advent of the New Jerusalem, the narrator instead gazes upon a startlingly familiar scene. Before him sprawls the field of Macrocosm "as hit was shewyd me before." The *Assembly*'s author has located his own visionary work alongside the works of the Prophets. He shows himself as having crafted a new Scripture, one defined by transcendent invention and unearthly craft. Through the Garden of Doctrine, the *Assembly*'s author not only rewrites the *Rose* through substitution, correcting and then forgetting its authors, but also goes so far as to submit his own work as a continuation of Biblical narrative. He positions the *Assembly* at the vanishing point of both literary and Biblical history.

The variant treatments given to Guillaume's Garden of Deduit by *Reson and Sensuallyte* and *The Assembly of the Gods* offer an instructive contrast in poetic technique and method. As I have argued earlier, Lydgate writes himself, directly and explicitly, into Deduit's lush domain as a belated, corrective, and effectively superior authorial presence. The *auctor* traces the footsteps of Amant, whom Lydgate recognizes, as Jean had before, to be Guillaume, and attempts to atone for his predecessor's failure to achieve a rationally sound love.[45] Frank and self-conscious intertextuality advertise debt and absence, reliance and replacement. The *Assembly*, like *Reson and Sensuallyte*, uses Deduit's arbor as the imaginative space upon which unfolds its author's program of rewriting the *Rose* so as to bridge at last the gap between rationality and passion. But

[45] On Jean's playful transformation of Amant into Guillaume, see Noah D. Guynn, "Authorship and Sexual/Allegorical Violence in Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*," *Speculum* 79 (2004), 628–59.

while *Reson and Sensuallyte* and the *Assembly* undertake similar ends through similar means, there remains a principal difference in imitative strategy. Not once does the *Assembly* mention either the *Rose* or its authors. Rather, the author employs familiar imagery to suggest a point of origin without necessarily claiming, or perhaps even desiring, immediate kinship. On its own, the *Assembly*'s refusal to disclose its lineage may seem inconsequential, simply part of a broader medieval trend of burying sources—Chaucer's handling of Boccaccio in *Troilus*, for instance. As I will go on to show, however, the poet's unacknowledged debt to Guillaume and Jean stems from a larger, more nuanced program within the *Assembly* of handling past literary authorities.

We have already seen how the *Assembly*'s author positions his own work antagonistically to the likes of Virgil, Ovid, and even Albert the Great because of their allowing readers to stray from the path of doctrine. It is somewhat surprising, then, to see what appears to be that earlier assembly of misunderstood authorities located in a position of veneration shortly following Dame Doctrine's critique of their poetic opacity. For as the narrator turns his visage toward the fourth wall of Doctrine's garden—the same wall upon which he saw the psychomachiac story he later comes to write—he sees a collection of "poetys and phylosophers sage" (1890):

> Many oon mo then at the banket
> Servyd the goddes, as I seyde before.
> Som were made standyng, and som in chayere set
> Som lookyng on books, as they and stodyed sore,
> Som drawynge almenakes, and in her handes bore
> Astrylabes, takyng the altytude of the sonne—
> Among whom Dyogenes sate in a tonne. (1891–97)

The poet emphasizes that the learned body depicted on the fourth wall is not quite the same as that which he glimpsed earlier serving the pagan gods. Not only is the fourth wall's group much

larger in population, but, with the exclusion of the comically absurd Diogenes, the once extensively described band is now stripped of identity, rendered nameless intellectual laborers.[46] By placing an image of his own work alongside this thoughtful organization, the *Assembly*'s author acknowledges his affinity with the learned masters of yore, even the pagan ones such as Diogenes. His acknowledgement, however, does not entail exaltation, far from it. Of this group, the *Assembly*'s author counts himself within but also well apart and above. It is, after all, only his text that graces the wall with any real detail, and it is a magnificent detail at that ("In all thys world was neuer thyng wrought"). The *Assembly*'s author relates to these sagely poets and philosophers in the same way he relates to Guillaume and Jean: his link with past authorities is one of name-stricken and uneven affiliation. The transformation that occurs between the two appearances of the *Assembly*'s *bella scola* mirrors the poet's overall design toward reorienting the understanding of former masters, which finds expression, perhaps most fully, in Doctrine's critique of ambiguity. The *Assembly* quietly admits its debt to literary history, but then renders that debt moot by casting its holders into obsolete nothingness through critique and erasure.

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[46] While the appearance of Diogenes here certainly imbues the Cynic philosopher with a measure of authority, the *Assembly*'s veneration is far more restrained than that shown by other medieval authors. Take, for instance, Book VII of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, where, as Stephanie L. Batkie notes, Diogenes appears as a virtuous representative of Reason ("'Of the parfite medicine': *Merita Perpetuata* in Gower's Vernacular Alchemy," in *John Gower, Trilingual Poet: Language, Translation, Traditon*, ed. Elisabeth Dutton with John Hines and R. F. Yeager [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010], 157–68, here 164): "Bot Diogenes duelte stille / At home and loked on his bok. / He soughte noght the worldes crok, / For vein honour ne for richesse, / Bot all his hertes besinesse / He sette to be vertuous" (VII. 2266–71). In the *Assembly*, Diogenes is defined by the object attached to him, his tub, making any implications of virtue coincide with implications of comedy. The respectful humor at play here looks forward to Diogenes's later appearances in Renaissance satires as a biting, barking vehicle of scorn and ridicule. On this early modern transformation, see John L. Lepage, *The Revival of Antique Philosophy in the Renaissance* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2012), 25–80.

In this desire to turn out from canonicity the works of once vaunted predecessors, the *Assembly*'s author finds a troubling corollary in the figure of Atropos. The prime mover of the poem's central conflict, Atropos enters as a literal minded instigator of discord. Atropos speaks in the register of unearthly horror ("as hit had be oon / Had spoke in another world" 440–41) and bids the deific pantheon to "remembre howe ye made me your offycere / All tho with my dart fynally to chastyse / That you dysobeyed or wold your law dyspyse" (446–48). He then presents to his audience a catalogue of his finest works of annihilation—Alexander, Arthur, Hercules, Cyrus, Hannibal, Godfrey of Boleyn, all concrete, named historical or mythological personages—before reminding the gods of their discourse's hermeneutic singularity: "a goddes wrytyng may nat reuersyd be" (492). Atropos demands a literal reading of his contract that would extend his authority to include the realm of abstraction. He would have Virtue understood the same as Judas or Julius, a leveling that can only occur if discourse binds and remains bound to the word before intent.[47] Divine discourse, in Atropos's reckoning, holds but one meaning, unimpeded and unambiguous, to which its authors and recipients must submit unerringly. Atropos requires from the godly writers what the *Assembly*'s author would require from worldly writers—a composition without variance or the potential for misreading.

The intimate bond between Atropos and the literal also inflects the creation and consequences of his own discursive products as well as the appellatory transformation he

[47] The gods eventually come to realize the folly of their initial inattention to the literal. After their coerced allegiance with Vice and subsequent defeat by Virtue, Apollo finally revises the terms of his compact with Atropos: "The wordys of thy patent, dar I well say, / Streche to no ferther but where dame Nature / Hath iurisdiccion" (1324–26). The plight of the pagan gods, their tragic fall from the heights of Olympus to the depths of battlefield vanquishment, charts the consequences of poor authorship. Like the old masters, they had composed a text that could be mistaken by readers and have reaped the fruits of their misspent labor.

undergoes which culminates the poem's psychomachia. The complaint leveled by the grizzled destroyer toward the pagan god seeks a revision in allegorical mode. Atropos authors petitionary discourse so as to turn his listeners' attention away from the matter of Eolus's desecration to the matter of Virtue's contractually transgressive vitality. As Dame Doctrine later clarifies, this reorientation entails more than a simple switching of focus, but represents also a movement between interpretive levels. The conflict between Eolus and Diana and Neptune signifies how "wantons, by her wlydenesse, / Oft sythe bryng hem self in dystresse, / Because they somtyme to largely deele" (1635–37), while the conflict between Virtue and Vice represents just that, the conflict between virtue and vice. Eolus stands for vice, but a figure such as Vice stands for itself. Atropos generates an affectively charged language which he structures using recognizable generic markers ("a grevyous compleynt") with the aim of showing his audiences the necessity of attending to the events of psychomachiac literalism. To put it another way. Atropos crafts a text that urges a strict adherence to the word which then pulls its audiences to a matter based in a more direct word and not in the distance of myth. Atropos promotes the literal for the literal.

Atropos later undergoes the hermeneutic foreshortening that he would precipitate through his complaint to the gods. In doing so, the ghastly reaper becomes even more of an embodiment of the allegorical transition promoted both by him and by the *Assembly*'s author: "Dethe shalt thow be callyd from hens forward now" (1403). In becoming Death, Atropos is stripped of any distracting mythological baggage traditionally associated with the discarded proper noun. No more is he a (regendered) member of the Fates; now he is simply that which shakes off this mortal coil. Atropos's becoming Death dispatches the remnants of pagan myth and idolatry to embrace instead an unimpeded semiotics that can accord with Christian eschatology. In Death he becomes at last the literal abstraction he was always meant to be. Atropos stages upon the page

the generic movement the *Assembly*'s author would promote, through censure and through implication, in his very act of making the page in the first place.

Atropos may seek to distract from pagan myth, but as Death he desires nothing short of that topic's complete and perpetual eradication. Death hopes to blast from memory the names and works of classical authority. After his agnomic conversion, Death hears from Righetousness the fate of the old gods as well as the implicit role he will take in their forthcoming demise:

> And as for theym whom thow dedyst serue,
> For as moche as they presume on hem to take
> That hygh name of God, they shall as they deserue
> Therfore be rewardyd, I dar undertake,
> With peyn perpetuell, among fendes blake,
> And her names shall be put to oblyuyon
> Among men, but hit be in derysyon. (1408–1414)

That the gods' impending damnation shall be accomplished is apparent, but the agent in charge of bringing about that damnation remains unnamed. Here, Righteousness directs Death without commanding Death, modeling in the passive form of her dictate the function Death will take up as he strikes the names of the false divine into "oblyuyon." Death is a counter-discursive agent; his work is that of an amplified censor. He not only aims to suppress unruly past works, but must either strive to destroy their memory in total or to rewrite that memory so as to invite only future scorn.[48] Death's treatment of the pagan gods parallels the author of the *Assembly*'s treatment of

[48] In casting the fame of departed authorities into forgetful oblivion, the *Assembly*'s Death anticipates that of Stephen Hawes's *Pastime of Pleasure*, where following the demise of its main character, La Grand Amoure, Time arrives to mock the presumption of worldly fame and presages the nothingness to which the memory of La Grand Amoure must fall: "I meuayle moche of the presumpcyon / of dame fame so

his ancient, although not necessarily pagan, predecessors whose names only appear within the text for the purpose of "derysyon." The *Assembly* goes to great lengths to explicitly cite the names of the *bella scola* serving the appetites of false idols, but then refuses to recount those many who appear upon the fourth wall except for the foolish Diogenes and his homely tub. The *Assembly*'s author follows through on what Death only intends. Through his literary art, the poet completes Death's directive.

Death not only models the poet's handling of past masters but also acts to bridge the longstanding divide between reason and sensuality. After Dame Doctrine has interpreted the vision, carefully and explicitly delineating its *moralyte*, the narrator remembers almost as an afterthought that initial query that so boggled his mind and delivered him into a trance: "That ys to sey, howe Sensualyte / With Reason to acorde myght be brought aboute" (1926–25). The narrator then poses this initiating question to his hermeneutic interlocutor, and Dame Doctrine, exasperated, summons Reason, Sensuality, and Death to explain things themselves. Reason puts their point of accord in no uncertain terms:

> "Yes," quoth Reson, "in thys poynt, alway
> To euery man haue we yeuen our counsayll
> Dethe for to flee as long as they may.
> All though we otherwyse haue done our trauayll
> Yche other to represse, yet withoute fayll
> In that poynt oonly dyscordyd we neuer.

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puttynge in vre / Thy grete prays saynge it shall endure / For to be infynyte euermore in preace / Seynge that I shall all thy honour seace. / Shall not I tyme dystroye both se and lande?" (5628–35). Quotations from the *Pastime* are drawn from Stephen Hawes, *The Pastime of Pleasure*, ed. William Edward Mead, EETS 173 (London: Early English Text Society, 1928).

Thus condescendyd theryn be we for euer." (1968–74)

Reason and Sensuality might both agree on the terror of Death, but it also seems they share a love for the literal as well. Reason has indeed answered the narrator's question, providing him with a response valid given the words posed. Reason identifies at what point the two figures converge, but she neglects or purposely evades the sub-literal implications of the quandary—namely, how might one bring the two in line so as to engage sensuality rationally and rationality sensually. Is it possible to unite reason and sensuality in life and not just in death? In the end, the knowledge that Reason and Sensuality accord in a mutual fear of death is little more than a piece of trivia, an interesting factoid devoid of real world application. Death brings passion and rationality together in joint impracticality.

From the outset of the *Assembly of the Gods*, the author makes clear that his poem represents a search for "how that I myght make / Reason and Sensuallyte in oon to accord" (5–6). At the close, we realize what the author knew all along, that this accord is only in annihilation, and, therefore, what his poem truly represents is a search for death. As the poem pushes forward, its fictions of imaginative composition become intricately intertwined with the figure for whom the dreamer searches. This mingling implies that the poem is ultimately a search for Death through Death. It endeavors to unveil the accord between Reason and Sensuality through the measures enacted by the figure who emerges as representative of this accord. By showing the art of poetry to be a necrotic one, the *Assembly*'s author finally shows his imaginative project to be contrary to both reason and sensuality, both of whom urge deathly flight, not pursuit. The author solves the dilemma posed and popularized by Guillaume's and Jean's *Rose* through a medium that unites love and measure by rejecting both in favor of unambiguous literalism, of obliviating imitation, of Death and his discursive practices and predilections.

Chapter Five

Thomas Hoccleve's Authorship of Error

Thomas Hoccleve is a poet who understands all too well reason's loss. Across his corpus, the clerkly poet features centrally his intellectual shortcomings, his aesthetic ineptitude, and his wayward desires. Misrule, for Hoccleve, inflects both behavioral and authorial practices, representing a departure from measure and a penchant for sensuality that proves itself to be exemplary in its ends. He writes of excess desire, telling tales of taverns and overextended minds, while couching such writing in a voice that advertises its debt to the unreasonable. As David Lawton has convincingly demonstrated some time ago, Hoccleve's unstable speaking persona works to facilitate his speaking to power.[1] As an unruly and disorganized subject, Hoccleve gives his audience little reason to suspect censuring motivation or overreaching ambition. Irrationality, in this regard, acts both as an ingratiating cover to critique and as a means of establishing compositional authority among receptive authorities. Hoccleve's engagement with authorial misrule, however, extends well beyond acting as a tactic for subordination. The poet shows himself to act and write against then tenants of rationality, but he goes on to show such irrationality as doctrinally liberating, interpretively authoritative, and painfully exemplary.

Early readings of Hoccleve's career largely engaged with the clerk's relation to royal power, examining how the poet defined his practice and aesthetic criteria either in accordance or

[1] David Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," *ELH* 54 (1981), 761–99.

in opposition to aristocratic mandate.[2] Critics have since begun to locate Hoccleve within broader medieval traditions of authorial practices, which, while hardly detached from the poet's role within the Lancastrian regime, are generally concerned with topics of a more strictly literary nature. Sarah Tolmie asserts that Hoccleves constructs his poetic self-awareness in resistance to Chaucer and Langland.[3] According to Tolmie, such resistance leads Hoccleve to an authorial persona based in overabundance: Hoccleve spreads his subjectivity, generic reach, and ambition to posit a concrete definition of the professional poet. Robert Meyer-Lee understands Hoccleve as a "a failed laureate," a disaffected and subordinated writer who crafts his authorial persona around the figure of "the beggar, who in all his subjection displays both a vexed interiority and a resistance to power."[4] In this reading, Hoccleve defines his authorship by rejecting aspirations of literary greatness; he claims authority in his refusal of authority. Eleanor Johnson sees Hoccleve as a poet who founds his literary practices upon a healthy skepticism of the Boethian *prosimetrum*, a form, she argues, that depends on an unclear division between rational wisdom and sensory pleasures in its staging and effecting of ethical transformation.[5] Hoccleve, Johnson contends, parodies Boethius and, in doing so, calls into question the transformative potential of

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[2] Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation 1399–1422* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 173–95; John H. Fisher, "A Language Policy for Lancastrian England," *PMLA* (1992), 1168–80; Derek Pearsall, "Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*: The Poetics of Royal Self-Representation," *Speculum* (1994), 386–410; Andrew Lynch, "'Manly Cowardyse': Thomas Hoccleve's Peace Strategy," *Medium Aevum* (2004), 306–23; John M Bowers, "Thomas Hoccleve and the Politics of Tradition," *The Chaucer Review* 36 (2002), 352–69.

[3] Sarah Tolmie, "Thomas Hoccleve: The Professional," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 29 (2007), 341–73.

[4] Robert J. Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power From Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 88–124, here 89.

[5] Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 202–31.

such a mixed form. As these previous readers have demonstrated, then, Hoccleve imagines his authorial self and product as seated in contradiction, immeasure, and an incomplete acceptance of Boethius's rationalized sensuality.

With this chapter, I hope to highlight the broader poetic tradition of misrule that finally undergirds, enables, and authorizes Hoccleve's authorial work. The sense of authorship hinted at by Tolmie, Meyer-Lee, and Johnson finds its origin in the continuing medieval project of complicating and occasionally denying rationality's status as a literary virtue. In this chapter, I argue that Hoccleve comes to know himself as an author by knowing himself in relation to reason's flight. In making this claim, I will focus my discussion on three of Hoccleve's most studied major works—*Male Regle*, the *Regiment of Princes*, and the *Series*. *Male Regle* shows us an unreformed, sickly Hoccleve who, in recounting his descent into carnality and its associated practices of speech, recognizes the flattering boatmen as an unavoidably imitable authorial other. *Male Regle* speaks of mirth disdainfully, as might Lady Raison, but its model for doing so finds its most immediate correlate in a figure of misrule's enabling. Of all Hoccleve's works, the *Regiment* is perhaps wariest of reason's sway. Here, Hoccleve imagines rationality as an inimical to orthodoxy, as spurring heretical dissent against faith and state. Opposing reasonable inquiry, Hoccleve aligns himself with God and sovereign to claim textual authority and fiscal accountability. The *Series* responds to the historical poet's break from sanity: Hoccleve's fall from mind effects a return to reason's grace. Hoccleve shapes his work as a materialization of his newfound affinity with the measured intellect. Although Hoccleve would have his work take on the appearances of rational being, the rationality he imagines departs radically from the standard medieval sense. The reason that informs his composition and to which he would direct readers is a reason of a beastly, affective, and anti-intellectual variety.

I

In *Male Regle*, the unruly Thames offers models of authorship and literary form that flow into the practices that generate and sustain Hoccleve's art. Central to these models is the boatman, whom Hoccleve deems master of nautical and discursive crafts. In plying his trade, the boatman employs the "poesie" of the siren's song to further the "riot" of his audience. The boatman's verse refuses to foster rationality; it embraces the immediate rapture of linguistic and aesthetic pleasure. While Hoccleve ostensibly condemns this creative mode as flattery, he nevertheless finds himself following in the boatman's wake. Indeed, when Hoccleve digresses from his riverside tale to lament the effects of "favel," the boatman's watery conduit remains beneath such admonitions as literary form. Through amplification, a literary mechanism that transforms imaginative rivulets into raging rivers, the turns and bends of Hoccleve's poetry imitate the nature of the river without actually describing it. The poetry of the river, however, fully resurfaces when Hoccleve reveals his true end as not penitential but petitional. He confesses the excess of his youth, but only out of fiscal necessity. This confession requires that he sing the boatman's song: Hoccleve must induce and enable "riot" to carry his audience to that fleeting euphoria felt along the river's banks and tides. Thus, the river provides a means of transcending a poetry of edification, arriving at an aesthetic anchored in misrule and sensuality.

Immeasure is the principal condition for *Male Regle*'s authorship. Hoccleve, in other words, presents and uses error both as the poem's inventional impetus—the creative force that translates nebulous affect and idea into a formalized textual order—and as a means of claiming discursive authority. Excess and sensuality, in *Male Regle*, authorize literary production. Hoccleve opens his complaint apostrophizing an "Erthely god" who bears striking functional

resemblances to a certain celestial lady (8).[6] The Health to which the ailing Hoccleve prays serves as a heavenly ("Abouen alle þat in eerthe be," 4) "gouenor" of men whose reign allows for the sort of economic engagement demanded by Guillaume's Raison ("What wight may him avante of worldly welthe, / But if he fully stande in grace of thee," 6–7). It is through the aid of Health that Hoccleve hopes to remove himself from the pull of unreasoning thought and action: "O now thyn help, thy socour and releef! / And I for ay mis reule wole exyle" (55–56). The presence of this prayer, of course, indicates the absence of a healthy, rational measure. The complaining invocation exists only in the chaotic and sickly void of the speaker's misrule. Derived from "excesse at borde," Hoccleve's "seekness," or "riotoures whippe," not only initiates the poem's creation, but also gives its speaker experiential warrant (112, 118). The deficiency of health entails for Hoccleve a surplus of first-hand knowledge from which he might draw while composing: "Who may compleyne thy disseuerance / Bettre than I, þat, of myn ignorance, / Vn-to seeknesse am knyt / thy mortel fo" (20–22).[7] Hoccleve's "ignorance" has made him a master of genre. None can author a complaint such as he who remains bound to Health's unreasonably excessive other.

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[6] All quotations from *Male Regle* are drawn from Thomas Hoccleve, *Hoccleve's Works, I: The Minor Poems in the Phillipps Ms. 8151 (Cheltenham) and the Durham Ms. III. 9*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London: Published for The Early English Text Society by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co.,1892). On the opening invocation's Boethian resonances, see Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse: Hoccleve and the Literature of Late Medieval England* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 37–38.

[7] A. C. Spearing argues that Hoccleve drew such an authorial self-representation from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, where the disclosure of error and vulnerability functioned centrally in establishing the authority of narrative voice (*Medieval to Renaissance in English Verse*, 114).

Hoccleve is explicit regarding the irrational origins of his disease. His is a sickness of the mind whose symptoms find bodily expression. Much like Gower, Hoccleve understands his pestilential thought pattern as an age-based affliction:

> As for the more paart youthe is rebel
>
> Vn-to reson & hatith her doctryne,
>
> Regnynge which it may nat stande wel
>
> With yowthe as fer as wit can ymagyne.
>
> O yowthe allas why wilt thow nat enclyne,
>
> And vn-to reuled reform bowe thee?
>
> Syn resoun is the verray streighte lyne
>
> Þat ledith folk vn-to felicitee. (65–72)

Hoccleve applies the exact governmental language he initially attached to Health (*reygne*, *reule*) onto the faculty more traditionally associated with guiding human cognition and action, and, in doing so, emphasizes that the turn from health is also a turn from reason. Such a dual-natured turn is ultimately a natural one in itself. Blaming his sickness on the rebelliousness of youth—in a conjunction possibly designed to recall the *Roman de la Rose*—Hoccleve shows the refusal of bowing to "reuled reform" as a product of the times rather than as a measure willfully undertaken.[8] Age before intellect determines whether one wallows in the gluttony of appetites. Hoccleve's sense of a temporally determined rationality bears on the implied reception of his

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[8] On the allusivity in Hoccleve's representation of Youth, see Alice Spencer, *Dialogues of Love and Government: A Study of the Erotic Dialogue Form in some Texts from the Courtly Love Tradition* (New Castle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), 204. Attending to the depiction of Youth's revolt, Anthony Hasler argues that Hoccleve's unruly constitution acts as cipher for the unruly state ("Hoccleve's Unregimented Body," *Paragraph* 13 [1990], 164–83). Central to Hoccleve's rebellious self-presentation is Hoccleve's rebellious reason, a faculty itself traditionally associated with governance.

complaint and distances the poem from the productivity characteristic of a healthy reason.[9] From this reckoning of reason's nature, it follows that the doctrine contained in *Male Regle* falls either upon an audience who, by their very youthful nature, would find such teachings abhorrent or upon aged ears that would have little need for such illumination in the first place. Hoccleve's lament seeks not to advance knowledge, but to bewail the unavoidable state of unreason. The poem presents itself as an expression of affect that hopes not to deliver practicable instruction in reason's ways.

Although Hoccleve gives a largely unsurprising definition of reason as a means of virtuous discrimination ("syn reson youen is to me / For to discerne a vertu from a vice," 100), he departs somewhat startlingly from the medieval tradition that saw the intellectual faculty as that which separates man from beast. Hoccleve imagines rationality as constitutive of an oddly measured animality:

> Reson me bad & redde as for the beste,
>
> To ete and drynke in tyme attemprely;
>
> But wilful youthe nat obeie leste
>
> Vn-to þat reed ne sette nat ther-by. (105–08)

Reason counsels Hoccleve to live as would a beast—to eat and drink "attemprely," to satiate base appetites without pushing beyond into engorging excess. Rationality does not distinguish man and animal but links them in the shared task of temperately purging want. Hoccleve displaces responsibility for rational disobedience onto "wilful youthe," which, through its continued desire to outdo need, goes on to accomplish the man/beast split characteristically

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[9] On the economic representation and relationship of and among Health, language, and rationality in *Male Regle*, see David K. Coley, *Wheel of Language: Representing Speech in Middle English Poetry, 1377–1422* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2012), 113–152.

effected by that which it would disobey. Youth's unrestrained consumption might deny reason, but in doing so it also rejects membership within that earthly, animal kingdom so lambasted by previous figures of the mean. Hoccleve's misrule locates himself simultaneously below and beyond the animal. He sinks beneath the intellect's doctrine and slips outside brutish regularity.[10]

Trading on such un-animalistic excess, the tavern frequented by the lusty Hoccleve not only houses a menagerie of vice but also serves for the budding poet as a site of authorial realization. It is beneath "The outward signe of Bachus & his lure" and among "the fresshe repeir / Of venus femel lusty children deere" that Hoccleve can take up the persona by which he establishes his claim as literary heir to the departed master's now empty throne (121, 138–39). Hoccleve, it seems, understands his local haunt as more than a den of debauchery; it serves as a sort of discursive proving ground: "At Poules heed me maden ofte appeere, / To talke of mirthe & to disporte & pleye" (143–44). Hoccleve travels to the Paul's Head so that he might practice a speech of mirth. The tavern contains flowing drink, lecherous companionship, and distinct mode of language production. To bring the tavern's mirthful method of speech to voiced expression, Hoccleve, through appropriation, fashions for himself a familiar persona of resistance. To "talke of mirth," Hoccleve must first (re)envision the type of voice through which he would do such talking. He imitates an earlier discursive medium, a model for authorship, which would enable his expression in the pleasurable barroom register. Hoccleve speaks of mirth by speaking like

[10] Although the association Hoccleve presents between reason and bestiality upends most standards, it is not without precedent. Passus XI of *Piers Plowman*, for instance, contains a sense of rationality that corresponds markedly with that of *Male Regle*: "Resoune I seighe sothly suen alle bestes / In etynge, in drynkynge and in engendrynge of kynde; / And after course of concepcioun none toke kepe of other" (326–28). Quotation drawn from Willam Langland, *Langland's Vision of Piers Plowman. The Vernon Text; or Text A*, ed. W. W. Skeat, EETS 60 (London: N. Trubner and Co., 1867).

Chaucer.[11] Following Chaucer's claim in *Troilus and Criseyde* to "Ne dar to Love, for myn unlyklinesse," Hoccleve asserts his amorous ineptitude: "Of loues aart yit touchid I no deel / I cowde nat & eek it was no neede" (153–54). Not only is Hoccleve unable to practice such a love, but he cannot abide even its preaching: "Whan þat men speke of it in my presence, / For shame I wexe as reed as is the gleede" (158–59). Hoccleve's aversion to speaking of "it" inflects his response to such amorous language at the same time as it shapes his own discursive tactics. His shame does not prevent him from speaking of the tavern's bodily pleasures; it merely redirects such speech into euphemism. Besides glossing sex using a pronoun without referent, Hoccleve also transforms the prostitutes into a jovial assembly of beautiful ladies ("Þat so goodly / so shaply were, and feir, / And so plesant of port & of maneere") and describes his engagement with them through the trappings of courtly love: "To suffre hem paie, had been no courtesie: / That charge I tooke to wynne loue & thanke" (151–52).

Hoccleve thus repurposes the authorial self-definition presented by his "maister" at the opening of *Troilus* and then proceeds to undertake the same sort of literary whitewashing Chaucer had accomplished already within that same work. Hoccleve does to the ladies of the

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[11] Hoccleve's use of Chaucer as a model for authorial self-fashioning has been well-documented by critics. As M. C. Seymour observes, "Hoccleve's greatest debt to Chaucer concerns the creation of his poetic *persona* which is the basis for much of his verse" (*Selections from Hoccleve* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982]). Also see J. A. Burrow, "Hoccleve and Chaucer," in *Chaucer Traditions: Studies in Honour of Derek Brewer*, ed. Ruth Morse and Barry Windeatt (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 54–61; David Carlson, *Chaucer's Jobs* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 89–100; Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 299–321; Sebastian Langdell, "'What shal I calle thee? What is thy name?': Thomas Hoccleve and the Making of 'Chaucer,'" *New Medieval Literatures* 16, ed. Laura Ashe, Wendy Scase, and David Lawton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2016), 250–76.

Paul's Head what Chaucer had already done to Criseyde at those numerous and oft-noted points in *Troilus* where, rather than describing his narrative's more unsavory details or condemning the Trojan widow, Chaucer decides instead to "excuse hire yet for route" (V.1099). Chaucer's *Troilus*—a work, as Nicholas Perkins notes, the *Regiment* later uses as a means of patterning speech and authorship—functions for Hoccleve in *Male Regle* as a means of speaking indirectly about irrational bodily excess.[12] Hoccleve takes a tale of worldly love told, as I have argued earlier, through a creative system coded as counter-rational, and uses that tale and its representations of authorship as a means of giving voice to his own personal misrule. A poem of sensual revelry written through irrationality becomes the vehicle for experiencing and depicting the unreasoning pleasures of worldly error.

The process of authorial self-definition Hoccleve initiates at *Male Regle*'s opening implicitly fashions the writer as a counter-rational agent who later finds concrete analogue in the figure of the boatman.[13] As Hoccleve makes his way back to the Privy Seal following a rowdy outing at the tavern, he often finds himself so overcome by "Heete & vnlust and superfluitee" that he is forced "To walke vn-to the brigge & take a boot" (189–90). There, he encounters the "bootmen," highly skilled tradesmen of oar and word:

> Othir than 'maisti' callid was I neuere,

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[12] Nicholas Perkins, "Haunted Hoccleve?: *The Regiment of Princes*, The Troilean Intertext, and Conversations with the Dead," *The Chaucer Review* 43 (2008), 103–39.

[13] I follow previous critics in drawing attention to the parallels between the boatmen and Hoccleve. See, Ethan Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*, 40–43; Robert Meyer-Lee, "Hoccleve and the Apprehension of Money," *Exemplaria* 13 (2001), 173–214. Where my reading differs from that of these earlier scholars is that rather understanding such an overlap as a performative contradiction, a sort of aporia that Hoccleve either fails to recognize or refuses to resolve, I see the boatman as offering to the poet a broader model of authorship based on a misruled poetics that Hoccleve implicitly embraces even in critique.

Among this meynee, in myn audience.

Me thoghte I was y-maad a man for euere:

So tikelid me þat nyce reuerence,

þat it me made larger of despense

Than þat I thoght han been. (201–06).

The boatmen dispense a highly wrought language that elevates its listener and simulates for him a temporary experience of eternity's pleasures ("I was y-maad a man for euere"). Their artful words enable a transient reorientation of their audience's mind and action. Hoccleve, however briefly, thinks himself truly worthy of such reverence and proceeds to reshape his behavior to match his newfound sense of self. Called a "maistir," Hoccleve then acts a "maister." As Paul Strohm notes, Hoccleve "enjoys the temporary fantasy of himself as a 'made-man.'"[14] While the boatmen are, of course, motivated by desire, their discourse nevertheless carries with it a weighty and imitable effect, one, as I will go on to show, Hoccleve himself hopes to duplicate. Their linguistic inventions may originate in overzealous want, but the boatmen, through their calls, transform audiences briefly to believe and then become their dreamed of betters. What Hoccleve ultimately pays for is not only a ride along the Thames but also a song of becoming, a transformative experience effected through language that makes him no longer the anxious clerk of the Privy Seal.

Hoccleve never denies the power of the boatmen's words, but it is a power he must condemn as "flaterie" (206). He does so because he understands the boatmen simply as brokers of transit and ignores the economic viability of the discursive component of their trade. The boatmen, from Hoccleve's apparent perspective, deal in travel and their artful words work only

[14] Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Pre-Modern Text* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 15.

toward the overinflation of transitional cost. As such, the bargemen of the Thames become emblematic of "the venym of faueles tonge" which has poisoned the entire countryside ("no man in this contree / Vnnethe eschue this confusioun" (211, 215–16). Although, Hoccleve refuses to acknowledge directly the boatmen's status as discursive artisans whose products warrant reimbursement, he still shows their apparent method of speech as authorial: "O! thow, fauele, of lesynges Auctour, / Causist al day thy lord to fare amis!" (223–24).

Upon first glance, these lines seem to read as an unambiguous condemnation of Favel's authorial work. Favel might be an *auctor*, but what it authors is dangerous lies. While such an interpretation certainly could be available here, Hoccleve's language allows for a broader range of meaning that does not necessarily cast Favel as an absolute evil. Hoccleve, in other words, shows Favel not only to be an author of falsehood, but to be an author of a distinctly literary brand of falsehood. Indeed, the *lesynges* generated by Favel are precisely what many medieval writers and readers understood as produced by ancient authorities such as Homer: for instance, John Trevisa, in his translation of Higden's *Polychronicon*, writes how it was prophecized "þat Troye schulde be destroyed, and þat Homerus schulde write lesynges afterward" (2.399), while the anonymous author of T*he Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy* described the blind, Grecian author as, "Thow Omer [. . .] Lelly þi lesynges þou lappis full faire" (10342).[15] Furthermore, for these lines in *Male Regle*, Hoccleve likely drew his phrasing concerning Favel's authorship from Gower's description of Mercury, "a grete spekere of alle thinges": "He was also, and of lesinges, an auctor" (V.945–47).

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[15] I draw this quotation of Trevisa from *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby, 8 vols., RS 41 (1865–86), and the quotation from *The Destruction of Troy* from *The Gest Hystoriale of the Destruction of Troy*, ed. G. A. Panton and D. Donaldson, EETS 39, 56 (London: Early English Text Society, 1869, 1874; reprint as one vol. 1968).

Hoccleve condemns Favel's authorship but implicitly situates himself among its users. Of course, it would be possible to understand the lines regarding Favel's compositional mode simply as Hoccleve distancing himself from the making of *lesynges*, as separating himself from the works of Homer and Mercury to envision the ideal authorship as grounded entirely in truth-telling. *Male Regle*, after all, is a poem that avoids the phantasms, visions, metaphysical elements that would mark it out to readers as a definite and complete product of the creative imagination, or "a story unrelated to fact."[16] I would argue that while this is the reading that Hoccleve seems to desire, this is not the reading Hoccleve actually delivers. Hoccleve presents Favel as an "Auctor" whose works mirror the "poesie" of the "meermaides in the See / How þat so inly mirie syngith" (262, 236–37).[17] Flatterers, like the Sirens, create a "mirie" poetry of pleasure, which is exactly what Hoccleve, channeling Chaucer, hoped to create during his travels to the Paul's Head so that he might "speke somewhat of mirth."[18] And though Hoccleve distances *Male Regle* from his talk of the tavern, he does not detach it completely. The poem's author has been defeated by poor rule but remains unreformed. When he does manage later to speak of that desired mirth, when not inhibited inside the tavern by the bumbling restraint of the

[16] *Middle English* Dictionary, s. v. "lesynge" 3.

[17] Knapp points out that "Hoccleve's persistent metaphoric connection between himself and the Sirens in alluding to their 'harmonie' as 'poesie'" allows the poet "to cast himself as a Siren and acknowledge the flattering intent of his verse" (*The Bureaucratic Muse*, 41).

[18] C.f. *Boece*: "But yif ye muses hadden withdrawen fro me with youre flateries any unkunnynge and unprofitable man, myne ententes weren nothyng endamaged. [. . .] But goth now rather awey, ye *mermaydenes*, which that ben swete til it be at the laste" (Bk. 1, pr. 1, 59–70, emphasis my own).

Chaucerian persona, such speech ultimately occurs within *Male Regle*'s critical bounds.[19] Even in critique, *Male Regle* remains a *mirie poesie* of *mirth*.

Hoccleve casts doubt on Favel's literary *lesynges* using a discursive tactic emblematic of the boatman's nautical art. Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova*, a widely circulated text and one cited by Hoccleve, presents us today with perhaps the most developed theory of medieval rhetoric, which as J. J. Murphy has shown, is itself largely a theory of *amplificatio*.[20] For Geoffrey, amplification functions as a means of capturing in discourse the river's essence. Once invention has determined material, *ordinatio* delineated arrangement, the writer must then decide on formal procedure, whether to textualize nascent idea as "either a river or a rivulet." If one decides on the former, which Geoffrey seems to recommend highly, one must turn to amplification, which puts words on a circular, winding, drawn-out flow: "Here is the flowing water of the well-spring, where the source runs purer." As Geoffrey notes, it is through amplification that a poem becomes like the watery conduits: "in this way, great rivers draw their source from a tiny spring."[21] To write like the wide river, Geoffrey prescribes devices such as *digressio*, *comparito*, *circumlocutio*, *oppositio*, and *apostrophia*, all of which Hoccleve puts to

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[19] As Sarah Tolmie notes, "The *Male Regle* is a poem that takes a ludic view of concupiscence, or at least of the tavern sins. Instead of eradicating worldly desires by confessing them, the poet reifies them by narrating them, and offering to exchange the result, the poetic text, for his pay" ("The Professional: Thomas Hoccleve," 370).

[20] J. J. Murphy "The Arts of Poetry and Prose," in *The Middle Ages*, ed. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 42–67. Also see J.J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1974), 135–193. Hoccleve, likely in imitation of Chaucer's *Troilus*, cites Geoffrey's famous house building analogy in the *Series* (See Dialogue, 637–44).

[21] Quotations from the *Poetria Nova* are drawn from Ernest Gallo, *The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (Paris: Mouton, 1971).

use during his censuring glossation of the boatman's art.[22] The poetic medium Hoccleve employs here is thus one that would have been recognized as bearing deep associations to the medium traversed by the very figure targeted by *Male Regle*'s critique of flattery, a figure who, as we have seen, himself dabbles in Homer's and Mercury's art. The torrential design of *amplificatio* hardly aligns with a poet resigned to reason's measure. The application of a flowing verse form stands against the doctrine that such verse would espouse while emphasizing the poem's highly wrought, distinctly literary language. Hoccleve condemns the boatman's "poesye" through the methods contained within Geoffrey's *Poetria*.

Hoccleve's affinity with the boatman emerges perhaps most fully when *Male Regle* unveils at last its true purpose—its author needs money. As Meyer-Lee points out, *Male Regle*'s revelation of its pecuniary desire depends upon "an apology for the petitioner who uses language in whatever way necessary to obtain what he or she wants."[23] Hoccleve closes his poem by descending to flattery so that he might attain at last the money owed him. Admitting that he is "a shamelees crauour," the poet prays to "my lord the Fourneval," "My noble lord þat now is

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[22] Hoccleve clearly marks the discourse on Favel as a digression: "Be as be may / no more of this as now; / But to my mis reule wole I refeere" (289–90). Hoccleve makes use of apostrophe when he directs his lament to the flattering abstraction: "O! thow, fauele, of lesynges Auctour" (223); "O flaterie! o lurkyng pestilence!" (260). The instances of circumlocution, which Geoffrey defines as speaking around a certain subject or collecting and compiling multiple meanings at once, are many: Hoccleve's description of "enchantours" (225–232), for instance, piles occupational definition upon occupational definition. Although, Hoccleve does not employ precisely Geoffrey's sense of *prosopoeia*, which is to deliver a speech in the voice of an inanimate object, he does ventriloquize a number of absent and imagined bodies (218, 249). Hoccleve makes abundant use of comparison, equating Favel with a serpent (211), an author (223, 247), a Siren (249–56), a pestilence (260), and a courtier (287). In the *Documentum de arte versificandi*, Geoffrey considers the citation and quotation of authorities a mode of amplification as well.

[23] Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 106.

tresoreer," and beseeches "thyn Hynesse haue a tokne or tweye / To paie me þat due is for this yeer" (417–20). Hoccleve emphasizes the social distance between audience and author and addresses his master as the boatmen had addressed him. But while Hoccleve, unlike the boatmen, is correct here in appellational terminology, the poet nevertheless goes on to undertake the same sort of ingratiating inflation heard shouted from the banks of the Thames. Hoccleve reminds his would-be paymaster that "My body and purs been at oones seeke," which places in his master's hands the ability to "Releeue the repentant in disese" (409, 414). Bestowing upon Fournival the power to relieve sickness, Hoccleve effectively conflates the treasurer with the "Erthely god, piler of lyf, thow helthe" upon whom the poet initially calls. There is no change in addressee between the poem's opening and conclusion; there is only a slow deification. *Male Regle*, in other words, reveals across is textual span that, Health, the divine abstraction of vigor to which its opening lines call, is really no abstraction at all, but rather a lord with easy access to a vital means of exchange. Where the call of the boatmen elevates a clerk of the Privy Seal to noble stature, the fiscal prayer of Hoccleve elevates a noble to godhood.

Male Regle emerges from an unmeasured poetics of contradiction. Hoccleve's opening self-representation as a writer wracked by the effects of mirsule envelops also the creative methods that bring the poem into textual being. Hoccleve shows himself as ruled by irrationality and excess and then proceeds to enact this foolish doctrine within the poem's formal makeup. He accomplishes such congruity in form and content by embedding within his poem irresolvable stances, such as his simultaneous discrediting and application of literary language, which then find expression through techniques representative of an overflowing excess. At the poem's close, the boatmen's art, though initially subject of critique, surfaces as a viable and proven mode of literary production. A verse of self-advancement, of pleasure, of fleeting transcendence shows

itself not simply as a model of discourse in dire need of scathing rebuke, but one inescapable and valuable even in condemnation.

II

The *Regiment of Princes* is a poem that understands the error of reason and the sensuality of the faithful book. In the Prologue, Hoccleve presents himself as a writer wracked by an overabundance of reason. His anxiety derives from an immeasure of measure's intellectual agent. Hoccleve purports to send off the *Regiment* so that Prince Henry might drive away the night, but, as in *Male Regle*, the poem's petitionary design undercuts its consolatory potential. Lost in "thoght," Hoccleve turns to literary composition so he might transfer over such "thoght" to his royal audience. The *Regiment* seeks to remedy its author's corrupted mind by acting as the medium that dispenses its initiating misrule unto readers.

The rational excess that so envelopes the poem's author and aim parallels dangerously the heretical mindset of John Badby, the Lollard whose fiery end Hoccleve shows as originating in an over-reaching of the intellect. Hoccleve attempts to mute any resonances between himself and heterodox dissent by rewriting Boethius's Lady Philosophy as a counter-rational agent. The Old Man, the *Regiment*'s answer to the *Consolatio*'s heavenly Lady, draws heavily on Boethian doctrine but denies reason its capacity for divine connection. Rationality breaks with the heavens in its refusal to submit to the correction of textual authority. Showing himself unwilling to make the same mistakes as Badby, Hoccleve readily accepts the doctrinal and aesthetic guidance of his beggarly master, and, in doing so, models the counter-rational mode of reception promoted by the text: the ideal reader is one who locates faith in the word and not in the mind. As the exemplum of Badby proves, the enervation of rationality removes the potential for hermeneutic

resistance, thus enabling and empowering the authorial voice. To reject reason is also to claim discursive primacy.

The compilation Hoccleve proceeds to compose for Henry is somewhat at odds with the compositional vision outlined in the Prologue. The *Regiment*-proper does, after all, hope to systematize proper governance, to put rule to rule, and it often outlines this project using an aesthetic based in measure, temperance, proportion, and order. Even with this reliance on the tropes of rationality, though, Hoccleve's mirror for princes reveals itself and its author to remain productively devoted to irrationality. Hoccleve's section of kingly chastity intervenes most directly into the traditional discourse surrounding the topic of rationality. Although Hoccleve would have his king err on the side of measure, rejecting anti-intellectual passion, the poet goes on to represent the means of attaining such measure as founded in sensory excess. Among the section's unmeasured methods of inducing bodily temperance, Hoccleve includes the book, and, in effect, the *Regiment* itself. The *Regiment* seeks to instruct its Prince on the ways of the mean only to do so through an artifact of excess made by an anxious and infective author.

Hoccleve's opening state in the *Regiment* highlights the dark underbelly of reason's dogma. Unlike the *Rose*'s Amant, who firmly rejects the Boethian precepts of his measured intercessor, Hoccleve accepts unquestionably the tragically passing nature of the terrestrial sphere, but it is precisely this acceptance which brings the poet to his lamentable worry. "Musynge upon the restlees bysynesse / Which that this troubly world hath ay on honde," Hoccleve finds himself beset by "Thoght": "Bysyly in my mynde I gan revolve / The welthe unseur of every creature, /

How lightly that Fortune it can dissolve" (1, 6, 15–17).[24] Clearly, the teachings of Ladies Philosophia and Raison have struck home with Hoccleve, but the promised solace of such instruction is unforthcoming. There is no consolation in her philosophy. Besides showing a congruity in topic between his worry and the advice of those famous emblems of rationality, Hoccleve also draws careful attention to the reasonable origins of his cognitive woes in the language describing the development of his plight.[25] While the abstraction Hoccleve uses to label his mental affliction primarily denotes a state of anxiety, Middle English *thoght* also refers to "the reasoning capacity or power" or "the act or process of thinking, cogitation; also, the faculty of thought or reason."[26] Hoccleve repeatedly draws attention the active state of his intellectual anguish: "musynge" (1); "as I can understonde" (2); "bysyly in my mynde I gan revolve" (15) "Me fil to mynde" (22); "thus in my musynge / I destitut was of joie" (33–34); "blyve ran it in my thoght" (36); "I thoghte eek" (43); "I hadde rollid up and doun / This worldes stormy wawes in my mynde" (50–51). The poet dwells on materials traditionally associated with representatives of rationality using his reasonable faculty. He reasons of reason only to arrive at the borderlands of madness ("troubly dremes drempt al in wakynge, / My mazid heed sleepless han of konnynge / And wit despoiled" 109–11).

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[24] All quotations from the *Regiment of Princes* are drawn from Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regiment of Princes*, ed. Charles R. Blyth (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications for TEAMS, 1999).

[25] Hoccleve's reliance on Boethius has been well noted by past scholars. See, for instance, Ian Cornelius, "Boethius' *De consolatione philsophiae*," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature*, Vol. 1: 800–1558, ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 269–98; David Greetham, *Textual Transgression: Essays Toward the Construction of a Biobibliography* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1998), 123–97; Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages*, 202–31.

[26] *Middle English Dictionary* s. v. "thought" (3, 4).

Although Hoccleve readily accepts the cyclicism and transience of Philosophia's and Raison's worldview, he finds himself unable and unwilling to subscribe fully to their evaluation of poverty's virtue. It is through this rejection that the *Regiment* comes to be written. A denial of rational wisdom acts as the poem's inventive seed. When repeatedly counseled, much like Boethius and Amant are, to remember that "Richesse is povert and povert richesse," Hoccleve responds with a complexity left unaccounted for in the advice of his sources (1315–16):

> By procees I me weddid atte laste
>
> And God it woot, it sore me agaste
>
> To bynde me, where I was at my large;
>
> But doon it was, I took on me that charge. (1453–56)

Hoccleve's advisor, the Old Man, whom I will later argue functions as a counter-rational analogue to Boethius's and Jean's figures of rational authority, realizes that marriage stands at heart of the sleepless clerk's anxious woe: "This is the tow that thow speek of right now!" (1457). Poverty may indeed be, as the Old Man describes it—"the glas a mirour / In which I see my God, my saveour"—but the divine perception it allows the individual does not balance fully with the pain it inflicts upon that individual's dependents (690–91). The Old Man can delight in the simplicity of living off the Carmelite's beneficence primarily because he stands alone ("My frendshipe is al clene fro me falle," 700). His fall from wealth and grace affects none but himself. Realizing that the circumstances of Hoccleve's situation demand a departure from well-worn precept, the Old Man suggests action instead of acquiescence: "Wryte to him a goodly tale or two, / On which he may desporten him by nyght, / And his free grace shal upon thee lyght" (1903–5). The creation of the *Regiment* aims to drive away both royal insomnia and its author's overworked intellect. An infusion of funds should allow Hoccleve and his wife to step outside, however temporarily and partially, the "ristless bysyness" essential to the perpetually turning

philosophy of the heavenly Ladies. Here, literary composition—in this case the translation of "any tretice / Growndid on his estates holsumnesse"—represents a means of countering a rationality run amuck as well as the doctrines associated with that very faculty (1949–50).[27]

Hoccleve does not necessarily desire the eradication of "thoght," but rather its transference. Though presented as a nighttime diversion, the *Regiment* is a poem that hopes to bereft its princely reader of any rejuvenating slumbers. The petitionary design of the poem hinges on its engendering within the Prince that selfsame anxiety that so plagues Hoccleve before the Old Man's intervention. Hoccleve would cure his mental anguish by inflicting it upon a royal other. To do so, Hoccleve indirectly yet forcefully reminds the Prince of the pecuniary mismanagement shared between author and audience alike and of the dire turns of fortune that typically follow. As the Old Man makes clear, a pledge is a type of credit that demands reimbursement lest the oath-maker stand willing to sacrifice truth and honor: "Of confort, sone, made I thee promesse. / And of a trewwe man, byheeste is dette" (1771–72). A vow, regardless of the action it delays and anticipates, embodies in discourse fiscal liability. Formulating the promise in such economic turns, Hoccleve quietly shapes Henry into a debtor twice over. The Prince has gone into arrears both for his failure to pay the clerkly poet his yearly annuity and for

[27] Some scholars read Hoccleve's marriage as a counter-productive one. In these readings, his marital union prohibits both authorship and authority. Knapp, for instance, argues that Hoccleve's marriage removes him from clerical literary authority (*The Bureaucratic Muse*, 72), while Isabell Davis writes that "for Hoccleve, marriage—the source of his shame—can only detract from work, disrupting homosocial communities" (*Writing Masculinities in the Later Middle Ages* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011], 153). While I would agree that Hoccleve' marriage separates him from a certain brand of literary authority, it acts as the measure which drives him to write the *Regiment*. It is his marriage that would have him seek association with royalty and that would go on to generate his most popular work.

the promise that put that annuity into exchangeable language.[28] To put it another way, if both a promise and an annuity are forms of debt, it follows, then, that to promise an annuity is to borrow on labor already borrowed.

Hoccleve returns throughout the poem to the issue of maintaining vows—it is no mistake that the *Regiment*-proper's first and longest section describes the necessity of a king keeping his oaths—and in doing so he implicitly invokes over and over the topical specter of the king's monetary misrule. Detailing the text's deep reliance on the language of exchange, Jenni Nuttal has already noted how "Hoccleve's poem warns that imbalances, inequalities or even fraud in this reciprocal relationship relationship of credit and loyalty cannot be sustained indefinitely without the monarch's symbolic treasure becoming devalued."[29] The *Regiment* shows that in depriving Hoccleve of a promised salary and thus defaulting on multi-leveled loans, the Prince has entered into a course of action that, unless quickly remedied, will bring his coffers to the same dreadfully empty state that the author faces at the poem's opening. For the *Regiment* to achieve its desired effect, that Hoccleve's "patente into the hanaper / May chaunged be," the Prince must come to realize that the financial distance between himself and the poem's author is not as great as it might at first appear (1879–80). To prevent himself from entering the ranks of

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[28] The Prince may have not granted the annuity directly, but this hardly excuses him from blame for the repayment's failure. As Hoccleve indicates, the king's person is something of a false symbol. The king's person creates the illusion of a centralized and singular body, when in truth kingship extends across multiple agents whose actions converge, color, and create an idea of royal authority: "If ministres do naght but justice / To poore peple in contree as they go, / Thogh the kyng be unjust, yit is his vice / Hid to the peple; they weene everemo / The kyng be just for his men gye hem so. / But ministres to seelde hem wel governe; Oppressioun regneth in every herne" (2535–41).

[29] Jenni Nuttal, *The Creation of Lancastrian Kingship: Literature, Language and Politics in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118.

future furstenspiegels as a negative exemplum, the Prince must see himself as Hoccleve sees himself—as bound to the world's restless busyness by an ever depreciating purse.[30]

The economic dynamic among author, text, and aristocratic reader imagined and promoted by the poem incorporates error, much like it does oaths, as a commercial medium. This inclusion partially reverses the debt incurred by the poem's undertaking. A mirror for princes, Hoccleve's work fashions itself as counsel made literary, governmental advice put to narrative and elevated verse. While one might think that it would be counsel that functions as the object of value within the advisory exchange, Hoccleve indicates quite the opposite:

> Of counseil and of help been we dettours,
>
> Eche to othir, by right of brethirhede;
>
> For whan a man yfalle into errour is,
>
> Hir brothir owith him conseil and rede
>
> To correcte and amende his wikkid dede. (2486–91)

This type of consultive debt renders intellectual labor as recompense: "Every man owith studien and muse / To teche his brothir what thyng is to do" (2493–94). Hoccleve envisions an economic model where it is "errour" that serves as currency and acts as the force initiating the compensatory obligation. Considering, then, that the *Regiment* reports "a kynges draght," counseling a king of his proper moves, it would seem that in creating and delivering his text to the Prince, Hoccleve exacerbates his financial burdens, taking on further debt with a wallet already well spent. As the prologue carefully notes, however, Henry dwells in unerring virtue: "it

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[30] My argument regarding Hoccleve's desire to transmit his anxiety to the king finds parallel in Sarah Tolmie's understanding of the *Regiment* as a form of coercion: "This Hoccleve is neither an inept Chaucerian nor a royalist stooge, but a poet with a very nice line in innuendo: a potential blackmailer" ("The *Prive Scilence* of Thomas Hoccleve," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 22 [2000], 282).

be no maneere of neede / Yow to consaille what to doon or leeve" (2136–37). Although such a characterization of Henry almost certainly stems from Hoccleve's supplicating rhetoric, which veils and softens intimations of critique through abundant praise, it also connects with the poet's erroneous self-representation so as to carry the Prince to a deeper realization of economic loss.[31] An unfaltering Prince holds no error that would draw his subjects into a debt repayable only through sage advice; a faltering and witless poet, however, retains an abundance of such folly from which to demand restitution from his betters. The creation and delivery of the poem, half of which details Hoccleve's need for help, is also a creation and delivery of debt. The Prince's obligation to the clerk may have begun with an annuity, but by imagining both promises and error as forms of fiscal responsibility, Hoccleve amplifies Henry's debt two-fold. The *Regiment* is a literary receipt that generates interest upon reading.

The elevation of error to a debt-bearing object, a receptacle of value, helps to explain Hoccleve's denigrating presentation of his authorial work. Following the much maligned fifteenth-century standard, Hoccleve refuses to put on any airs regarding his poetic making. When the Old Man asks him to "endyte in English tonge," Hoccleve replies, "Fadir, therof can I but a lyte" (1873). He goes on to describe his future act of invention as an unfolding of the barely reasoning mind: "Of my symple conceit wole I the clasp / Undo" 1956–57). The art of writing holds Hoccleve in the deepest of contempt: "Considereth how endytynge hath in hate / My dul conceit" (2056–58). Unsurprisingly, from this shallow yet unruly source flows a shallow yet unruly product:

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[31] On Hoccleve's supplicatory rhetoric and its underlying critique, see David Lawton, "Dullness and the Fifteenth Century," 761–99; James Simpson, "'Nobody's Man': Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*," in *London and Europe in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. Julia Boffey and Pamlea King (London: Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1995), 149–80.

Also byseeche I that the altitude

Of your estat, thogh that this pamfilet

Noon ordre holde ne in him include,

Nat greeved be, for I can do no bet.

Anothir day, whan wit and I be met

Which longe is to, and han us freendly kist,

Deskevere I wolde that now is nat wist. (2059–65)

Unlike Chaucer, who sends his "litel boke" off to "subgit be to alle Poyesye," or Lydgate, who describes his *Reson and Sensuallyte* as a "scripture," Hoccleve contents himself with the production of a "litel pamfilet," a brief, lewd, and unorganized document apparently devoid of literary aspiration. Critics have understood the humility topos, of which these lines are clearly an example, as a subtle method of claiming literary prowess: "by conveying precisely the opposite of what they literally communicate, they are a means of tactful self-aggrandizement."[32] While I would agree that Hoccleve's self-deprecating authorial pose assists in establishing his writerly reputation, it seems to me that such a reputation is built finally not on a rhetoric of doubleness—something Hoccleve repeatedly condemns throughout his corpus—but rather on the reimagining of misrule as an aesthetic virtue. We have seen already how Hoccleve figures error as a means of establishing credit and, therefore, as a source for delivering wealth unto another. By drawing such error into the formal construction of the *Regiment*, by creating a text that admits its lack of order and its penchant to descend into digressive imperfection ("thynke it nat to longe / Thogh in that draght I sumwhat wade deepe"), Hoccleve in effect generates value by emphasizing poetic blemish. His confessing of aesthetic shortcomings, rather than an instance of coy misdirection,

[32] Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 83.

enters into an economy of error in which such imperfection serves not as burden but as currency. Hoccleve trades on the folly of invention, style, and arrangement.

Hoccleve's valuing of reason's opposite finds perhaps its clearest articulation through the voice of the Old Man, a figure whom Larry Scanlon has described has Hoccleve's alter-ego, an authorial stand-in.[33] Dispensing a doctrine of worldly flight, the Old Man functions as a counterbalance and limited corrective to Hoccleve's initial excess of mind. Hoccleve refuses to make the same mistakes as Amant. When confronted by a figure espousing rational wisdom, the poet commits himself fully to "submittynge unto correccioun" (756). As James Simpson notes, "the old man in Hoccleve's *Regiment* plays the role of Philosophy to the lamenting bureaucrat Hoccleve."[34] The advisory engagement that occurs between the two from across a clear social divide fictionalizes and prepares for the experience Hoccleve would hope to simulate between himself and Prince Henry upon the *Regiment*'s delivery. The exchange shows Hoccleve as assimilating the Old Man's teachings, many of which later reappear within the *Regiment*-proper, and this helps to cushion the author's initial appearance of instability as well as the poem's petitionary and self-serving motivations. Reasonable doctrine disguises an over-reasoning and needy mind. But while the Old Man might parrot and Hoccleve accept much of what Ladies Philosophy and Raison had expounded before, the *Regiment* radically readjusts the status of rationality within these past epistemological models.

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[33] Larry Scanlon, "The King's Two Voices: Narrative and Power in Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes*," in *Literary Practice and Social Change in Britain, 1380–1530*, ed. Lee Patterson (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1990), 217–24.

[34] James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution*, The Oxford Literary History, Vol. 2: 1350–1547 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 245.

Reason, in the *Regiment*, is a token of Lollardy. Hearing the conditions of the clerk's taxed mind, the Old Man offers a tentative diagnosis based on the symptoms of a contemporary cognitive pestilence. According to the Old Man, Hoccleve's oppressive "thoght" might very well stem from professional sloth ("Sum man for lak of occupcioun / Musith ferthere than his wit may strecche"), that selfsame sin which caused John Badby, "a wrecche / Nat fern ago," to be "of heresie / Convict and brent" (281–87). A refusal or inability to participate in the domain of terrestrial economics leads to excessive participation within the domain of the intellect. Similar to Amant, Badby forgoes the worldly production so central to the doctrine preached by Guillaume's Lady Raison, but rather than arriving from that spurning at unrestrained sensuality the Lollard is, somewhat paradoxically, brought back to reason. Badby has stretched his mind beyond its permissible outer limits. As the Old Man makes abundantly clear within a short space, reason has no business dabbling in matters of the divine: "For mannes reson may nat preeve our fey / That they wole it dispreeven or denye" (332–33); "man by conjecture / Of reson or what he can ymagyne / Nat savoure it ne can it determyne" (346–47); "Our feith nat were unto us meritorie / If that we mighten by reson it preeve" (351–52).

Hoccleve's sense of rationality departs dramatically from that of his predecessors and contemporaries. Jean, for instance, depicted *raison* as a medium of celestial sight ("I am the daughter of God, the sovereign father who made and shaped me so. See here his form and see yourself in my clear face," 5785–89), while Lydgate, in *Reson and Sensuallye*, defines the faculty as a "secret ynwarde syght" (755) that "makes hyss wytt to encylne / To knowe thinges that be deyvne" (743–44). According to other poets and philosophers, then, it is through reason one glimpses the intelligence of the godhead. For Hoccleve, however, a link between the mind of man and the ways of God is not only impossible but theoretically detrimental. Reason would

devalue faith, remove its merit, if it were to somehow arrive at proof of the metaphysical. Hoccleve, of course, vehemently denies any connection with Badby and his heretical reasoning ("Cryst forbeede it" 374) to align himself further with Prince Henry, the merciful defender of faith (309–15). Hoccleve sets himself up as a recipient of a wisdom that recognizes the virtue of rationality's limits. Unreasonable mystery and inaccessibility establish authority and value. Denial, however, does not necessarily entail erasure. Hoccleve might assert his distance from the heresy of Lollard doctrine, but the similarities in thought-pattern remain an object of record within the *Regiment*'s stanzas and are emphasized by the Old Man's recognition of the clerk's and the *wretch*'s shared "musynge."[35] Hoccleve condemns overreaching reason while simultaneously engaging in that which he would condemn.

The *Regiment* goes on to show that it is faith's bridling of the intellect that ensures a reader's adherence to the instruction contained within a text.[36] Faith squashes reason's desire to penetrate sub-literal mysteries. Faith conditions the reception of the holy word by preventing rebellious, counter-authorial interpretations:

> That our lord God seith in Holy Scripture
>
> May nat be fals, this knowith every wight

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[35] Much like the Old Man, modern scholars have also noted the similarities between Hoccleve and Badby. Christine Caldwell Ames sees between Badby and the poet an association in linguistic practices (*Medieval Heresies: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015]), while Sarah Tolmie see Badby as Hoccleve's "monstrous double" ("The *Privee Scilence* of Thomas Hoccleve," 299). Also see Ruth Nisse, "'Oure Fadres Olde and Modres': Gender, Heresy, and Hoccleve's Literary Politics," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 21 (1999), 275–99.

[36] Hoccleve does, in fact, describe faith as a bridle: "That selve same to me were a brydil / By which wolde I be governed be and gyed, / And ellse al my labour were in ydil" (365–66). Hoccleve's reckoning of the anti-reasonable faith as a bridle, seems to me a direct response to Chaucer's reckoning of reason in *Troilus*: "And that youre resoun bridled youre delit / This made, aboven every creature" (IV.1678–79).

But he be mad; and thogh a creature

In his Goddes werk feele nat aright,

Shal he rebelle ageyn his lordes might,

Which that this wyde world hath maad of noght,

For reson may nat knytte it in his thoght? (337–43)

Only the mad would doubt the truth of Scripture. A failure to grasp that truth, to fix it in the mind's eye, in reason, constitutes hermeneutic treason. For Hoccleve, rationality is a mechanism of dissent. Its inability to comprehend the profundity of textual mystery forces upon the anxious, those who "feele nat aright," a circumvention of the meaning embedded by the text's creator. By promoting an unreasoning readership, Hoccleve in turn promotes an unassailable authorship.

Hoccleve would have this faith-based, counter-rational model of reading serve as the lens through which audiences approach the *Regiment* itself. Although Hoccleve, unlike Lydgate or the *Assembly*'s author, makes no grandiose claims regarding the status of his work—he writes "pamfilet," after all, and not a new scripture—he nevertheless pens a document that hopes to reaffirm its readers' commitment to the literalness of the Holy Word and its governmental expression. He designs the *Regiment* as an artifact of faith, and, as such, and artifact of limited intellect. Besides layering frequently and throughout his poem biblical citation, and thus assimilating the inviolability of scripture into the *Regiment*'s hermeneutic matrix, Hoccleve also shows himself as disciple to Aristotle's faith-based compositional program.[37] In the "epistles to Alisaundre," Hoccleve saw a form of writing "Whos sentence is wel bet than gold in cofre"

[37] The manuscript apparatus draws careful attention to the scriptural citation with manicules. In the prologue alone there are 18 of such markings which point out the Biblically intertextual nature of the *Regiment*.

whose goal "to sette was this worhty conquerour / In reule how to susteene his honour" (2040–45). Aristotle and, in translation and imitation, Hoccleve set in rule how a king might set himself in honorable rule.[38] Undoubtedly appealing to the cash strapped clerk, the exchange of such discourse outweighs in far the exchange of precious metal.

Hoccleve understands Aristotle's epistolary collection as an admonition toward faithful conduct. The later-imitated Aristotle authors a text on the matter that lingers ever outside reason's typically penetrating gaze: "Lo thus this Aristotle in his book seith / To Alisaundre, and to be waar him bit / That he ne breke his bondes ne faith" (2199–201). Aristotle is an author whose work concerns itself with that which cannot be proven by the intellect. The importance of faith extends well beyond maintaining the loyalty of unpaid writers. Faith is what transforms a mob into a citizenry:

> By feith is maad the congregacioun
> Of peple and of citees enhabitynge;
> By feith han kynges dominacioun;
> Feith causith eek of men the communynge;
> Castels by feith dreden noon assailynge;
> By feith the citees standed unwerreied,
> And kynges of hir sogettes been obeied. (2207–12)

[38] Although we know today that the *Secreta* was not, in fact, written by Aristotle, but by an imitator all to willing to hide under the mantle of the Alexandrian tutor's name, Hoccleve would have understood the epistolary collection as bearing a genuine Aristotelian hallmark. Throughout this section I will refer to the *Secreta*'s author as Hoccleve does. The "Aristotle" to whom Hoccleve refers in the *Regiment* is less a historical figure than an interpretive construction, a model of poetics and aesthetics born out from a sort of predatory close reading of the *Secreta*.

These lines sketch out the genealogy of a successful kingdom. Faith draws disparate folk together and congregates them within the strictures of place. Faith then places this congregation under the will of a figurehead, inspiring the mass with communal sentiment that shores up the defenses of circumscribed habitation. Faith turns "peple" to obedient "sogettes." While this depiction of a faithfully generated governance seems at first to show the virtue of upholding royal vows, when put into conversation with the Old Man's earlier damnation of Lollardy the lines take on greater nuance. Hoccleve does not show oaths as what finally establishes kingship, although vows certainly play a role, but that unreasoning principle of inaccessible authority. The true foundation of governance is that which must be applied to Scripture, that which is "nat were unto us meritorie / If that we mighten by reson it preeve." Considering that Hoccleve understands the faculty of human understanding as severed from divine order, offloading civil order onto faith effectively places kingship beyond terrestrial understanding. A faith-based governance can be apprehended but not comprehended, felt and witnessed but not known or contradicted.

As Hoccleve makes clear shortly following this representation of a faithful social order, the submission to objects virtuously beyond reason applies equally to the discourses that would carry such counter-intellectual doctrine. Hoccleve continues the tale of counsel established by the *Secreta Secretorum* by grafting to Aristotle an account drawn from—at least as the marginal commentary would have it—Valerius Maximus.[39] Knitting together these two tales, Hoccleve posits a teleological narrative, one that begins with a description of the faithful doctrine that "Aristotle in his book seith / To Alisaundre" before then moving on to a demonstration of how that doctrine later plays out in Alexander's historical governance. Through compilation,

[39] As Blyth points out, although Hoccleve cites Valeruius Maximus as his source, he likely drew the tale of Alexander and the Philosopher from Jacob de Cessolis' *Chessbook* (n.2300).

Hoccleve shows us an Alexander who has taken to heart his philosophical master's teachings. The *Nota de Alexandri juramento tento* recounts the Siege of Lapsat where Alexander met once more "a philosophre in the toun / [. . .] That to this kyng sumtyme had maister be" (2307–09). Although within the context of the *Nota* the philosopher might remain anonymous, his description as Alexander's former master almost certainly works to recall that earlier sage authority who, in his "epistles to Alisaundre," "his counsel gaf he cleer / Unto his lord to keepe him fro nusance" (2049–50). The Aristotelian philosopher emerges from the city's walls to plead for mercy and Alexander greets him with rather a foreboding oath: "At thy prayere do wole I nothyng." In response, the philosopher skillfully crafts and delivers a speech predicated on the assumption of a faithful audience: "O worthy conquerour and kyng, / Than preye I thee unto the toun thee speede / And it destroye." Alexander, ever the true pupil, must relent: "He rather chees be disobedient / To his vengeable wil and his ooth keepe, / Than be forsworn of that he swoor so deepe" (2317–31).

To prevent the conqueror from ruling by unruly emotion, from being "meeved of ire and of malencholie," the philosopher authors a discourse that bears the external markings of error (2302). The philosopher would correct Alexander's misguided desire, which would in turn bring peace to the realm, not through direct critique, but through a mode of speech foolishly destructive in form but exceedingly wise in contextual application. At its literal level, the advisor's speech would have Alexander reap the fruits of his emotional excess by laying the town to waste. Alexander's wrath-provoked promise to do nothing by counsel, however, establishes a rhetorical context that conditions the reception of the philosopher's suggested action. Stemming from a governance guided by unmediated affect, the error of Alexander's oath-making prevents him from accepting what for the philosopher would have been a catastrophic

course. The absurdity of the former teacher's prayer shocks the king into a realization of his own foolish speech ("And whan the kyng his preyere undirstood, / Al his angire and his irous talent / Refreyend he" 2325–27). The philosopher uses irrationality to illuminate irrationality and so restore faith to royal dictate. Alexander began the siege of Lapsat fueled by riotous desire. The discursive intervention of the philosopher advocates the cessation of this desire by advocating its consummation. The clearly farcical nature of such language, coming as it were from one bent on the city's salvation, enables the king to put aside such desire by turning instead to faith.[40] Existing beyond a rational scope, faith requires that Alexander attend to his oath as he would a religious scripture: he must view language with a lens of unimpeachable literalism, understanding the word as it appears regardless of extra-textual will. In observing his vow to do nothing, Alexander devotes himself to the literal in a way that John Badby's reason would never allow.

Aristotle, for Hoccleve, thus represents an author and icon of faithfully irrational discourse. The ancient philosopher not only documents faith's virtue in his writing of the *Secreta* but also implicitly becomes such faith's unmediated proponent during the barely anonymized event that occurs outside Lapsat's walls. As an account of Aristotle's authorship put to practice, the *Nota de Alexandri juramento tento* fictionalizes discursive folly as an instrument of faith. The tale clarifies the creative mechanisms that enable Aristotle to preach effectively truth's maintenance. The *Nota* explains how Aristotle speaks faith to power using a rhetorical posture that assimilates and amplifies the indiscretions which it would correct. An absurd advisory

[40] In this sense, faith accomplishes the limitation of desire without the intervention of the intellect. Much like Lydgate's representation of a measured love in *Reson and Sensuallyte*, Hoccleve's representation of faith's curbing of the "vengebale wil" renders rationality extraneous.

language mirrors for princes the unreasonable impressions that distort their administrative conduct. By showing himself as imitator, translator, and continuer, Hoccleve in turn emphatically shows himself as heir to those creative methods that define Aristotle's practice.[41] Hoccleve cultivates the Aristotelian lineage of his authorship across the *Regiment* in doctrinal similarity and in self-reflection. The poem concretely advertises its reliance upon Aristotle while also imitating the faith-building strategies that appear as characteristic of the philosopher's speech. The poem's calculatingly undervalued representations of itself and of its author function analogously to the counter-intuitive discourse the philosopher employs when weaning Alexander from surplus emotion. Both hope to shape their audiences into measured rulers using a medium whose form is self-consciously fashioned as error.

It is finally this engagement with the classical sage that enables Hoccleve to elevate what would otherwise be a disorganized "pamflit" to the status of irrefutable scripture. Hoccleve hopes to claims faith's attendant interpretive lens for himself in imitation and citation of Aristotle. Hoccleve's marked reliance on the philosopher's faithful authorship and teachings helps to circumvent the seeming frivolity of a poem designed to while away the restless night. Hoccleve follows Aristotle into faithful authority. Although Hoccleve would hardly consider Aristotle's authority as equivalent to the Scriptural Author, the *Regiment* nevertheless presents

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[41] I follow earlier critics in reading Aristotle as a model of authorship and Alexander as a model of readership. See Derek Pearsall, "Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes: The Poetics of Royal Self-Representation," *Speculum* 69 (1994), 386–410; Diane Watt, "John Gower," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Literature 1100–1500*, ed. Larry Scanlon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 153–64, here 160; Knapp, *The Bureaucratic Muse*, 80. Building upon these earlier observations, my reading clarifies and expands upon what it actually means for Hoccleve to follow Aristotle, particularly in the adoption of an Aristotelian poetics. Hoccleve further establishes his lineage by figuring his "fadir" Chaucer as "heir in philosophie / To Aristotle" (2087–88).

the pagan philosopher as a writer of books of faith. The *Secreta* might differ from Scripture in degrees of textual authority, but the two works share a species of authority which demands from readers univocal interpretation. For as the exemplum of Badby attests, Hoccleve understands faith as a barrier to rational analysis. Faith's repulse of reason's mediation precludes the imposition of unauthorial meaning. A faithful reader remains bound to the text's literal sense and stands prevented from descending into a heretical hermeneutic, one that might allow for a questioning of transubstantiation or a breaking of public oaths. Drawing on Aristotle, Hoccleve draws into the *Regiment* the readerly conditions requisite for a book of faith, making the little pamphlet into a book that cannot and should not be proven by the rational mind.

So far we have seen how Hoccleve incorporates the failings and limitations of rationality into the representations of his poetic practice. He begins the *Regiment* by showing his malfunctioning intellect as the poem's inventional source. The unpaid clerk dwells excessively in a flawed mental pattern which he would transfer over to the Prince through writing. The *Regiment* would transmit unto its reader an intellectually disruptive worry alongside its more rationally orthodox content. Even while marshaling the economic potential of overtaxed reason, Hoccleve simultaneously recognizes the inherent and possibly heretical danger in such thought within the reading experience. The treatment of the Badby's execution indicates that an overreaching reason threatens authorially sanctioned meaning. Faith counteracts the prying mind, limiting rational analysis to protect and elevate textual authority. Hoccleve fashions himself as a writer worthy of such an unreasonably unquestioning hermeneutic by presenting his literary predecessor, Aristotle, as an author of books of faith. Because Aristotle wrote of faith and because Hoccleve writes from Aristotle, it follows that Hoccleve is an author whose works should be approached with a similar literal-minded devotion. Hoccleve's authorial project is

dynamic, multifaceted, and perhaps even somewhat paradoxical. He writes from and trades on intellectual intemperance, recognizes its predisposition toward doctrinal calamity, and then rejects the human faculty responsible for restoring cognitive order in favor of a transcendently unprovable standard.

From here, I will move on to a brief and concluding discussion of the governmental doctrine expressed by Hoccleve's doubly unreasonable authorial persona and how such doctrine intersects with literary composition. Although Hoccleve admits to succumbing to and writing from a perspective of faithful irrationality, he still espouses, throughout the *Regiment*, the virtuous necessity of royal conduct that accords with the mean. Hoccleve, for instance, defines justice as a principle of proportion ("gevynge unto every wight / That longith to his propre dignitee" 2466–68) and as an earthly instantiation of the divine presence: "Justice is of the kynde and the nature / Of God" (2507–8).[42] He counsels reason in royal expenditure: "Largesse mesurable unto yow tye / And fool largesse voideth fro yow clene, / For free largesse is a vertuous mene" (4744–46). He understands a prudent king as a king who has the will to govern governed by reason: "Prudence is vertu of entedement; / Shee makith man by reson him goverene" (4761–62).[43] Clearly, for Hoccleve, reason is a kingly faculty. As a poetic faculty, however, reason's status remains far less certain.

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[42] Hoccleve's definition of justice through the discourse traditionally associated with reason is anticipated by Langland in Passus IV of *Piers Plowman*, where, as Kellie Roberston points out, allegorical Reson appears as a local justice of the peace ("Authorial Work," in *Middle English*, Oxford Twenty-First Century Approaches to Literature, ed. Paul Strohm [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 441–58).

[43] Perkins argues that "Hoccleve defines the virtue of Prudence in terms that connect it to the practice of reading and interpretation" (*Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes: Counsel and Constraint* [Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001], 75). While I agree with Perkin's reading, Hoccleve's desire to have imposed upon the

Of all the *Regiment*'s doctrinal divisions, it is *De Castitate* that engages most directly with the discourse of medieval rationality. Here, Hoccleve hopes to dispel any lingering doubts regarding the course charted by Amant in his quest for the *Rose*. Where Jean refrained from condemning Amant's consummation of irrational appetite, Hoccleve presents in no uncertain terms the damnable end that awaits those unable "to restreyne flesshly nycetee" (3762). Citing Aristotle's counsel to Alexander, Hoccleve shows the way of the flesh to be a "hogges lyf, which were esclaundre / To him if he tho weyes take wolde / That beestes resonlees usen and holde" (3657–59), a representation then immediately developed with Biblical paraphrase: "The Scripture seith, no fornicatour / The regne of Cryst and God shal enherite" (3669–70). Hoccleve levels and merges Scriptural and Aristotelian authority in compilation to speak where Jean remained silent.

Hoccleve goes on to support this rather unsurprising, straightforward rehearsal of rational orthodoxy with exempla of an occasionally unusual and, at times, unsettling variety. A doctrine of sensual flight finds evidence in narratives based upon the desirous, the excessive, and the strikingly earthly. As Perkins points out, the section's narratives all share a certain "physical immediacy."[44] The account of "Affican Scipio, that noble knyght" which opens the section imagines the performance of chastity not as a triumph over desire but as a redirection. When offered as tribute a maid "Of yeeres rype ynow, and of beautee / Moost excellent," Scipio finds himself unable to escape the pangs of sensual appetite: "Thynkynge that shee was of beautee able / The worthyeste on lyve for to qweeme, / And in him multiplied thoghtes breeme" (3685–

Regiment a hermeneutic of unreasonable faith comes into tension with a prudential interpretive lens founded on reason.

[44] Perkins, *Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes*, 138.

87). Finding the maid already betrothed, Scipio returns her to the very city he hopes to conquer and finds that his restraint has achieved his desire: "they this lord gaf laude and hy renoun / For that; and alle with oon herte and wil / Submittid hem to this prince gentil" (3705–07).

The Tale of Scipio's Chastity serves as counterpoint to the Tale of Alexander's Oath-Keeping. Both tales unfold over the same dramatic situation. Seeking control over an antagonistic state, a king is brought by a supplicant a gift that ostensibly would inflame desire. The king's subsequent rejection of that offering then functions as the tale's point of exemplarity.[45] The central difference between the two narratives appears in the aftermath of that rejection. Where Alexander's desire dissipates in recognition of his hastily authored oath, Scipio's reaches consummation through corporeal dismissal. Scipio's renunciation of the body is hardly a repudiation of the earthly. To put off the mundane want of flesh is simply to take up a new mundane want. Control over land and reputation replaces control over the body. Chastity provides a permissible outlet for worldly lusts. The Tale of Scipio's Chastity, therefore, works to clarify the *Regiment*'s doctrine of desire. It shows that terrestrial longing need not be dispelled

[45] Finding parallels between Scipio and Hoccleve's earlier tale of the Roman general Camillus, Larry Scanlon, too, reads Scipio's refusal as a means of realizing desire: "Moral restraint effects a significant gain in political power, producing a sovereignty that had not existed before. Camillus and Scipio bend a hitherto refractory population to their will through the ideological power of example, through their personal enactment of a public moral narrative, acts of virtue that cannot be separated from the political positions they reinforce" (*Narrative, Authority, and Power*, 316). Where our readings differ, however, is that rather than viewing Scipio's decision as restraint, I see it as redirection.

like Alexander's, but rather that it be contained, like Scipio's, in a vessel more substantive than single mortal shell.[46]

Like Lady Raison, Hoccleve would have his audiences seek the mean in sensuality, but the methods he describes as accomplishing such ends either promote, as does the account of Scipio, translation over abatement, or abstinence through exuberance.[47] Hoccleve would counsel bodily measure through excess. Following from the example of Scipio, Hoccleve details the response of "a seemly, fressh yong man" to an endless barrage uninvited of advances ("there nas womman / That ones had a look on him despent / But that hir herte gaf flesshly consent" 3718–22). To counteract such passion, this anonymous Adonis turns to self-mortification:

> By toknes kneew he hir unclene entente,
>
> And with his nayles cracchid he his face,
>
> And scocchid it with knyves and torente,
>
> And it so wondirfully gan difface
>
> That his beautee refusid hadde hir place.
>
> Al this dide he hir hertes to remue
>
> From him and make hem unclennesse eschue. (3725–31)

Hoccleve's language betrays an awareness of the irrationality inherent to the young man's attempts at living in rational love. Middle English *cracchen* refers to a typically extreme act of

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[46] The Old Man, too, recognizes the virtue of desire so long as that desire remain focused on productive ends: "leefful lust is necessarie; / Withouten that may be noon engendrure; / But use lust for lust oonly, contrarie / To Goddes heestes" (1590–93).

[47] Cf. The *Rose*: "Never, out of my mouth, has come the counsel that one ought to hate anything. One must find the right mean. It is the love which I love and esteem so much that I have taught you to love" (5755–62).

bodily defacement that Hoccleve's contemporary, Lydgate, describes as a foolish and unadvisable act: "Crache not thi fleche for ought that may befall, / Hede and hond, ne other thinge that is upon thee noght."[48] John Trevisa defines *cracchen* as a response suited primarily to feminine sorrow: "Þerfore it is þe maner of wymmen to cracche here chekis in sorowe," a characterization supported by the word's typical usage across the corpus.[49] Scratching with nails and scoring with knifes, then, the young man creates a wonder of defacement in an overzealous act of suggestive re-gendering. Hoccleve's representation of the chastening disfigurement demonstrates in its diction an awareness of the act's peculiar excess but nevertheless advertises that act as an example of the section's particular virtue of focus. The poet-compiler asserts the viability of an unreasonable aesthetic medium, an affective spectacle built from wondrous superfluity, when put toward achieving the abandonment of sensuality's "hogges lyf."

The repugnant features centrally in Hoccleve's counsel for eschewing passion. The ability to love by rational and not beastly standards occurs through a designedly distasteful vehicle. After the Tale of a Certain Young Man, *De Castitate* passes through narratives of exemplary gropings and idealized halitosis before finally arriving at an account of chastity's debt to spoiled meat.[50] Here, Hoccleve describes the "good sotiltee" undertaken by a few noblewomen "In conservynge of hir virginitee" against a band of Hungarian oppressors: "They chekenes flessh putte undirnethe hir pappes / Hem to deffende from unclenly happes" (3779–80).

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[48] I draw this quotation from John Lydgate's "Stans Puer ad Mensam" in *Queene Elizabethes Achademy,* ed. F. J. Furnivall, EETS E.S. 8 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., 1869; reprint 1973).

[49] This quotation is taken from *Polychronicon Ranulphi Higden*, ed. C. Babington and J. R. Lumby.

[50] See *De Demostenes castitate* (3766–73), where Demosthenes "his hands ones putte / In a wommanses bosom japyngly," and *De castitate cuiusdam femine Ulie numcupate* (3732–59), which describes how a Roman maid named Ulie refrained from telling her husband "That his breeth stank" because she had never smelled that of another man.

Time soon turns such fowlish coverings into olfactory shields: "By that this flessh thus hadde leyn a whyle / An that it was ychaufed wel and het / It stank so foule that it hath ylet / Tho men" (3783–86). Like the young man's disfigurement, the stench of rancid flesh prevents a descent into carnality. The senses repulse sensuality. The noblewomen, whom Hoccleve glosses as estimably imitable ("Beholde of wommen heer a noble wyle" 3781), create for their hostile audience an anti-aesthetic experience that works toward the maintenance of virtue. In this regard, Hoccleve holds their donning of poultry up as a model for advisory art, one he follows rather closely in his own literary project. The rotting stench the noblewomen create in their absurd apparel functions as analogue to the halting verse and unreasoning order of the *Regiment*: both works depend on the profusion of sense, albeit a repulsive sense, when drawing even the most reluctant of audiences away from a life of beastly lasciviousness.

Hoccleve confirms the correspondence between the vehicles of chastity presented in these tales and his own authorial work. He enters the faithful text among the section's collection of rationally restorative measures. Words of devotion can effect, given the proper conditions, desirous redirection or sensory repulse. Unlike putrefied meats or extravagant deformation, however, the good book can fail to reach its intended audience:

> Beholde also, whan that the paunche is ful,
> A fume clymbith up into the heed
> And makith a man al lustlees and dul;
> He wexith hevy as a pece of leed.
> Whoso that thanne wolde geve him reed
> To looke in a book of devocioun,
> I trowe in ydil were his mocioun. (3879–85)

Of books of devotion, Hoccleve highlights both constraint and possibility. The efficacy of faithful writings depends upon their readers having retained some semblance of rationality. Having passed a certain physiological threshold—when the fumes of appetite cloud cognition—audiences find little appeal in the texts' proffered counsel. Devotional composition still maintains an ability to obstruct over-consumptive impulses. Those who would give advice are not without reason when hoping to use such books as a means of assisting those afflicted by mindless want. So long as such want has not physically corrupted the mind, so long a such want remains but immaterial thought, the book can achieve the desired effect of curbing and containing desire.

Hoccleve, in effect, presents books of devotion as corollary to those desirous, defaced, and repugnant methods of rational preservation described in *De Castitate*, a congruity supported by the tales' own aesthetic and poetic suggestivity and significance. On its own, Hoccleve's description of the books of chastity is rather vague and gives little indication of underlying doctrine or compositional methodology. Hoccleve, however, inserts such faithful books—a genre which, as I have argued, would include the *Regiment* itself—into a network of narratives whose spurning of irrational desire occurs either incompletely, as in the tale of Scipio, or through the intervention of an unreasonable aesthetic object, as in the tales of the anonymous young man and the noblewomen. This collocation tinges devotional texts with the much more apparent irrationality of sectional neighbors. *De Castitate* tells of unreasoning want transformed by unreasoning ends, a grouping which devotional works may count itself among, albeit in a less dependable form. Devotional books may help limit passion, but their service to reason's proliferation ultimately flounders when put up against the body's full unthinking onslaught. To rise above corporeal limitations, the devotional text must incorporate, as the *Regiment* does

through its erroneous self-presentation, an aesthetic of unmeasured imperfection. To redirect desire like Scipio, the author of the faithful work must be willing to descend into sensory misrule, to counsel through formal disproportion and blemish.

Hoccleve situates the book in opposition to gluttonous impulsivity such as described by *Male Regle.* If composed according to standards outlined across *De Castitate*'s whole, if the devotional text can manage to fold into itself the anti-aesthetic methods of the young man and the noblewomen, the book should be able to prevent readers from following the youthful Hoccleve in deleterious misconduct. Even while recognizing the faithful author's allegiance to reasonable action, however, Hoccleve admits, perhaps making use of personal experience and auto-citation, the ability of appetite's unthinking to carry adherents to authorship. The fumes of appetite not only "makith a man al lustlees and dul" but also maketh a man an author:

> But consaille him to trotte unto the wyn
>
> And, for al his excesse and his outrage,
>
> He therto wole assente wel afyn,
>
> And there wole he outen his langage,
>
> And to do Bachus and Venus homage. (3886–90)[51]

It seems that overabundant desire does not effect the complete cognitive paralysis as suggested by the previously described stupor that tends to greet the counsel of good books. Rather, when the desiring subject "ageyn resoun werreye and hir offende," he attains a sort of selective

[51] These lines recall the language of *Male Regle*, where Hoccleve describes himself as succumbing to "Excesse at borde" (112), choosing Youth's counsel over reason's to eat and drink "outrageously" (109), travelling to the tavern which bore "The outward signe of Bachus & his lure (121), mingling with "venus femel lusty children deere" (138), and wanting "to talke of mirthe" (144).

hearing, a partial hermeneutic, that apprehends only likeness. When the unreasoning seek out the unreasonable, what follows is the production of Bacchanalian and Venusian discourse. Hoccleve juxtaposes books of devotion with "excess" and "outrage," emblems of rationality with enablers of folly, and shows the latter to be the only one capable of escaping idleness through its production of epideictic rhetoric. Although Hoccleve may seem here to approach such rhetoric with derision, his authorially-charged presentation of that rhetoric hearkens back to his earlier training under the boatman's guidance. Such riotous linguistic projects are not necessarily an end in themselves but serve as a gateway to higher literary forms.

III

Hoccleve writes the *Series* as a correction to the the *Regiment*'s rational skepticism and foolish self-fashioning.[52] Where before the poet-compiler had drawn attention to reason's heretical potential while presenting his own authorial work as unreasonable in form and faith, he comes to the composition of his final work with a much reoriented perspective. A "wylde infirmitee" has led him to experience, and continue experiencing, the consequences of the intellect's abandonment (C.40).[53] He picks up the pen once more so as to counter a vicious narrative economy that continues to perpetuate whispers of mindless excess. Hoccleve uses the *Series* as a means of intervening into a tradition of madness endlessly and detrimentally retold. This

[52] Although this section will deal primarily with Hoccleve's *Complaint* and *Dialogue*, I will throughout refer to these works according to the broader collection in which they appear. The *Complaint* and *Dialogue* serve as prologue to the *Series* and, as such, work to establish the conditions for the broader work's reception. These two interconnected poems fictionalize both their own creation and the creation of the larger text. They describe how and in what ways we should understand Hoccleve as an author and the *Series* as a literary artifact.

[53] I draw my text from Thomas Hoccleve, *Thomas Hoccleve's Complaint and Dialogue*, ed. J. A. Burrow, EETS o.s. 313 (London: Oxford University Press, 1999).

intervention takes place on both the formal and hermeneutic levels. The collection builds from the recovered clerk's recently developed obsession with appearances. Hoccleve would have the *Series* like he would have his countenance—bearing obvious external markers of rationality. To prove himself rationally sound, Hoccleve need have his authorial work prove itself aesthetically rational. Though designed as an artifact of the unwavering mind, the poem seeks not to dispel the talk of madness but rather to amend the interpretive screen such talk brings to bear on its subject. In doing so, Hoccleve embeds within his opening complaint a near literal translation of Isidore of Seville's *Tractatus Deflentis Hominis et Amonentis Racionis*.[54] The *Tractatus* shows the success of an authorial Resoun and functions as a imitable model for reading and writing irrationality. Immediately following the translated *Tractatus*, the *Series* restages Isidore's dialogue but with a key difference: Hoccleve has himself displaced Resoun, rehearsing much of her discourse and doctrine, to become the new proxy of measure and mean. Hoccleve dons Resoun's authorial hood to speak of his formerly unreasonable self. The once mad poet is both content and craftsmen. Through the literary example and authority of Resoun, Hoccleve rewrites his former descent into absurdity to stand as a lasting testament to virtue. Through Resoun, he makes mental disorder an exemplary trial.

The conditions that necessitate the invention of *The Series* attest to the power of unreasonable fictions to sustain themselves in opposition to the mandate of historical fact. The discomforting anxiety described in the *Regiment* develops into a "thoghtful maladie" that completely severs Hoccleve from wit and memory ("the substance of my memories / Wente to

[54] For a description of Hoccleve's translational method and source material, see J. A. Burrow, "Hoccleve's *Complaint* and Isidore of Seville Again," *Speculum* 73 (1998), 424–28.

pleye" C.50–51).[55] Hoccleve's amplified *thoght* returns him once more to the state of excess he had sought after and performed along the banks of the Thames: "A riotous persone I was" (C.67). Such unmeasured behavior translates easily into a narrative whose circulation exhibits and promotes the qualities of that spoken: "It was so knowen to the peple and kowth / That conseil was it noon ne nat be mighte. / How it with me stood was in euery mowth" (C.43–45). Word of Hoccleve's madness spreads into commonplace. Breadth of transmission transforms such talk from fleeting rumor into a form of knowledge that broaches no dissent. Once known, the talk of irrationality prohibits audiences from receiving contrary evidence. The presumption of knowing that accompanies this unreasonable tale's circulation denies "counsel," and, in doing so, denies the possibility of fully rational action. Adhering audiences become like the Youth of *Male Regle*, that "rebel Vn-to reson" who "no conseil wole he call" (66, 76), or the Lollard, John Badby, who "Dampnable errour holdith, and can nat flecche / For no conseil ne reed" (284–85). Even when faced with tangible proof of rational recovery, the corrupted understanding admits no revision to the transmissionally sanctioned narrative ("Fo thogh that my wit were hoom ageyn, / Men wolde it nat so vndirstonde or take" C.64–65). Hoccleve describes a network of madness

[55] Scholars have posited a variety of medical explanations for Hoccleve's wild infirmity ranging from "bi-polar manic depressive illness" to "melancholic madness" (respectively, Stephen Medcalf, "On Reading Books from a Half-Alien Culture," in *The Later Middle Ages*, ed. Stephen Medcalf [London: Methuen, 1981], 129–30; George MacLennan, *Lucid Interval: Subjective Writing and Madness in History* [Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson Press, 1992], 18–23). P. B. R. Doob reads Hoccleve's madness with greater skepticism and sees his infirmity as serving primarily rhetorical purposes (*Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974], 210–30).

told in repetition, a system of narrative exchange that can perpetuate its spurious fictions because of an infectious irrationality.

Hoccleve's body serves as the site on which the poet starts to contest the unreasonable murmurs unreasonably received. He would check the rumors of unending madness and the error which follows by turning his self into spectacle, his corpse into corpus: "My spirites laboured bisily / To peynte contenance cheere and look" (C.148–49).[56] An aesthetic labor, Hoccleve busily paints his countenance so as to create material testament of reason renewed:[57]

> Many a saut made I to this mirour
>
> Thynkynge 'If that I looke in this maneere
>
> Among folk as I now do noon errour
>
> Of suspect look may in my face appeere.
>
> If I foorth vse is no thynge repreeuable

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[56] Thomas Prendergast has shown how Hoccleve uses Chaucer's body as contested site for developing a sense of authorship. Hoccleve dwells on Chaucer's corpse so as to posit a definition, for both Chaucer and for himself, of what it means to be author. (*Chaucer's Dead Body: From Corpse to Corpus* [New York: Routledge, 2004], 1–45). In doing so, Hoccleve seems to have drawn a lesson from which he would later apply to the fashioning of his own body. On Hoccleve's use of the body as spectacle, see Shannon Gayk, *Image, Text, and Religious Reform in Fifteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Hasler, "Hoccleve's Unregimented Body," 164–83.

[57] Hoccleve uses similar language to describe the act of writing in the *Regiment*: "Whoso shal wryte, may nat holde a tale / [. . .] But we laboure in travaillous stilnesse" (1002, 1013). Hoccleve interconnects writing and painting perhaps most visibly in his incorporation of the now famous portrait of Chaucer in the *Regiment* so "That they that han of him lost thoght and mynde / By this peynture may ageyn him fynde" (4995). For discussion of Chaucer's portrait, see James H. McGregor, "The Iconography of Chaucer in Hoccleve's *De Regimine Principum* and the *Troilus* Frontispiece," *The Chaucer Review* 11 (1977), 338–50; Jeanne E. Krochalis, "Hoccleve's Chaucer Portrait," *The Chaucer Review* 21 (1986), 234–45; David R. Carlson, "Thomas Hoccleve and the Chaucer Portrait," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 54 (1991), 283–300.

To hem that han conceites resonable.

Hoccleve describes the intense and practiced effort of his self-fashioning. He turns to the mirror to make himself into a mirror of an unmarred cognitive order. This imitative project rejects the haphazard design that, as we have seen, the *Regiment* simultaneously apologizes for and capitalizes upon ("thogh that this pamfilet / Noon ordre holde" 2060–61; "if I nat the way of reson holde / Folwe me nat" 2189–90). Where before error functioned as a method of inciting correction by drawing audiences into debt and requiring recompense, it now represents a socially excluding wildness whose redress can only come about via divine intervention. For Hoccleve, the virtue of an erroneous poetic—a system of making structured around self-revealing blemish and incongruity—depends on the participatory engagement generated by a controlled irrationality. A broken order is a shared order so long as such breaking remains purposeful and closely monitored.

The appeal to a reasonable aesthetic that Hoccleve undertakes in front of his mirror informs the creative practices that subsequently give form to *The Series*. Hoccleve's shaping of his countenance presages the shaping of his verse. The inception of his writerly project begins with a realization of his initial medium's opacity ("Vpon a look is hard men hem to grownde" C.211). With its penchant for doubleness (C.196–218), the body cannot readily accomplish the sort of rational self-revelation the poet so needs in restoring his social standing. Instead, Hoccleve takes up a more stable, more convincing instrument: "Man by his deedes and and nat by his lookes, / Shal be knowen be as it is write in bookes" (C.202–03). Hoccleve rather cleverly shapes a citation of Matthew 7:16 into a statement regarding the epistemological warrant of the book. To put it another way, these lines show books both as the source that contains the translated platitude (as we have seen written elsewhere) and as an example of the sort of deed that proves the man (as is embodied in the act of writing). This latter reading reiterates the sense

of writing Hoccleve presents in both the *Regiment* ("wrytynge wole endure. / What a man is, it prest is for to preeve" 2371–72) and at the Complaint's prologue: "And for to preeue I cam of a womman / I brast out" (C.34–35). To counter the circulation of tellings of mad action, Hoccleve inserts into this system of narrative exchange the action of reasonable telling. He would prove himself against whispered testament by directing his well-practiced countenancing into literary language.

The transition from bodily crafting into literary making trades medium while maintaining the insistence on rational exhibition. Hoccleve retains compositional practice to inscribe reason onto parchment instead of flesh. The deed of poetry will prove what countenance could intimate but partially:

> I meene to commune of thynges mean,
>
> For I am but right lewde douteless,
>
> And ignorant my konnynge is ful lene.
>
> Yit hoomly resoun knowe I nathelees;
>
> As men deemen, Marie, Cryst forbeede!
>
> I can no more preeue may the deede. (C.218–24)

Middle English *communen* refers to acts of both association and telling.[58] Hoccleve would share with readers his own sharing in reason's bounty. To do so, he relies on the inept authorial

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[58] *Middle English Dictionary* s. v. "communen" (1–3, 5). Burrow (n. C.217) glosses *communyge* as conversation. As the *MED* also points out, *communen*, like its modern counterpart, can denote an act of sexual intercourse. Margery Kempe, for instance, uses such a sense when describing her matrimonial debt: "Sche had neuyr desyr to komown fleschly wyth hyre husbonde, for þe dette of matrimony was so abhominabyl to hir." I draw this quotation from *The Book of Margery Kempe*, ed. S. B. Meech and H. E. Allen, EETS 212 (London: Early English Text Society, 1940; reprint 1963). While I see Hoccleve' usage as indicating primarily an affinity he would later impart, the undertones in diction could reflect also the

persona he had employed in his earlier work but with an important caveat. His ineptitude no longer stems from irrationality. Unlike the *Regiment*, Hoccleve's writing in the *Series* will and must to the way of reason hold. This is partly because reason is not a matter of craft or learning—the sense employed in the *Regiment*'s description of Badby's intellectual overreach—but now represents instead a homely, innate knowledge. The reason Hoccleve formalizes in the *Series* is a matter of instinct before it is a matter of mind.[59] The reason of the *Series* is a reason known through sense. Authorial lewdness, a perceived lack of learning or craft, does not prohibit the expression of such an affective and natural knowing. Writing need not prove an author's intellectual capability, but must serve rather as a display of unthinking feeling.

Hoccleve's redefinition of reason as a sensual understanding draws into his literary program a counter-intellectual, and traditionally counter-rational, sensibility. He does not dispel or critique irrationality but alters its meaning so as to accord with virtuous standards. This transformational design finds correlate in the *Series*'s near verbatim incorporation of Isidore's abridged *Tractatus*. Hoccleve surrounds his translation with commentary which, in drawing attention to the two works' interconnectivity, renders poetry as substitute for reason's guidance.

Before he moves into the translation of Isidore, Hoccleve makes the affinity between himself and the *Tractatus*'s speaker all too clear. Much like the *Series*'s author, who, tormented by melancholy ("my spiryt / To lyue no lust hadde ne delyt" C.28), composes a "Conpleynte" which bewails his pitiful state and its mutability, the *Tractatus*'s nameless speaker, "a woful

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often sexually charged character of Reason herself. Through word choice, then, Hoccleve shows himself as taking up the offer Jean's Lady Raison made to Amant when she presented herself as an Echo-like "amie."

[59] The presentation of an instinctual reason here hearkens back to *Male Regle*, where reason operates as beastly measure. Cf. *Male Regle*, 105: "Reson me bad & redde as for the beste."

man," a "heuy man," creates "a lamanetcioun" that "Compleyned in this wyse" regarding a "Vaxacioun of spirit and torment" (C.310–323). The obvious parallels mark out the incorporated material as model. Hoccleve translates both the starting point of invention—the imitative kernel from which his own complaint builds in content and genre—as well as the desired ends of such lamentational writing. Up until this point, the *Series* has dealt in material principally analogous to that authored by the *Tractatus*'s tormented soul. The integration of the translated Isidore, however, moves from complaint to consolation, from reiterating familiar content to describing desirable future effects. Hoccleve establishes congruity between himself and Isidore's complaining author, and implies that their compositional effects should be one and the same. What follows from the heavy man's lament, is what Hoccleve would have follow from his own.

What results from the heavy man's complaint is the intervention of Resoun. While Hoccleve might initially see himself in the melancholic man and his mood-matching composition, the *Series*'s poet finds much to desire in the discursive practices of the abstract interlocutor who arrives bearing Boethian reassurances. Hoccleve describes Resoun's discourse in a language that inverts Amant's characterization of his own interlocutor's attempted teaching. Where Amant saw both of Raison's speeches as bland and ineffectual lectures, Hoccleve understands Resoun's consolation as an unquestionable success:[60]

> Of a woful man in a book I sy,
>
> To whom wordes of consolacioun

[60] Cf. The *Rose*: "Now let me be immediately; for you could waste your French in idleness. I would rather die thus than that Love should have accused me of falsity or treason. I want to be praised or blamed, at the end, for having loved well. Anyone who lectures me annoys me" (3070–79); "When you make me think elsewhere, by means of the speeches that you repeat here, until I am constantly tired of hearing them, you will see me flee away from here if you do not immediately keep quiet, for my heart's attention is turned elsewhere" (7220–28).

Resoun yaf, spekynge effectually;

And wel esid myn herte therby,

For what I had a whyle in the book red

With the speeche of Resoun was I wel fed. (C.309–315)

In Hoccleve's reckoning, the *Tractatus* is a poem made up of two poems—an outpouring of emotion into verse, a complaint, followed by a rationalization that would turn such feeling into production, a consolation. The expository description of the *Tractatus* imagines the dialogue as an encounter between two authors working in two different genres. This imagining of the dialogue as authorial and generic interplay further aligns the *Tractatus* with the *Series*, which in its very act of translation shows itself to a similarly conglomerated work, and also suggests that the satiating ease of "the doctrine by Resoun taught" effects the desired outcome of Hoccleve's own sorrowful song. Through the translation and re-setting of the *Tractatus*, Hoccleve presents his own opening work as a means of drawing out reason's intervening counsel. Affective expression functions as rational invocation.

Within the *Series*'s narrative frame, there is no transcendent allegorical figure that arrives to offer Hoccleve the same solace as offered to the heavy man by Resoun. Hoccleve imitates the *Tractatus* rather faithfully in complaint, but veers somewhat in consolation. Where Hoccleve finally finds relief from his thoughtful malady is in poetry. Such literary succor occurs on two levels. First, the *Tractatus*, as imitative model, demonstrates the ability of writing to achieve for the author what it would achieve with the audience. By composing a complaint, by putting downcast affect into emotive discourse, the heavy man rekindles his intellect.[61] The act of

[61] This sense of writing finds parallel in the *Regiment* where Hoccleve describes the physical and mental knitting demanded from him while working in the Privy Seal: "A wryter moot thre thynges to him knytte,

writing is itself rationally restorative, in a sense, a form of therapy. Second, Hoccleve's response to the *Tractatus* fictionalizes the rationally substitutive capacities of effective poetic composition. Reason well-written transmits its cognitive order into the misruled mind of the reader.

For Hoccleve, the appeal of Resoun's doctrine lies in its delicate handling of that which it would oppose. The heavy man complains that his life is "ful encombrous" because of his inability to shun measure. He bears a great burden because he has heaped upon himself manifold irrational evils: "My wikkidnesses euere folwen me, / As men may see the shadwe of a body sue; / And in no manere I may hem eschue" (C.320–22). In response to this revealing and dogged wickedness, Resoun prescribes a doctrine of joyful and profitable suffering: "Wo, heuynesse, and tribulacioun / Commune arn to men alle and profitable," because "Swich souffrance is of mannes gilt clensynge / And hem enablith to ioie aylastynge" (C.349–52). Resoun never advises the heavy man to avoid his wicked ways. Her teachings would instill instead a new interpretive lens, a means of perceiving suffering as ill-gotten gain. Irrationality precipitates a torment which then precipitates a productive purgation and everlasting pleasure. Error and its often painful consequences represent tokens of divine grace ("God wowndith tho / That he ordeyned hath to blisse go" C.356–57).

Hoccleve makes himself into an emblem of Resoun's reinterptetive doctrine. His Complaint operates as a means of rational self-fashioning, which is itself a means of fashioning appearances of misrule into appearances of virtue, albeit a virtue based upon inhuman standards.

/ And in tho may be no disseverance: / Mynde, ye, and hand—noon may from othir flitte, / But in hem moot be joynt continuance; / The mynde al hool, withouten variance, / On ye and hand awayte moot alway" (995–1000).

Having been "ful el apaid" by Resoun's teachings, Hoccleve enacts her teachings and views his "seeknesse" as "Goddes visitacioun" (C.378–82).[62] He bring his madness, his temporary stepping outside of self and sanity, into alignment with Resoun's discourse on the bounty of suffering. The unreasonable becomes reasonably exemplary. Taking up such a perspective entails Hoccleve's taking up a bestial nature. The poet embraces Resoun's dogma and, in doing so, makes himself into a dog: "And he me yaf a boon on for to gnawe / Me to correcte and of him to haue awe" (C.398–99). Resoun allows Hoccleve to see his suffering as food for an animalistic appetite. Resoun makes Hoccleve into an unthinking beast, one easily corrected into awestruck submission through sensory distress. The *Series* might advertise Hoccleve's newly discovered adherence to rationality, but it is not immediately to the divine intelligence after which this thought pattern aspires. Hoccleve's reason sees the ethereal but through a savage gaze.

Hoccleve sees himself not only as material testament to the efficacy of rational doctrine but also as the successor to Resoun's authorship. Resoun offers the once-mad poet both the content of his literary making as well as the speaking persona through which such material enters

[62] Hoccleve's translation never mentions whether the heavy man follows either Resoun's advice or the suit of Amant, whether he proceeds to understand pain as product or rejects such teachings outright. Although Hoccleve explains this elision by his needing to return the book ("He that it oght ageyn it to him took" C.374), and although such a cutoff, as Burrow notes, also appears within Hoccleve's true source (Bodleian Library MS Bodley 110), I would argue that the consequences tend to work out in Hoccleve's favor, particularly in regards to his attempts to align himself both with the heavy man and with the *Tractatus* itself. By not noting Resoun's success or failure upon the heavy man, instead choosing to show Resoun's success on the *Tractatus*'s reader, Hoccleve inscribes himself into Isidore's narrative. The heavy man is barely forgotten as another more visible melancholic steps in immediately to fill the empty space.

into discursive being. Hoccleve's rational discipleship becomes most apparent after he concludes his "conpleynt and begynneth a Dialog." The emphatic demarcation of generic boundaries highlights the close association between this new section and the just translated conversation between Resoun and the heavy man.[63] Before, Hoccleve had drawn out the similarities between himself and the anonymous melancholic speaker, but here the Dialogue proceeds to reconfigure the arrangement of parallels. The nameless friend who appears before the once-complaining poet offers little in the way of meaningful instruction. Indeed, Hoccleve rebukes the vast majority of his friend's advice for its shortsightedness: "'A nay,' quod I, 'nay, nay! / Thogh I be lewde I nat so ferfoorth dote'" (D.35–35); "'If your frendshipe cancre so and ruste / Sore wole it trouble myn innocence'" (D.325–26); "'swich errour / In your conceit I feele now, sanz faille / That in this cas yee can nat wel consaille'" (D.460–62). With the friend clearly being the one in need of counsel, Hoccleve implicitly steps into the role previously occupied by Resoun. The poet further builds upon such lineage by imitating Resoun's earlier speech ("Of Goddes strook how so it peise or weye, / Oghte no man thynke repreef or shame" D.55–56) and then extending her philosophy to account for topical issues such as counterfeiting ("But syn gold to weye charged now been we / Resoun axith that it obeied be" D.138–39).[64] The Complaint establishes the

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[63] The Latin marginalia draws further attention to the *Tractatus*'s dialogic form by arranging the source material into clearly demarcated speakers. To illustrate: "Racio: 'Quare tantum frangeris in aduersis? Omitte tristiciam, repelle dolorem a corde.' Homo: Qualiter? quomodo? qua racione? quo consilio, ingenio?' Racio: Sume luctamen contra tristicias temporales. Respice similes euentus etc.'"

[64] As Paul Strohm points out, Hoccleve's discussion of counterfeiting builds on contemporary anti-Lollard discourse: "The very terms in which Hoccleve demeans counterfeiters—as members of a "secte" and so on—are the terms of frequent Lollard invective" (*Theory and the Premodern Text*, [Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2000], 155). Also see, Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation 1399–1422* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 128–52.

authority and efficacy of Resoun's mode of composition; the Dialogue then claims, through displacement, this mode as Hoccleve's own.

Even though Hoccleve would have the *Series* bear a formal countenance indicative reason's grace, and even though he would construct his authorial persona as analogue to rationality's allegorical stand-in, the text consistently reminds us of the irrationality inherent to such a project. Hoccleve shapes himself into an author of reason, but the reason he authors is finally one of instinctual affect and animality. Hoccleve complainingly begins the *Series* to correct the failings of bodily composition. He would show in writing what he could not show in face—a rejuvenated and remeasured mind. The rational testament he so desires, however, emerges in verse not through virtuosic stylistic flight or intellectual self-display, but through a revelation of an innate and feeling knowledge. Hoccleve shores up the reasonable presentation of his text with a reasonable presentation of persona and authorial practices. But again the reason he invokes manages to envelops its opposite. In the Dialogue, Hoccleve models his discourse, doctrine, and authority on a figure who teaches not of irrationality's circumvention but of irrationality's advantage. Resoun teaches Hoccleve to accept his anti-intellectual descent by accepting his bestial nature. The *Series* finally depends on reason's veneer but not its nature. Hoccleve presents his writing as a rational byproduct only to repeatedly call upon the virtue of madness and misruled perception.

The *Series*, then, continues in its course of amending the *Regiment*'s sense of rationality. Where Hoccleve had earlier shown the Lollard heresy to stem from an overreaching reason, here he shows them to be members of an irrational sect.

Epilogue: Writing in the Wake of Reason's Departure

The counter-rational authorship this dissertation has described is a tradition that does not end with the close of the Middle Ages. By way of concluding, I will briefly consider how Stephen Hawes and John Skelton—two of the early-Tudor era's most important authors— attempt to resist the rational skepticism of their medieval forebears only to admit, like those earlier, now imitated poets, the virtue of writing at reason's end. Hawes and Skelton are far from the last dying gasps of the Middle Ages' authorial misrule. Rather, they represent a point of transition that carries forward and develops the medieval detachment of reason from authorship into the early modern fascination with the passions and sublimity.

In the *Pastime of Pleasure*, Hawes writes himself into a canon of rational authorities through a literary endeavor directed by unfettered desire. For Hawes, Chaucer, Gower, and especially Lydgate achieve lasting fame by mastering reason in form and doctrine. In Hawes's reckoning, the triumvirate of foundational authors uses their mediating faculty to penetrate cosmic mystery and then express such mystery under a well-measured allegorical cloak. Reason guides invention, structures representation, and orders style. Hawes professes to follow the trace of his departed forbears. He delivers a tale that explains the training requisite of canonicity. The

Pastime advertises its imitation and clarifies the specific rhetorical techniques enabling that recycling compositional act. The longest section of the poem, the hero's tutelage under Dame Rhetoric, outlines a method of discursive creation deeply appreciative of reason's rule. Hawes presents rhetoric as a system for bringing words into alignment with celestial order. Even while praising the linguistic mean, Hawes shows excess and desire as fundamental to the writing process. It is the inflamed longing for newness, renovation, and fame that inspires authors to write with reason. Such a theorization finds correlate in the fiction's handling of its hero's intellectual training. La Grand Amour, who is also Stephen Hawes, only assimilates rational wisdom so that he might revel in sensuality.[1] Winning the love of La Bell Pucell, Hawes enters himself among the Nine Worthies—surpassing his poetic predecessors—by recognizing how reasonable teachings can be put to contrary designs. Passion wields its other to meet desirous ends. Hawes might not immediately identify the misruled authorship of his forebears, but he nevertheless remains beholden to the same ambivalence over reason that animated those earlier literary makers.

Hawes assesses the works of antiquity based on an aesthetic of rationality. His sense of literary history depends on an author's affinity with the intellectual faculty. The *Pastime*'s prologue champions "the monke of Bury, floure of eloquence," who serves as Hawes's authorial model ("To folowe the trace [. . .] / Of my mayster Lydgate [. . .] / Suche fayned tales I do fynde

[1] Hawes does not distinguish between the poetic "I" of his prologue—a voice clearly marked as the historical author in its references to Tudor patrons—and the "I" of the fantastical romance narrative. On the slipperiness of Hawes's persona, see Anthony Hasler, *Court Poetry in Late-Medieval England and Scotland: Allegories of Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 108–44.

and deuyse," 27, 47–49).[2] According to Hawes, Lydgate's staying power stems from his ability to materialize thought in a hazily immaterial textual form. Lydgate authors "fatall fyccyons" which "are yet permanent / Grounded on reason with clowdy fygures. / He cloked the trouthe of all his scryptures" (33–35). Reason is the *materia* derived from invention, a pre-textual idea bound to *trouthe* and memory. Lydgate attains fame—what Hawes presents as the defining virtue of the nascent Tudor dynasty—by discovering such grounded content and then giving it oblique expression.[3] These rationally beclouded poetics are not Lydgate's alone, but are characteristic of the "poetes olde," a group which also includes Chaucer and Gower (1316–40). The poets of yore unite in a project of thoughtful obscurity: "They were so wyse and so inuentyfe / Theyr obscure reason fayre and sugratyfe / Pronounced trouthe vnder cloudy fygures" (718–20). Hawes's sense of reason as a *trouthe* best left hidden parallels the ineffability Chaucer associates with rationality in *Troilus* while also coming into tension with the clarity attributed to the faculty in the *Rose*, the *Confessio*, and *Reson and Sensuallyte.*[4] Where Chaucer's work emphasized the frustrating difficulty of putting reason into language, Hawes's develops such a formulation to make that difficulty aesthetically central. To write like the old masters, the poet must identify reasonable content without defining reasonable content; the poet must discover rational truths without putting those truths into direct, literal discourse.

Offering self-reflexive commentary on the poetics governing the *Pastime*, Hawes's discussion of rhetoric follows Gower's in its simultaneous vaunting and undercutting of a

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[2] Quotations from Hawes are drawn from *The Pastime of Pleasure*, ed. William Edward Mead (London: Early English Text Society, 1928).

[3] On Hawes, Fame, and the Tudor regime, see Seth Lerer, "The Rhetoric of Fame: Stephen Hawes's Aureate Diction," *Spenser Studies* 5 (1984), 169– 84.

[4] Cf. The *Rose*, 7097–107; *Confessio Amantis*, Book I, 1051–2; *Reson and Sensuallyte*, 743–55.

language put to reason.[5] Throughout the section, Hawes draws attention to the empowering relationship between rhetoric and rationality: "Rethoryke she sayde was founde by reason / Man for to gouerne well and prudently / His wordes to ordre, his speche to puryfy" (691–93);[6] "Full meruaylous is the operacyon / To make of nought reason sentencyous" (710–11); "Without ordre, without reason we clatter / Where is no reason it vayleth not to chatter" (865–66); "They [the ancient poets] fayned no fable without reason / For reasonable is all theyr moralyte / And upon reason was theyr conclusion" (952–54) (to cite but a few instances). Clearly, Hawes understands reason and rhetoric as inextricably linked. Such a connection comes under pressure when Hawes describes the place of desire within invention. The most exemplary poets, Hawes shows, are those guided by that same impulse that led Amant to win the Rose and write the *Rose*:

> They hadde suche a fantasy
> In this hygh arte to be intellygyble
> Theyr fame encreasynge euermore truely
> To flour euer, they were inuyncyble.
> To theyr wofull hertes was nought impossyble.
> With brennynge loue, of insacyate fyre
> Newe thynges to fynde they set theyr desire. (722–28)

Fantasy is a method of making "newe thynges" intelligible, the writer's ability to devise fresh material, to undertake the impossible. Fantasy plays a central role in generating lasting renown.

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[5] The self-reflexivity of Hawes's section on rhetoric is well noted by previous scholars: A. S. G. Edwards, *Stephen Hawes* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1993); Robert Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 179–90. Rita Copeland, too, draws connections between Hawes's and Gower's handling of rhetoric ("Lydgate, Hawes, and the Science of Rhetoric," *Modern Language Quarterly* 53 (1992), 57–81.

[6] Cf. *Confessio Amantis*, Book VII, 1522–25.

Fame emerges from fantasy which is fueled by desire, burning love, insatiable fire. Lasting literary reputation—the sort achieved by Lydgate, Chaucer, and Gower—depends on the well established tropes of counter-rational misrule. The old poets ground their works in rationality obscured, but such an effort remains bound at once and ever to love's excess. The author puts passion to invention and makes a work of reason dissimulated.

Hawes might show the ends of rhetoric to lie in veiled rationality, but he shows the ends of the larger body of learning of which rhetoric is a part to lie in the fervency of sensual desire. Rhetoric begins with burning and insatiable lusts, which is put toward the allegorical expression of rational *trouthe*, which is finally put toward burning and insatiable lusts. Fame's report of La Bell Pucell's beauty at the inception of the quest inspires the precise response that governs fantastical invention: "Her swete report so my herte set on fyre / With brennynge loue moost hote and feruent / That her to se I hadde grete desyre" (288–90). Hawes or La Grand Amour only travels to the Tower of Doctrine so that he might consummate an Amant-like longing. Intellectual expansion, training in rational wisdom, is not an end in itself. Hawes improves his reason so that he might know but not displace the object of unquenchable desire. The doctrines of the *Rose*'s measured Lady and Amors are not mutually exclusive. Hawes underscores the irrational design of his hero's training in the design of the Tower itself. The Sages of the Seven Liberal Arts are housed in a "ryall toure of morall document" that is primarily a "a place of pleasure" whose description works to invoke Deduit's Garden (348, 410). La Grand Amour enters the Tower, passing "the goodly portres," immediately to encounter "a fountauyne depured of pleasaunce" before gazing upon the vividly painted walls which describe "a full noble story / Of the doughty waye to the toure peryllous" (380, 388, 414–15). The descriptive congruity

amplifies the poem's narrative suggestion that the Seven Liberal Arts are actually Seven Arts of Love.

John Skelton, too, defines his authorial project in response to rational flight. Unlike Hawes, however, the Tudor laureate consistently and explicitly denies misrule its status as a literary virtue. Across his satirical corpus, Skeleton imagines a realm abandoned by reason. He populates his narrative landscapes with clerics corrupted by excess appetite, censuring readers who lack the wit to comprehend poetry's cosmic wisdom, nobles who have banished intelligence's light. Political and social irrationality give the poet inventional warrant, structuring content and critique. Skelton refuses to descend into popular madness. The laureate authorship he would claim relies on the distance between topical folly and the writer's pose of rational discipleship. This distance does not entail detachment. Skelton champions reasonable governance because of reasonable governance's lack. Misrule is what sustains Skelton's sense of laureate authorship. The poet of the nation is a poet who corrects error in the state, but without error in the state the poet finally becomes irrelevant. Skelton's authorial pose, however, is far from monolithic. Even while holding himself up as a sanctioned exemplar of mean and measure, Skelton cannot help but occasionally revel in the unrestrained pleasures of appetite, representing those pleasures through a poetic discourse founded on overflowing excess. In Skelton, then, we have a poet whose elevated sense of occupation demands the appearance of rational affinity. Such an appearance cannot be maintained indefinitely. The pull of reason's opposite remains far too enticing.

Skelton's English corpus is largely an effect of misrule. More often than not, the poet puts pen to parchment due to a rampant irrationality that affects commoners, nobles, and clerics alike. Take, for instance, *Ware the Hawk*, an attack on the widespread ecclesiastical depravity as

embodied by a hawking priest. Here, Skelton opens by making his poetic intention all too clear: "This work devised is / For such as do amiss" (1–2).[7] Skelton would use his authorial work as a means of imposing "control" on those who "cannot be excusyd / By reason nor by law" (6–7). Irrationality governs the immediate reception of literature. Poetry finds an unruly readership, who, through the intervention of a "compendyously comprysed" book, can return to measure once more (24). Primarily an invective against Cardinal Wolsey, *Why Come Ye Not to Court* extends its critique to a broader social issue, presenting itself—in its application of "Good reason and good skill"—as a "garlic pill" to a corrupted body politic where "there vaileth no reasoning / For Will doth rule all thing" (104–09). Skelton writes *Against Venemous Tongues* to counter the abuse of "frantick faitours half mad and half straught" by making the relationship between his authorial persona and counter-rational discourse abundantly apparent (27):

> There is no noble man wil judge in me
>
> Any such foly to rest or to be.
>
> I care muche the lesse what ever they say,
>
> For tunges untayde be renning astray. (34–36)

These lines outline in short the nature of Skelton's wider self-representation that enables him, across his satires, to claim the authority needed to dispense scorn and effect correction. Associating himself with the perceptive "noble man," Skelton vehemently rejects folly, and discursive folly in particular. He dislocates his work, which responds to venomous tongues with a venom of its own, from the immeasure of his rivals. The difference between his censure and that directed at him lies in the laureate's ties to reason's restraint. Skelton recognizes little value

[7] Quotations from Skelton are drawn from *The Complete English Poems*, ed. John Scattergood (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983).

in transgressing measure. A break with the mean would entail taking up the behavior he so lambasts. A break with the mean would precipitate moral bankruptcy. He would no longer speak down to detractors and miscreants, but would approach them from an equally degenerate plane.

Though scornful of irrationality in the majority of its forms, Skelton is far from unaware of its function within his divinely inspired laureate poetics. The poet's final work, *A Replycacion Agaynst Certayne Yong Scolers Abjured of Late*, deals with a pseudo-Lollard heresy but closes with a resounding articulation of "The fame matryculate / Of poetes laureate" (356–57). To those who would deny poetry its efficacy as a medium for discouraging "heresy excrable," Skelton reminds his detractors of the "Poete of poetes all," King David, whom the *Replycacion*'s author holds up as his model. Like David, Skelton defines his writerly occupation as a communing with etherial powers. The poet channels the "spyrituall," "mysteriall," "mysticall," "Effecte energiall," and achieves "hevenly inspyracion / In laureate creacyon" (365–73). A supernatural origin, however, does not entail super-rational product. Skeleton elevates his verse to a near Scriptural status, but shows its divinely forwarded mode of invention to be actively marshaled and sustained by misrule. The supernatural is, in this sense, a byproduct of the irrational:

> I pray you, for to take,
> In this that I do make
> Agaynst these frenetykes,
> Agaynst these lunatykes,
> Agaynst these sysmatykes,
> Agaynst these heretykes,
> Now of late abjured,
> Most unhappely ured;
> For be ye wel assured,

That frensy nor jelousy

Nor heresy wyll never dye. (398–408)

Skelton unsurprisingly positions his work in contrast to those who stand outside of the mean, sanity, and orthodoxy. And though his work has renounced and dispensed with those it initially targeted, he closes with a promise of more to come. The lunatics are ever replicating, their irrational behaviors and doctrine ever spreading. The poet might craft a heavenly verse, capturing divinity in meter and on parchment, but that verse is initiated and sustained by those who would counter such an inventional font. Skelton's celestially censorious authorship cannot be without a misruled villain to which it might stand in opposition.

Skelton's rational conservatism—his hesitancy to embrace the literary virtue of misrule—occasionally gives way to a formal and material revelry that would ultimately come to define the posthumous understanding of his authorship. A work that John Scattergood describes as Skelton's "most considered statement" on "the nature of the poetic tradition," *The Garlande of Laurell* recognizes the irrational font of literary history. In a moment that recalls Gower's parade of authorial lovers at the close of the *Confessio*'s Book VIII, Skelton finds himself witnessing a procession "Of poetis laureat of many dyverse nacyons" whose spokespersons are none other than the medieval triumvirate—Chaucer, Gower, and Lydgate (324). The refrain of Skelton's rhyme royal stanzas makes clear the enabler of laureate discourse: "But blessyd Bachus most reverent and holy, / Of clusters engrosid with his ruddy flotis / Theis orators and poetis refresshid ther throtis" (376–78). Authors lay claim to compositions but Bacchus lays claim to invention. His "engrosid" vine, his excessive product, produces intellectual rupture which then produces poetry.

Elynour Rummynge, much like Hoccleve's *Male Regle*, recounts the poet's unruly barroom excursions but, for the most part, celebrates clamorous festivity through an effusive

display of the Skelton's namesaked measure and displaces minor critique to a closing Latin gloss. Readers, early and modern, have long recognized and relished the work's irrational qualities. C. S. Lewis once classified the poem as a "vivid impression of riotous bustle, chatter and crazy disorder."[8] Stanley Fish notes that "all its conflicts are only potential, and it is morally neutral," arguing that the poem functions as "a verbal painting—nothing more."[9] Jane Griffiths understands *Elynour* as "a picaresque narrative whose runaway Skeltonics convey a linguistic excess equivalent to the abuses perpetrated by the drinkers."[10] *Elynour* captures riot in form and content. The author is both in the tavern and inspired by the tavern. Unfortunately for Skelton—a poet, who, as we have seen, tirelessly pledges allegiance to rationality—*Elynour* is the work that would carry him into remembrance. A poem "typically understood as a pure representation of misrule" defined his authorial project up until the close of the nineteenth century.[11] Like it or not, Skelton would enter posterity largely according to the description given to him by the anonymous seventeenth-century author of *Pimlyco*, as a poet "of those mad times."[12]

As I have hoped to demonstrate in these brief readings of Hawes and Skelton, reason retained its troubled poetic status well past Lancastrian poets like Lydgate and Hoccleve, extending into the Tudor era and beyond. The *Rose* and the counter-rational authorship it

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[8] C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 138.

[9] Stanley Fish, *John Skelton's Poetry* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1965), 251. For an opposing view, see John Scattergood, *John Skelton: The Career of an Early Tudor Poet* (Portland, OR: Four Courts Press, 2014), 219–32.

[10] Jane Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority: Defining the Liberty to Speak* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 71.

[11] Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority*, 171; Fish, *John Skelton's Poetry*, 252.

[12] *Pimlyco, or Runne Red-Cap* (London: John Busbie and Geoffrey Loftis, 1609), sig. C1v. On Skelton's posthumous reputation, see Griffiths, *John Skelton and Poetic Authority*, 158–84.

initiated resonated over centuries. Scholars attending to the early modern passions and the sublime have noted the *Rose*'s echoes without necessarily pinpointing what I contend to be a crucial source for the discourse of irrationality that continued to direct authors' content and modes of expression. Richard Strier argues that the humanist taste for affective rhetoric coupled with Reformist theology's rejecting of asceticism in favor of passionate piety to establish the intellectual conditions that would enable writers such as Erasmus, Shakespeare, and Herbert to revalue unrestrained emotion: "the next time one hears some pundit explaining that the 'Western tradition' has always valued order, reason, self-control, and decorum above all else, one should remember Petrarch, Salutati, Folly, Luther, and their followers."[13] Joseph Pappa sees "erotic reading" as a defining aspect of the early modern literary experience. Writers strove to enthuse readers' imaginations, creating "a heightened, irrational mental state [that] affected the entire body."[14]

Patrick Cheney draws attention to the centrality of the Longinian sublime—a distinctly literary aesthetic based on the celestial transport of terror and rapture—in early modern authorship, particularly for poets and playwrights such as Spenser, Marlowe, and Shakespeare. As Cheney observes, the framework of the sublime allows Renaissance writers to imagine and then represent themselves and their projects according to a standard of literary greatness. Authors "replace self-regulated passion with heightened emotion" to fictionalize the occupation and act

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[13] Richard Strier, "Against the Rule of Reason: Praise of Passion from Petrarch to Luther to Shakespeare to Herbert," in *Reading the Early Modern Passions: Essays in the Cultural History of Emotion*, ed. Gail Kern Paster, Katherine Rowe, Mary Floyd-Wilson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 23–42, here 42.

[14] Joseph Pappa, *Carnal Reading: Early Modern Language and Bodies* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 15.

of creating imaginative composition as a near divine undertaking.[15] David Sedley traces the interconnected rise of sublimity and skepticism that occurred during the late seventeenth century in authors such as Montaigne and Milton. According to Sedley, the "transcendence of understanding" or "defeat of understanding" (the sublime) developed in conjunction with an intellectual outlook that "purges the mind of any dogmatic position" (skepticism): "knowledge inspires wonder; sublimity thrives on ignorance."[16]

As these scholars make clear, counter-rationality is a defining trope of English Renaissance literature. I would argue that the trope reaches such prominence, in no small part, because of the *Rose*'s initial willingness to show itself as literature made from reason's departure and from the reverberations of this conceptualization that would spread into the works of Chaucer, Gower, Lydgate, and Hoccleve. This collection of medieval writers casts doubt on the regulation of desire—especially when applied to imaginative composition—and shows the rejection of rational dogma to be both the principal impulse for authorship and a means for appreciating the rapture of earthly, bodily, and transient beauty. As time and changing tastes distanced writers from the *Rose*, intertextual links with the Garden of Deduit and faltering Ladies of Boethian wisdom became less frequent, slowly buried under more immediate predecessors and poetic models. The *Rose*'s popularity may have declined as preferences shifted away from its brand of allegory, but Guillaume's and Jean's framework for authorship—a framework

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[15] Patrick Cheney, "'The Forms of Things Unknown': English Authorship and the Early Modern Sublime," in *Medieval and Early Modern Authorship*, ed. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne (Tubingen: Narr Verlag, 2011), 137–61, here 137. Also see Cheney, *Marlowe's Republican Authorship: Lucan, Liberty, and the Sublime* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009).

[16] David Sedley, *Sublimity and Skepticism in Montaigne and Milton* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 2005), 1–17.

sustained and developed by English rivals and imitators—would find itself amplified by early modern writers now highly attendant to a passionate sublime.[17] It is possible that if not for that dual-authored tale of a lover-made-writer spurning the advances of a dogmatic would-be *amie* that literary history would not have received the focus and drive necessary to achieve a literature designed for more than the exposition of knowledge, for ecstatic and bodily affect, for lasting greatness. The *Rose* and its misruled followers found a tradition that would, in many ways, come to define and structure the English canon.

[17] On the early modern shifts in allegorical method, see Michael Murrin, "Renaissance allegory from Petrarch to Spenser," in *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. Rita Copeland (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 162–76.

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