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**PERSUADING THE POLITY: AUTHORITY, MARRIAGE, AND
POLITICS IN LATE-MEDIEVAL FRANCE**

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by

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Abstract

Persuading the polity: Authority, marriage, and politics in late-medieval France

In the later Middle Ages, texts on marriage proliferated, either works of conduct meant to make women good wives or more general reflections addressed to a wide spectrum of medieval society. These multiple and contradictory discourses regarding matrimony performed a variety of functions beyond attempting to regulate a household or persuade the audience of the worthiness, or lack thereof, of the institution. They are displays of power that seek to impose an idealized vision of society and one's authority over others. An exploration of this subtext brings to light the difficulties of exerting individual agency in the face of myriad constraints, whether social, economic, or political. The authorial postures assumed, the identities created, the sources adapted, and the knowledge exposed created a late medieval form of self-fashioning. Another didactic genre, mirrors for princes or *Furstenspiegel*, fulfilled a manifest political role in providing counsel to male rulers; texts regarding marriage, addressed ostensibly to women but containing many messages intended for men, complement this agenda of influence. Marriage texts express the fears, ambitions, and negotiations that result from governing the polity in their representation of the difficulties of holding sway over a representative microcosm, the household. This study examines the authorial anxieties and authoritative posturing of three texts representative of late medieval discourses about marriage, *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement ses filles*, *Le Ménagier de Paris*, and Eustache Deschamps's *Le Miroir de mariage*.

Chapter One "The Courtly Conundrum: Marriage and Legitimacy in *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*" discusses the late medieval shift toward a regulatory discourse of institutionalized marriage and away from the perilous courtly love trope. *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, a French conduct book written by the Chevalier

de la Tour Landry, a member of the provincial *petite noblesse*, in 1371. His work displays a patriarchal, authorial desire to participate in the conversation regarding matrimony. The narrator, known as “the Chevalier” in this study, betrays a paternalist angst brought about by the threat of disobedience should he fail to impose his vision. The narrator’s adaptation of his source text, *Le Miroir des Bonnes Femmes*, espouses the idea of a lineage founded in virtue and reveals the threat of illegitimacy that could arise if his fatherly advice is not heeded.

Chapter Two, “Playing the Game in *Le Ménagier de Paris*,” examines the importance of gaming and social exchange in the 1394 Parisian bourgeois conduct book of an anonymous author. Through its anecdotes, *exempla*, religious instruction, and preoccupation with the daily affairs of the household, this polyvalent work celebrates a set of class values particular to the late medieval bourgeoisie. As the narrator encourages his wife to uphold their collective estate, he negotiates a place for himself and his household through the practices of leisure and labor. Depicting men who participate in games where a wife’s obedience is at stake demonstrates how the discursive formation of a woman’s virtue circulated as a form of symbolic currency in late medieval society. His unacknowledged adaptation of *Le Jeu des echecs moralisé*, a mirror for princes composed in Latin by Jacobus de Cessolis and translated into French by Jean Ferron in 1347, reveals the political aspirations and personal investment in self-improvement behind his allusions to gaming.

Chapter Three, “Franc Vouloir and the ties that bind in Eustache Deschamps’s *Miroir de mariage*,” reflects upon the masculine solidarity established between Franc Vouloir [Free Will], model ruler, and his counselor, Repertoire de Science [Repository of Knowledge], in the allegorical mirror intended to dissuade men from wedding. Neither of the protagonists lives up to his name; Free Will strains to exert his agency in decision-making and Repository’s counsel remains ineffective. This lengthy, unfinished treatise and its illustrations of faulty medieval institutions reflect Deschamps’s

own frustrations and motivations as a politically engaged poet, a member of the *noblesse de robe*, and administrator in the royal court during the reign of Charles VI. The text showcases Aristotelian notions about politics, adapting ideas from the *Nicomachean Ethics* and the *Politics* that had been translated for Charles V, at the same time as it features their problematic application. It is above all an illustration of the difficulties of imposing and maintaining an ideal in an imperfect, material world, a self-reflexive act regarding the problematic confrontation of the wills that results from the production and reception of any mirroring or conduct text.

Chapter Four complements and completes the study of Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*. "Eustache Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*: The Wife and the Will" posits that the illustration of the problematic application of counsel is in fact a parody of the mirroring tradition. The sober tones of Franc Vouloir and Repertoire de Science's exchange are counterbalanced by the fabliaux-like yet still misogynistic comedy of the descriptions of the imaginary household. The proliferation of voices and the multiple audiences established in the work complicate the questions of authorial voice and purported certainties about what society should be. In this dispute over sovereignty and mastery, there can be no true winner and the loser is the French nation as a whole. This last chapter demonstrates how the surprising transition from the discussion of an unruly wife to a poorly ruled nation lends political significance to the exchange of tales about women between men in the later Middle Ages.

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Persuading the polity: Authority, marriage, and politics in late-medieval France

Le cleric: Je considere cy deux choses : primierement, qui est celluy qui puet legitimer, et je diz et respons que c'est le Pape et non aultre, soit Impereur ou Roy.

Et si le preuve en ceste maniere : car legitimacion si a proprement son conmancement de mariage (...). Adonques, je argue ainssi : celluy seulement qui puet dispenser en cas de mariage, puet aucun legitimer. Mez le Pape est tel.

Donques, il puet seul legitimer, car le prince seculier ne puet tenir court ne cognoissance de cas de mariage (...) Car mariage si est sacrement ordené et establi de Dieu (...). Et par consequant, son vicaire se doit, seul, de cause de mariage soy entremettre.

Le chevalier: Selon Droit naturel il samble que les enffens nez hors mariage puissent et doivent succeder a leurs parents, car de Droit naturel toute conjunction d'onme et de fame estoit lisible, et lez enffens nez estoient reputez legitimes (...). Et, pour ce dit une loy civile que concubinage ne doit mie estre, selon Droit civil, puny (...).

The cleric: I consider two things here: first, who can declare a child or other fact legitimate and lawful, and I say and reply that it is the Pope and no other, neither the Emperor nor the King. And I prove it in this way : for legitimacy is properly found in marriage (...). Thus, I argue the following : only he who can pronounce a marriage can render legitimate. The Pope is one such person. As such, only he can render legitimate as a secular prince cannot hold court or knowledge in the case of marriage. Marriage is a sacrament ordained and established by God (...). Consequently, only his vicar may interfere with the institution of marriage, and he alone.

The knight : According to natural law it would seem that the children born outside of marriage can and must inherit from their parents, for in natural law every union of a man and a woman was read, and the children born of this union were legitimate (...). And for this reason a civil law states that having a concubine must not be punished according to civil law.

(*Le Songe du Vergier*, Vol. 2, 211)

The words of the cleric in *Le Songe du Vergier* remind the contemporary reader of the social and political importance of the institution of marriage in the late Middle Ages. Discussions on marriage and the roles of women in society were addressed to a wide variety of audiences, from rulers to commoners, with a vehemence and passion that is surprising to a contemporary society that all too often views the institution of marriage as a question of personal fulfillment rather than a political affair, rightfully or not. However, as Aristotle observed in the *Politics* and pseudo-Aristotle in *Economics*, two texts that gained newfound popularity during the reign of Charles V, marriage and the resulting household are the foundational elements of the polity. Politicized marriage texts and the

production of mirrors marked the intellectual climate of late fourteenth-century France. The fact that mirrors for princes, a discursive genre providing reflections on the ideal religious and social relations for princes, grew in popularity at the same historical moment is no mere coincidence. In *Le Songe du Vergier*, a mirror for princes composed in 1378 for Charles V and frequently attributed to Evarit Trémaugon, the cleric reminds the audience in his debate with the knight that the individual who can determine the legitimacy of a union between man and woman wields great power. The medieval clergy had understood this as early as the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Duby 302-3). To control the institution of marriage was to influence civil society. The aristocracy had also learned this lesson well, its kinship systems at the base of political institutions. The knight of *Le Songe du Vergier* replies that natural law too can guarantee the legitimacy of heirs, demonstrating a marked interest in denying privilege to the clergy and entrusting the transmission of worldly goods, whether wealth or status, to the laity. These contrasting opinions and the active investment in the question of what constitutes a legitimate union are not limited to *Le Songe du Vergier* alone. It would seem that many understood that producing a persuasive vision of what marriage should be could serve to legitimate one's own power. Given these circumstances, medieval discourses on marriage are imminently political.

This study focuses on texts where this investment is tangible and their authors express a vested interest in either maintaining their status or extending personal influence in society by exerting control over the definition and substance of marriage. The cleric's words could be read differently; it is not the union that a member of the clergy makes legitimate but rather his control over this union that can lend legitimacy to the clergy, guaranteeing them a central role in medieval political life. A socially ambitious author granting himself the privilege of determining what a marriage should be is a formidable self-authorizing maneuver.

In the later Middle Ages, works of conduct meant to make women good wives proliferated, as did more general reflections on the institution. Some texts celebrated clerical celibacy and attempted to dissuade future clerics from entering into marriage. Mirrors for princes almost always addressed the topic, even if only briefly and to underscore the virtues that a ruler should seek in a bride. From speculums or mirrors, exhaustive encyclopedic texts composed for a general (read majority masculine) audience on politics or other subjects, to true works of conduct addressed to women regarding their religious and domestic duties, discourses on marriage cannot be confined to one genre. Contemporary critics have labeled a set of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* the marriage group as it is the theme that connects the pieces. Philippe de Mezières, close to Charles VI and an eminent political thinker, wrote his own book on marriage, *Le Livre de la vertu du sacrement de mariage*, composed between 1385 and 1389 (Williamson 9). Another polyvalent author and woman scholar, Christine de Pizan, wrote texts that ranged in subject from the virtues of good women and the decorous behavior suiting them (*Le Livre de la Cité des Dames* and *Le Livre des trois vertus*) to political treatises regarding warfare (*Le Livre des Fais d'Armes et de Chevalerie*), the reign of Charles V (*Le Livre des fais et Bonnes Moeurs du sage roy Charles V*), and the organization of government (*Le livre du Corps de Policie*). Marriage was in vogue, just as the didactic mode; authors did not hesitate to discuss the affairs of the heart and hearth with just as much sobriety and *gravitas* as the affairs of state. The texts that will be discussed in this study, *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, *Le Ménagier de Paris*, and *Le Miroir de mariage*, all follow in this vein, their authors incorporating either subtle or overt political guidance into their discussions on marriage and women's behavior.

At first glance, these works seem to provide a unitary vision of matrimony, a strict set of expectations placed on married women and, by extension, on the institution itself. In late-medieval society, marriage provided heirs to property and fortunes, a functioning domestic economic unit, and the means to display the moral character and virtues of a family line through wives' respectable

behavior. The ties established through marriage (or not in the case of the clergy) could also cement distinctions between the existing classes, the aristocracy, the emerging bourgeoisie, and the laboring class, maintaining their identities and spheres of interest separate thanks to these codes of conduct. Agreement and concord would seem to reign among the male authors of these texts producing a stable, hegemonic discourse concerning marriage: a wife, that necessary helpmate, can provide comfort and assist in securing one's position in the world as much as she can endanger it. Her propensity for virtue is just as great as her propensity for waywardness; rule over her well.

To the modern reader, these less than liberating epistles appear to be repetitive, encyclopedic compendiums of popular wisdom and religious and moral platitudes divorced from any practicality beyond providing laborious, heavy-handed instruction for a seemingly captive feminine audience. However, upon further observation, discourses on marriage reveal tensions, anxieties, and attitudes about power and social organization that are highly informative. More might be said and understood about medieval society through the careful study of its aspirations and fears than the difficult to trace implementations of the guidelines provided by mirrors and works of conduct.

The political tenor of texts on marriage is difficult to reconcile with the seemingly inconsequential *exempla* that constitute the bulk of these works, having been borrowed from other more overtly religious sources or even mirrors with an evident political function. The same observation is often made about mirrors for princes. In real life, with the exception of a few, women were generally deemed unworthy of participation in the political life of medieval communities, at least in official discourses. The Salic law, for example, is the reflection of the perceived dangers that inheritance through a female line can pose to dynasties. What conduct literature and medieval marriage texts remind the contemporary reader of is that women did, however, play a vital role in the two spheres without which the political community could not exist, the economic and political

microcosms of domestic spaces. Negotiating power among the members of a household was good practice for deploying one's agency in the larger context of the emerging nation. Political and social actors are individuals with a family life first and public figures second. Rendering the workings of a household public, which was the effect of these works whether or not it was the intent, both blurs the line between the public sphere and the private world and provides a highly visible definition of what constituted the intimacy of family life. These indistinguishable boundaries create a space for political experimentation in texts about marriage.

The purpose of this study is to focus on the genesis of these discourses regarding marriage rather than on the use to which they were put. Their adaptation of sources is often telling and it suggests what the authors' ambitions were in influencing the behavior of others and creating social organizations that corresponded to an ideal. Just as the authors attempted to mould others, they fashioned authoritative personae for themselves. This practice of self-display and self-definition runs contrary to the understanding of conduct works as merely instructional texts that model behaviors for their women audiences. The persuasive function of the authorial posturing that takes place, the messages sent from masculine authors to masculine consumers of these texts, is equally important. Women might be crafted as obedient subjects in these texts; however, men struggle to depict themselves as capable, virtuous, and worthy leaders. What might be at stake here is a spirited contest to shape a discourse on marriage, to encourage emulation; the method is a willingness to embrace and participate in *auctoritas* in order to become an authority whose voice would be heard. These texts, by their very existence, also suggest the fear of losing the very authority that their masculine narrators attempt to bring into being, they "...inscribe a persistent tension between the order they seek to impose and the difficulty of controlling the material world and human behavior" (Krueger, Identity 22). What emerges from these texts is a tentative form of political subjectivity.

This interest in the authorial and self-authorizing functions of texts on marriage is in no way meant to discount or neglect the question of their reception, on the contrary. The readers and consumers of conduct works and mirrors and their potential implementation of the precepts put forth are of great interest, yet the impetus behind the composition of such texts might render questions of reception less straightforward than one might think. Kathleen Ashley reminds her reader of Rabelais's parody of the husband who would chastise his young wife in *Gargantua* "...by reading her conduct literature about chaste and unchaste women! Rabelais's satirical suggestion that conduct books are primarily designed to be used by desperate male authorities to subjugate women is echoed seriously in much scholarly analysis" (The *Miroir des Bonnes Femmes* 87). Similar parodies of the difficulties of educating women are found well before Rabelais as we will see in Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage* and in Chaucer's depiction of the Oxford scholar Jankyn, who attempts to tame the indomitable Wife of Bath. In fact, the effectiveness of the didactic genre as a whole was met with skepticism quickly in the late Middle Ages. This idea is supported by a perceptible self-reflexive movement in the texts themselves as they suggest the futility of their own endeavor or recognize the unattainable aspiration that their guidelines be applied as strictly as possible.

These moments also intimate that the authors' misogynist motivations might not have been as genuine as one would like to assume. Although the authors' sincere desire for masculine domination should not be discredited; at the same time, it is plausible that these texts were the opportunity to participate in a tradition that lent authority, to display understandings about the workings of power and social organizations, and to render one's moral fiber and personal integrity public in an ambitiously political and cautiously coded manner.

Articulating relationships of power

Observing how men address other men in texts concerning marriage can only enrich our understanding of medieval social and political structures. Positing that women are malicious creatures and that a union with a daughter of Eve should be avoided at all cost was a means for the clergy to increase its numbers and encourage those already in the fold to remain (or become) celibate. Demonstrating two aristocratic goals, first, that marriage was a necessary tool to ensure the transfer of power and wealth to legitimate heirs, and second, that women could be the pillars of virtue of a family were ways in which to defend their social practices. To debate these two opinions, to uphold one and then defend the contrary, was the means to sound the intellectual and philosophical constructions of knowledge of the late Middle Ages. By the fourteenth century, the cultural mainstays regarding marriage were so firmly established so as not to have to be reiterated *ad infinitum*. Rather, it was the ability to construct and diffuse knowledge that was of interest. Could there have been a better way to do this than by taking up a subject that was more than familiar to the audience, listeners and readers who very possibly would not change their mind about whether or not they were to participate in the institution under discussion, assuming that they had any choice in the matter? For women audiences, it was highly unlikely that they were unfamiliar with the precepts detailed in these works, quite the opposite. However, it was the process of consolidation, of amassing *exempla* and creating one's own that could give pleasure to both author and readers, not to mention grant power.

For late fourteenth-century France, having suffered a great moral defeat in the war with England after the treaty of Brétigny, establishing and maintaining sovereignty over the nation was of utmost concern. Recovering power was a patriotic duty. Many historians have identified this period after the Black Death as a social “vacuum” in which new roles could be occupied, hence creating a need for models that could teach new and desirable behaviors (Krueger, “Nouvelles choses,” 54). Self-control and self-governance could translate into sought-after worldly governance, or so the

argument goes. Mirrors for princes, texts often composed by university-trained clerics who had made their way into public administration, defined the means to gain power, impose it, and keep it. At the same time, they guaranteed the clout of those writing such texts. Both mirrors for princes and mirrors for women or about women were performative texts; a variety of roles are played and postures assumed for an audience expected to emulate the models given and engage in the practices therein.

In some ways, mirrors regarding marriage or works of conduct for women were a complementary and subversive genre to this other political mirroring practice. The former were intended to humble their audience and make them obey; they demonstrated the force and corrective measures necessary to achieve this goal. They are also filled with examples of disobedience, showing what happens when things go wrong. Ultimately, they express a longing for certainty by attempting to assert an unwavering moral firmness; they are about the desire to have agency in an uncontrollable world. At the same time, this desire is frustrated by contingency, material and structural limitations, and the unpredictable desire and agency of some Other. The threat of contestation and resistance is omnipresent; no one is ever safe from an uppity wife who might just murder your favorite hunting hound before your very eyes as you sit comfortably by the fire (*Mesnager* 280).

This discourse of morality and certainty had rested in other hands for a very long time. The clergy had the corner on the market of virtue for most of the Middle Ages while the aristocracy was more interested in *realpolitik* approaches to worldly institutions. The religious code of ethics, and thus Christian marriage, did not always correspond harmoniously to the chivalric code of ethics and its subsequent forms of marriage, even if there was a gradual convergence or Christianization of chivalry. The two groups did not agree on marriage practices, a question, as we have seen, that was the means by which to renegotiate one's sphere of influence; at the same time, an urban elite was

becoming a more prominent conditioning force in society, and encouraging men to get the upper hand in matrimony and women to submit was a discourse of power like any other (Viennot 265-6). The clergy's contestation of the ideal of the courtly woman was pretext; it was the rivalry between the nobility and the clergy brought about by a threatening consolidation of royal power and the clergy's newfound influence over the monarch after the thirteenth century that was a source of tension (276). The influential administrative positions that would be created to assist the monarchy in governing were also highly sought after; the clergy, university trained scholars, and competent members of the bourgeoisie found themselves vying for this honor in the late Middle Ages, another source of social strain (280). Competing classes made for competing discourses about an institution that each medieval estate used to define itself.

Viennot, in her discussion of women and power in medieval France, asserts that discourses on marriage were not addressed to women so much as they were addressed to men and women; in her opinion, these texts were so very degrading that many women would have been insulted by their content and not easily persuaded to interiorize their antifeminist notions (266-7). Perhaps, they identified themselves solely with portraits of good women, ignoring the portraits of the bad. Perhaps, this is merely contemporary reconstruction of a medieval mentality that will, unfortunately, remain inaccessible to us. Another possibility remains that is suggested by contemporary feminist theorists: women do not form a homogenous category, that in situations of patriarchal domination some women might not identify with misogynist insinuations of inferiority themselves but might readily identify these disparaging characteristics in other women. Some women might use sexist discourse to gain power or oppress other women they consider different from themselves. They might, in other words, use the values of patriarchy much as men do; hence, the difficulties of reconstructing the reception of conduct literature and misogynist discourse as a whole.

What texts on marriage and works addressed to women did create was a series of gendered roles. It might seem strange that so much energy was devoted to the creation of more clear definitions of appropriate gendered behavior during a time of national conflict, yet it was a means of delineating that which one wanted to preserve. These conservative texts characterizing a desirable daily existence were the means to display that which was worth fighting for. Chivalrous knights no longer sought camaraderie and adventure in their quests, encountering the occasional damsel in distress; rather, the nation was focused on the protection of its primary, domestic, economic units that were endangered by the English *chevauchées*. The boundaries of the private sphere suddenly became visible because they were made public, just as the borders of the nation gained heightened visibility because they were challenged. Securing the family was a metaphor for providing for the security of the nation; demonstrating the difficulties involved in this process was a cathartic exercise, an exorcism of angst. It has been recently observed that “gender plays a big role in producing state unity” and that “collective identities are constructed through the types of men and women that war creates or brings out” (Wadley 50). Indeed, it was necessary for men of all ranks to position themselves as the protectors of the nation, whether they were providing leadership or financial, martial, or spiritual support. Defining a “protected” part of society was equally important, a *casus belli* that was also feminized metonymy for *la belle France*. As Wadley observes,

“The Judeo-Christian ideal of masculinity, which centers on responsibility, ownership, and paternal authority, is featured prominently in protection when protection is performed as either *praesidere* or *tutore*¹ (...) The silencing of agency, the restriction on movement, the claiming of knowledge about threats that the protected does not possess—when viewed in relation to dominant forms of masculinity, it is apparent that such performances establish not only asymmetric relations, but relations that are asymmetric *because* of their relation to gender norms” (53).

The authors of conduct who claim to be educating a wife for her own good because the preceptor knows her better even than she does or suggest that a spouse left to her own devices can lead to the

¹ “*Praesidere* invokes the guaranteeing of security and survival by someone else. (...) *Tutore* is a form of protection that is carried out through profiling : monitoring and surveillance, the identification of risks, the obedience of the protected” (Wadley 52).

vulnerability of the home all serve to reinforce the idea that discussions of marriage had a political and nationalist bent in a time of peril. The Hundred Years' War occurred just as gendered and embodied metaphors of the nation became popular, whether it was the notion of the body politic of which the king was the head² or the personification of France as a woman,³ the vigorous defenses of gendered norms for both men and women were in fact the means to consolidate and protect a French nation that was emerging both historically and in the collective imaginary.

The historical context: the France of Charles V and Charles VI (1364-1407)

The scope of the historical period relevant to this study does not correspond exactly to the dates of composition of the works in question (1371-1407); it corresponds to the time period between Charles V's ascension to the throne and the passing of the last author considered here. The beginning of the fifteenth century brought with it the death of Eustache Deschamps. The only extant manuscript of *Le Miroir de mariage* (BnF Ms. fond français 840) claims that the work remained unfinished for this reason. This assertion is contestable, but the political events from the beginning of Charles VI's reign in 1380 to 1407 are of significance for our understanding of the historical and political landscape of France that concerns us. Charles V's political, cultural, and literary endeavors, most notably his translation project, are perhaps the most determining factors in the composition of many of these works. Charles V understood that the cornerstone to rebuilding the nation was the idea of sovereignty (Autrand, *Charles V*, 523). His conception of a literature that could serve to consolidate power is the defining principle behind the texts under study.

His reign began in 1364 when his father Jean le Bon died in exile in England, an ominous time for a mostly rural France devastated by repeated *chevauchées* and the slash and burn practices of

² The metaphor of the body politic found in Jean de Salisbury's twelfth-century *Policraticus* experienced a renewal in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Blanchard and Mühlethaler 21).

³ The metaphor of France as a woman in distress became popular in the works of Eustache Deschamps and Christine de Pizan, see Thierry Lassabatère "La personnification de la France dans la littérature de la fin du Moyen-Âge." *Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique*. 86 (2002). 87-98.

unemployed *compagnies* which could not be held in check without stronger royal authority (513). His most immediate concern was restoring France to its former glory, that is to say, to recover the territory lost to England in 1360 at the signing of the treaty of Brétigny. By the time of his death in 1380, this aspiration had become a reality through seven years of continuous war (1369-1377), although peace with England was not an imminent possibility (569). His translation project, begun before he took the crown and marking a decidedly political turn in 1370 with the command of several mirrors for princes, provided the ideological foundation for his consolidation of royal power and sovereignty. *Le Songe du vergier* itself was a composition requested by Charles V (729). It was also a deliberate policy on his part to promote the French language and culture (722). The inventory of Charles V's library established by Jean Blanchet upon his death in 1380 counted over a thousand volumes, attesting to his involvement as a patron of the arts (720). The consolidation of France as a nation and a cultural entity was the hallmark of Charles V's reign; assuring the diffusion and appreciation of his accomplishments was a self-imposed goal of many literary figures of the time. At the same time, not all was well; the Great Schism in 1378 and Charles V's abolition of the hearth tax shortly before his death would complicate the political playing field of his successor, who found himself without the support of Rome and with a diminished tax base with which to wage war (Autrand, *Charles VI* 65-71).

Charles VI inherited this literary tradition rich in the language of governance; his education was certainly shaped by the mirrors for princes that his father had passionately collected (*Charles VI* 22). King at the age of twelve, his first descent into madness occurring in 1392, the reign of Charles VI was a tumultuous one. Surrounded by his paternal uncles who disobeyed his father's instructions regarding the administration of the regency with Louis d'Anjou seizing the title of regent and sharing his power with the others, Charles VI found himself in the midst of a struggle for control of the state amongst princes very much invested in their own interests. His father's counselors were dismissed;

Philippe de Mezières remained at Charles VI's side. This arrangement did not appeal to the young king; at the age of 20, in 1388, he took over control of his reign, introducing a group of counselors formerly belonging to his father, the Marmousets, and relying on his brother Louis d'Orléans for support (Contamine 75). This government and Charles VI's ambition to remove the Roman Pope in favor of the Avignon Pope came to an end in 1392 with his first fit of madness; as his condition worsened, his uncles returned to his side (75). The apologia of wise counsel and a display of authoritative governance were powerful statements in this political climate. The father had set the tone; the son's reign would prove its importance.

Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*, perhaps the most historical of the texts in question, relates the significance of two events in the life of the French nation that would shape late medieval thinking about power, the defeat of the French at the battle of Poitiers in 1356 and the shameful treaty of Brétigny that followed the defeat in Calais necessitating major concessions on the part of the French (Harriss 405-07). The peril that these events posed to the integrity of the domestic territory is reflected in the virulent tones of the protagonist Franc Vouloir's accusations directed at Folie in Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*. Charles V would spend much of his reign attempting to recover from these losses materially; late medieval authors would spend much of their time helping the nation and its rulers to recover from these losses psychically. At least the former undertaking would succeed. Charles VI, early in his reign, would benefit from his father's know-how and experience a respite from the hostilities with the English after 1389, moments of peace being only briefly interrupted by occasional violence.

France, during the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, constantly had an unruly Other in its house, an English alterity contesting the authority of its masculine ruling class. Its assets, acquisitions, and reputation among nations were endangered; preservation, maintenance, and the

imposition of a national will, perhaps one of Deschamps's intended meanings for "Franc Vouloir," were the order of the day. Roberta Krueger, in her discussion of the role of fashion in conduct works, sees in this time "...the desire to reimpose 'order' and articulate boundaries. Even as the majority of French people suffered the ill effects of plague, famine, and war, members of royal and ducal courts [were] perhaps seeking to secure their precarious power through symbolic means..." ("Nouvelles choses" 55). At the heart of the anxiety regarding boundaries and precarious power was the desire to define what constituted a just order and what was simply injustice or tyranny; the metaphor of marriage allowed these concepts to be articulated in covert and gendered ways. One could experiment with relationships of power in a non-threatening manner. These texts were also the means by which to encourage men to rise to positions of authority and rendered "natural" the creation of docile, subservient (and feminine) subjects. The fate of the nation depended on it and the method had been sanctioned by the king himself.

Defining heterogeneous genres: mirrors and conduct texts

The kind of cultural work being done by medieval texts about marriage is effective because of the array of genres that could contain this discourse. Mirrors for princes were openly political texts directed at those who were intimately concerned with the affairs of state and actively seeking counsel; mirrors about trivial subjects and conduct texts were less likely places to locate discussions of authority. In part, this is the result of the presumed role of their addressees. The addressee is a fictional construct intended to encourage the reader's full credence to the surface motivation of the text; the narrative voice is unitary and disinterested, its pedagogical endeavors undertaken for the well-being of this addressee. The addressee is consistently gendered feminine in works of conduct in this study, masculine in the mirrors, while the identity of the instructional narrative voice is variable. This seemingly transparent communicative process can conceal much. Should the identity of the

addressee changes, the text is transformed. The heterogeneous nature of these texts furthers this same agenda as authors adapt different styles, genres, and sources to suit their purposes. Intergeneric combination, as Roberta Krueger calls it, or experimentation allow for the adoption of a variety of narrative stances and postures.

Traditionally, one sought out discussions of marriage in texts primarily addressed to two audiences; women seeking guidance or clergy or potential clergy members whom others hoped to dissuade from marriage. These texts function “transparently” with their addressee construct and the disinterested authoritative narrator. Scholarship has distinguished between two types of late medieval manners texts; the first, the “courtesy book,” taught the etiquette of the court and was mostly for men, and the second, the “conduct book,” defined daily behaviors and practices for women or men (Ashley and Clark ix). Anglo-Saxon approaches to the topic also differ from that of French scholarship that “... took a different approach to such texts, assimilating them to a broad category of moral or didactic literature including sermons, fables, proverbs, mirrors, allegories, and exempla collections...The broader term of ‘conduct’ (...) has been applied to written texts systematizing a society’s codes of behavior (...)” (x). This study follows the French classification system as it reflects the generic complexity of the texts themselves; within a work of conduct and many mirrors, all of the didactic elements mentioned above can be found. This study includes a mirror alongside works of conduct because what is of interest here is function rather than genre; these texts depict the construction of authority and the ominous potential for its collapse. Krueger too identifies this common articulation: “Despite the common attempt of the fashion system and conduct books to impose a distinctive order that would bring social advantage for the moralist, the reader, or the wearer, the sartorial and discursive systems bear witness to the incapacity of individuals to fix behavior, create identity, or shape communities in ways that would assure their superiority” (“Nouvelles Choses” 51). I would contend that perhaps these texts do not fail in the way that it

would seem that they fail, but rather explore the possibility of failure towards their purported audience. They do succeed in creating multiple forms of authority, however. By repeatedly depicting the breakdown of individual sovereignty, one could pinpoint the causes of its breakdown and create more successful methods for its maintenance. At times, corrective measures are exaggeratedly harsh yet highlight the absolute submission of their subject such as in the tale Griselda; at others, even brute force is insufficient. Still at others, an exterior, unjust, and tyrannical force undoes the best laid plans. Exploring the possibilities within the confines of fiction, in which the “natural” superiority of the masculine authority inscribed in the text could not be doubted, was an exercise in governance and a display of mastery in the face of the uncertainties of collective and personal fortune.

The works of interest here distinguish themselves by defying classification. Across classes, genders, and historical periods, these authors experiment with identity as the remedy to failure. Whether it is the *Ménagier de Paris* with its prim religious instruction followed by a rather complete cookery or the humorous moments of Deschamps’s series of lamentations, the texts to be discussed are generic hybrids that reflect new, possible hybrid identities, for better or for worse. The texts superimpose and recombine fictional, authorial identities as their narrators experiment with personae. The Chevalier de la Tour Landry places his own anecdotes on a par with Biblical *exempla*. The *Ménagier* changes tones, roles, and genders with a surprising chameleon-like ability. Deschamps’s allegorical characters travel up and down the range of authoritative postures, from submission to domination, from humbling to self-aggrandizing gestures. Conflicting tones and styles, from the courtly to the bawdy, the bourgeois to the aristocratic, render a strict categorization difficult. These works are the result of authorial experimentation, of a role playing game where the narrators in question assume the postures of the authoritative moralizing voice, the subservient common man seeking counsel, the worldly cleric who intones *contemptus mundi*, the simple woman reciting her prayers. Practice makes perfect in an imperfect world.

The texts, source texts, and contexts

The origin of the heterogeneous nature of these texts and perhaps the most revealing aspect of their uneasy relationship to authority are their appropriation of source material. Each author adapts the content of previous texts that they deem worthy of transmission to suit the vision of marriage that they attempt to impose. They actively seek to participate in the practice of *translatio studii* whether in emulation of their admirable predecessors or to claim their own stake in *auctoritas*. Just as they encourage their readers to imitate certain behaviors, they themselves implement the literary practices that consolidated the medieval construction of knowledge. One could be led to ask who the true pupil is in these instances. As the functional authors of these texts learn the lessons of their elders, they also negotiate their place in a textual pedagogical project. By repeatedly depicting submissive, willing disciples, they humble themselves before the authority of the medieval text in order to better assume the power that it could grant.

Each chapter of this study is devoted to another pedagogical moment in late medieval France. The first two chapters are devoted to the individual texts, source texts, and contexts of *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* and *Le Ménagier de Paris*. Chapters three and four focus on the same text, Eustache Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*, a work that is too complex, rhetorically, historically, and intellectually, to be treated in just one chapter, or even two for that matter. Although each of these texts has multiple sources, I have chosen to focus on those that are surprising and revealing, that furnish the subtexts for new understandings about late medieval considerations on marriage and politics. Some borrowing is officiously announced, but the most important sources and influences go unmentioned. Another curiosity is that the most seemingly political of texts, Eustache Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*, draws heavily upon a highly apolitical

source, *De Nuptiis* by Hugues de Fouillois, while the least politically invested work, at least on the surface, *Le Ménagier de Paris*, borrows stealthily from the mirror for princes *Le jeu des échecs moralisé*.

Chapter One is devoted to *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, an eponymous conduct book written by this very same Chevalier. The author/narrator builds a fictional persona for himself as benevolent patriarch, father of three young maidens, and justice wielding noble. The historical Chevalier did participate in the campaigns of the Hundred Years' War. As a provincial aristocrat from Western France, his family home not far from Angers, his services were required in these highly contested territories. He fought at the Battle of Auray in 1364 and sent men to the siege of Cherbourg in 1378 (Barnhouse 4). Did witnessing the disputed sovereignty of the nation influence his literary project? That remains to be seen. What his work does show is the difficulty of navigating between divided loyalties, caught in the paradigms of courtly chivalry and ecclesiastical moralizing. His paternal project is devoted to the betterment of his young daughters and their like; he repeatedly tells tales of young ladies who through their decorum are able to wed powerful men. However, turning over questions of lineage to one's daughters does not occur without some degree of angst. His adaptation and transformation of *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes* reveal his genealogical qualms as he recreates a literary lineage for the less than proud Biblical patriarch, Lot. My thoughts regarding the Tour Landry's adaptation of this source are particularly indebted to Robert M. Polhemus's volume *Lot's Daughters: Sex, Redemption, and Women's Quest for Authority*. His definition of the "Lot complex" as the transmission of knowledge and power from fathers to daughters is a paradigm particularly suited to understanding conduct literature on the whole. Whether church fathers, intellectual fathers, or historical, biological fathers, the transmission of a certain form of patriarchal, medieval knowledge from influential masculine figures to "subservient" women is a transfer marked by anxiety. The balance between control and oppression and the granting of agency is precarious.

Le Miroir des bonnes femmes, a book of *exempla* composed around 1300 by a Franciscan friar to provide tales for clerical sermons exists in three extant manuscripts; it was first identified as a source for *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry* by John L. Grigsby in 1963. The manuscript from which the passages incorporated in this study are drawn is Arsenal Ms. 2156.⁴ Kathleen Ashley, in her study of this source text for the Chevalier's work, questions the common acceptance in studies of conduct works that it is "[the husband or cleric's] power that is bolstered through containment of female freedom and agency" (87). She explores how *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes* as an object could serve in the social improvement of an urban elite who purchased and transmitted a work of conduct and found a new source of prestige in showcasing feminine behavior (102). I would argue that in his adaptation of *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes*, the Chevalier does not gain power so much from the potentially fruitless endeavor of trying to contain female behavior, but rather from the publicizing of an authoritative, knowledgeable voice. He risks just as much as he stands to gain, but his participation in creating a new discursively constructed social paradigm of valor based on an ethos of marriage and feminine conduct takes him beyond the strictly religious and moralizing vision of *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes* or his caste-based values of courtliness.

Chapter Two explores the highly heterogeneous compendium *Le Ménagier de Paris*. The anonymity of its author, the charm of his far reaching narrative voice, and the wide spectrum of his knowledge ranging from the quaint to the erudite provides reading pleasure for the contemporary audience. The work is striking and intimate, humorous yet sober, at times ghastly authoritative and at others prudently measured; it has provided much fodder for the scholar of conduct works since the first critical edition was published in 1981 thanks to the efforts of Georgina Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier who completed the task. The *Ménagier's* borrowings are numerous as he includes set pieces

⁴ Kathleen Ashley devotes her study of *Le Miroir* to the transmission of Ms. Fr. 213 Bibliothèque Municipale de Dijon. A third manuscript (Ms. Fr. 32) is housed at the University of Pennsylvania Library.

such as the exemplary story of Griselda, the tale of Melibee and Prudence, and Jacques Bruyant's the "Way to Poverty and Riches" [Le Chemin de Povreté et de Richesse]. Other sources that he knew either from their original text or glosses include texts by saint Jerome, saint Augustine, Gratien, *La Vie des Pères*, *Les Sept Sages de Rome*, *La Légende dorée*, *L'Histoire de la Bible*, *Le Catholicon*, *Le Somme le Roy*, *Le Roman de la Rose*, *Le Livre de la Chasse*, and *Le Livre du Roi Modus et de la Roynne Ratio*; his cookery is largely indebted to Taillevent's *Viandier* and perhaps *La Fleur de toute cuisine* (Ueltschi 8). Brereton identifies another source for the *Ménagier's* text, *Les Moralitez sur le jeu des eschés* [Le jeu des échecs moralisé] as translated by Jean Ferron in 1347. Jacobus de Cessolis's thirteenth-century work *Libellus de moribus hominum et officiis nobilium ac popularium super ludo scachorum* uses the game of chess as a metaphor for medieval society, describing the role of each representative piece through a series of *exempla*. This very popular mirror for princes, translated into French in the fourteenth century by Jean Ferron in 1347 and Jean de Vignay for Jean le Bon between 1332-1350, survives in an impressive number of extant manuscripts. Whether or not the *Ménagier* had access to the work directly remains to be seen, however, his highly personal appropriation of the text is of special interest to me. It demonstrates his true understanding of the importance of gaming as a tool to negotiate one's position on the chessboard of medieval society. The metaphors of the game and the wager, two leisure activities, stand in sharp contrast with his incorporation of Jacques Bruyant's text that celebrates the value of work. The *Ménagier* creates a class specific code of ethics for himself and his young wife where bourgeois values do not reside only in feminine decorum, but in the exchange of feminine virtue as moral currency between men.

Chapters Three and Four are dedicated to *Le Miroir de mariage* by Eustache Deschamps, a mirroring treatise indebted to Jean de Meun's *Romance of the Rose*, but perhaps more importantly to the philosophy of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics*, made more readily available after 1373 in Nicolas Oresme's middle French translations completed at the request of Charles V. Both of these

borrowings have been studied by scholars in previous works, and yet Deschamps's apparent sobriety and dutiful imitation are challenged by the comic elements that intrude upon the text. His unfinished *magnum opus*, most likely composed with the audiences of Charles VI's or Louis d'Orléan's courts in mind, is the product and recognition of the intellectual foundations of Charles V's reign, a literary espousal of the values of the father that seeks to persuade his son of their worth. At the same time, a subversive fabliau subtext and the endless depictions of failure and defeat complicate Deschamps's work, rendering its decoding an imaginative exercise in reader reception as hidden messages become apparent in this lengthy and quite trivial debate.

The questionable sincerity of Deschamps's opinions in this debate regarding the benefits of marriage resides in the philosophical paradox that is the result of borrowing from two very different types of texts. Much of the first portion of his text draws inspiration from Hugues de Fouilloy's twelfth-century treatise *De Nuptiis*, in which Fouilloy tries to dissuade an aspiring cleric from worldly marriage so that he may take orders and participate in spiritual marriage. This is the unlikely theme of Deschamps's debate, too. Franc Vouloir himself attempts to decide between the two alternatives as opposing parties try to convince him of the worthiness of both endeavors. The conflict that ensues covers a gamut of medieval social issues, not limited to the topic of marriage. In fact, the original topic of discussion has been entirely lost by the time that the unfinished text comes to an abrupt end. Deschamps's engagement with matrimony is a lengthy illustration of the irreconcilable philosophical differences of intellectual life in the late fourteenth century.

Authoring Discourses About Marriage: Ever Vigilant Exegesis

“Saint Augustin est moins sévère. Sans doute est-il persuadé que dans l'homme la lutte est constante entre la volonté qu'éclaire l'intelligence et les pulsions libidineuses. Et lorsqu'il médite sur le texte de la Genèse, il reconnaît dans Adam, comme saint Ambroise, la part spirituelle de la condition humaine, dans Eve, la part de sensualité. (...) Par le mariage peut-être rétablie la hiérarchie primitive, la domination de la chair par l'esprit” (Duby 32-3).

Saint Augustine is less strict. He is persuaded, without a doubt, that within man the struggle between the will that illuminates the intelligence and the libidinal drives is constant. As he meditates on the text of Genesis, he recognizes in

Adam, like saint Ambrose, the spiritual side of the human condition and, in Eve, the part of sensuality. Marriage, perhaps, can reestablish the primitive hierarchy, the domination of the flesh by the spirit.

It is hard to admit that arriving at new understandings about the political messages hidden behind medieval marriage discourse obliges me to recognize the primacy of the masculine authorial functions of these texts and the loss of the historical medieval women and wives to whom they were destined. At the same time, recognizing the anxiety regarding governance and agency that fills these texts and the possibilities for subversion that lay therein reveal how any educational system can become an uncomfortable marriage of coercion, oppression, liberation, and progress. The emergence of these male authors will allow for the birth of writers such as Christine de Pizan (Blanchard and Mühlethaler 3), a daughter of Lot in the medieval genealogy of knowledge. The excessive exercise of caution of these authors can only culminate in the breakdown of self-policing, the requisite ingredient for late medieval humanism that would follow on the heels of these texts. Containment and the obsessive desire to preserve a glorious past are futile.

Perhaps the feature that discourses on marriage most commonly share with mirrors for princes is the new role that both types of texts create for the author, or rather, that these new authors are able to forge for themselves. Blanchard and Mühlethaler, in their study of power and political writings in late medieval France, bring this process to light; the gaze of the writer, on himself and on a society that he is no longer content to just describe or idealize, is at the heart of these works (2). This gaze is progressively liberated as it renders the life of the polity sacred once more and infuses it with a newfound pragmatism (3). However, I would argue that it is the conflict between this notion of the sacred and a desacralizing form of pragmatism that these lay writers have difficulty reconciling. The opposition that medievals found between the spiritual and the material was mediated in the attempt to create of a new ethos of marriage, a polyvalent institution in both its sacred and worldly dimensions. The chapters that follow discuss the trials and tribulations of this undertaking as

marriage becomes the metaphor for the locating one's place and asserting one's authority in the medieval nexus of spiritual and political power.

Practical matters

The majority of primary sources in this study are in middle French. The English translations provided within the body of the text are my own unless otherwise indicated. The middle French names for characters have been privileged and their English translation provided. All modern French sources are translated into English in the body of the text and the original text provided in a footnote.

Chapter 1 : The Courtly Conundrum: Marriage and Legitimacy in *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*

Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles, composed by a French *chevalier banneret* for his three young daughters in 1371, is an important contribution to French medieval conduct literature and contemporary understandings of the role discourses on marriage played in medieval society. The earliest text in this study, it is also the most courtly in tone, reflective of the aristocratic background of its author and his purported audience. La Tour Landry's work is destined for a primarily young aristocratic feminine reading public, first his daughters and then young noble women at large. Or is it? Through a series of anecdotes, the author opens domestic life up to public scrutiny, translating the concerns and interests of his social class for a wider reading public. By placing this middle aristocratic household in the public eye, the author emulates the practice of royal and more prominent households of providing public representations of domestic life in order to consolidate and justify the family's power and position. The eventual audience for the text was indeed much larger than originally intended, as demonstrated by the success of Caxton's English translation and edition of the work among England's up and coming bourgeoisie and mercantile class. The Chevalier de la Tour Landry provided something more than mere guidance for young girls; he provided an understanding of the negotiations of power that took place between medieval men and a path to power accessible to those of humble birth.

Typical of conduct works, *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* tells tales of good women and bad, from Biblical, classical, and historical sources, sharing many of the *exempla* commonly found in this genre. It also contains more personal anecdotes that enrich the reader's understanding of his world, apparently drawn from the father/author's experiences and milieu. The advice given is intended to encourage proper conduct in young women of noble birth

with the ultimate goal of leading them to a suitable marriage. The suitable union, more often than not, is with one's social betters. The practical implications of these guidelines are more important than theory in the text composed by La Tour Landry; he expresses obsessive concern with lineage, reputation, and social ascension. Controlling hierarchical family relationships within the household and establishing sound bonds with other aristocratic families through the vehicle of fiction are his primary undertakings.

The traditional tropes of advice for women found within *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* vary from controlling women's speech, dress, eating habits, religious conduct, and, most importantly, their sexuality. The content of these teachings has been amply explored by other scholars who denote in the Chevalier's text the traditional concerns regarding women's behavior and fear of their appetites.⁵ This chapter proposes, rather, to study the articulations of power portrayed by fictional family relationships. The different exemplary households contain models for asserting authority and domination, securing obedience, and punishing transgression. The Chevalier's text is a display of patriarchal power and yet the work's adaptation of a primary source, *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes*, speaks to an anxiety over paternal adequacy in these endeavors. Try as he might, the patriarch's control over the world he inhabits could be undermined by disobedience. The knowledge that he wishes to impart is partial and partisan; reception and implementation are never guaranteed. As he expounds on the virtues of marriage older courtly paradigms that provide for class identity are no longer adequate to shape the destiny he has in mind for his household. Placing the responsibility for the continuity of his family

⁵ Anne Marie De Gendt's *L'Art d'éduquer les nobles damoiselles: Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry* provides a thorough survey of both the text and its context. Rebecca Barnhouse translates and comments passages from William Caxton's early fifteenth-century translation and edition, making the work more accessible to a non-specialist audience and providing a reconstruction of medieval domestic life as a context for reception.

line in the hands of his daughters reveals the uncomfortable possibility that control might escape him.

It is hard to imagine a medieval world that would place such power into the hands of its daughters, as it does not correspond to contemporary visions of this highly patriarchal society. Yet, the very insistence on the place of the patriarch in late-medieval France suggests that this status was tenuous at best. Rebecca Barnhouse, in her work *The Book of the Knight of the Tower: Manners for Young Medieval Women*, translates many of the knight's *exempla* and recreates the domestic life of the Tour Landry family and an imaginary English merchant family who are emblematic of the historical readers who might have received the work, either among the French nobility or in urban England through Caxton's translation and print copy of this French book. While she deftly sketches possible scenarios for reception by the two families, she often depicts the young ladies quietly acquiescing to the advice given. She asserts that this docile reception relies on the fact that the values expressed would have most likely corresponded to the young women's education and worldview and that the *exempla* were also an important form of entertainment. However, it could also be said that the antagonistic and competitive relationships portrayed with the goal of bettering the family's standing are representative of the anxieties and struggles for power in late fourteenth-century Europe. The Chevalier's book, written for women, also sent a strong message to communities of men. The processes of self-representation, emulation, and identification, so often found within works of conduct, could easily have been enacted outside of the text in late fourteenth-century and early fifteenth-century society. It is difficult to imagine that the antagonistic relationships displayed in the work did not resonate with other social contentions or dissensions, namely competition between the aristocracy and bourgeoisie or clerical and lay persons.

The late fourteenth-century was rife with antagonism and conflict, in part because of the devastation caused by the Hundred Years' War, and also because of new economic and social paradigms. The result would be the emergence of the French nation and the Christian family as model for the polity. The nobility, like all other parts of French society, found itself caught in a shifting nexus of power with the uncertainties brought about by the losses to the English at Crécy in 1346 and Poitiers in 1356 (Kaeuper 350-1). The consolidation of the monarchy under Charles V held its own challenges and hopes. Articulating the roles and responsibilities of the monarchy, clergy, and nobility was often at the crux of works from the mirrors for princes's tradition; negotiating political power and boundaries was a hot topic in the fourteenth-century. Other scholars have emphasized the great historical and social importance of the Chevalier's text. De Gendt states that the study of the vices and virtues laid forth in the Chevalier's work allow for a better understanding of the workings of a social class and its era; women's conduct could have economic and social value at the end of the fourteenth-century, providing for a common adhesion to a sanctioned set of values for the lower and upper aristocracy, thereby distinguishing them from the dreaded up and coming bourgeoisie (178-9). However, the manners in which these values and virtues are expressed by men and enforced by representative characters are just as important as the precepts themselves. Expressing a series of consensual values provides for class cohesion, displaying their implementation or lack thereof demonstrates an understanding of the interstices of power at work in late medieval society. The Chevalier de la Tour Landry would appear to be well-versed in these difficulties. His desire for authority and attempt to obscure any form of paternal doubt contributes to the text's search to eliminate ambiguity. The author shows that the aristocracy, which once embraced the value of courtly love, is seeking to supplant it with marital values that provide for reputable lineages. He is also obliged to recognize that this undertaking does not depend entirely on him.

Father knows best, but what does he know?

The unique father-daughter relationship depicted in this work is the most immediately visible within the fabric of the multiple narratives as he attempts to impart his wisdom and instruction to these youngsters. This father as preceptor's education is authoritarian in nature. Preoccupied by justice and the "law," either paternal or divine, he often chooses to relate examples of corrective violence used against young women who do not obey the rules set out before them. Other family relationships are occluded in favor of this primary one. But what is made of the emotions and relationships between sisters and between mothers and daughters? It is this very occlusion that speaks to the strangeness of the Chevalier's depictions of communities of women. An imaginative exercise in reader reception, it is useful to reflect upon the often conflicting family relationships that the knight/author establishes and the impact that this could have on feminine readers belonging to such communities of women. Competition and reward are the name of the game.

Faithful to the *exempla* tradition the Chevalier represents individual, illustrious women, but one must not neglect the meaning of their relationships with other representative women characters. Conduct works expected the feminine audience to identify with the characters in these tales, either rejecting or adopting their behaviors. It can be assumed that they are also being encouraged to adopt the models of competition between women. Since the most dominant relationship is that of *pater familias* with the rest of his household, the educative process is the means by which to reinforce a moral and practical position of authority.⁶ La Tour Landry clearly understood that the personal could be made political in his day and time much like other eminent figures that will be discussed later. Male figures are dominant and women subordinate and subservient for the most part; cooperation between women endangering the control of the father over his household. In order to ensure a spirit

⁶ Barnhouse insists on the Chevalier's desire that his daughters know how to protect their honor and reputations, how to be devout Christians and conform to social standards for decorum (3-4).

of competition, young noble women are repeatedly designated as rivals with a desirable suitor and marriage as the prize for publically virtuous conduct. Ties of solidarity, comprehension, and comfort between women, which were most certainly an historical reality, are entirely absent from these domestic portraits. “Paternal love” is often mentioned and seems to be the only valid expression of affection.

Contemporary visions of medieval aristocratic marriage and family organization might see in this emotional vacuity the expression of the utilitarian political and economic aspects of this social institution. De Gendt underlines the important role that aristocratic marriage could have played in creating peace, social concord, economic ties between families, and legitimate lineages, a responsibility which fell more heavily on the shoulders of aristocratic women than men (214). While noble concerns over making upwardly mobile social matches and ensuring legitimate lineages are clearly comprehensible in light of the hereditary transmission of power and goods, more than that might have been at stake in attempting to ensure virtue through conduct literature.

Aptitude at governing and the ability to “ensure” virtuous behavior on the part of household members, thereby guaranteeing a lineage endowed with moral uprightness, were also the keys to asserting one’s claims to power outside of the domestic sphere. The authorship of conduct works would have allowed lay persons to participate in the game of influence that was the practice of advice and counsel between courts, clerics, and universities from the thirteenth-century to the end of the Middle Ages. Depicting one’s self as both an active participant in and vector of the transmission of knowledge that was medieval *translatio studii ed imperii* was a way to assert one’s position as an initiate. One suggested that they had the capacity to rule by demonstrating knowledge of texts and the concept of *auctoritas* that founded philosophies of governance at the time. By making public one’s

ability to exert authority and force in the domestic sphere one strengthened his or her claims to authority elsewhere.

It is vital to deconstruct the seemingly “natural” process of educating within the family as it is portrayed in the Chevalier’s work; he nurtures in the best interest of the polis. A contemporary audience might readily accept that educating one’s children is a part of parenting, but few might undertake the writing of a lengthy volume in order to do so. Beyond household purposes, there is a cultural, historical, and political motivation on the part of the Chevalier for providing a very formal means of educating his daughters through his book. By assuming the posture of an educator, he demonstrates his worthiness to impart values and envision the society that he would like to see come into being, actively engaging in the process of shaping the contours of late-medieval France. Other social actors were also invested in the construction of the nation at this time. What father knew was that by shaping discourse in the form of the text, he could shape a social reality in which his place was established.

Picture perfect

While the Chevalier was penning his work or shortly thereafter, another educational project was taking place in a large, noble household. Charles V, having ascended to the throne in 1364, had undertaken his great literary and translation project of mirrors for princes from 1370 to 1380, selecting Latin texts that would be translated into the vernacular, commissioning others that often acted as compendia of wisdom, Ancient and contemporary (Autrand, *Charles V*, 732). King Charles V, who would become under Christine de Pizan’s pen, “li sage rois Charles,” [wise king Charles] had chosen a variety of didactic, historical, and religious texts to be translated for the use of the royal household (715-6). Cécile Quentel-Touche has examined the iconographic program surrounding the figure of the queen that accompanied the manuscripts produced during this time. She has found the

iconographic groupings of the royal family significant: the queen, children, and monks or other members of the court present, all listening to the king while he speaks and points his finger, assuming a posture of instruction (53). As such, the king was able to display wisdom and authority within the family, a means by which to assert his power as monarch over the kingdom as a whole. For Quentel-Touche, the circulation of these texts was a form of royal communication with the kingdom's subjects "... there is a question about the function of these representations, propagated through the royal library, for an elite readership concerned with French political issues. Using family portraits to highlight political symbolism is a widespread phenomenon in medieval kingdoms, as the legitimacy of the king is reinforced by his family unified around him. The king arranged a detailed portrayal of his family's private life, for public display, in order to propagate a perfect image: a Christian family, an educated wife and children, forming a virtuous world in itself. (...) Charles V recognized that personal life is always political"(55).

Other individuals in positions of power were obviously aware that medieval legitimacy came through the family and that displaying the virtues of a household could work in their favor. Practices of iconographic self-representation were easily found in vernacular literary texts by other authors of the time, including the text by Geoffrey de la Tour Landry. Could these practices emanating from the royal household have been familiar to him? The father of Jeanne de Rougé, the first wife of the Chevalier de la Tour Landry, was chamberlain and advisor to Charles V (Barnhouse 5). The family's continued relationship with the royal household could have provided the Chevalier with firsthand knowledge of the types of representational practices that consolidated royal power; in turn, he might have deemed that the same iconographic and literary representation could have been beneficial to his household. By frequently reasserting his position within the nobility throughout his text and reiterating approval of their common cultural practices, he expresses both allegiance to and implementation of the values that could have placed him in good standing.

Family portrait: From lover to father to preceptor

As such, in the prologue to the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses Filles*, the reader is not surprised to find a family portrait in the seemingly unlikely setting that begins this conduct work. The prologue of the work begins with an imaginative *mise en scène* of the fictional Chevalier who will be the narrator of the work, in his garden, reflecting upon his youth:

Ce doulz chant me fit envoisier et mon cuer sy esjoir que lors il me va souvenir du temps passé de ma jeunesse, comment amours en grant destresce m'avoient en ycellui temps tenu en son service, où je fu mainte heure liez et autre dolant, si comme elle fait à maint amant. (1)⁷

This sweet song pleased me and my heart was wrought with joy as I began to think about the past times of my youth, how love in great distress had held me in its hold, how I spent many hours in delight and others in pain, as love would do to many a lover.

This father's posture as lover is both a nod at a courtly commonplace but also a recognition of his amorous past as a carefree young nobleman. As Anne-Marie De Gendt has observed, the narrator portrays himself in a *locus amoenus* in springtime, lamenting in a courtly poetic voice the virtuous woman he had loved during his youth and fearful for what future encounters might befall his daughters (59-61). While he identifies with the courtly literary practice of love lyric, reaffirming his adhesion to the nobility and its courtly ethos, he includes a textual family portrait. The virtuous, mystery lady that he had loved but whom he had lost could not have been Jeanne de Rougé, his first wife, still very much alive at the time of composition in 1371.⁸ Rather, she is a nameless good woman of times past, her virtue and her untimely passing being the key components of her identity, the first historical feminine model with which the Tour Landry daughters are presented so that they may emulate her behavior.

⁷ All textual references are to Anatole de Montaiglon, ed., *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*. Paris: Bibliothèque Elzévirienne, 1854. Rpt. Kraus, 1982. All English translations are my own.

⁸ Rebecca Barnhouse concurs on this point, placing the death of Jeanne de Rougé after 1383 (33).

As I have argued elsewhere, the link between an amorous relationship and death is made to serve as a warning from the very beginning of the text (Kinne 140). The shadow of mortality looms large over love relationships and discourages the young women readers from entering into such a union lightly lest they become disqualified from the medieval marriage market for suspicions cast on their virtue. The narrator's vision of his daughters who arrive in this garden scene supplants his memories of the woman he had loved previously.

Et ainsi, comme en celui temps je pensoye, je regarday emmy la voye, et vy mes filles venir, desquelles j'avoie grant desir que à bien et à honneur tournassent sur toutes riens; car elles estoient jeunes et petites et de sens desgarnies. Si les devoit l'en tout au commencement prendre à chastier courtoisement par bonnes exemples et par doctrine, si comme faisoit la Royne Prines, qui fu royne de Hongrie, qui bel et doucement sçavoit chastier ses filles et les endoctriner, comme contenu est en son livre. (2)

And then, as I was reflecting, I saw my daughters coming toward me up the path. I wanted above all else that they come to good and to honor; because they are young and small and lacking in instruction. From the very beginning, they should be taught and courteously chastised through good examples and doctrine, as did Queen Prine, who was queen of Hungary, and who knew how to sweetly and kindly chastise her daughters and taught them, as it is told in her book.

This passage confirms the central position of the paternal figure; his discerning gaze and the expression of his will are the forces that shape the work. In order to participate in this discursive creation, the Chevalier's recollection of a romantic, erotic love must be sublimated into a paternal affection that has the best interest of his subjects or daughters in mind. This amorous impulse gives way to the desire to educate; the *locus amoenus* is transformed from a place for considerations on courtly love to the site of the transmission of a knowledge that will provide for fruitful marital endeavors. His mention of another mirror of conduct as a source of inspiration displays his knowledge of the mirroring tradition and a form of self-authorization to produce his own conduct work. The reference to the book of "Royne Prines" cannot be authenticated with certainty; Barnhouse attributes it to Elizabeth of Bosnia (34). However, by evoking the mirroring tradition, the

Chevalier inscribes his work in a tradition of reading, rewriting, and transmission. Visual clues also place the Chevalier and his book in this practice.

Barnhouse notes that in one of the illustrations accompanying the prologue in the London British Library Manuscript Royal 19 C vii, fol. ir., Sir Geoffrey de la Tour Landry is “shown sitting on just such a bench, pointing his index finger at his wife and daughters as he reads to them from a scroll in his lap. A low garden wall surrounds all four family members” (33). The similarity between this miniature and the one described by Quentel-Touche is striking. As will be seen later, other iconographic projects that accompany the Tour Landry’s text place it within the medieval interstices of power through representation, clearly understood by those who would have produced this later manuscript. The inclusion of the mother of the girls, strangely absent from a significant portion of the text, invites one to speculate about the standardization of such iconography. Representations of authoritative figures chastising their households in a public forum could have become common practice in mirrors by this time.

The mother might be absent from the textual description of the scene; however, several other essential figures soon arrive in the garden:

Pour ce forte chose est à congnoistre le monde qui a present est, et pour cestes raysons que dict vous ay, du vergier je m’en alay et trouvay enemy la voye deux prestres et deux clers que je avoye, et leur diz que je vouloye faire un livre et un exemplaire pour mes filles aprendre à roumancier et entendre comment elles se doivent gouverner et le bien du mal dessevrer. Si leur fiz mettre avant et traire des livres que je avoye, comme la Bible, Gestes des Roys et croniques de France, et de Grèce, et d’Angleterre, et de maintes autres estranges terres; et chacun livre je fis lire, et là où je trouvay bon exemple pour extraire, je le fis prendre pour faire ce livre, que je ne veulx point mettre en rime, ainçois le veulz mettre en prose, pour l’abrégier et mieulx entendre, et aussi pour la grant amour que je ay à mes enfans, lesquelz je ayme comme père les doit aimer, et dont mon cuer auroit si parfaite joye se ils tournoyent à bien et à honnour en Dieu servir et amer, et avoir l’amour et la grace de leurs voisins et du monde. (4)

For this reason it is a very important to understand the world as it is at present, and for these reasons that I have told you, I left the garden and found on my way two priests and two clerics that I had, and I told them that I wanted to write a book of exemplary stories to teach my daughters to read and to understand how they must

conduct themselves and how to distinguish between good and evil. I had brought and put before them the books that I had, such as the Bible, the Gestes of Kings and Chronicles of France, of Greece, and of England, and from many other foreign lands, and I had each book read, and there where I found a good example, I had it taken up for this book. I do not want to put it into rhyme, but rather I want to have it put down in prose, to make it shorter and easier to understand, and also because of the great love that I have for my children whom I love as a father should love them, and for whom my heart would have perfect joy if they should turn to good and honor and serve and love God, and if they had the love and admiration of their neighbors and the world.

As Geoffroy de la Tour Landry mentions the priests and clerics who will assist him in this task, he demonstrates his ability to provide himself with advice and counsel in this undertaking. Much like aristocrats who commissioned mirrors for princes from clergy members or other learned individuals, La Tour Landry incorporates this process into the fictional genesis of his literary text. Requesting moral and political guidance from a religious or university figure was common practice in the upper echelons of society at the time and through this gesture the author assumes the political authority that accompanies the request for counsel. The royal iconography of Charles V often showed the king and his family receiving important lessons or counsel from religious figures, notably Franciscans (Quentel-Touche 68). The Chevalier, much like the good king, knows how to surround himself with the proper individuals to assist him in the guidance of the institution that he is to govern, in this case, his own household. The works that the author chooses to mention as sources are also important. The Bible is cited first, but the remaining texts are all historical and political works. He does not mention *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes*, the main source of his book, perhaps a suggestion of his own literary ownership or the secondhand nature of the Biblical sources it provides, as De Gendt would suggest? (47).

In his introduction, he gives one of the principal reasons for penning such a treatise: “congnoistre le monde qui a present est” (4). By asserting that he is able to impart this knowledge to his daughters, he suggests that he himself already has a firm grasp on the workings of the world. Through his teachings, the narrator displays what exactly the Chevalier knows, but more importantly, what fears and forms of desire he is not willing to admit. Elsewhere he describes the world as both

“marvelous and dangerous” meaning that he understands the pratfalls that await the individual who ventures forth in society, whether of a political or amorous nature. Falling victim to false speech or flattery was a commonplace in conduct works for women and mirrors for princes. As De Gendt suggests, the best remedy against false forms of speech is to be able to “romancier” and “le bien du mal dessevrer” to distinguish between good and evil and to manipulate language in such a way as to avoid danger and thereby safeguard one’s reputation (68-69).

This fatherly desire for discernment and good judgment in his daughters will be amply demonstrated by the author himself who makes a series of value judgments to be emulated. The author has a vested interest in propriety, indicating his knowledge of how things “should” be throughout the work, very often at the expense of a young woman who will be severely punished by a fictional father. Roberta Krueger discusses how humorous tales such as the retelling of the fabliau “Des Braies du Cordelier” turn violent and how punishment sequences fill the *exempla* of bad women: “This sequence of chapters (XLVII through LXII, inclusive of the *Old Testament* exempla from the *Miroir*) is remarkable not only for its combination of high and low styles, trivial and major infractions, clerical prose and fabliau, but for its repetitive violence against female bodies. Within this sequence, each moral infraction, major or minor, ends with a humiliating or painful punishment, in most cases inflicted on the transgressing women” (“Intergeneric Combination” 65). These swift paternal corrective measures, including public humiliation and corporal punishment, are dealt out to one female household family member while the other plays the role of the virtuous spectator spared. Thus, the knight makes a literary show of fatherly moral and physical force. Justice is the right of the patriarch. Sororities and households become a court of law where transgressions are judged and punishment is swift and visible.

And justice will be done...

For the reader who has just witnessed this gathering of obedient daughters in the harmonious garden recounted by an affectionate paternal voice, the violence inflicted and conflicts among sisters or daughters in the stories that follow provide a sharp contrast. In several *exempla* taken from the author's own historical era, sisters are continuously placed in competition for a desirable marriage. Time and again, the elder and most beautiful sister loses out to the youngest and most virtuous sister. Indeed, the stakes are high. Narratives in the Chevalier's book repeatedly underscore the possibility of becoming a queen at the head of a people, responsible for providing heirs to the throne. However, the medieval marriage practice of sisterly primogeniture, whereby the eldest makes the first and most advantageous match, is subverted in the Chevalier's book in favor of the most virtuous sister.⁹

Modern understandings of medieval communities of women often come from our knowledge of feminine religious orders of the time and the codes of conduct that regulated their daily lives, a more ample documentation than that existing for lay households. Reliable information about the primary feminine community formed by women sharing the same home is hard to come by. Rebecca Barnhouse intuitively fills in the blanks in her work by describing the relationships between imagined communities of women who could have received the Chevalier's work together. In his text, sisterly and mother/daughter relationships are neglected and examples of how each should relate to male members of the household come to the forefront. Even depictions of maternity or the projected motherhood of his daughters are rare in the Chevalier's book. Even though he repeatedly expresses the concern that young women are to become virtuous matriarchs providing legitimate heirs, the young women "tailiées de porter ligniée" (25) do not seem to have any.

⁹ Didier Lett locates the foundation for this practice of favoring the morally superior younger sibling in Scripture (345).

Antagonistic dual or triangular relationships between sisters often make up the fabric of the Chevalier's stories. Considering that the historical Chevalier had three daughters, these tales might have spoken to his audience in a very immediate way. Anne-Marie De Gendt sees in these "narrative programs two characters who confront an identical situation, the former undergoing a process of degradation, and the latter a process of improvement. This is the case in chapters III, VI, and XIV, CV and CXX, where, each time, two young women apply or reject the life lessons that the narrator would like to teach his audience. Generally, the second functions as a model, the first as an anti-model, and when a third character is added, she also commits an undeserving action. In this last case, the plot presents a three-part process analogous to that often found in folktales where two agents (anti-heroes) fail at a test that they must undergo, preparing the success of the third" (111).¹⁰ This folktale pattern leaves no room for moral doubt. The heroine is triumphant and he or she who loses out disappears from the remainder of the tale. Social existence as such is determined by virtue.

These folkloric paradigms in sisterly relationships are featured early on in the work, setting the stage for reception within a given family and inviting the reader to judge the behavior of the family members portrayed, and, by extension, their own. In chapter VI, "Of the two daughters of a knight, one of whom was devout and the other gluttonous"¹¹ the questions of deficient maternal instruction and sisterly hierarchy are brought to the forefront. In this story, a knight has two daughters from two marriage beds. Morally superiority in this instance is a direct correlate to the first, more virtuous marriage. The daughter from his first marriage was marvelously pious and never

¹⁰ Translations from this French source are the author's : "Ainsi, dans un certain nombre de récits, le Chevalier oppose les programmes narratifs de deux personnages qui ont à affronter une situation identique, l'un parcourant un processus de dégradation, l'autre un processus d'amélioration. C'est le cas des chapitres III, VI et XIV, CV et CXX où, à chaque fois, deux jeunes filles appliquent ou rejettent les règles de vie que le Chevalier veut enseigner à son audience. Généralement, la deuxième fonctionne comme modèle, la première comme anti-modèle, et lorsqu'un troisième personnage est ajouté, le plus souvent il commet lui aussi un acte démeritoire. Dans le dernier cas, le récit présente un processus en trois temps analogue à celui que l'on rencontre si souvent dans les contes folkloriques où il arrive fréquemment que deux actants (anti-héros) échouent à l'épreuve qu'ils doivent subir, préparant ainsi la réussite du troisième" (De Gendt 111).

¹¹ "Cy parle de deux filles d'un chevalier, dont l'une estoit devotte et l'autre gourmandoit" (12-13).

ate in the morning before either her prayers or having heard all the masses that she could. The younger daughter, from the knight's second marriage, was spoiled by her mother who allowed her to neglect her religious duties and eat after a few prayers and a short mass. She did not fast, claiming it made her head hurt, and often ate after her parents were asleep. She was then married to a knight who was both wise and malicious. In spite of her husband's gentle chastising, one night he surprises her in the pantry with the help, eating and making merry in mixed company. Outraged, he attempts to hit one of the servants who is holding a housekeeper in a compromising position. He accidentally pokes out his wife's eye. As a result she loses her husband's love. The author makes it a point to add that,

[...] leur mesnage alla à perdicion du tout. Cest fait leur advint pour la mauvaise ordenance de sa femme, qui accoustumée s'estoit à vivre dissoluement et desordonnément le matin et le soir. (13)

Their household was lost. All this came about because of the bad government of his wife who was accustomed to living dissolutely and in disorder from morning to evening.

The pious sister, on the other hand, receives a God-given, good, rich, powerful knight as a husband. The knight makes it a point of underscoring the hospitality that the father receives from his two daughters when he goes to visit their households:

Sy avint que leur père, qui moult estoit proudomme, les ala veoir toutes deux; si trouva chiez l'une grans honneurs et grans richesses et y fut receu moult honnorablement, et chiez l'autre, qui avoit l'ueil trait, il y trouva l'arroy et le gouvernement nice et malostru. (14)

And it came about that their father, who was a very proper gentleman, went to visit them both; he found with one great honor and riches and was very honorably received, and with the other, who had lost her eye, he found the organization and government of the household stupidly neglected and miserable.

There are several important messages that the knight is communicating both to his intimate, domestic audience and his reading public at large. The first regards marriage and motherhood. In this instance, the child of a first marriage bed is more virtuous than that of a second. As such, this corresponds to the medieval disapproval of remarriage by demonstrating how the fruit of such a union can compromise the virtue and integrity of a lineage. Let's hope that the historical knight's

second wife did not take this admonition too harshly. Moreover, the mother is ultimately responsible for the moral education of the child. If she fails in this enterprise, both the future household of her offspring and her own position are compromised. This idea seems to undermine the reason for the Chevalier's composition as he takes on the responsibility for his daughters' education himself.

The second important lesson regards virtuous young women and marriage. The virtuous young woman gets the well-deserved, divinely awarded husband while the immoral daughter receives a husband who punishes her. It is important to underline the passive stance of the two young women who "receive" their mates. Justice is a power that is transferred from one deserving man to another and exercised on young women who are seen as subordinates. Within this nexus, it would be preferable that the man in question reaffirm his understanding of acceptable forms of behaviors and punishments. The Chevalier in composing his work renders this knowledge public. When the husband of the immoral young woman deprives her of an eye with which to see, her household becomes visible to others. Her father's visit opens the door for the audience's viewing pleasure as they witness the withdrawal of his social approval from this home. The domestic organization of these members of the lower nobility takes on the public character of more prominent households.

The next lesson is that proper young women do not engage in merriment with people of other social classes in mixed company, determining and reinforcing the boundaries between classes and sexes in her home. She should establish her alliances in order to allow her to either maintain her place in society or improve it. The aristocracy as such can remain an endogamy. By not following these precepts, she is demoted within the ranks, losing the love and respect of her husband and the integrity of the household.

Lastly, fathers ultimately inspect and pass judgment on their daughters and their households. This tale reflects the process that is transpiring in the work as a whole. Daughters are observed and

judged, their households scrutinized, and the state of their marriage is rendered public for all to observe through the eyes of the father, a very efficient form of blackmail should one of the La Tour Landry daughters make a misstep. The audience is made privy to not only what is happening in the pantry of the immoral household but also of who is occupying the marital bed. It is suggested that the debauched daughter finds herself replaced as her husband seeks love elsewhere. The virtuous household, however, is depicted only in its ceremonious function of properly receiving a visitor with the commonplaces of pomp and circumstance that that entails. The father finds “grans honneurs et grans richesses” in his eldest daughter’s home; the audience is left to fill in the blanks behind these courtly terms, understanding both the flattery and vacuity behind them. Thus, the dissolute household is made public for all to see while the virtuous household is occluded behind the aristocratic codes of propriety.

This dichotomy of respectable wife to good daughter, deficient wife to bad daughter, creates a moral lineage for the household in question and follows the paradigm of the *exempla* tradition which juxtaposes tales of good women versus bad. Virtue is a question of individual struggle and practice, heredity and transmission. Correction is the foundation of education and governance. The woman who has no control over her appetites loses any type of social control she might have had over her household or her husband. This visible form of self-government is a power that can be firmly within one’s grasp if she properly demonstrates her worth. Daughters are encouraged to participate in the same process of self-authorization as the knight-author, demonstrating that legitimate inheritance of virtue and decorous behavior are a will to power. By being able to identify corruption, they more easily distinguish themselves as not the dissipated Other. The heroic individual struggles that are depicted for the young women readers warn them that the path to virtue is not guaranteed by family line but must be continuously reenacted, a performance of a certain class and gender identity.

This focus on individual self-government allows little room for a community of women. Rather, the relationships between mothers, daughters, and sisters are severed in a spirit of competition and comparison in the interest of the tie that binds: the relationship with the father. To the most virtuous go her father's favor, a suitable union, and the favorable opinion of the audience. The curial principle of currying favor and seeking reward from a superior is reinforced in the text.

The degenerate household is a penetrable, vulnerable institution. The upright household, however, remains covered in discretion and ceremonious in function. It is described using the common adjectives of proper chivalrous conduct associated with masculinity and nobility, an institution made worthy by the irreproachable wife who inhabits the space. The nature of the immoral household, however, is determined by the wife's lack of propriety and loses its position in the social hierarchy. This gendering of the public domestic space plays a vital role in conduct literature as a whole. Immoral spaces are feminine; properly governed spaces are masculine. With this gendering of space comes a secularization of the space for moralizing literature. For male authors like the Chevalier it was important to be able to create a virtuous space outside of the Church and wield a form of moral justice. The secular composition of treatises on domestic and political governance is made possible and this allows for a middle aristocratic voice to penetrate the spheres of power. The Chevalier demonstrates for the members of his family and audience at large that an innate sense of justice and right allows for another type of entry into these same spheres.

May the best sister get the prince...

The priority in the author/narrator's vision of justice is not the type of offense but the problem of infraction itself. The narrator-knight might target a variety of different sins however it is not the nature of the sin that would seem to matter but the simple fact of disobedience. The relationships within the feminine communities described follow a similar pattern regardless of the sin

under discussion demonstrating that these narratives of transgression and reward or punishment speak more to forms of dominance and hierarchy than doctrinal matters. In the Chapter III, “Of two knights who loved two sisters,” the youngest daughter of the emperor of Constantinople is, this time, the more virtuous of the two. The elder sister mocks her younger sister for her piety when she hears her praying for the dead. The sisters are courted by two knights and arrange to meet them secretly in their chambers at night. Quite predictably, the devout sister meets a happier end than her elder sister.

Et quant celui qui devoit venir à la plus juenne cuida entrer entre les courtines, il lui sembla qu’il veist plus de mille hommes en suaires qui estoient environ la demoiselle. Si en eut si grant hideur et si grant paour qu’il en fut tous effrayez, dont la fièvre le prist et fut malades au lit. Maiz à l’autre chevalier ne avint pas ainsi, car il entra entre les courtines et ençainta la fille ainsnée de l’Empereur. Et quant l’Empereur sceut qu’elle fut grosse ; il la fist noyer par nuit et le chevalier fist escorchier. Et ainsi par celui faulx delit morurent tous deux. (...) Et quant la damoiselle oyst la verité, si en fust toute esmerveillée, et mercia Dieu moult humblement...et ne demoura gaires que un grant roy de Grèce la fist demander à son père, et il luy donna, et fust depuis bonne dame et de notte, et de moult grant renommée. (7-8)

And when he who was supposed to meet the youngest attempted to enter her bed curtains, it seemed to him that he saw more than a thousand men in shrouds surrounding the damsel. So horrible and frightening was the sight that he was scared out of his wits; a fever overcame him and he found himself sick in bed. However, the same did not happen to the other knight, because he entered between the bed curtains and got the daughter of the Emperor with child. And when the Emperor found out that she was pregnant, he had her drowned by cover of night and the knight skinned alive. And as such, for their immoral act, both of them died. (...) And when the young lady (the younger sister) heard the truth, she was amazed and humbly thanked the Lord...and without delay a great king of Greece asked for her hand from her father, and he gave it to him, and since she has been a great lady of much renown and solid reputation.

The social rewards for a young lady of virtuous conduct are spelled out here for the audience. While the elder “fallen” sister meets with a horrible punishment meted out by her father, the younger sister is rewarded with an advantageous social situation. Although she had been courted by an ill-intentioned knight, as the result of her refusal of his advances, she is rewarded with an attractive marriage to the king of Greece. The moral character of the knights is of no interest to the Chevalier. Justice is only carried out by fathers on their daughters. It is important to note once more that the father, in this instance the Emperor of Constantinople, judges and punishes the elder daughter, while

receiving and accepting the proposal in marriage for the younger. Feminine conduct is at stake yet the male participants in the tale determine which exchanges will take place.¹²

The violence of the punishment enacted by the father is noteworthy. Not only does he drown his daughter, but he also ensures the death of her suitor. This unofficial, undesirable knight suitor is able to “penetrate” the household, first the bed curtains of the elder sister, then the family line by engendering an illegitimate offspring (Kinne 147). Much like in the preceding exemplum in which the pantry was transformed into a stage for the reading public to witness the discomfiture of the family, the bed curtains are drawn back and the reader becomes witness to the fall of the young woman. The bed of the younger sister, however, remains invisible; much like her suitor the reader sees only the holy presences surrounding her.

While a very gruesome tale for young women and a reminder of the terrifying authority that a medieval father could wield, it is the reaction of the younger sister that might seem equally astounding to a contemporary audience. Upon hearing of the fate of her sister and her own escape from infamy, she thanks the Lord for having spared her, with no apparent thought for her sister’s demise. Thus, the ties of sisterly solidarity are severed in the narrator’s account and reinforce the notion that virtue is a personal struggle. The younger sister “reads” the tale of her sister as the feminine reader is expected to take in the work as a whole, with detachment and as a practical guide of conduct to be implemented for her well-being, not to mention the fact that she should give thanks for reaping the fruits of this instruction.

The knight author tells not just one, but one of many stories of competitive sororities and virtuous daughters rewarded by marriage to a king. This obsession with kingship is omnipresent in

¹² Lett discusses this type of exchange between men that is repeatedly illustrated in the Chevalier’s work in more detail. A knight comes to visit a young woman and then contractual obligations are negotiated between father and fiancé (347). The eldest daughter is punished because she does not adhere to these practices and consummates her union of her own accord.

this first portion of the work which is the fruit of the Chevalier's imagination and not his borrowing from *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes*. In three successive *exempla* at the very beginning of the work the morally upright younger sister is promised to a foreign king, but never once do these tales touch French soil. Interest in hierarchy and the recognition of aristocratic order show how La Tour Landry adheres to the values of his social class.

However, in the depiction of sisterly relationships, the “natural” medieval hierarchy, whereby elder sisters wed first and set hopeful examples for younger sisters, is partially subverted. Unworthy sisters whose conduct fails to meet set standards are severely punished and are exemplified for their younger sisters. Didier Lett discusses the primogeniture of medieval marriage practices and suggests that these illustrations are a form of attenuated imaginary compensation on the part of the author, who does not seek to completely transgress the marriage practices of the aristocracy of which he defends the social values (345).¹³ At the same time, however, the narrator introduces moral doubt and an invitation to supervision between individuals who would inevitably become competitors on the medieval aristocratic marriage market. He also suggests that, in spite of near equal social status, social rewards are allotted to the more virtuous members of a community. This paradigm could have repercussions beyond the universe of the page if his advice were to be truly implemented. Sisters and other women of confidence from the household can also provide either ill-counsel or poor examples to follow reasserting the pedagogical hold of the fictional father and preceptor on his daughters. By being able to identify poor counsel, advice that usually leads the woman in question into an

¹³ “Il convient de se demander pourquoi, dans les textes narratifs médiévaux, le cadet ou la cadette est toujours si fortement valorisé. Face à la réalité socio-économique, on assiste à un ‘phénomène de compensation imaginaire’. Dans la très grande majorité des coutumes de la fin du XIV^e siècle, l’aîné est largement avantagé ; la littérature permettrait au cadet un ‘rattrapage’. Mais, dans la mesure où, dans les régimes préciputaires, l’ordre de naissance des filles n’a pas la même importance que celui des garçons ne représente pas les mêmes enjeux en matière d’héritage et de transmission du patrimoine, ce phénomène est-il valable pour les sœurs ? Dans notre récit, La Tour Landry a atténué le phénomène de compensation car il décrit une compétition entre deux cadettes. Il précise en effet, dès les premières lignes du récit, que l’aînée est déjà mariée, mention essentielle, qui permet à l’auteur de présenter un renversement dans l’ordre chronologique des mariages qui ne remet pas radicalement en cause les stratégies matrimoniales de l’aristocratie dont il défend les valeurs. Il peut ainsi offrir à ses filles une histoire exemplaire sans transgresser les usages matrimoniaux de son temps et de son groupe social” (Lett 345).

illegitimate and dangerous liaison, the author is projecting himself as a virtuous counselor worthy of public esteem.

Sisters thus find their position continuously renegotiated according to their relationships to men, first fathers in nuclear families, then husbands during marriages, then eventually brothers and sons in widowhood. They also find their positions renegotiated amongst other women. Virtue can preempt birth order; virtue must be practiced in order to be acquired. There is something revolutionary in this apparently highly conservative text. In previous courtly paradigms, knights demonstrated their worth for a position held through birth and lineage. Conversely, within the confines of medieval discussions on marriage, social position and hierarchy become increasingly negotiable. One can lose one's rank through immorality, but visible, public practice of virtuous precepts leads to social rewards. Individual behavior can trump social determinations. This subversive demonstration of a changing medieval paradigm is represented through a series of relationships that would invite little scrutiny. By inscribing this new way of thinking in the relationships between the women of a given household, the full import and eventual repercussions of the lack of class solidarity, the overt competition between equals, and the dramatic punishments of those who disobey are attenuated for the audience. At the same time, they might have provided hopeful possibilities for those with upwardly social pretensions.

Climbing the ladder

The invitation to observe behavior and pass judgment is extended elsewhere in the narrative. The Chevalier repeatedly invites his audience to engage in this practice by depicting characters who model this very behavior. In Chapter XII, the story of "She who lost the king of England by her impudent conduct" is told. Quite simply, in this tale, the King of Denmark has three daughters and

the King of England sends envoys in order to determine which one he should marry. Among the envoys are a knight and a lady, who are:

[...] moult congnoissant et moult soubtilez, et qui bien mectoient l'oeuil et l'entente de veoir leurs manières et countenances, et aucunes foiz les mettoient en parolles. (26)

[...] very knowledgeable and subtle, and who lent eye and ear in order to observe their manners and appearances, and sometimes engaged them in conversation.

What this expert team of matchmakers discovers is that the eldest daughter looks about too often; the second daughter responds too quickly before understanding what is said to her; but the third daughter, while not being the most beautiful, has the most certain and steady manners and composure. The King of England chooses to marry the youngest daughter upon hearing this report.

Once more, the youngest daughter is rewarded for her virtuous conduct; her wanton sisters are deprived of a sought-after union. Their behavior is a public performance and scrutinized openly; the judgments passed are verbalized and announced for all to hear. In this instance, the knight and lady take the place of the critical father.

However, perhaps as important as the tale is the prelude to the main story. The knight/narrator clarifies a certain number of values and precepts concerning aristocratic marriage for his audience.

Dont je vouroye que vous eussiez bien retenu l'exemple des filles du roy de Dannemarche. Si vous en compteray. Ilz sont quatre roys de ça la mer qui anciennement se marièrent par honnour, sans convoitise de terre, comme des filles de roys ou de haulx lieux, qui soient bien nées ou qui aient renommée de bonnes meurs, de bel maintien, et fermes, et de bonnes manières, et les convient veoir se elles ont ce que femmes doivent avoir et se elles sont tailiées de porter ligniée. Ces liij sont li roys de France, qui est le plus grans et le plus nobles; l'autre est le roy d'Espaigne; le tiers le roys d'Angleterre; le quart est le roy de Hongrie, qui est de son droict mareschal des crestiens ès guerres contre les mescréans. (25)

I would like you to retain the example of the daughters of the King of Denmark. Indeed, I will tell you about it. There are four kings across the seas who in old times married for honor, with no desire for land, much as the daughters of kings or of noble birth, who are well-born or who are renowned for their good morals, of pleasant poise, and sound, and of good manners, and it beholds one to see if they have what women should have and if they are made to bear heirs. These four are the king of France, by far the greatest and noblest, the other is the

King of Spain, the third the King of England; and the fourth is the king of Hungary, who is by rights the leader of Christians in the wars against the miscreants.

Is this merely a paternal fantasy for the knight narrator, the means by which to show his adherence to true aristocratic values and his hopes for his daughters? Noble readers might find themselves duly flattered by identifying worthy examples of kingship and praising an aristocracy that disavows territorial gain. He recalls an age when morality was praised and ties of kinship were created with disregard for material interest. By alluding to the practices of times past, whether his idealization has factual import or not, he suggests that the current fashion for virtue has both economic and political ends. His expression of this ideal serves only to underscore his preoccupation with the gain and social advancement predominant in noble marriages. He feigns disapproval and simultaneously depicts advantageous royal matches made possible by daughters, his or those of another aristocratic father. Much as in the introduction when the narrator takes up the topos of courtly love, he once again finds himself nostalgic for a cultural ideal different from the nobility's current reality. The crisis in chivalry, brought about by military defeats and a monarchy that sought to consolidate its own power, could have been behind the Chevalier's desire for a renewal of older values (Blanchard and Mühlethaler 86-7). Ironically, however, this gesture shows how he himself, aristocratic patriarch, might willingly participate in the process of social and economic betterment through marriage. By revealing the intricacies of the education he provides, he displays the worthiness of his household and characterizes his daughters as desirable matches available for an enticing proposition. For De Gendt, keeping the family reputation intact and maintaining young women's moral availability for marriage would have been the Chevalier's primary goal (159). Also, his acknowledgement of the desirability of a love match with a member of the upper aristocracy signals his willingness to subscribe to and practice the social codes of those more powerful than himself. Moralizing nostalgia is a tool to further his personal interests, but this might not be its only goal. Another example regarding marriage bears the same wistful vision and suggests class consensus.

This obsession with royal marriage is the subject of Chapter XIII that tells the tale of “The daughter of the king of Aragon who lost the king of Spain through her bad behavior.”¹⁴ Interestingly, it also gives advice to rulers regarding which type of mate to choose. In this story, the King of Spain plays the role of the observant judge, who can reward good behavior by marrying a young woman or bring about shame by refusing her. He humbly disguises himself as a servant and observes the two daughters of the King of Aragon. As in the preceding *exempla*, the elder is impudent and proud, the younger humble and courtly. However, it is his advice that is most prominent as he delivers words of wisdom to his people:

‘Vous savés que les roys d’Espaigne ne les roys de France ne se doivent pas marier par convoitise, fors noblement et à femmes de bonnes meurs, bien nées et bien taillées de venir à bien et à honneur, et à porter fruit, et pour ce j’ay veues ces deux filles et leurs manières, et me sembla que la plus jonne est la plus humble et plus courtoise que n’est l’autre, et n’est pas de si haultain couraige ni de si haulte manière comme l’ainsnée, comme j’ay peu appercevoir, et pour ce prenés la plus jeune, car je l’eslis.’
(31)

“You know that neither the kings of Spain nor the kings of France should marry because of desire, but rather nobly and with women of sound morals, well-born and well-built so as to come to good and to honor, and to bear fruit, and after having seen these two girls and their behavior, it would seem to me that the youngest is more humble and courtly than the other, and she isn’t as proud and impudent as is the elder, as I was able to observe, and for this take the youngest, because it is her that I choose.”

While before, the definitions of courtly behavior often implied proper conduct on the part of a knight, these values are taken up under the sign of feminine virtue. The two young female protagonists in this tale find themselves under the scrutiny of a king who will make his own decisions. Once again, through his words, the king reiterates the marital values of a social class, noting that this advice is applicable both to Spain and France. The younger sister becomes the queen of Spain, while the elder has “grant desdaing et grant despit” [great disdain and great spite] upon hearing this news (31). Again, the sisterly relationship is rendered contentious and competitive. The King of Spain communicates a public judgment, playing the role of the father figure from other tales.

¹⁴ Chapitre XIII : Comment la fille au roy d’Arragon perdit le roy d’Espaigne par sa fole manière.

The father-author, by transmitting and concurring with the advice of the king of Spain, secures his place in a community of like-thinking men. However, the exhortation to daughters to found lineages and perpetuate the family line can have unintended consequences. The anxiety behind a father's sexual education of his daughter is apparent in the Chevalier's adaptation of a series of Old Testament stories. The power that a patriarch grants to his daughters risks being misused when he entrusts them with familial desires. Daughters can take matters into their own hands to found lineages that bring shame to the family and create chaos in society at large.

Lot's lustful legacy

Chapters XXXVII through CXXII of *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* are an adaptation of *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes*, a thirteenth-century book of *exempla* of good women and bad. It has been surmised that this compilation, most likely penned by a Franciscan friar, was a work intended to provide material for clerical sermons (Ashley 87). The Chevalier follows this text quite closely, first adapting its telling of the nine follies of Eve, then sharing with the reader a tale that can unintentionally serve as a frame for analysis to decode the tensions and anxieties behind the work as a whole. The Old Testament tale of Lot and the problematic genealogy that follows are embellished and take on greater meaning in the Chevalier's text.

The Biblical *exemplum* of Lot is one of the few stories told by the Chevalier that shows cooperation and harmony between sisters. This disturbing father-daughter drama reverses the paternal control over the foundation of lineages that the Chevalier has diligently attempted to impose thus far. The cooperation of the daughters of Lot in the seduction of their inebriated father leads to the establishment of illegitimate family lines in the Old Testament. One might also read disquiet behind it, the story representing what the Chevalier could have envisioned as potential consequences should his educative project fail and his own daughters bear bastards. Intended to decry the sin of

lust and the dangers of the drink, the tale also betrays some of the Chevalier's paternal and educative angst. The relationships between sexuality and knowledge, fathers and daughters, and virtue and lineage might not be as clear cut as he would like them to be. Dissension and transgression are at the heart of Lot's tale and shows how easily fatherly educative projects can go awry.

Lot's wife and variations on the theme

In this original retelling of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, like in the source text *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes*, Lot's hospitality and protection toward his two heavenly visitors and his attempt to appease the angry, lustful crowd gathered at his door by offering them his daughters are entirely absent. Rather, both authors unsurprisingly chose to focus on the conduct of the women involved in the tale, first Lot's wife and then Lot's daughters. Chapter LIIII focuses on the former's disobedience of God's command not to look back upon the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, decrying the sin of lust and condemning those who, despite their newfound purity of conscience, return to less wholesome times. The Chevalier adds a personal, geographical element not found in *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes* to this Genesis tale, mentioning similar events that happened in the bishopric of Nantes.

Un exemple vous diray de la femme Loth, que Dieux avoit gettée de Gomorre, elle et son seigneur, et trois de ses filles, et Dieu luy avoyt deffendu qu'elle ne regardast point derrière elle; mais elle n'en fist riens, ainçoys y regarda, et pour ce devint comme une pierre, tout aussy comme Saint Martin de Verto, quant il fist fondre la cité de Erbanges, qui estoit en l'eveschié de Nantes, laquelle fondy par le pechié de luxure et d'orgueil, aussy comme fist la cité dont Loth fut sauvé, c'est de Gomorre, Sodome, et autres v. cités que Dieu fist ardoir par feu de souffre jusques en abysme, et devindrent lac et eau, et furent tous perilz, et la cause fut tout pour le vil pechié de luxure, que ja ne fait à nommer, qui put tant ordement que la pueur en va au ciel et bestourne tout le ciel et toute l'ordre de nature.
(113-4)

I will tell you the story of Lot's wife, that God had thrown out of Gomorrah, her and her lord, and three of her children; God had forbidden her to look behind her ; but she paid no heed, and looked back. For this, she was turned to stone, just like Saint Martin of Verto when he destroyed the city of Erbange, which was in the bishopric of Nantes. It was destroyed because of the sin of lust and pride, just like the city from which Lot was spared, Gomorrah, Sodom and five other cities that God had burnt with sulphurous fire into nothingness, that

became lake and water ; all perished. The cause of this was the vile sin of lust, which I have no need of naming, which stinks so filthily that the stench rises to heaven and disrupts all of the heavens and nature's order.

This mention of the Chevalier's local geography must have been intriguing to the aristocratic families who first read this text, not to mention rather disparaging for those who might have founded Erbanges; above all it endows his place in the world with the authority of experience. If Biblical stories replayed themselves in the daily life of his community, his interpretation and claims to moral authority were valid. It also allows him to make a claim regarding the utility of the book; if such dangers were present in everyday life, such a work would help women, and thus families, to avoid dishonor. This geographic proximity might also indicate the story of Lot's significance to the Chevalier, perhaps too close for comfort.

Little mention of the protagonist Lot is made in either the Chevalier's or the *Miroir's* telling of the tale, apart from informing the audience that he has been saved. The sin of feminine lust comes to the forefront. Like in the *Miroir*, the narrator merely mentions in passing the initial, Biblical agents of this lechery responsible for the destruction of their cities, the inhabitants of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. This occlusion imputes a heavier blame on Lot's wife and her sin appears more egregious. Following his source text, the Chevalier describes lechery as the sin "qui put tant ordement que la pueur en va au ciel et bestourne tout le ciel et toute l'ordre de nature" [that smells so horribly that the stench ascends to the sky and disturbs all of heaven and the whole order of nature].¹⁵ The disorganizing principle of this sin is manifest; it rises up from the earth, creating disorder in the universe. The consequences that interest the narrator, however, are more of a social order. This will be the case in many of the Old Testament examples that he adapts in this portion of the work regarding bad women; women that misuse their sexual energies cause the microcosm in which they live to become disorganized and chaotic. More importantly, women's sexuality subverts

¹⁵ *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes* reads: "...celui vil peche dont nus ne doit fere mencion car il put tant que la puour en va avant le ciel et restourne toute l'ordre de nature" (fol. 10r). All textual citations from *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes* are from BnF Ms. Arsenal 2156.

the orders that patriarchs have determined as best for their communities. However, this same sexuality proves repeatedly to be an element that is beyond their control.

The narrator goes on to warn that disobedience is the principal mistake committed by Lot's wife.

Si est bel exemple comment l'en se doit garder du feu de luxure fors du fait de mariage, qui est commandement de Dieu et de sainte Eglise. Après ce que la femme Loth regarda derrières elle pour veoir le tourment des pecheurs qui perissoient par celluy feu de fouldre, et se fist contre le commandement de Dieu et la deffense qui luy avoit esté faite [...]. (114)

This is a good example of how one must keep oneself from the fire of lechery outside of marriage, as it is commanded by God and the heavenly Church. After Lot's wife looked back to see the torment of the sinners that perished by the flames of lightening, and thereby went against God's commandment and the interdiction that had been given her [...].

The narrator states his case in such a way that the reader unfamiliar with the story might presume that it was in fact Lot's wife who had committed the sin of adultery to which he refers. However, the reason for her punishment was disobedience above all, the assumption that looking back on Sodom and Gomorrah was the expression of a nostalgia for an immoral life. The text then reminds the readers that once they have been absolved of their sins through confession, they should no longer return to their sinful ways lest they wish to disappear. Those that do so “devendront pierre, et neant, et plus que neant, si comme elle fist” [shall become stone, and nothingness, and more than nothingness, as she did]. Once again, the expression of a woman's sexuality leads to her disappearance and subsequent exemplification for the instruction and betterment of others. Like the other women of conduct literature, both Biblical and historical, Lot's wife becomes a pillar that tells a tale of warning before the reader's own eyes. Exemplary women, good and bad, live only in the past or the fictional confines of the text.

The story of Lot's wife for the author of *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes* and the Chevalier does not have entirely the same meaning. The author of the *Miroir* warns repeatedly of those who “...quierent compaignie doumagens et soupesonneuses” (fol. 11v) [seek out dangerous and suspicious company]

and that as punishment God “leur tost le sen et le savoir” [takes from them both sense and knowledge] (fol. 11v). This collective sin committed in the company of others is punished by depriving the transgressor of cognition. However, for the Chevalier, sin, like virtue, is an individual affair. No mention of cognition is made as he refers to the responsibility of those who having confessed still return to sin:

[...] c'est à ceulx à qui il donna grace de eulx confesser et de repentir, et quant ilz sont nettoiez et confessez, et que l'en leur a deffendu qu'ilz ne regardent point derrière eulx, c'est à dire que ilz ne retournent plus en pechié et que ilz se gardent nettement dorenavant, et puis ilz retournent arrière à leur pechié, ou en fait ou en dit, et se remettent arrières au peril et en l'ordure où ilz estoient [...]. (114)

It is to those to whom he accorded the grace to confess and repent, and when they were cleansed of their sins and had confessed, and when they had been told to no longer look back, that they should not return to sin and should keep themselves pure henceforth, and then they went back to their sin, either in deed or in word, and they put themselves back into peril and filth where they had been before.

The author of *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes* often ends his *exempla* with an allusion to another cautionary tale to be told, medieval rather than Biblical. He does not develop the narrative, merely providing a suggestion from which a priest would have drawn inspiration for the elaboration of a sermon. The author could have suggested a new story to be inserted by his prompts at the end of each example. In the case of the tale of Lot's wife, he adds the following:

Je vodroie que vous seussiez le conte de la dame que perdi honeur pour ce qu'ele ne se vost garder de la compaignie d'une personne dont ele avoit este blasmee aucune foiz. (fol. 11v)

I would like you to know the story of the woman who lost her honor by keeping the company of a person because of whom she had once been accused.

The Chevalier takes this prompt to another level of violence and tells the story of a knight's wife found fornicating with a monk and the horrible punishment the adulterous couple received at the hands of her brothers. When the knights find their sister with the monk, they castrate him and throw the offending appendage at their sister's face. The sinful couple is then put in a large bag with rocks and drowned in a pond. The narrator concludes: "...car de mauvaise vie mauvaise fin: car c'est un pechié qui convient que une fois soit sceu ou pugny" [to an evil life comes an evil end for it is a sin

that must be punished when it is known] (115). The addition of this violent anecdote, reminiscent of fabliaux such as “De la dame descoilliee,” is the illustration of Grigsby’s point that the Chevalier, in his adaptation of the *Miroir*, “characteristically portrays good women more virtuous and more highly rewarded and bad women more wicked and more severely punished” (198). In this case, the Chevalier invests in overkill.

By demonstrating his understanding of what type of sin merits punishment and then ensuring that this exaction is carried out by noble figures belonging to the same family, the Chevalier once again makes obvious his claim to moral authority. He and other members of his social class can wield justice as well as any other social actor just as he too can write a book of exemplary tales to be followed. The excessive violence of this example suggests the Chevalier’s discomfort at the possibility of his own impotence as a father; Lot’s daughters go unpunished and a punishment must follow. His own displays of paternal and familial violence are a form of compensation for a tenuous hold on agency in his educative program. This exaggeration serves not only to encourage its purported young and impressionable audience to obey, but, as in the other stories concerning sororities and justice within the family, it demonstrates the Chevalier’s legitimacy in levying judgments and punishments. There is no room for ambiguity. Gone is the punishment wielded by God upon a collectively sinful group in the story of Lot; justice and redemption become an individual, family affair and, by extension, the right of a class to be maintained at all costs.

However, the tale of Lot is at work in the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l’enseignement de ses filles* in more ways than one. Like Lot’s wife, the girls’ mother is absent from their education as presented in the text. Her stony, fixed presence is only apparent at the end when, through a trick of authorial ventriloquism, she provides arguments to her daughters against the practice of *fin’amor* and marrying one’s spouse for love. Similarly, as stated in the introduction, the entire work is composed

in the shadow of a courtly woman, once loved by the father-narrator, who is endowed with a didactic potential through her very absence. What the deaths of exemplary women guarantee, above all, is the absence of agency. The death of these women and their location in times past ensure their inaction in times present. This fear of feminine agency will become more apparent in the second part of the narrator's retelling of the story of Lot. The consequence of Lot's daughters' acts is an illegitimate and sinful family line.

From Competition to Sisterly Collusion: The Lineages of Lot's Daughters

The families founded by Lot's daughters, the Moabites and Ammonites, were two groups alien to the tribes of Israel in the Old Testament. Given the narrator's obsession with legitimate family legacies, it is no wonder that the story of Lot could haunt his narrative. The narrator explains the girls' motivations differently than in the Old Testament; according to the Chevalier, after having seen the nudity of their father, the girls were enflamed by lust and conspired to have their father drink and lay with them.

Encore vous diray-je un exemple des filles Loth, comment l'ennemi les tempta vilainement. Elles virent leur père tout nu sans braies; si furent toutes deux temptées de sa compaignie, et s'entredescouvrirent leur fait, et vont entreprendre à enyvrer leur père ; si le festoyèrent et le firent tant boire que il fut yvre, et lors elles se couchièrent et si se mistrent delez lui et l'esmurent à fornication, et tant qu'il les despucella toutes deux, car il cuidoit que ce feussent autres qu'elles, et ainsi feut deceu par vin. Si est moult perilleux pechié de gloutonnie que de vin, et en avient moult de maulx; et toutesfoiz elles engrossèrent toutes deux et eurent deux fils, dont l'un eut nom Moab et l'autre Amon, dont les paiens et la mauvaïse loy descendit d'eulx. Et moult en vint de maulx par celluy pechié. Et dist l'en que elles se cointièrent et s'enourguillèrent, et pour ce l'ennemi les tempta plus ligierement à faire celluy vil pechié, et dist l'en que l'une en atiza l'autre et ainsi l'autre le fist par mauvaiz conseil. (115-6)

I will tell you another example of Lot's daughters and how the enemy wickedly tempted them. They saw their father nude, without pants. They were both tempted by his company, shared their thoughts and undertook inebriating their father. They celebrated and made him drink until he was drunk ; then they laid down, and put themselves before him and moved him to fornication. He deflowered them both because he thought they were other than they were and as such he was deceived by wine. Wine is the very dangerous sin of gluttony and much ill has come of it. As such, they both became pregnant and had two sons, one named Moab and the other Amon, from whom the pagans descended and the evil law came. Much ill came about because of this sin. It is said that they dressed themselves and became proud and in this way the enemy tempted them more easily to commit this vile sin, and it is said that one spurred forth the other and the other followed poor counsel.

Forgotten is the Biblical mention of the sisters' concern for the continuity of their people, for having seen the destruction of their cities, Genesis states that from their cave they believed themselves to be the only remaining survivors and thus responsible for repopulating the earth (Genesis 19.30-34). Instead, the chapter begins with the explanation that the daughters had been tempted by the devil. The moralizing narrative turns to the trope of bad counsel to explain their behavior providing another medieval example of how sinful women will lead other women into sin. This metaphor could serve as a warning against both poor counsel and bad government of the community. By underscoring women's "inability" to lead this microcommunity of women, the sorority, in both the absence of the mother or brothers, and the father's "cognitive" absence, women's "natural" position of subordination is questioned. The impressionable reading public would have nevertheless received a story regarding feminine agency and sisterly collusion against the patriarch despite the narrator's best effort to denounce the sin of lust. The story of Lot can only be ambivalent within the Chevalier's text.

It would seem that the narrator is uncomfortable with simply ending the story as in the Genesis version. After giving birth to Moab and Amon, the two girls and their father disappear from his text. He is unable to come to a conclusion regarding the Lot material itself; he simply mentions that the "mauvaise loy" comes from the union of Lot with his two daughters. However, justice must be done and a punishment wielded. The narrator introduces these aspects through a medieval example in which a servant girl gives bad counsel to her mistress. This *exemplum*, used to underscore his point, seems incongruous. In this second portion of the tale of Lot, he takes the prompt provided by the *Miroir* more literally. The Franciscan author leaves off the story of Lot's daughters by stating: "Pleut a dieu que vous seussiez le conte de la dame que chier en pechie par une damoisele qui li lessoit faire toutes ses volentez" [May it please God that you learn the story of a lady who fell into sin

because of a damsel that let her do all she wished] (fol. 12v). The Chevalier takes up another of the source text's formulas and adapts the idea:

Et pour ce je voudroye que vous sceussiez l'exemple de la fole damoiselle, qui, pour un chapperon que un chevalier luy donna, elle fist tant et bargigna que sa dame fist sa volenté et que elle la fist deshonnorer. (116)

And for this I want you to learn the example of the crazy young woman who for a bonnet that a knight gave her cajoled and coerced her lady so that she did his bidding and was dishonored.

Thus, the apparent responsibility for the misdeed that is to follow is transferred from the lady whose whimsies are encouraged by her servant in the *Miroir* to the servant who inspires her lady's sin in the Chevalier's retelling. The servant is given a bonnet by a knight in exchange for the opportunity to seduce her mistress whom she convinces of the worthiness of his intentions. When the lady is found by her husband, he has her locked up in a convent. In a dramatic display of justice, the young woman who gave her such poor counsel has her head cut off adorned with the bonnet in question. The tale becomes one of domestic warning.

Sy regardez comment il fait bon prendre bonne compaignie et femmes de service nettes qui n'ayent eu nul blasme ; car cest damoyselle n'avoit pas esté trop saige, comme l'en dit. Et pour ce est bonne chose de prendre bonnes femmes et nettes; car mauvaises femmes conseillent trop de mal à juenne dame, comme fist la folle suer des filles Loth et comme fist celle folle damoyselle, qui en eut son guerredon et sa desserte. (116-7)

See how it is wise to keep good company and impeccable women servants who are without reproach; because this damsel was not too wise, as is said. And for this reason it is a good thing to take good, irreproachable women; because bad women give evil counsel to young women, as did the mad sister among Lot's daughters, like this mad damsel who received her reward and just desserts.

The servant in question receives her "reward and just desserts" by having her head cut off, a punishment strikingly similar to that received by sinners in the *Miroir* who are deprived of both sense and knowledge. Thus, the Chevalier is able to avoid mention of the collusion among equals that occurs in the Lot story, likening one sister to a servant and the other to a lady. The servant in question, however, becomes part of Lot's line, a sister of his daughters. Subversion is averted through the introduction of a difference in social class. However, the Chevalier's anxiety is made all

the more apparent. By transforming the question of incest and the resulting illegitimate family line into a problem of mere domestic organization and poor counsel, the troubling subtext of Lot remains unresolved in his instruction.

The themes of sexualized father-daughter relationships, disappearing mothers, the threat of ill-begotten heirs, the pandering of one's own children, and the transmission of knowledge from fathers to daughters all haunt the Chevalier's narrative, making the Lot episode perhaps more telling than originally intended and revealing the tensions that lie behind conduct literature as a genre. This is by no means to suggest that the historical Chevalier, both narrator and father, was the incestuous patriarch that Lot eventually became. However, the anxieties that underlie the tale of Lot in many ways mirror the Chevalier's difficulties in trying to transmit a certain type of knowledge to his daughters. There is a crisis in leadership. Ultimately, the Chevalier's assumed responsibility, that of having to provide for his daughters' moral and sexual education all while advising them to refrain from sexuality except in the most narrow of circumstances, puts him in an uncomfortable position. Much like in the tale of Lot, the continuity of the family line is delegated to his daughters. Recurring tropes such as finding appropriate mates among his peer group for his daughters, providing heirs that will maintain both their lineage, honor, and social class, and repeated *exempla* recounting the dangers that one immoral sister can pose for the others inscribe the Tour Landry family story within the legacy of Lot.

This type of sisterly rebellion is at the heart of Robert Polhemus's study of the echoes of the Lot story throughout literary history, society, and politics. He locates what he calls the "Lot complex" at the heart of civilization replacing the primacy of the Oedipus complex. "The Lot complex, as I read it in nineteenth- and twentieth- century culture, features the drive or compulsion to preserve, adapt, and/or expropriate the traditional paternal power to sustain, regenerate, define,

represent, and transmit life and civilization- the patriarchal seed of culture in history. It thus plays a central part in the high drama of the change in the status of women and the liberation of female aspirations” (4). He points out the anxiety laden reception this incestuous father-daughter relationship has caused for readers over the ages and how it has been represented in both art and literature. The Lot complex as defined by Polhemus may be an appropriate framework for the analysis of conduct literature as a whole as it showcases the transmission of patriarchal knowledge from older man to younger woman, from father to daughter, and how the daughters’ agency in implementing or adapting the “father’s seed” allow for its preservation and continuity. At the same time, the possibilities for rebellion and disobedience, for cooperation and collusion between women suggest that daughters might come to usurp paternal power and find their own fulfillment through this intergenerational transmission.

As the Chevalier seeks to educate his daughters, to teach them to “romancier,” to transmit the knowledge of his culture and social class for their betterment and the preservation of the family line, his retelling of the tale of Lot is echoed in more ways than one. Much like Lot’s wife, his own wife disappears from the pages of his narrative. The Chevalier too realizes that the sexual availability of his daughters could be a means of self-preservation and provide for the continuity of his social class. While in the Genesis version of the Lot tale, Lot offers his daughters up to the lascivious crowd of Sodom in order to spare the angels that are his guests, thus respecting the cultural and social imperative of hospitality, the Chevalier offers his daughters to appropriate suitors in order to maintain the endogamy of the Tour Landry lineage. By indirectly encouraging his readers to follow suit, the nobility as a whole is preserved. Like Lot, he publically advertises their virginity. Polhemus explains: “The Lot complex features the drive to control, displace, and suppress sexuality: Sodom is destroyed; the cities of the plain are burned; the children of incest turn out to be the outcast neighboring tribes of Israel, not the children of Abraham and God; all sex without the purpose of

progeny is for the time being eliminated” (8). Indeed, like in the Chevalier’s work, in conduct literature as a whole, the control and suppression of sexuality and the channeling of reproductive forces into legitimate uses are at the heart of education. The nexus of sexuality, knowledge, and power must serve the needs of the men who are attempting to impose their vision of what the microcosm of the family should be so as to guarantee order within the macrocosm of medieval society. In the first portion of the *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l’enseignement de ses filles* concerning bad women, as we have seen, scenes of seduction are repeated and punishments are meted out by paternal figures in an attempt to control their daughters’ and wives’ sexuality. The narrator refuses the dangerous codes of courtly love and its “civilizing seduction” in order to embrace the legitimizing institution of marriage.

From a courtly Sodom to rightful matrimony

In the Tour Landry’s introduction, the narrator turns his back on the Sodom of his past, the dangerous world of chivalrous conduct that he once knew. He mentions that one impetus for his writing is to be able to protect his daughters from the lascivious knights who would trick young women and ruin their reputation. Much as in Sodom and Gomorrah, the wolf is forever at the door. He includes himself in the number of young knights who would engage young women in talk of love only to betray them:

Car maintes foiz vouloient partout desduit avoir, et ainsi ne faisoient que decevoir les bonnes dames et demoiselles, et compter partout les nouvelles, les unes vraies, les aultres mençonges, dont il en advint mainte honte et maint villain diffame sanz cause et sanz raison. Et il n’est ou monde plus grant trayson que de decevoir aucunes gentilz femmes, ne leur accroistre aucun villain blasme; car maintes en sont deçuees par les grans seremens dont ilz usent. (3)

Often they wanted to take their pleasure everywhere, and all they did was deceive good women and damsels, and then tell the tales everywhere, some true, the others false. Much shame and vile defamation came from this, without cause or reason. And there is no greater betrayal in the world than to deceive good women, or cause for them vile blame, because many are deceived by the great promises that they make.

Like Lot fleeing Sodom, the fictitious Chevalier flees this sinful past into a pedagogical and morally sound future, one that he ensures through the composition of his book. He takes his daughters with him to this space, allowing for the transmission of his knowledge and the guarantee that his family will persevere in the time of calamity that was the fourteenth-century in France.

Through his use of the traditional binary representation of womankind, those following Eve being sinful and those cultivating the Marian characteristics virtuous, he is able to simultaneously blame and exonerate his own daughters and daughters in general. For the knight, Lot's daughters are brought to incest through lust: "Elles virent leur père tout nu sans braies; si furent toutes deux tentées de sa compagnie, et s'entredescouvrirent leur fait, et vont entreprendre à enyvrer leur père" (115). Polhemus writes, "By projecting upon the daughters the moral onus for incest, the Scripture ironically allows them to become conspiratorial, socially responsible agents. Women move from sacrificial objects to reasoning subjects. From chattel, they become paradigmatic figures out to save the world. They identify with the divine command and purpose to look forward, not back, and their plotting together to use the father shapes history. They seek to intoxicate and obliterate the "rational" male will that would leave them without a future. They can be seen moving to replace the rivalries of sons and brothers with sisterly cooperation. Daughterhood might become a sisterhood moving to recreate social life. It might even come to reanimate the lives and minds of the abandoned older women" (10-11). It is indeed this possibility for cooperation within sisterhood and daughterhood that the Chevalier seeks to render impossible elsewhere by placing sororities in conflict. Just as the story of Lot provides for the possibility of disobedience and daughterly resistance, expressing perhaps the Chevalier's fear of just such a phenomenon, the narrator seeks to undermine it by introducing moral and social barriers that will maintain his paternal control. The stories that follow the tale of Lot create a "genealogy" of sin and demonstrate how women that disrupt appropriate homosocial relationships between men are punished.

The Chevalier's appropriation of the Old Testament stories of his source text, *Le Miroir des bonnes femmes*, at first glance, would appear to be relatively faithful. However, what is discovered upon further exploration is that there is a conscientious effort made to exclude stories of women who have founded legitimate family lines or whose tales do not thematically follow that of Lot's family.

Beginning with his retelling of the Lot story, his appropriations follow as such:

<i>Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour ses filles</i>	<i>Le Miroir des bonnes femmes</i>
LIV. La femme Loth	3. La femme Loth
LV. Des filles Loth	4. Des filles Loth
LVI. De la fille Jacob (Dinah)	5. Dyna la fille Jacob
	6. Rachel la fame Jacob (digression)
LVII. Thamar, qui fust femme Honain	7. Thamar qui fu fame Honain
LVIII. Cy parle de la femme du roy Pharoan et Joseph le filz de Jacob	8. La fame Putifar (et Joseph)
LIX. Cy parle des filles Moab	9. Marie, sœur de Moyse
	10. Les filles Moab
LX. Cy parle de la fille Madian	11. La fille de Madian
LXI. Thamar, la fille du roy David	12. D'une fame sanz nom
LXII. D'un bon homme qui estoit cordier	13. D'une paienne que Sanson pris a fame
	14. D'une autre fame Sanson, Dalida
	15. D'une femme née de Bethleem, que avoit un seigneur du Mont Effrayim
	16. Helcana et Feneima
	20. Thamar, la fille au roi David la seur Absalon et Amon

In his adaptation of *Le Miroir des Bonnes Femmes*, the Chevalier selectively leaves out the Franciscan author's sixth example, that of Rachel, Jacob's wife, who so longed for a child that her punishment was death during the birth of twins Joseph and Benjamin, and the ninth, that of Marie, the sister of Moses, who jealously claimed to be as holy as her brother. He also displaces the stories of Samson, incorporating them elsewhere in his text. These tales would have seemed incongruous to the Chevalier in his thematic interest regarding lust, illegitimate unions, warfare, and the consequent defeat and disorder of armies and societies. It also serves to keep stories that have an apparent link with Amon and Moab, if only in name, closer together, thus making their "genealogy" more apparent. Often, a second tale of warning is added after the primary Biblical example in order to reflect events closer to medieval times and underscore his message that the happenings depicted contain lessons that remain pertinent to his time.

These narratives demonstrate that Lot is not the only Biblical patriarch to have trouble with his daughters and their unions. Whether Dinah, the daughter of Jacob; Tamar, the daughter-in-law of Judah; the daughters of Moab; or Madian's daughter; the examples that follow all relate problematic transmissions of legitimate family legacies. In Chapters LVI – LXI the genealogy in question is that of sin, common names and themes standing in for actual Biblical family relationships when there are none that relate directly to the children of Lot's daughters. For the most part, he would seem to empathize with the warriors of his tales, illustrating how illegitimate love relationships diminish the military prowess of the righteous Israelite tribes. The overt message that the Chevalier sends addresses contemporary fourteenth-century concerns: the lust that is the result of a lack of virtue and proper education can be at the root of conflict. For the warrior members of society to maintain their influence, they must demonstrate that the mothers of future generations are without reproach and within their control.

In Chapter LVI, the narrator adapts the story of Genesis 34 to suit his purposes. In this Old Testament story, Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah is raped by Shechem, the son of Hamor the Hivite, and Jacob and his family demand that in reparation all the men of the city be circumcised so that they may marry into Jacob's family line. Once the Hivites comply, however, Jacob and his sons go into the city and kill them. La Tour Landry's retelling is entirely different and follows that of the *Miroir*. He explains:

Je vous diray un autre exemple de la fille Jacob, qui, par sa joliveté de cuer, laissa l'ostel de son père et de ses frères pour veoir l'atour des femmes et l'arroy d'un autre pays. Dont il avint que Sichem, le filz de Amon, qui estoit grans sires, la regarda et vist qu'elle estoit belle, et si la pria de folle amour, tant qu'il la despucella. Et, quant les xij. frères d'elle le sceurent, si vindrent là et le occistrent, luy et le plus de son lignaige et de ses gens du pays, pour la honte que ilz eurent de leur suer, qui ainsi avoit esté despucellée. Or resgardez comment par fole femme vient le grant mal et le dommaige, car par sa juennesce et par son legier couraige advint celle grant occision. (117)

I will tell you another example of the daughter of Jacob who, through lightness of heart, left her father's house and her brothers to go observe the women's dress and customs of another people. It came about that Sichem, the son of Amon, who was a great lord, looked at her and saw that she was beautiful, and he uttered sweet words of love to her and took her virginity. And, when her twelve brothers learned this, they went and they

killed him, along with most of his family and people of his land, for the shame that they had for their sister who had been seduced. See how through an immodest woman comes such evil and harm, because of her youth and light-heartedness this killing came about.

Purely medieval concerns become integrated into this Old Testament story. Dinah's name is not mentioned in the medieval text; her status as a daughter is mentioned. She leaves her home to observe the dress and customs of another people, the imitation of women of other social groups and cultures being a practice against which the narrator has elsewhere expressed strong disapproval. This puts her in immediate danger; the rape of Dinah is reformulated to take on the appearance of a seduction by Sichem. The formulaic language, "si la pria de folle amour," is a recurring notion in the text and implies that women who do not put up an adequate resistance to such masculine pleas are themselves guilty of what befalls them. The genealogy of the family of Sichem (Shechem) is also modified to place him directly within the lineage of Lot. The reader could be led to believe that he is the son of Amon and, thus, the grandson of Lot. The story of this condemned family line, those who represent the "mauvaise loy," is fabricated before the reader's eyes. Perhaps most importantly though the reader is introduced to the notion that a woman's immodest and immoral behavior can cause war between men. The seduction of a daughter and a sister is the root of a conflict between the twelve sons of Jacob and another tribe. This link between women and warfare will be repeatedly made by the Chevalier in his work.

Illegitimate unions repeatedly bring about conflict, a result that the late medieval aristocracy would most certainly have hoped to avoid. Chapter LVI closes with a more contemporary example concerning the daughter of the king of Greece, who much like her Biblical counterpart, is seduced by the son of a count. The king then declares war on the count and over a thousand people are killed. The brother of the king expresses the opinion that such a daughter never should have been born and the king has her killed by the sword to serve as a warning to other women (118). This *exemplum*, so similar to the many other stories that the Chevalier/narrator tells, follows a narrative schema now

well-known to the reader: an aristocratic woman compromises the position of her family by having an illegitimate union with a lesser noble and causes armed conflict between men; the father follows good counsel and puts her to death.

However, incest is never very far from the Chevalier's mind. The next chapter, LVII, follows the confused Lot genealogy and returns to this grievous sin. In this adaptation of Genesis 39, Tamar, having lost her husband Honain (Onan) (in the Old Testament telling she is married to Er, Onan's brother), tricks her father-in-law, Judah, and has two illegitimate sons by him. According to the Chevalier's narrative, the two children are "Phares" and "Amon," while Genesis 39 refers to Pharez and Zarah, and *Le Miroir des Bonnes Femmes* to "Pharez et Aram." Once again, the Chevalier's creative license with scriptural material or the fantasy adaptation of his source allows him to further prove his point. Amon's omnipresence signifies the illegitimacy of these bad procreative practices. The narrator reaffirms the position expressed in the previous tale, "[...] les enfans qui sont mal engendrez et qui ne sont de loyal mariage, ce sont ceulx par qui sont les guerres et par qui les ancesseurs sont perdu" [Ill-begotten children of an unfaithful marriage are the reason why wars and ancestors are lost] (118-19). However, the other son of the daughters of Lot also finds his descendants figuring prominently in the medieval narrative.

In keeping with the Old Testament source material, Chapters LIX and LX tell the story of the encounter between the tribes of Israel after their flight from Egypt and the Moabites, the descendants of Moab (Numbers 25). In the medieval narrative, the Chevalier explains how the army of Israel is infiltrated by Moabite women and the men are made to sin so as to draw God's anger. He also reminds his reader once again of the sinful origins of Moab:

Vous avez ouy comment Moab fut fausement engendré contre la loy, et voulentier de mauvaise arbre ist mauvais fruit. (122)

You have heard how Moab was ill-begotten against the law, and how from a bad tree issues bad fruit.

While the daughters of Moab bring about the death of many princes upon Moses' command, Chapter LX relates the story of the Midianitish woman, a pagan, who is found with the Israelite Zimri. Phinehas, upon seeing them joined together, pierces them through with his sword, a punishment not unlike those dealt out to the adulterous medieval women to whom the narrator has referred previously. In this example, the punishment for bringing evil to an army, for participating in an illegitimate union, is delivered by the sword. The correlation between feminine misdeeds, the subsequent threat to military might, and violent retribution is once again established by the narrator. Indeed, as Anne-Marie De Gendt has suggested, feminine lust is harmful to society on the whole, and particularly to the nobility for whom illegitimate family lines undermine their entire social organization (155-56).¹⁶ However, the question of legitimacy goes beyond mere family ties. In fact, he who demonstrates that he controls the institution of marriage is invested with a moral, social, and political responsibility that was highly sought after.

The Chevalier ends his Old Testament *exempla* and his "genealogy" of Lot with another tale of incest, bringing the thematic relationships between these tales to full circle. He refers to the story of Tamar, the daughter of King David, and her brother, Amon.

Encores, mes chières filles, vous diray un autre exemple comment l'on ne doit pas estre ne demourer seul à seul avecques nul, tant soient ses parens ne ses prochains ne autres, si comme il advint de Tamar, fille au roy David, que son frère Amon despucella. Celluy Amon fut tempté contre Dieu et contre la loy, et, pour acomplir sa mauvaise volenté, il se faingny estre malade et se faisoit servir à sa suer, et la regardoit de faulx regart et puis la baisoit et acoloit, et tant fist petit à petit que il l'eschauffa

¹⁶ "La luxure féminine n'atteint pas seulement l'honneur individuel : elle nuit à la société entière. Qu'elle soit vierge ou célibataire mais déjà initiée aux plaisirs sexuels ou encore mariée, la femme qui s'offre et qui, tentatrice, amène les hommes à commettre le péché de la chair, est un facteur de désordre social. Elle sème la discorde dans les armées et est à l'origine de massacres collectifs. La faute de la femme mariée- l'adultère- est particulièrement perturbatrice, notamment dans la noblesse, parce qu'elle peut avoir pour conséquence la naissance de bâtards, une infraction à la pureté du sang qui constitue la pierre angulaire de la politique des descendance aristocratique. Dans une société où la seule filiation paternelle est reconnue, la noblesse ne peut en effet tolérer aucune incertitude au sujet de la paternité. Dans les classes dirigeantes, la bâtardise peut même causer 'une dérégulation du monde dont les effets sont pervers, et à long terme' : guerres, maladies et pauvreté frappent les territoires que les héritiers illégitimes s'arrogent abusivement et le Chevalier fait ressortir cette donnée beaucoup plus vigoureusement que l'auteur franciscain du *Miroir*" (De Gendt 155-6).

et la despucella. Et quant Absalon, son frère de père et mère, le sceut, il en fut tout forsenné et yré, et, de fine ire et courroux il occist son frere Amon, qui celle deloyaulté avoit faicte à sa suer, et en vint moult de mal, et pour ce a cy bon exemple comment toute femme qui veult nettement garder son honneur et son estat ne doit point demeurer seul à seul avecques nul homme vivant, fors avecques son seigneur ou avecques son père ou avecques son fils, et non avecques aultres [...]. (125-26)

Again, my dear daughters, I will tell you of another example of how you should not find yourself alone with a man, neither your relatives, nor your neighbors, nor any other; this is what happened to Thamar, the daughter of king David, who was deflowered by her brother, Amon. Amon was tempted to sin against God and the law, and, to complete his ill-intentions, he feigned being ill and had his sister serve him. He looked upon her with lustful eyes and then kissed her and caressed her, and went on so that little by little he warmed her to the idea and deflowered her. And when Absalon, his brother by father and mother found out about it, he went out of his mind with fury, and out of boundless anger and pain he killed his brother Amon, who had committed this disloyalty toward his sister, and great ill came of it; and for this it is a good example of how all women who wish to perfectly keep their honor and estate should never remain alone with any man alive, except for with their husband or with their father or with their son, and not with any other[...].

For the Chevalier, fratricide and internecine fighting are the results of women's weakness and inability to "perfectly keep their honor," not the consequences of one brother's misdeeds. Incest between a brother and a sister brings the illegitimate genealogy of Lot's daughters to a close.

Ironically, it also brings the reader closer to the genealogy of Christ. As noted by other critics, the genealogy of Lot's daughters overlaps with the genealogy of David. Moab, the son of Lot's daughter, and Perez, the son of Tamar by her father-in-law Judah, both enter into the genealogy of King David (Jackson 30). This second Thamar, too, is a member of King David's family, his own daughter, and thus a member of the family tree of Christ. Whether these theological questions were present in the author's mind cannot be known however, their inclusion in narratives destined to ensure family virtue and legitimacy send mixed messages. As such, women lacking in virtue can, indirectly, participate in the process of redemption and the continuity of a lineage, whether it be that of Christ or of the medieval aristocracy.

The Courtly Conundrum: From *fin'amor* to *mariage*

The Chevalier de la Tour Landry as a pedagogue is no stranger to internal contradiction in the lessons that he gives. As seen previously, the courtly garden setting of his prologue embraces

aristocratic literary practices and cultural codes, all while providing him with the impetus to write. However, his description of his youthful comrades is less than flattering. The behavior of these *fin'amants* is no longer the subject of literary praise, but rather a practice that endangers his daughters and the aristocracy as a whole. The change in tone witnessed in the Chevalier's narrative could be the mark of a transformation within the nobility, from that of a warfaring aristocracy to a nobility of the court with standards governing speech and acts (De Gendt 242). However, beyond a mere personal refusal to turn back to the Sodom of youth, might the Chevalier be refusing the old codes of courtly love in favor of another institution, that of marriage?

Et pour ce, quant je les vy vers moy venir, il me va lors souvenir du temps que jeune estoye et que avecques les compaignons chevauchois en Poitou et en autres lieux. Et il me souvenoit des faiz et des diz que ilz me recordoient que ilz trouvoient avecques les dames et damoyelles que ilz prioient d'amours ; car il n'estoit nulz jours que dame ou damoiselle peussent trouver que le plus ne vouldissent prier, et, sy l'une n'y vouldist entendre, l'autre priassent sans attendre. Et se ilz eussent ou bonne ou male responce, de tout ce ne faisoient-ilz compte; car paour ne honte n'en avoient, tant en estoient duiz et accoustumez, tant estoient beaux langagiers et emparlez. (2-3)

And for this reason, when I saw them come toward me, I began to think back to my youth and how I used to ride all of Poitou and other places with my companions at arms. And I remembered all the deeds and words that they told me of, that they found with ladies and damsels to whom they spoke words of love. Because there was no day in which they did not meet a lady or a damsel from whom to beg favor, and, if one wouldn't hear them, they would request the favor of another without delay. And whether the response was good or bad, they did not take this into account; because they had neither fear nor shame, this was a habit to which they were accustomed; they were so very sweet-tongued and talkative.

The Chevalier, all while recalling his amorous past, denounces the practice of speaking of love to both married dames and virginal damsels. He criticizes enacting the principles of courtly love whereby knights were encouraged to court both married and unmarried ladies through appropriate speech acts and gestures of romantic involvement. It would seem that courtly love had spun out of control, as the reckless young men accumulate amorous conquests on *chevauchées* that the narrator finds particularly threatening to his interests. The civilizing aspect of courtly love has been lost and knightly courtship has become disorderly. By the fourteenth-century, the social uses of courtly love,

so well summarized by Louis George Tin, were no longer timely.¹⁷ Tin traces the mutation of a society based on homosocial relationships between warriors as represented in the epics of the early Middle Ages to one in which the heterosexual couple of courtly love becomes predominant by the end of this period. This institutionalization of heterosexuality is furthered by the institutionalization of marriage. Conduct literature for women is designed to consolidate and ensure the legitimacy of the bonds of real-world marriage, shunning the literary flights of amorous fancy that were courtly love. Feudal political bonds based on homosocial relationships between knights, united in fealty and combat in early epic poetry, were quickly sublimated by the heterosexual relationship of courtly love; both homosocial relationships and heterosexuality reinforced the authority of the lord and the power in place (Tin 41). However, this sentimental vision expressing relationships of loyalty, service and protection were outdated in the late fourteenth-century context. The contractual bonds of marriage and the discourses surrounding it are, like courtly love, less the expression of true relationships between men and women than the negotiation of a series of social alliances, both economic and political, between men of different categories. The next step in the consolidation of this culture of heterosexuality was the institutionalization and political cooptation of marriage. Tin describes the Church's discovery of the utility of the sacrament of marriage, its consequent acceptance of the heterosexual couple leading to the neglect of the masculine loves and a culture of celibacy promoted previously, and concludes that feudal and ecclesiastical power were ultimately the domain of men (88). Fourteenth and fifteenth-century writers had also understood that discussing the couple,

¹⁷ "En fait, la présence de la dame proposée à l'admiration des chevaliers et à la célébration des troubadours s'inscrivait dans une logique toute féodale. La présence permanente à la cour de tous ces soldats, les *bacheliers* et tous les autres, était une nécessité pour le suzerain qui les employait à son service et les attachait à sa personne ; mais elle était également source de troubles et de désordres, la frustration sexuelle et sociale exacerbant quelque chose, quoi que ce fût. Dès lors, la beauté de la dame et son rang prestigieux tenaient en respect tous ces turbulents. On les domestiquait, on les calmait et on les polissait en distillant les faveurs de la dame : un regard, une attention, une délicatesse peut-être, mais sans plus. Ainsi, maintenus dans la dépendance de la dame, et donc du suzerain, ils renforçaient le pouvoir féodal" (Tin 41).

marriage, and appropriate female conduct could ultimately serve the acquisition and maintenance of power, whether as members of the aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, or the Church.

As such, the Chevalier's contradictory opinions of romantic love may be less symptomatic of nostalgia for a glorious past and more the sign of changing times. While he begins his narrative by adhering to the cultural and literary practices of *fin'amor* which his audience was sure to recognize, he immediately decries the harm which can come to a woman's reputation as a result of the actual practice of the precepts of courtly love. Consequently, his support for marriage reveals the insincerity of his deployment of the courtly love topos. One of the concluding portions of his work is a debate with the Chevalier supporting love for love's sake and his wife denouncing "amer d'amours" for their daughters; courtly love loses. In Chapter VIXXIII, "Cy parle du debat qui avint entre le chevalier qui fist ce livre et sa femme, sur le fait d'amer par amours. Le chevalier parle, la femme respont après" (246-65), the Tour Landry's wife systematically refuses romantic love as a lesson for the young girls while the Chevalier plays the devil's advocate. Gendt concludes that this debate reflects the author's contradictory views on this subject, caught between literary pretense and his educational, moralizing role (188-205). I think that the Chevalier's opinion is more definite than that: his position as an aristocratic father and preceptor renders his courtly posture a mere rhetorical and literary form that provides for social recognition. On a larger scale the composition of his work relies on him not turning back with nostalgia to the Sodom and Gomorrah of courtly love but rather looking forward to the sound, virtuous marital future of his daughters. His wife has some of the last words on the matter:

Car, ainsi comme l'un boire attrait l'autre, et comme le feu se prent de paille en paille et puis se mest au lit et du lit en la maison, et puis elle art toute, tout ainsi est-il de maintes amouretes. (264)

For, just a channel attracts water, and like fire that spreads from straw to straw and then upon the bed and from the bed to the house, it burns everything in its path; much the same are many *amouretes*.

The Chevalier's literary pretensions are undone by the primacy of domestic realities. Marriage replaces courtly love in its role of paradoxical civilizing institution, thus, the danger of a fire consuming the marital bed and the entire household. Much as in courtly romance, where amorous attachments either drained knights of their capacity to participate in chivalric acts or inspired them to greater prowess, in fourteenth and fifteenth-century texts marriage had taken on some of these same contradictory characteristics. The institution either placed men in a compromising position, obliging them to choose between intellectual and spiritual pursuits or worldly constraints, or provided an arena in which they could demonstrate their ability to govern the basic economic unit of the family, wield justice, and be the moral guarantor of the household by communicating the virtue of a spouse or daughter. In many ways, much like courtly love, talk about marriage had become the means of negotiating relationships of domination and submission between men and expressing a common set of values. Heterosexual relationships, in fact, placed men within the boundaries of homosocial understandings, allowing for demonstrations of political and social power to other men. Courtly love was no longer needed to civilize the bachelor warriors of the court. Rather, in the late medieval period, marriage came to provide a metaphorical space in which kings, knights, and clerics could acknowledge shared or conflicting interests and recognize and promote social alliances in a collective royal war effort against an outside aggressor.

Upholding the institution of marriage is more than a simple family or class affair. Respect for the institution of marriage indicates respect for important medieval social institutions as a whole. The metaphorical use of marriage, whether in the image of the Church as the bride of Christ, or as the organizing principle of a series of aristocratic social relationships and political and economic alliances that went beyond the mere construction of individual domestic units, was a strong signal to a medieval audience. In *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, the narrator

positions his text strategically at an aristocratic crossroads, caught between a nostalgic vision of the courtly tropes of the past and the desire to wield power through legitimate marital unions.

Chapter Two: Playing the Game in *Le Ménagier de Paris*

Le Ménagier de Paris, written in 1394 over twenty years after *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles*, is a conduct book destined, if the author is to be taken at his word, for his much younger wife. What his young reader will soon discover is that keeping house actually is fun and games, at least for her husband. The negotiations that take place there are an important part of maintaining the estate for which she is responsible, the industrious enterprise of Parisian bourgeois domesticity. The author of the work creates an authorial persona through his narrator, and, much like the Chevalier de la Tour Landry, he begins his work by explaining its genesis. In a bedroom *mise en scène*, his newlywed teenage wife requests instruction in her new roles and she will not be disappointed. Like the Chevalier, he begins by describing her religious duties before compiling a lengthy series of *exempla* for the young woman's moral instruction, envisioning a variety of circumstances in which a young wife may find herself. The work also includes more direct, practical forms of instruction for his young wife, explaining everyday household practices and including a cookery adapted from Taillevent's volume. Owing to the heterogeneous nature of this compilation and the ideological *bricolage* he undertakes, his adaptation of source texts is of special interest to the critic. Political investment is not very far from this humble household compendium that would like to present itself as divorced from the ruling caste.

This compendium of theory and practice, an idealized vision that seeks to attain a pragmatic reality, is received differently by the reader than *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry*. At times it might appear more familiar and friendlier, inviting the reader into a historical domestic space; at others, as critics such as Roberta Krueger have observed previously, this familiarity only serves to heighten the brutality of the corrections dealt out to the women who populate the *exempla*. The *Ménagier* wields a distinct type of power from the Knight narrator discussed in the previous chapter. He, too, is concerned with demonstrating his aptitude at governing the microcosm of the household;

yet, rather than offer examples of young women attaining social ascension through fortuitous marriages, he focuses on maintaining the rank of his household. His descriptions of this Parisian domestic space and the bourgeois household practices carried out there provide glimpses of a fourteenth-century historical reality. However, more importantly, they present the desire to define a set of class values and a social organization that the narrator would hope to impose and defend far beyond the confines of his home.

Rather than governing and wielding an aristocratic form of justice, the *Ménagier* is interested in overseeing household affairs and participating in strategic relationships that allow for displays and exchanges of power. Competent and crafty, male figures prefer to assert dominance through betting and winning rather than force. Young women, rather than being the model subjects of a ruler-patriarch, are the tokens of exchange and the symbolic currency of a political economy. Their behavior is the stake in this game of influence. Attempting to turn his back on the values of the aristocracy, refusing the clichés of courtliness, the *Ménagier* is concerned with upholding and celebrating the bourgeois values of domesticity, industry, and profitable leisure. Marriage and householding are entirely different institutions in his work; rather than providing legitimate heirs, the young wife is expected to be the mainstay of a lifestyle that upholds a series of well-defined values.

The narrator chooses and adapts sources for his work according to his marked interest in questions of social class, his rejection of the aristocratic milieu, and his espousal of his own *estat*, or estate. The desire to write a truly “bourgeois” work of conduct is reiterated and discourses concerning relations between the aristocracy and bourgeoisie take on new meanings in this context. The transmission of its manuscripts attests to its appeal for bourgeois and aristocratic readers. To complicate these questions further, the transmission of this bourgeois compendium in Ms. BnF fonds français 12477 within the House of Burgundy demonstrates the interactions between social

classes at the time and the ways in which reception is a clue to the construction of identities.¹⁸ The many conflicting discourses found in the work could also have created possibilities for reception that differed from the author's apparent original intent. In short, this bourgeois enterprise has something for everyone.

Who was the *Ménagier*?

The wealthy narrator's familiarity with the aristocracy is evident. Jérôme Pichon, in the 1847 introduction to his edition of the text, frames the *Ménagier* within its historical context, noting that the author would have seen Charles V's ascension to the throne, his reign, and the subsequent ascension of Charles VI. As such, he explains how the work resonates within the era of Charles V's great literary and translation projects without going so far as to establish a specific link between the monarch and the bourgeois author; "The *Ménagier de Paris* is obviously one of the results of the literary movement of the reign of Charles V and the desire that any man could feel, with the encouragement of the king, to write about the subject that pleased him best and that he knew well" (Pichon xix).¹⁹ Elements of this benevolent and rather democratic vision of Charles V's cultural and social project are inherent to the *Ménagier* text; indeed, the author who undertook its composition placed himself in an authoritative position of knowledge, the vastness of his subject matter only serving to confirm his general culture. Swayed by the author's erudition, Pichon is tempted to include him in the ranks of the royal administration owing to his style, use of the French language, and knowledge of events in the lives of illustrious individuals of the time (xxv-xxx). The questions of identity that the work elicits begin with the anonymity of its author; when faced with the

¹⁸ There are four extant manuscripts : Paris, Ms. BnF. fonds français 12477 (fifteenth-century), Brussels, Bibliothèque royale, 10310-10311 (fifteenth century), Paris, BnF. nouvelles acquisitions françaises 6739 (late fifteenth-century) and Luxembourg, Bibliothèque national du Luxembourg MS I :95 (sixteenth-century) (Greco and Rose 2).

¹⁹ "Le *Ménagier de Paris* est évidemment un des résultats du mouvement littéraire du règne de Charles V et de la tendance qu'avoit alors éprouvée chacun, par suite des encouragemens du roi, à écrire sur le sujet qui lui plaisoit le plus et qu'il connoissoit le mieux."

impossibility of identifying a historical *Ménagier*, the critic's projections and doubts only serve to underscore the instability of the author's literary self-fashioning. The bourgeoisie, the aristocracy, and the laboring class, masculine voices and feminine voices, all of these are poles between which the *Ménagier's* narrator wavers as he negotiates his place in late-medieval Paris.

Given the rich, hybrid nature of the *Ménagier de Paris*, it is no wonder that the surrounding criticism has remarked on its great polyvalence, as an historical document informing the contemporary audience of the domestic and culinary practices of its medieval readership, as a transcription of the possibilities for relationships between the sexes, or as a work with greater social and political valence. The text, as it stands, is organized quite differently from the author's original conception. It contains three "distinctions" or sections; the first, containing nine articles, discusses religious behavior, tells tales of women exemplary for either their chastity or their wifely behavior, and explains how to take care of the husband and the home. It also includes adaptations of the stories of Griselda and Melibee, intertextuality providing a literary scope and political resonance to the *Ménagier*. The second distinction includes a poem attributed to Jehan [Jean or Jacques] Bruyant "Le Chemin de Povreté et de Richesse" [The Way to Poverty and Riches] an article on gardening, and a third on servants, wine, and choosing horses. The third distinction, incomplete, contains its second, fourth, and fifth articles, the first regarding hawking; the latter two form a substantial cookery. The missing articles that the narrator announces at the beginning of his work are absent from all extant manuscripts.

His audience and the critics

Given this lively hodgepodge of material adapted and integrated into the *Ménagier's* work, the audience for the book was most likely diverse; not every owner necessarily made the same use of the book. Roberta Krueger's work on the text has often focused on the historical and social elements

and the impossibility of establishing the order so desired by the narrator. She has studied the discourse on fashion contained not only in the *Ménagier*, but also in *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* and Christine de Pisan's *Livre des Trois Vertus*, to explain how both fashion and conduct books bear witness to the instability of the very social identities they attempt to codify ("Nouvelles choses" 2001). Elsewhere, Krueger sees in the *Ménagier*'s unruly organization and his contradictory messages and *exempla*, the tension between order and chaos that might have encouraged the author to take up his pen in the first place and ultimately leads to the failure of his ability to counsel his wife ("Identity" 2005). For Krueger and many other critics who study conduct books, prescriptive works do not necessarily equate to historical realities; "Beyond the surface disarray of the text, the *Ménagier* represents myriad material disruptions that threaten bourgeois order. (...) Only constant vigilance and close attention to small details keep disaster at bay" ("Identity" 25). In another perspective, Christine Rose reads the *Ménagier* on a social and psychological level, seeing in the book the means to define and shape desires. The work simultaneously instructs medieval women on how to make themselves sought-after mates and informs medieval men of the qualities they should seek in a spouse ("What Every Goodwoman Wants" 393). Lynn Staley considers *Le Ménagier de Paris* within the context of Charles V's France or at least of what remained of it at the time of the work's composition. For Staley, this work about "self-governance" includes *exempla* with political and social tenors that allow it to resonate beyond the bourgeois household (279) and simultaneously imparts older aristocratic values to a bourgeois readership without threatening or contesting the stratified social hierarchy of late-medieval France (280). Staley, like Pichon, situates the work in the same vein as Charles V's program of politically motivated literary endeavors for his household and suggests that this portrait of an "obedient subject" would have thus been appreciated by the Dukes of Burgundy who had understood and adopted the same practice of political cultural patronage (288). Greco and Rose, in the introduction to their recent English translation of the

Ménagier, also denote the political and social ramifications of the texts, exploring much of the scholarship surrounding the stories of Griselda and Melibee and the possible meanings of the author's adaptation of these medieval commonplace *exempla* (Greco and Rose 28-43).

In keeping with the opinions of Staley and Pichon that this text participates in the spirit of other didactic and political writings of the time, I will explore the narrator's interest in establishing an authoritative voice and demonstrating his knowledge not only in order to present the vision of an "obedient subject" but also to project a self-image of a capable administrator. The narrator of the work does not have a unitary voice, but rather is a polyphony of performative voices that change according to the role which he is playing in a given instructional moment. The *Ménagier's* adaptations of the tales of Melibee and Griselda have been often studied; I will consider his wholesale inclusion of Jean Bruyant's "Le Chemin de Povreté et de Richesse" in order to better understand who is educating whom in this text and how this embedded conduct work for newlywed husbands, a passage so often neglected in past studies, actually serves a vital function in completing our understanding of the *Ménagier's* vision of society at large and his aspirations for the place of his own household in this order. I will then focus on his adaptation of a portion of Jacques de Cessolis's *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé* in order to discern how this vision of medieval society might have comforted the *Ménagier* both in his opinions and in his project of orderly social and self-fashioning.

Listening to the Voice of Reason: The *Ménagier* speaks

Ranging from fatherly to authoritarian, this anonymous author complicates the task of the reader by adopting multiple voices and identities. Critics have often commented on the tone of the *Ménagier* narrator's instruction, finding in his displays of didactic prowess both a warm, fatherly figure, but also the menacing, authoritarian presence that has the ability to punish insubordinate young wives. Rose aptly contrasts these differing visions: "...Power finds in the narrator sympathy,

tenderness, and the ‘mellow sadness of an autumn evening,’ at best, the tone recreates that of fatherly advice (but he, we must remember, was *not* her father); at worst it reminds one of the grim and threatening surveillance which Foucault ascribes to Bentham’s model of the Panopticon prison, with everyone watching everyone else, and leading to the interiorization of surveillance” (Rose 402). By introducing the notion of surveillance and underlining that what was intended to be a private, conjugal book has resulted in a “very public document indeed, given its inscribed multiple audience,” Rose hints at the multiplicity of visions and the diverse modes of reception to which the *Ménagier* invites his reader (403). Just as there are several internal and external audiences for the work, the *Ménagier* narrator is also a manifestation of this plurality.

This form of role play is preponderant throughout the text, as the narrator’s self-referential first person singular does not always correspond to one fictionalized authorial identity as the narrator would have us believe. This “I” that represents simultaneously fictional author/narrator, the authoritative voice of his many source texts, and, at times, a projection of the wife’s or reader’s voice, creates a tension that calls into question the traditional reading of the *Ménagier* as a text establishing strict gender and class roles. The seemingly stable wife/husband and bourgeois/aristocrat dichotomies that the *Ménagier* would establish are undone by this type of narration. The constant, verging on obsessive, interest in class and distinguishing his household from the households of the aristocracy and the strict understanding of wifely and husbandly duties are obscured by the many narrative voices. The polyphony becomes a cacophony of counsel adding a certain ambiguity to the advice given.

In the Prologue to the work, before the *Ménagier* begins with his formal instruction, he asks of his young wife that she recognize the condition of the household with an emphasis placed on their *estat* [estate]. “Bourgeois decorum” relies almost entirely on establishing their identity as existing in

opposition to its hierarchical other, the aristocracy. The husband ironically begins his treatise on the innumerable household chores that he expects his young wife will complete by defining appropriate leisure activities for her. These do not include participating in the social activities of the nobility:

Et saichiez que je n'en pren pas desplaisir, mais plaisir, en ce que vous avrez a labourer rosiers, a garder violectes, faire chappeaulx, et aussi en vostre dancier et en vostre chanter, et vueil bien que le continuez entre noz amis et noz pareilz, et n'est que bien et honnesteté de ainsi passer l'eage de vostre adolescence feminine: toutesvoies sans desirer ne vous offrir a repairier en festes ne dances de trop grans seigneurs, car ce ne vous est mie convenable ne afferant a vostre estat ne au mien. (24)²⁰

Understand that it doesn't displease me, but rather pleases me, that you tend roses, raise violets, make garlands of them, and also that you dance and sing. I would like you to continue such activities among our friends and our equals- it is only natural and appropriate that a girl spend her adolescence in such pursuits, as long as you don't desire to frequent parties or dances of high-ranking lords, because that would not be appropriate to your rank or mine. (Greco and Rose 49)²¹

As the young wife will soon see, she will have precious little time to devote to these bucolic activities. The narrator creates distinct boundaries between social classes by distinguishing between the leisure activities in which his wife can properly participate with their friends and homologues and the activities that might tempt her but in which she should avoid being seen participating. The public nature and multiple inscribed audiences of the work suggested by Rose provide the setting for a true performance. The disparaging superlative construction describing the undesirable company that his wife might seek out, the *trop grans seigneurs*, raises the question of how just such a formulation would have been received by an aristocratic audience. An ironic reception might have understood wry flattery; a member of the nobility might have been well pleased by this bourgeois denunciation of aristocratic excess just as he might be reassured by the narrator's recognition and praise of bourgeois sufficiency as a class value. Such a clearly defined separation of social classes might have appealed both to aristocratic and bourgeois audiences. However, this definition of separate spheres is not as clear as it could be.

²⁰ All Middle French textual citations for the text are from *Le Mesnagier de Paris*. Ed. Georgina E. Brereton and Janet M. Ferrier, trans. Karin Ueltschi, Lettres Gothiques. Paris: Livre de Poche, 1994.

²¹ All English translations are from *The Good Wife's Guide (Le Ménagier de Paris) : A Medieval Household Book*. Trans. Gina L. Greco and Christine M. Rose. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2009.

The narrator is careful to draw another distinction. While suggesting the homogeneity of their own household, he refers to their joint *estat* [estate] as belonging to each of them separately. This grammatical disjunction is but one of the first tightly drawn distinctions that he will make between the identity of his wife and himself. If we are to believe that his young wife was indeed an orphan of minor aristocratic lineage, the assimilation with which he presents their place in the world at once recognizes and abolishes difference. He extends this social homogeneity to those with whom they live, referring to his wife's family members and neighbors.

[...] saichiez, chiere seur, qu'il me souffist bien que vous me faictes autel service comme vos bonnes voisines font a leurs mariz qui sont pareilz a nous et de nostre estat et comme vos parentes font a leurs mariz de pareil estat que nous sommes. Si vous en conseillez presentement a elles, et aprez leur conseil si en faictes ou plus ou moins selon vostre vouloir. (24)

[...] know, my dear, that it is enough for me that you treat me as your good neighbors or relatives, who are of our same rank, treat their husbands. Consult them first about this, then follow their advice, more or less, as you please. (49-50)

The rather awkward formulation, “*pareilz a nous et de nostre estat (...) de pareil estat que nous sommes*” is a stylistic hint at the narrator's overarching obsession with class and social status. This clumsy articulation reveals a true anxiety regarding class identity. Proximity and family relationships create a space of trust and a unified domestic locus from which to speak. Like the Chevalier de la Tour Landry in his garden, the *locus amoenus* which becomes a space for the transmission of knowledge, the *Ménagier* makes of his neighborhood a space in which domestic practices can be shared. He also provides the young wife with living models of whom she may ask advice, much as the La Tour Landry creates a virtuous genealogy for his daughters. The household and bourgeois identities provide a refuge for the newlywed couple. Although he advises her to seek counsel, the young wife might soon find more than enough advice provided by her husband, presenting not only acts to accomplish but also words to speak. When seeking to distinguish himself from the aristocracy, the narrator is not against playing the role of other social actors.

Role playing games on a less than level playing field

Just as in the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry* and in keeping with the cultural paradigm of his era, the first distinction of the *Ménagier* establishes the virtue of his household; the husband's ability to ensure it is tantamount to the credibility of this didactic project. Rather than teach through an immediate series of *exempla*, the narrator adopts the role of the priest and father confessor. The *Ménagier* would seem to be all things within his own home. He can simply play the part in order to acquire the authority he covets. The narrative voice varies between a priestly posture and the tone of the young woman reciting her prayers.

In the third article of the first distinction, "Enseignement catéchistique et moral," the narrator provides lengthy descriptions of the different parts of the mass. Then, he literally puts words into his wife's mouth in his discussion of the seven deadly sins and their corresponding virtues. It is unlikely that the fictional wife in question was ignorant of the components of the mass, but presenting her with a series of appropriate prayers to recite and potential sins to be wary of might serve other purposes. It reflects the author's knowledge of spiritual life and his espousal of these values, all the while allowing him to assume the power over his wife normally relegated to moralists and clergy members. There is no note of anticlericalism or contestation; the narrator calmly reaffirms the place of the Church and religion in his household and conveniently usurps the authority that these moral discourses guarantee. However, as the article progresses, there is a conflation of his own discourse, that of an imagined religious authority, and the words that the wife is to speak.

This priestly privilege is not the only one that the narrator grants himself. He can also become a woman when he chooses. In his display of good prayer practice, his utterances become feminized as his use of masculine endings is progressively replaced by feminine ones. For example, in his discussion of the sin of "jactence" (boastfulness) he provides both the masculine and feminine

forms: “Je me suis esleve ou eslevee et vanté de mes maux que j’avoie faiz et dis...” (...) “Je me suis eslevee ou eslevé et ay eu orgueil...” (78) [I puffed myself up and boasted of the malice I had told and done... (...) I bragged and was conceited...]. However, shortly thereafter, he returns to entirely masculine endings, “Quant je me suis aucunefoiz confessé, en ma confession je me suis excusé...” (82) [Sometimes when I did confess, I began my confession by making excuses for myself...] (70).

On the other hand, feminine adjectival endings most often appear in his discussions of sins that he considers to be of special danger for his spouse.

J’ay désiré vaine gloire en querant les honneurs, et estre pareil aux plus grans es vestemens, es autres choses aussi, et ay eu gloire d’estre des haultes personnes honorees, d’avoir leur grace, estre haultement saluee, et que honneur et grant reverence me fust portee pour ma beauté, pour ma richesse, pour ma noblesse, pour mon lignaige, pour estre joliment asseee, pour moult bien chanter, dancier, et doucement rire, jouer et parler. J’ay voulu et souffert estre la plus honnoree partout. (82)

I desired vainglory in seeking honors, in craving to be attired just as well as the foremost citizens in the finest of clothing, and in other ways. I had the triumph of being honored by the most eminent people, having their goodwill, being grandly saluted, and receiving honor and reverence for my beauty, wealth, nobility, lineage, my elegance, beautiful singing and dancing, graceful laughter, playing, and speech. I sought to be the most honored everywhere and was gratified to be so considered. (70)

The past participles “saluee,” “portee,” and “asseee” all bear feminine endings perhaps because the author felt that “vaine-gloire” was a particularly feminine sin or one that his wife was in particular danger of committing. The personalization of this passage also underscores the narrator’s message: his wife should not seek to be the equal of those of greater standing who have more conspicuous signs of material wealth. More dangerous than vanity is the young woman’s desire for social ascension, even if in appearance only. The questions of beauty and clothing are important reminders for a young woman of the bourgeoisie to maintain her estate and not overstep the boundaries of her station in life by dressing inappropriately. This sartorial ascendancy envisioned speaks to another boundary that she should not cross. The behavior that he indicates could also be of a courtly nature, “...moult bien chanter, dancier, et doucement rire, jouer et parler...” are forms of behavior prescribed more for the ideal courtier who would have attended the “festes” and

“dances” eluded to previously. The feminine speech reproduced by the narrator is inspired by *La Somme le Roy*, composed in 1279 for Philippe le Hardi (Brereton and Ferrier xxxiv). She speaks of her desire to be honored by high personages, all while indicating the nobility of her birth, “...pour ma richesse, pour ma noblesse, pour mon lignaige...” The sin of “vaine-gloire” is something that she could potentially commit, but it would not necessarily be for the same reasons or in the same context as that of the aristocratic, seemingly feminine voice that is channeled by the narrator. Desiring to draw distinct boundaries between his own masculine, bourgeois identity and the feminized version he provides for his wife, his example blurs these lines. By prohibiting the behavior, he allows his wife the possibility of reproducing this discourse all while bringing into question both his authoritative masculine position and his class identity.

Verbal intercourse and social promiscuity

Danger lurks when the young reader is finally allowed to speak on her own and not merely repeat the words of the narrator. Control over the young woman’s speech, which the narrator had painstakingly attempted to exert in the eighth article of the first book, reflects the medieval antifeminist tradition that considers women’s speech dangerous and excessive. It also suggests the tenuousness of the author’s negotiation of the space he occupies inside and between social classes. He warns against speaking to members of courtly households and assimilates them with “gens arrogans.” By entering into verbal commerce with those who could be considered her social superiors, she would seemingly lose her own authority within the household. The question of self-control is vital and expressed in proverbial fashion.

Et moult de perilz sont venuz de trop parler, et par especial quant l’en prend parolles a gens arrogans ou de grant courage ou gens de court ou seigneurs. Et par especial gardez vous en tous vos faiz de prendre parolles a telles gens. Et se par adventure telles gens se adressent a vous, si les eschevez et laissez sagement et courtoisement, et ce sera grant sens a vous. [...] Car il est trouvé ung proverbe rural qui dist que: *Aucun n’est digne d’avoir seignourie ou maistrise sur aultruy qui ne peut estre maistre de luy mesmes.* (308)

Many dangers have come from overmuch talk, especially when speaking with arrogant or strong-tempered people or persons of the court or lords. Above all, refrain from conversing with such folk, and if by chance they should speak to you, it will be wise of you, and indeed it is crucial, to avoid them, withdrawing sensibly and courteously. However much it pains you, you must nonetheless master the control of your speech, for a person who cannot do so is not wise. As the country proverb goes: “*No one is worthy of mastery over another if he cannot master himself.*” (142)

The seriousness of the author’s words is emphasized by the extreme position that he suggests for his wife: when spoken to by someone of higher status than hers, she should remain silent and part company. The absoluteness of his advice, indicated with the expression “*en tous vos faiz*” and his suggestion to avoid the aristocracy is of note in that this obviously does not apply to him. His own commerce or that of other members of the bourgeoisie with the aristocracy is mentioned in other instances in the text. If we adopt Pichon’s suppositions concerning his career, the logical conclusion would be that the wife should potentially avoid her husband’s associates and the social superiors with whom he is in contact. Regarding the potentially dishonest behavior that could be provoked by verbal intercourse with the aristocracy, he makes his point with a “*proverbe rural*” [country proverb], juxtaposing the corrupt world of the court with a certain rural authenticity and simplicity, neither of which accurately represent his own bourgeois social context. As in the *Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry*, women who involve themselves in the game of witty social banter lose. The rural proverb privileges quaintness and speaks to his desire to rule over his own estate. It also suggests that self-government is obtained by displaying control over himself and, as an extension of his own person, his wife. The concepts of moderation and appropriateness of conduct and speech are of increasing concern to the narrator, especially when he instructs his wife in her governance of the household.

The Ménagier manages

This translates urgency within the author’s project as he must provide her with the worldly knowledge and experience that he believes she is lacking. As noted by Krueger, “The narrator’s light

touch as an indulgent husband and his serious agenda as moralist and household manager are in opposition from the start” (“Identity” 23). By appealing to her sense of responsibility and desire to please, he is proving his own managerial skill in the affairs of the household. His exhortations of self-control and his desire to control his other half translates his belief in his own capacity to govern his household and, by extension, a larger political enterprise. His display of agency in recreating an appropriate social hierarchy within the home legitimates his position as an administrator at a time when a historical vacuum drew many a bourgeois into positions of authority.

The good estate manager also knows how to delegate. He has absolute authority over his wife, but she is also allowed to govern by proxy in his absence if indeed she correctly assimilates his many lessons. What more encouragement would the good pupil need than a transfer of power? In the second distinction, article three, regarding the hiring of household servants, the keeping of wine and the care of horses, he ascribes several prestigious roles for her to assume in his absence.

Apres, chere seur, sachiez que sur elles, apres vostre mary, vous devez estre maistresse de l’ostel, commandeur, visiteur et gouverneur et souverain administrateur; et a vous appartient de les tenir en vostre subjection et obeissance, les endoctriner, corriger et chastier. (440)

Next, my dear, know that after your husband, you must be mistress of the house, giver of orders, inspector, ruler, and sovereign administrator over the servants. It is incumbent upon you to require submission and obedience to you and to teach, reprove, and punish the staff. (217)

The accumulation of administrative titles, all masculine ones at that, “commandeur, visiteur, et gouverneur et souverain administrateur,” speaks to his interest in positions of authority. By attributing them to his wife, he attributes them to himself. There is a transfer from husband to wife of the educational project. Just as he has done with her, she too will soon be able to demand obedience and teach, correct, and punish the subservient members of the household. His lively, dramatized descriptions of the potential laborers that she could hire reveal class prejudice and doubts about her abilities to accomplish these tasks. In one instance, he recreates a conversation between an estate holder and a day laborer who contests his salary, which had not been negotiated beforehand

(*Mesnager* 434). When in doubt and to avoid such instances, his wife should delegate to trustworthy, experienced household employees. Like the pieces on a game board, the narrator anticipates the moves of his household members and how to counter them. Strategy is the key to the wise management of an estate.

And the obedient shall be obeyed

However, for his young wife to be obeyed, she must first learn to obey her husband. Questions of obedience and subservience occupy a good portion of the *Ménagier de Paris* allowing the narrator to express his understanding of these concepts, an important demonstration if he is to obey a superior or be obeyed by others. The fictional wives in these tales help him to achieve this. The most strikingly violent example of voluntary wifely subservience is the very popular *exemplum* of Griselda. Other tales of lesser trials fill the pages of the work, too. Naturally, as Staley states, "...the entire article on obedience suggests the ways in which properly observed hierarchy, or the wife's internalized acquiescence to hierarchy, is the key to order" (278). The sixth article of the first distinction regarding obedience is a lengthy one; it begins with the story of Griselda and many anecdotal tales in medieval settings follow, perhaps in an attempt to lighten the mood for the young readership. Before the narrator makes these tales of obedience public, he reminds his wife of the importance of not contesting his authority in the presence others.

Jasoit ce qu'ilz sont aucunes femmes qui pardessus la raison et sens de leurs maris veulent gloser et esplucher; et encores pour faire les sages et les maistresses font elles plus en devant les gens que autrement, qui est le pis. Car jasoit ce que ne vueille mie dire qu'elles ne doivent tout savoir et que leurs mariz ne leur doivent tout dire, toutesvoies ce doit estre dit et fait apart, et doit venir du vouloir et de la courtoisie du mary, non mie de l'auctorité, maistrise et seignourie de la femme qui le doit par manière de dominacion interroguer devant la gent ; car devant la gent, pour monstrier son obeissance et pour son honneur garder, n'en doit elle sonner mot, pour ce qu'il sembleroit a la gent qui ce orroient que le mary eust acoustumé a rendre compte de ses vuloirs a sa femme. (242-44)

However, there are some women who want to gloss and dissect their husband's reason and good sense, and what is worse, to look wise and masterful, they do it more in public than in private. For although I don't at all wish to say that they should not know their husband's business and that their husbands should not tell them everything, nonetheless it should be said and done in private and must come from a husband's will and courtesy,

not at all from the authority, master, and lordship of the woman who interrogates him in front of people. In public, to show her obedience and to maintain her honor, she should not speak a word, because it would seem to people who would hear it that the husband was accustomed to giving his wife an account of his reasons. (122)

The narrator disapproves not of his wife's knowledge of the affairs of their domestic life stemming from the courteous instruction of her husband, but rather of her open contestation of his authority. As such, the author makes public his own assimilation of an important medieval political lesson: overt dissension can undermine authority; knowledge made public can provide for self-authorized mastery and sovereignty. It would seem that he had followed the lessons of Charles V quite well and intends to convey this through his work. Such practices might be dangerous for a young wife, and their critique helps her socially ambitious spouse to prove his legitimacy as an authority figure.

Before beginning his telling of the many humorous tales of wifely obedience and disobedience, he reports an unfortunate event that befell "une femme de tresgrant nom en bourgeoisie qui est mariee en une bonne personne, et sont deux bonnes creatures" (248) [a woman from a bourgeois family of distinction who is married to a good man, and they are both decent creatures] (124) at the hands of a tyrannical aristocrat during the Maillotin uprising in Paris. Her absolute obedience to her husband allows him to exonerate her in the eyes of public opinion. This might seem paradoxical given the nature of the story he is about to tell.

Le cas est tel, qu'ilz demeurent en une des plus grans citez de ce royaume. Son mary et plusieurs autres bourgoiz furent de par le roy emprisonnez pour une rebellion que le commun avoit faite. Chascun jour l'en en coppoit les testes a .iii. ou a .iiii. d'iceulx. (...) L'un des seigneurs qui estoit entour le roy, comme non cremant Dieu ne sa justice, mais comme cruel et felon tirant, fist dire a icelle bourgoise que s'elle vouloit faire sa volenté, sans faulte il feroit delivrer son mary (...) Son mary lui commanda que, comment qu'il fust, qu'elle fist tant qu'il eschappast sans mort, et qu'elle n'y espargnast ne son corps, ne son honneur, ne autre chose pour le sauver et rescourre sa vie. A tant se partirent l'un de l'autre tous deux plorans. Pluseurs des autres prisonniers bourgoiz furent decapitez, son mary fut delivré. (248-50)

This is the situation : they live in one of the greatest cities of this kingdom. The king because of a rebellion of the city's inhabitants imprisoned her husband and several other compatriots. Each day, three or four of these prisoners were beheaded. (...) One of the lords who was close to the king, a cruel and treacherous tyrant fearing neither God nor His justice, sent a wicked message to the bourgoise saying that if she agreed to satisfy his lustful desires, he would have her husband set free without fail. (...) Her husband bid her do what was necessary for him to escape with his life, whatever it took, and not to spare her body or her honor or any other thing to

save him. On this they parted from each other tearfully. Several of the other prisoners were beheaded, but her husband was freed. (124)

The young wife, upon order from her husband who fears for his life, complies with the tyrant's wishes. This story, when read within the context of the tales of Susannah and Lucretia that are told earlier in the *Ménagier's* work, attenuates their message. A wife's own life may be risked in order to preserve her chastity, whereas her husband's life must be spared at all costs. What is found here is not a heroic gesture on the part of the virtuous woman, but rather a bourgeois compromise forced by the hand of the tyrant. Equally important is the public acceptance that "what had to be done, had to be done." A similar compromise to preserve honor and save face is found in the story of the unfaithful wife for whom the husband provided the pretext of a pilgrimage to save his reputation and hers (318). This signals a more benevolent position on the part of the *Ménagier* regarding chastity than the draconian punishments enumerated by the Chevalier de la Tour Landry. It also speaks to a form of solidarity within the couple and a bourgeois investment in keeping up appearances. In the face of aristocratic tyranny, wifely acquiescence to the compromises of a bourgeois husband is the only possibility for salvation. As will be seen later, the narrator is not as lenient with unfaithful aristocratic women. Two sexual standards are at work here.

In this *exemplum*, more important than chastity is the preoccupation with the tyranny of the aristocrat who perpetrates this detestable crime. Whereas in the story of Roman Lucretia the victim pays for the crime, this is inconceivable for the *Ménagier* in this instance of Parisian class struggle. For Staley, "...the stories of Susannah, Griselda, and Prudence are not merely domestic dramas but also describe what can easily be seen as social or political issues. Moreover, they do so by implicitly problematizing issues of social justice, such as equity, tyranny, or wise rule, in relation to a discussion of female conduct in marriage. The wives in each story are above reproach" (279). These issues are at work in this story for the *Ménagier* as he denounces the tyranny of those who visited injustice on this couple:

Mais toutesvoyes je laisse le cas qui est villain a raconter et trop grant (maudit soit le tirant qui ce fist !) et revien a mon propos que l'en doit obeir a son mary, et laisseray les grans cas et prendray les petis cas d'esbatement. (250)

At any rate, I now leave this matter that is unpleasant to tell and too serious (cursed be the tyrant who did it !), and I return to my topic, that one must obey one's husband, and I will leave such weighty matters for those of lesser magnitude. (124)

The antidote to tyranny is wise rule and equity within the couple to preserve the husband's life and the continuity of their household. The narrator seems particularly touched by this story and says so as he introduces it, "Et a ce propos je vous diray une piteuse merveille, et que je plain bien" (248) [On this subject, I will tell you a piteous and astonishing tale, which provokes sympathy] (123-4). Obedience is made a bourgeois value by the narrator of the work as he demonstrates how it can preserve the existence of the founders of a domestic unit. His display of humility and moral fortitude are an appeal to any social superior who might happen to read his book. He knows how to obey a righteous ruler and preserve his station in the face of tyranny, an important political posture in a world of shifting alliances and social uncertainty. Having made the case for absolute wifely compliance, and thus his own paradoxical mastery and subservience, he concludes by stating that he will turn from this very serious story to lighter subjects for both his and the reader's entertainment.

Making earnest of game

Repeated illustrations of husbandly authority follow, but the lowered stakes of these gaming tales are less likely to be perceived as criticism of abusive forms of authority. On the contrary, testing wives becomes the occasion to create masculine solidarity. The stories that follow are humorous in narrative tone as colluding husbands joyously test their wives who ridicule themselves in public with their insubordination. In these communities of men governance becomes game. The groups are often heterogeneous, composed of men of different social classes and functions, participating in social occasions where talk frequently turns to the obedience, or lack thereof, of their wives. Much like in the fabliaux, the sense of game, strategy, and spirited contest are present. While the fabliaux as

a genre largely function on class and gender stereotypes and satire, the bourgeois narrator would seem to want to turn the tables a bit in this portion of the work. Gone is the ridiculed husband of the “Bourgeoise d’Orleans,” who finds himself *cocu, battu, et content* [cuckolded, beaten, and happy] for all to see.²² Obedient wives are the pride, joy, and claim to social fame for the lucky husbands in these stories. Those whose wives, and by extension themselves, are the losers in these contests, find their authority and credibility undermined.

These are merit-based contests, not class-based condemnations such as those found in the *fabliaux*; in these examples, the best bourgeois may in fact win. As such, the narrator’s stories in this section serve to undo the many negative visions of bourgeois domesticity presented in comic texts like the *fabliaux*. He is able to subvert the stereotype of the simple-minded obliviousness of the older bourgeois husband within his own home, replacing this figure of times past with the knowledgeable, competent, and virtuous individual emerging in the fourteenth-century collective imaginary. The author’s inclusion of a rewriting of the “Farce du Cuvier” demonstrates his knowledge of this type of twelfth and thirteenth-century literature and thus supports the idea that he seeks to subvert it (*Mesnager* 237). By changing the social dynamics of these tales, he is able to rehabilitate the bourgeois male as a capable head of household.

Once again, the performative nature of the *Ménager*’s storytelling is vital. Each of these stories has actors who are tricked into engaging in certain types of behavior and an audience ready to scrutinize and disapprove of them. This form of social correction mirrors the structure of the work itself; a narrator displays the interstices of daily, domestic life in order to reprimand and seek approval. In these instances, the audience finds itself invited to meals and is privy to the conversation

²² In Willem Noomen and Nico van den Boogaard *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux (NRCF)*. Vol. 3. Assen et Maastricht : Van Gorcum, 1986, 337-374 and 459-465. “The Wife of Orléans” is a genre defining tale in which an upstart bourgeois husband finds himself duped by his wife so that she may entertain her lover. The incipit of the *fabliau* makes note of the fact that the husband is punished for having aspired to greater social status, an interesting observation in light of the *Ménager*’s ambivalent project to defend his class values and render them public, suggesting that should anyone be looking for a good bourgeois to promote in the ranks, he is available.

that takes place there, these heterogeneous repasts hinting at the class transcending cookery that is to follow. Could the diners be partaking in the very same dishes that will be carefully described in the last distinction? Does the composite nature of the groups of diners suggest who will eventually “consume” this book?

In the one of the first stories in this section, the reader is invited to a dinner in the home of the “Bailli de Tournay,” a “bailli” being a royal judicial administrator of a local jurisdiction. The narrator provides a creative transition for introducing his story, claiming that this one will be about the “games and joys” between husbands and wives. What follows might not be exactly what the reader expects and it remains to be seen who is having fun at the expense of whom.

Et a ce propos de jeux et esbatemens entre les mariz et les femmes, par Dieu j'ay ouy dire au Bailli de Tournay qu'il a esté en pluseurs compaignies et disners avecques hommes qui estoient de long temps mariez, et avecques iceulx a fait plusieurs bourgages et gaigeures de paier le disner qu'ilz avroient fait, et pluseurs escos et disners a païé sur condicion que d'ilecques tous les compaignons de l'escot yroient ensemble en l'ostel de tous iceulx mariez, l'un aprez l'autre. Et celui de l'assemblee qui aroit femme si obeissant qui la peust arrangement et sans faillir faire compter jusques a .iiii. sans arrest, contradicion, mocquerie ou replicacion, seroit quite de l'escot ; et celui ou ceulx de qui les femmes seroient rebelles et reppliqueroient, et mosqueroient ou desdiroient, icellui escot rendroient a chascun autant. (252)

On the topic of games and pleasures between husbands and wives, by God, I heard the bailiff of Tournai say that he had attended several gatherings and dinners with men who had been married a long time, making with them several bets and wagers to pay for the dinner they had just eaten. They also bet on future dinner bills, on the condition that together all the members of the party would go to each married man's house to ascertain who in the group had a wife so obedient that he could, without a warning and without her making any mistakes, order her to count to 4 without pause, contradiction, derision, or protest. Such a man would be free of his share of the bill, and the one or ones whose wives were rebellious and answered back, mocked, or refused would have to pay for the others' dinner. (125)

In a nod at his understanding of the importance of protocol and order, the narrator pays special attention to his description of the rules of the game, the rewards (dinner) and the penalties (paying for dinner) coming well in advance of the actual contest itself. In keeping with the practice of rendering the private sphere public for scrutiny, the diners will be invited into each other's homes where they can witness the test of each individual wife. Making their wives count to four without questioning their husband's request is both a test of the wife's obedience but also the husband's

authority over her. Each participant opens himself to the type of situation that the narrator fears at the beginning of this series of stories, being contradicted in public by his wife. The ridiculous request, which openly questions the wife's intellectual faculties and invites her credulity, puts the husband in a position to expect an unfavorable response on her part. What wife would allow herself to be so ridiculed? As so desired by the narrator, the good wife reveals her knowledge only upon her husband's request.

As the group wanders from household to household, those who do not pass muster are named by their names. Robin and Marie, Jean and Agnès, and Mr. and Mrs. Tassin all fail in the endeavor. The narrator contents himself to state that the joyous winners are men who had married well brought up and well taught young women, the young female reader most likely eagerly wanting to envision herself in these categories and succeed in such a test should it arise.

The next test takes place in another mixed group, as three abbots and three husbands discuss whether the abbots' monks or the husbands' wives are the most obedient.

Et a ce propos je tray un raconte qui dit: Trois abbez et trois mariez estoient en une compaignie, et entre eulz mut une question en disant lesquelz estoient plus obeissans, ou les femmes a leurs mariz ou les religieux a leur abbé. Et sur ce eurent moult de paroles, d'argumens et exemples racontez d'une part et d'autre. (260)

On this subject I cite a tale of three abbots and three husbands who were gathered and one of them raised the question, asking who was more obedient, wives to their husbands or monks to their abbot? Much was debated on this topic, with arguments and examples offered on both sides. (127)

The question as it is asked resembles a *débat* [debate], a popular form of entertainment during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries at the royal court. Debating more or less serious topics allowed the participants to display their knowledge and verbal acumen in public. However, in this story the question does not just remain an abstract rhetorical exercise. Regaling themselves with the same pleasures as Griselda's husband, the Marquis de Saluces, the husbands and abbots are able to put their subordinates to the test. The abbots instruct their monks to put sticks next to their beds and

await punishment while the husbands instruct their wives to place a broom behind the bedroom door without questioning their husbands' motives. The abbots win; each monk obeys and does as instructed. Each of the wives fails. The narrator evokes the naturalness of this outcome: of course the monks obeyed, they are men; the wives, of course, disobeyed because they are women.

The tripartite structure of these challenges has meaning. Much as Griselda was tested three times by Walter, in the first story the narrator tells of three couples who failed at the trial and in the second of three more disobedient wives. In these stories, the folk paradigm discussed in the previous chapter, in which two contestants fail paving the way for a victorious third, does not hold up. There is no winning wife and the husbands lose the ten francs that they had each wagered. The paradoxical position in which the *Ménagier* places his young reader is worth noting here: she cannot possibly obey because she is a woman, but she should certainly try lest he lose out in this social contest of wits and authority. This also allows the *Ménagier* to display his ability to govern the ungovernable, to rule over the most unruly of all subjects, a woman.

The narrator himself takes great pleasure in telling these tales as witnessed by the many variations on the theme. Again and again, testing wives is a form of entertainment between social classes. In one of the few references to the historical backdrop of the work, written in the midst of the Hundred Years' War, the story of the lord of Andresel is told. It would seem that he finds himself at a loss for *divertissement* in the city of Melun, and the narrator recounts the following firsthand experience:

Par Dieu, je veys a Melun une chose bien estrange un jour que le sire <de> d'Andresel estoit cappitaine de la ville, car en pluseurs lieux les Anglois estoient logiez a l'environ. Les Naverroiz estoient logiez dedans le chastel, et un aprez disner ledit sire d'Andresel estoit a la porte, et lui annyoit, et se demenoit qu'il ne savoit ou aler esbatre pour passer le jour. Un escuier lui dist : 'Sire, voulez vous aler veoir une demoiselle demourant en ceste ville qui fait quanque son mary lui commande ?' Le sire d'Andresel lui respondit que : 'Ouy. Alons.' (264)

By God, I beheld a very strange thing in Melun, during the time that the sire d'Andresel was captain of the town. The English were lodged in several places in the vicinity and the men of Navarre inside the castle. One

day after dinner the said sire d'Andresel was at the door, bored, griping that he had no idea where to go to have a good time and pass the day. A squire said to him, "Lord, do you want to go see a damsel living in this town who does anything that her husband commands?" The sire d'Andresel replied, "Yes. Let's go!" (129)

The squire's suggestion that seeing an obedient wife is ludicrous and Andresel's enthusiastic response to his proposition verge on the ridiculous. The two rapidly go to the home of the husband of the obedient wife, also a squire. The lord of Andresel makes a bet with the man; should his wife pass the test, he will pay for dinner. In an aristocratic gesture of generosity, the squire states that he would rather reverse the bet and wager that his wife will disobey allowing him to pay for dinner for Andresel when he loses. Andresel, a true aristocrat, will have none of it. He asks the young woman to jump over a stick which she does three times. Quite content, he returns home and asks his own wife to do the same; she promptly refuses. The narrator empathizes with Andresel's plight, hoping that his wife will preserve his honor and prove obedient. The contrast between Andresel's aristocratic gesture of insisting on receiving the short end of the stick and his wife's contempt of his authority raises a question; could this be a veiled, humorous form of dissension on the part of the author, a one-ups-manship of the aristocracy by the bourgeois narrator? When elsewhere bourgeois husbands win and lose, the narrator makes it a point to mention the status of each actor in this story several times. Andresel has less authority in his home than a squire; what is more, he does not know how to entertain himself and relies on a subordinate to suggest activities. Previously "nobles seigneurs" were criticized for their life of leisure and lack of industry. Andresel's wife did not contest his authority in public; she does so in the privacy of their own home and it is revealed by a bourgeois story teller. It would seem that there is dissension in the ranks.

So amused by these stories is our narrator, that he tells another tale that follows the same paradigm and in which he is a participant. The same scenario plays itself out again in the anecdote of the Ménagier's trip to Bar sur l'Aube.

Pluseurs des jennes hommes de la ville, mariez en icelle, desquelz aucuns avoient a moy aucune congnoissance, vindrent a moy prier de soupper avecques eulx, si comme ilz disorient, et disoient leur cas estre tel : Ilz estoient pluseurs hommes jennes et assez nouvellement mariez et a jennes femmes, et s'estoient trouvez en une compaignie sans autres gens sages. Si avoient enquis de l'estat l'un de l'autre, et trouverent par les diz d'un chascun que chascun d'eulx cuidoit avoir la meilleur et la plus obeissant femme, de toutes obeissances, commandemens et deffenses, petites ou grans. (268)

Several young men of the town who were married there and knew me somewhat came to entreat me to have supper with them, and they presented their situation as such : These men were married fairly recently to young wives, and there was not a sage amongst them. They had inquired of each other and realized from each man's answer that each of them believed he had the best and most obedient wife, compliant in all things- orders or interdictions, large or small. (130)

Once again a group of husbands bets on the obedience of their wives, each planning to visit the other's home to test their wives by asking them for a household object, with the losers whose wives would refuse or question them paying for a meal. In this instance, the prize is more modest; the meal costs merely a franc given the age and status of the participants. The *Ménagier* does not inform his audience of the outcome of this contest; however, his narrative confers a higher social status to him than to the participants. By emulating the game of obedience, these young burghers and the *Ménagier* who serves as an overseer establish a social organization that mirrors that of the lord and squires in the previous tale. A wife's obedience becomes the focal point around which men can create ties of solidarity and cooperation. Finally, a strange form of agency is granted to these young women; they may change the course of events for their household, if only in a modest scope.

The *Ménagier's* article on wifely obedience is far from being just a lesson for wives. The confidential tone and humor make a case for them being appreciated by a masculine audience. More than that, they display the renegotiation of a series of class roles and demonstrate that there is both "jeu" and "jeu" in the social hierarchy, that is to say play and space for slippage. Through the veil of humor directed at a masculine audience, the *Ménagier* demonstrates an implicit form of contestation. Ruling well is no longer a question of social class but rather one of aptitude and strategy. As Rose states, "Images of profit and loss abound, the language of economics, of men wagering, show this bourgeois authorial voice to be deeply concerned with commerce, money and goods (...) [Le

Ménagier] is a secular, class specific document” (Rose 400). His adaptation of another famous treatise on gaming shows that he understood the full political and social import of referring to games in the late Middle Ages. By embracing the values of the aristocratic game of chess, he recognizes the legitimate roles played by each member of society.

Playing the part: Bourgeoisie, aristocracy, and *Le jeu des échecs moralisé*

The author repeatedly appropriates the discourses of aristocratic sources, even as he criticizes their values and social practices; could it be inferred that he too would like to make a claim to *largesse* much like the squire in the story of the Lord of Andresel? Whether a member of the royal administration or not, he clearly felt the need to reassert his own station in life, discursively mapping out the place of his household within two social circles that were intimately entrenched during the fourteenth century. By adopting aristocratic examples, he indicates that codes of conduct were not uniquely bourgeois or uniquely aristocratic. Appropriation and imitation allowed for proper forms of behavior to be renegotiated for men as they simultaneously tried to impose them on their female readership. This movement, this back and forth, resembles the wagers and games to which the author of the *Ménagier* refers. Demonstrating the virtue of a household wins both recognition and reward, symbolized by the many meals to be shared among men. At the same time, the stakes are high and the author recognizes that risking loss is an inevitable part of the wager. However, it would seem that taking part in the game, being a participant in this exchange, is already a claim to a place in society, allowing one to uphold their station in life all the better.

Although wagering is presented as a form of homosocial bonding in the previous tales, another game serves as a subtext for article four of the first distinction regarding feminine chastity. The author adapts several of his *exempla* from *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé*, written by Jacobus de Cessolis and translated into French by Jean Ferron in 1347. The author relies on a variety of sources and he

takes more liberties with some than with others. For the story of Griselda, he relies almost exclusively on Philippe de Meziere's version as told in *Le Livre de la vertu et du sacrement du mariage* and leaves it virtually unaltered. For the story of Melibee, he adopts Renaud de Louen's version of the story as told by Albertano di Brescia. However, the *exempla* of Raymonde and Lucretia that he borrows from Jean Ferron's translation of *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé* are more personalized and he seems to have taken great pleasure in adding his own literary flourishes. Brereton observes that this was his source for this section to which he added his own personal touches ("Deux sources" 346). However, upon careful comparison, other details in the story of Lucretia show that it might have been drawn from Livy's Latin text as he claims, or another slightly different version of this story that was more faithful to Livy's text. I would argue, however, that the modifications made are not merely the result of a desire to render the settings and practices therein more contemporary. There is a political and social will behind the modifications made to a text that was already highly political in nature. While Brereton and Ferrier rightly argue that the narrator's bourgeois identity lies in his knowledge of the people and practices of his social class, it could be argued as well that his adaptation of literary sources commonly associated with the aristocracy speak to a class concern. The *Ménagier*, while primarily a guide for his wife's conduct, was also the means to converse with readers in places of power in late medieval France.

The emendations made by the author are a question of both his tastes and a desire for appropriation. Telling the tale of Griselda or Melibee is no empty gesture; the stories, when read together, demonstrating obedience and the willingness to be an active participant in political life, perhaps even expressing one's ability and capacity to provide counsel. The intellectual liberty that Prudence displays in advising her husband is the same type of freedom of tone and content that this bourgeois author will provide for his willing listener elsewhere. Both Griselda and Prudence devise

strategies for dealing with unreasonable, tyrannical men. The author is displaying his ability to do the same.

Near and dear to his heart was most certainly the message that was the premise for Jacobus de Cessolis's composition of the *Solatium ludi scacchorum* that would become the *Jeu des échecs moralisé* in the translation of Jean de Vignay for Jean le Bon and Jean Ferron's version. The treatise, a mirror for princes, is the story of Philometer the philosopher's re-education of the tyrannical prince, Evilmerodach. The wicked prince had killed his own father, the king Nebuchadnezzar, in order to seize power. It is a denunciation of tyranny and the abuse of power and a work that explicitly lays out the roles and functions of each member of society through the metaphor of the game of chess. Philometer explains to Evilmerodach the roles and movements of the different game pieces on the board, the king and queen, the knights and clergy members, and the artisans and laborers all representing their equivalent in medieval society.

It is easy to see how this social metaphor could have been comforting to a member of the up and coming Parisian bourgeoisie in a time of trouble. Order could be reestablished through the collective effort made by each member to know and properly execute his or her role. For Jenny Adams, who has examined the relationships of power that the metaphor of chess represented in medieval society, Cessolis's work might be destined for the king, but it shows how political and social power must be dispersed among the different participants in the polity who have both freedom of action and the ability to affect the game. Anyone can learn the game and implement its principals (Adams 4-5). Adams reminds the reader that regicide lies at the foundation of the game; "Just as the new king divides the old king's *literal* body, so too does Philometer divide the *figurative* body politic into multiple and somewhat autonomous pieces. Or rather, Philometer's chess set imagines an ideal community as a place where the body of the king no longer stands as the lone representative of the

realm. Like Evilmerodach's destruction of his father, this act is violent. Yet by pairing these acts- the murder of Nebuchadnezzar followed by the creation of the chess set- the narrative displaces the implicit violence of the latter onto the explicit violence of the former" (17-8). Just as Evilmerodach assassinates his father, the game shares out the power of the body politic and ends with the symbolic assassination of a king.

Despite the fact that the *Jeu des échecs moralisé* contains multiple portraits of different members of society, the author of the *Ménagier* chooses to adapt only the chapter on the queen to serve his pedagogical purposes. His selective adoption of some stories and not others is indicative of his carefully thought out appropriation. He leaves out two anecdotes that Ferron includes in his translation; these two stories would seem to be at cross purposes with his goals. The first tells the story of Ylie, who does not dare tell her aging husband, Duelle, that he has bad breath (*Eschaqz* 139). When her husband inquires as to why she merely states that she thought it to be the case of all men, not a particularly flattering anecdote for an older author writing for his younger wife. The second short anecdote regards a widow who refuses to remarry despite a friend's counsel. She explains that if her new husband were as good as the last, she would fear losing him every day. Inversely, she reasons that if her new husband was not as good as the last, then she would wonder why she had gone to the bother of remarrying to have a bad husband after a good one (139). The narrator of the *Ménagier* frequently refers to the husband he hopes his young wife will marry after his death; this short tale would not have served to further his exhortations for her to do so. While the *Ménagier's* many anecdotes may at times seem to conflict with each other, such an omission displays that the author's conscientious borrowing might not be as contradictory to his purposes as it would first seem.

In the *Ménagier de Paris*, the author does not follow the order of the *exempla* as they are presented by Ferron. The story of adulterous Raymonde and her betrayal of her city to the

Hungarians for the sake of lust come before the tale of Lucretia. The story of the child Papire is integrated into another part of the book entirely, relegated to the distinction concerning women's speech. The *Ménagier* author changes a few details in his adaptation of the tale of Raymonde.

Raymonde, upon seeing an invading army, is taken by lust for one of its members and agrees to open the gates to the city for the invaders if he agrees to marry her. In the *Ménagier* version, Raymonde does not fall in love with King Cantamus, but rather with one of his knights. For Brereton, this serves to better emphasize her guilt, since not only did she commit adultery but she also broke the class barrier in doing so ("Deux sources" 350). The *Ménagier's* Raymonde also has fewer children, two daughters and a son opposed to four sons and two daughters in *Le Jeu des échecs moralisé*. The most important change that is made, however, is the nature of Raymonde's punishment. In the *Ménagier*, the narrator focuses more on the public aspect of the punishment. The knight, after decrying her lechery and prostituting her to the remainder of the army, has her run through with a spike. His insults then figure prominently as text that is written upon her body:

Et aussi ces parolles fist il escrire en plusieurs lieux parmy sa robe. Et toute morte la fist atachier et lier aux barrieres de deshors et devant la porte de sa cité, afin que chascun la veist, et la laissa. (142)

He also had these words written on her garments in several places. When she was completely dead, he tied her corpse to the outer bars of the city gate for all to gaze upon, and he left her there. (90)

While in Jean Ferron's translation of Jacobus of Cessolis' story no mention is made of either the writing or the display of the dead body, the author, as usual, prefers that punishment be made both visual and public. Raymonde, like the other women of his *exempla*, is made text, so that the reader may see and interpret the appropriate message. Similarly, Raymonde does not just commit adultery; she transgresses the boundaries of the socially homogeneous group to which she is bound. For Adams, the punishment of Cessolis's "Rosimond" (Raymonde) underscores the civic nature of her crime; she forfeits the common good in pursuit of her own desires (40-1). The concept that the

weakness of one of the feminine members of a family can render the body politic penetrable is an aristocratic one, as seen in the last chapter. As such, this nuclear family is defeated.

Like in the Chevalier de la Tour Landry's many examples, adultery and the loss of chastity often come from inter-class relationships; marriage promises either maintenance of one's position or social ascension. The author of the *Ménagier* is quick to provide a violent punishment to this woman who does not uphold her estate. Other details that he changes are less significant. As Brereton notes, they seem to be made to make the story more clear and lively; however, she deems that the *Ménagier*'s version is inferior to the original and of less quality than his adaptations of other tales ("Deux sources" 350).

The *Ménagier*'s version of the story of Lucretia is one of the author's better literary endeavors, as Brereton would have it. He modifies a few components of the plot and makes several lengthy additions. The incipit of Lucretia found in Ferron's translation is much more condensed:

Et quant il y fu, entre les autres dames qui y estoient, celle Lucrece, ses depors, sa contenance, sa manière et sa beauté li plurent tant que briefment il fut tout espris et espia .I. temps que son père l'empereur s'en ala en l'ost et mena Collatin avec lui, puis celui Sexte s'en vint au manoir ou Lucrece estoit, lui et ses compaignons, et Lucrece le reçut moult hounourablement. Et quant le temps vint d'aler couchier, on fist le lit a Sexte comme a filz de roy, et ce mauvais si espia moult bien ou Lucrece gisoit, et quant il cuida que tous fussent en leur premier somme, si s'en vint au lit ou Lucrece gisoit. Si mist l'une main a sa poitrine, et l'autre a l'espee, et li dist : 'Lucrece, tays toy. Je suy Sexte le filz Tarquin l'Orgueilleux, se tu diz mot, tu es morte'. Et de paeur, elle se teut. (*Escha* 139-40)

When he was there, among the other ladies who were there was Lucretia, her behavior, her face, her manners, and her beauty pleased him so that for a moment he was subjugated and spied for a moment while his father the emperor left to join his army, taking Collatinus with him. Then, Sextus went to the manor where Lucretia was, along with his compaignons, and Lucretia received him honorably. When the time came to retire, a bed was made for Sextus befitting the son of a king, and this evil character found out where Lucretia slept; when everyone had fallen asleep he went to her bed. He put one hand on her chest and the other on his sword and he said : 'Lucretia, be still. I am Sextus, son of the proud Tarquinus, if you say a word, you are dead.' She kept quiet out of fear.

However, in the *Ménagier*, there is a greater development to the setting, from the time Sextus first sees Lucretia to his committing the horrible deed. In this rendition, he explains that there was a popular uprising against the emperor not far from Rome, obliging the men to go and fight in order

to quell the rebellion. He also includes an important detail that is found in Livy's *History of Rome* but not in Ferron's translation ("Deux sources" 346). Mirroring so many other stories that will follow later in the work, a wager is made. It is decided that the men shall go and observe the behavior of each other's wives; the winner will have the honor of housing Sextus, the son of Tarquin. Livy gives repeated demonstrations of the tyranny of both the father and the son, a suggestion which remains in the subtext of our author's retelling.

Et Sexte advisa la contenance de toutes les dames, et entre toutes et par dessus toutes les autres la maniere Lucesse lui pleut et sa beaulté. Par aucune espace de temps apres, les gens d'un chastel qui estoit a quatre lieues d'illec empres Romme firent rebellion a l'empereur qui ala mectre le siege devant, et avec lui fut et ala Sexte son filz, avec lesquelz estoit de sa compaignie furent plusieurs de jeunes hommes de Romme, entre lesquelz estoit Colatin, le mary Lucesse. Long temps furent illec les Rommains a siege, et ung jour qu'il faisoit bel et sery estoient assemblez a boire apres disner ensemble Sexte le filz l'empereur et plusieurs d'iceulx jeunes hommes rommains entre lesquelz estoit Colatin ; et prindrent complot ensemble de soupper tantost. Et apres alerent hastivement a Romme en l'ostel de chascun d'iceulx jeunes hommes veoir la maniere et contenance de chascune de leurs femmes et leur gouvernement ; par tel que cellui duquel sa femme seroit trouvee en meilleur couvine avroit l'onneur de logier Sexte, le filz l'empereur, en son hostel. (*Mesnagier* 142)

Sextus studied the countenance of all the ladies, and above all the others, he preferred Lucretia's bearing and beauty. A short while afterward, the people of a castle four leagues from Rome rebelled against the emperor, who then traveled to besiege them, accompanied by his son Sextus and several of the young men of Rome, including Collatinus, Lucretia's husband. One beautiful, clear day during this long siege, the emperor's son Sextus together with several of the young Romans and Collatinus were assembled, drinking after their midday meal. They plotted among themselves to sup immediately and then hasten to Rome to each man's house, to discover the behavior, demeanor, and governance of each of their wives. The one whose wife was found in the most reputable and blameless circumstances would have the honor of lodging Sextus, the emperor's son, in his house. (90)

Whereas the author of the *Ménagier* had carefully followed the plot of the story of Raymonde found in his source, he takes great care here to create a scenario that, as we have just seen, is repeated many times over in the rest of his book. Just as in the *exempla* discussed previously, the authoritative Latin text suggests that it is both proper and desirable for men to wager on their wives' behavior. In this instance, the ending is not quite as merry. Collatinus, while winning the contest, loses more in the end. The scene that the men witness upon their arrival at Collatinus' house is unique to the *Ménagier*. Coincidentally, it includes games.

Ainsi fu accordé, et vindrent a Romme et trouverent les unes devisans, les autres jouans au bric, les autres a qui fery, les autres a pincemerrille, les autres jouans aux cartes et aux autres jeux d'esbatement

avecques leurs voisines. Les autres, qui avoient souppé ensemble, disoient des chançons, des fables, des contes, des jeux partis. Les autres estoient en la rue avecques leurs voisines, jouans au tiers et au bric ; et ainsi semblablement de plusieurs jeux. Excepté Lucesse, qui dedens et ou plus parfont de son hostel en une grant chambre loing de la rue avoit ouvriers de laine, et la toute seule assise, loingnet de ses ouvriers et a part, tenoit son livre devotement. A basse chiere disoit ses heures devotement et moult humblement, et fut trouvé que lors ne autres foiz, toutes foiz que son mary Colatin estoits hors, et en quelque compaignie ou feste qu'elle fust, il n'estoit nul ne nulle qui la veist dancier ne chanter, se ce n'estoit seulement le jour qu'elle avoit lettres de lui ou qu'il retourmast la veoir ; et lors chantoit et dansoit avec les autres se feste y avoit. Et pour ce Colatin eust l'onneur de la venue et loga en son hostel Sexte le filz de l'empereur, lequel fut servy de tous les autres et de leurs femmes et aparentez. Et l'endemain bien matin fut des dames esveillé, vestu, et oyt messe, et les virent monter et mectre a cheminer. Et a ce voyaige fut Sexte moult fort espris de l'amour Lucesse, et tellement qu'il pensa qu'il revenroit devers elle, acompaignié que d'autres gens que des amis d'elle ou de son mary. Ainsi fut fait, et vint au soir en l'ostel Lucesse. Laquelle le receut moult honorablement ; et quant le temps vint d'aller coucher, l'en ordonna le lit a Sexte comme a filz d'empereur. Et ce mauvaiz filz d'empereur espia ou Lucesse gisoit, et apres ce que tout leens furent couchiez et endormis, Sexte vint a elle, l'une main mise a la poitrine et l'autre a l'espee. Et lui dist : 'Lucesse, taiz toy ! Je suis Sexte le filz a l'empereur Tarquin. Se tu dis mot, tu es morte.' Et de paour elle se escria. (144)

This scheme was agreed upon, and they went to Rome, finding there some ladies gossiping, some playing bric, others playing hot cockles, others "pinch me," others at cards and diverse pastimes with their neighbors. Some who had dined together were singing songs, telling fables and tales, and asking riddles. Others were in the road with their neighbors playing blind man's bluff, bric, and other similar games. Except for Lucretia who, within the innermost chambers of her house, in a large room far from the road, sat alone and apart, a short distance from her wool workers, holding her book devoutly and with bowed head saying her hours humbly and piously. Neither then nor any time when her husband Collatinus was away, in whatever company or celebration she was, had man or woman seen her dance or sing, except on the day when she received letters from him or when he returned to see her. At those times she sang and danced with the others, if there were a feast. Collatinus, therefore, had the honor of receiving and lodging in his home Sextus the emperor's son, who was served and treated like a relative by all the others and their wives. Early the next morning he was awakened by the ladies and dressed, heard Mass, and then the ladies watched the men mount their horses and ride off. On this journey Sextus was greatly smitten with love for Lucretia, so deeply that he planned to return to her accompanied by other people who were not friends of hers or her husband's. He did just that, arriving one evening at Lucretia's house. She received him honorably, and when the moment came to retire, they prepared a bed for Sextus suitable for the emperor's son. But this evil emperor's son observed where Lucretia slept, and after everyone was in bed asleep, Sextus went in to her, placing one hand on her breast and the other on his sword, and said to her, "Lucretia, be silent ! I am Sextus, son of the emperor Tarquin. If you speak one word, you are dead." She cried out in fear [...] (91)

As Brereton states in her study of the adaptation of this source, the description of Lucretia as the wise housewife corresponds to the lessons that the author hopes to inculcate in his wife and the pastimes of the party provide medieval coloring to this Roman story ("Deux sources" 357). Indeed, Lucretia is supervising her women as they work their wool in a room far from the dangers of the street; she is devoutly reading her book. She does not participate in the dancing or festivities that are

taking place elsewhere. All of these model behaviors are suggested by the author elsewhere in the work.

Beyond this model Lucretia is an artful *mise en abyme*; the other members of the household are entertaining themselves by playing games. Integrating a scene involving game players in an adaptation of the *Jeu des échecs moralisé* is no mere coincidence; it signals the author's implicit recognition that while he and other household members may be involved in situations of give and take with individuals of higher or equivalent rank, ultimately, it is up to his wife to play the conservative and isolated role of upholding their *estat*. Collatinus wins the bet, but the tyrannical Sextus does not play fairly. He seizes what belongs to Collatinus and is made to pay the price. The lesson taught in the *Ménagier's* retelling colors the many similar scenes that will take place elsewhere in his work. While he maintains his willingness to not transgress his station and to play by the rules, he implicitly threatens that others must do the same or risk their lives.

The agony of Lucretia described in the *Ménagier* is vivid and found neither in Ferron nor Livy's version. It is the touching vision of Collatinus who witnesses his wife's suffering and attempts to comfort her.

Adont Colatin son mary vit qu'elle estoit toute palle et descoulouree, et sa face blanche et toute esplouree ; car la grasse des larmes estoit apparant en son viaire des yeulx jusques aux baulievres, et avoit les yeulx gros et enflez, les paupieres mortes et espesses et dedans vermieux par le descourement des larmes, et regardoit et parloit effroyusement. Si commença a la conforter moult doucement et a lui pardonner, et lui monstra moult de belles raisons que le corps n'avoit pas pechié puis que le cueur n'y avoit donné consentement ne pris delit, et se commença a alleguer exemples et auttoritez. Tout ce ne lui pleut. (148)

At that moment her husband Collatinus saw that she was completely pale and colorless, her face white and tearful, for traces of tears were on her face from her eyes all the way to her lips, with her eyes puffy and swollen, the lids lifeless and thick, and the insides reddened from the flow of her tears, and she looked and spoke agitatedly. He began to comfort her gently and to pardon her, pointing out many good reasons why her body had not sinned, since her heart had not consented or taken pleasure, and he began to invoke examples and authorities. But none of this placated her. (91)

Collatinus gives examples and cites authoritative sources for Lucretia, much as the author does for his young wife. While this element of husbandly consolation is absent in both Ferron and Livy, it is present in the *Romance of the Rose* to which the author makes reference later:

[...] ils la supplièrent de cesser sa couleur, et lui dirent beaucoup de belles raisons: son mari surtout la consolait tendrement et lui pardonnait de bon Coeur tout le fait, cherchant à lui prouver que son corps n'avait péché, puisque le Coeur n'était pas consentant [...]. (*Le Roman de la Rose* 153)

They entreated her vigorously to abandon her grief and gave her many good reasons; her husband especially comforted her compassionately, and gladly forgave her everything, urging her and exerting himself to find powerful arguments to prove to her that her body had not sinned, since her heart did not desire the sin, for the body cannot commit a sin if the heart does not consent to it. (*The Romance of the Rose* 132)

Consequently, this Lucretia uses her more severe self-judgment and inflicts a punishment on herself that her husband would not.

This paradigm of forgiving husbands and “guilty” wives is found elsewhere in the *Ménagier* with two such similar stories told in the eighth article of the first distinction. In the first, an adulterous wife confesses her sin on her deathbed. Her husband stops her before she can name which of their children is illegitimate so that he will not love the child less (*Mesnagier* 316-318). This reminds the author of another story concerning a young woman who had followed her lover to Avignon. The husband avoids public shame for their couple by pretexting that she was on a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela and welcomes her back with open arms (318-320). Immediately following these two *exempla*, in a moment of intertextual serendipity, the narrator states the following:

Car tout ainsi comme celluy qui joue aux eschiez tient longuement en sa main son eschet avant qu'il l'assiee, pour l'adviser de le mettre en lieu seur, tout ainsi la femme le doit tenir pour adviser et choisir et se mettre en bon lieu. Et s'elle ne le fait, si luy soit reprouchié, et doit partir au blasme de son mary. Et se il est rien taché, elle le doit couvrir et celer de tout son pouoir; et autel doit faire le mary de sa femme, comme dit est dessus et dit sera apres. (320)

For just as a chess player holds his piece in his hand a long time before setting it down, reflecting about putting it in a safe position, so must a woman take time to consider, choose, and set herself in a good place. For if she does not do so, she garners reproach and will share whatever is her husband's blame. If he becomes tainted in any way, she must exercise all her power to cover and conceal it, and the husband must do the same for his wife, as is said above and shall be said below. (146)

Thus, the author's pedagogical enterprise proceeds through carefully orchestrated connections in the work apparent to the observant reader. He and his wife are co-conspirators and players of chess on the board of medieval society.

For Adams "...chess games in literary texts (...) encoded anxieties about political organization, civic community, economic exchange, and individual autonomy. (...) the actual game in real life was seen to model an ideal civic order based on contractual obligation and exchange" (2). The bourgeois who invites his wife to be just as wise as a player of chess, both regarding her marriage and her role in society at large, is both making a claim to a place in the game and expressing his desire to participate. Much like the author's didactic enterprise, the game of chess "...creates a social matrix that asserts its control over the subjects it contains. (...) Yet at the same time a player is now responsible for his own moral choices and ethical conduct. (...) By contrast chess thematizes the exposure of individual bodies for the scrutiny of all. One can see one's own "self" too. Thus rather than offering an opportunity for free movement, the act of playing demands that a subject police his or her own actions" (20). Showing one's appreciation for the game of chess means that one accepts to control one's behavior if others are willing to do so as well.

The idea that one can see one's self, but others can also bear witness to these correct behavioral choices is a *mise en abyme* of the *Ménagier's* pedagogical project. By repeatedly inserting characters that model forms of correct and incorrect behavior and audiences that view and, at times, wield punishment, the logic of chess, whereby pieces with specific identities move in predictable ways in order to be rewarded with victory or punished through elimination, bears out throughout the book. The *Ménagier* benefits from an underlying suggestion found in Cessolis' text that is reinforced by his choice of *exempla* drawn from this source: tyrants risk either real or symbolic death.

For Adams, this newlyfound division of the body politic and the redefinition of the pieces into autonomous yet interdependent individuals have great significance. "If (...) citizenship stems

from the ‘universalization of moral autonomy (which) meant that each individual, regardless of social status, became the source of morality,’ the *Liber*, one of the first political treatises to define the individual as a professional capable of moral sovereignty, was a crucial step in the development of our own identities as subjects of secular states. (...) Although still monitored by a central authority embodied in the king, the political body, as it was represented by the chessboard, suddenly consisted of multiple nodes of authority” (55). The author’s entire enterprise is based on the idea that he is professional capable of moral sovereignty, first in his home then in the world at large. The logic of the text corresponds entirely to that of the game of chess as a political metaphor for social organization in fourteenth-century France.

The author’s reference to strategy and game playing suggests that, like Lucretia, his wife has made a good strategic choice in marrying such a kind and forgiving man. She will also be wise enough to know when she merits punishment and to levy it herself. At the same time, he suggests that there is much to be lost and much to gain through marriage. If his wife plays correctly, she is rewarded with social harmony and peace, a place on the chessboard.

The strife that begins and ends this version of Lucretia might have a dreadful outcome for the woman involved, but her sacrifice allows for a tyrant to be deposed and morality to hold sway. Like other pieces in the game of chess, sometimes the queen pays the sacrifice for social concord. The description of the revolt against Tarquin and his son led by Collatinus is described in much greater detail in the *Ménagier* than elsewhere.

Et tout ce fut tantost fait; car ilz la porterent enemy la ville de Romme et esmeurent tellement le people que chascun jura la destruction de l’empereur Tarquin et de son filz, et a feu et a sang. Et adonc fermerent les portes afin que nul n’assist pour aler adviser l’empereur de leur emprise, et s’armerent et yssirent deshors, alant vers l’ost de l’empereur comme tous forcenez. Et quant ilz approcherent de l’empereur et il ouy le bruit et tumulte et vit les gens, pouldres, et fumees des chevaulx, avec ce que l’en lui dist, il et son filz s’enfuirent en desertz, chetifz et desconfortez. Sur quoy le Rommant de la Rose dist ainsi : N’onc puis Rommains pour ce desroy, Ne voudrent faire a Romme roy. (148-50)

And this was carried out immediately. Lucretia’s body was carried through the city of Rome and so moved the people that each man swore to exterminate the emperor Tarquin and his son by fire and bloodshed. They then barred the gates, preventing anyone from exiting and warning the emperor of their attack. The men armed

themselves and set out, heading like madmen toward the emperor's army. When they drew near to the emperor and he heard the noise and tumult and observed the people, all dusty, and the steam of the horses, and heard what was told him, he and his son fled into the desert, fearful and despairing. About which the *Romance of the Rose* says : "Because of this rebellion, the Romans never again wished to establish a king in Rome." (92)

The story of Lucretia is as much about a woman's exemplary behavior as it is about tyranny and the social disorder that it provokes. The description of the warfare that follows is highly realistic, underlining the violence that could ensue as the result of the abuse of power by an unworthy leader. There is a striking similarity between the story of Lucretia and the anecdote regarding the bourgeois couple during the Maillotin uprising examined previously. The bourgeois author finds a similar way out for the bourgeois couple faced with a medieval Sextus; the wife makes a sacrifice but preserves her husband's life. The sacrifice made, however, is not of the same nature. The contrast between the authoritative ideal that has been transmitted from Rome to France and the pragmatic, contemporary compromise that is invented by the author shows the discord that must certainly have existed between the ideals set forth in conduct literature and the everyday applications and adjustments made to the rules. The *Ménagier*, although encouraging idealized theory, is much more anchored in the social realities and practical organization of medieval society.

The other Roman example borrowed from the *Jeu des échecs moralisé*, the story of the child Papire, is relegated to article eight of the first distinction, a great liberty that the author of the text takes with his source if we are to compare it to the Chevalier de la Tour Landry's careful borrowing. Once again a political *exemplum*, Papire is brought to the Roman Senate by his father and forbidden from revealing any of the proceedings there. His mother asks him about the secret meetings and he makes up a clever lie, explaining that the senators were debating whether it was better for a man to have two wives or a wife to have two husbands. The wife, her interest peaked, takes her opinion to the Senate along with other wives. The senators are astounded and impressed with Papire's cunning; they make him a senator.

Brereton points out that there are no omissions or modifications to the action, yet the author does include the mother trying to flatter her son rather than beat him to get the information that she wants (“Deux sources” 348). This flattery is found in the source text as well as in the *Ménagier*. The author does add an additional paragraph to underscore the moral of the story:

Ainsi appert par ceste exemple que l'enfant masle, qui estoit jenne, sceut celer et taire, et evada; et la femme, qui avoit aage convenable pour avoir sens et discrecion, ne sceut taire ne celer ce qu'elle avoit juré et promis sur son serement, et mesmes le secret qui touchoit l'onneur de son mary et de son filz. (312)

This example makes it clear that the male child knew how to keep a secret and remain silent and thus escaped. Yet the woman, who was old enough to have sense and discretion, did not know how to hold her tongue and keep a sworn secret she had promised on her oath, not even a secret that concerned her husband's and son's honor. (143)

Flattery, as a means of obtaining what one wants and how not to fall victim to it, is a topic that is often addressed in the mirrors for princes' tradition. The author highlights the importance of political acumen, suggesting that he too understands this tradition well.

It is paradoxical that the *Ménagier*, a treatise outlining women's duties in the home and praising the value of industriousness, should illustrate these precepts while praising men's leisure activities as a means of measuring them. While, for the author, the comfort that his wife will provide him is primordial and leisure is an important part of his well-being, relationships of power established between men through the metaphor of gaming are omnipresent. The author announces in his prologue that, “La troisieme distinction est de jeux et esbatemens aucunement plaisans pour avoir contenance et maniere de parler et tenir compaignie aux gens: et contient trois articles” (26-8) [The third section treats pleasant enough games and amusements to help you socialize with company and make conversation] (50). Knowing how to play games, make conversation and provide good company fulfill an important role in the life of this bourgeois couple. One can only wonder at the absence of two of the aforementioned articles, but this intention signals the importance that the notion of the game has in the work as a whole. The only article completed in this distinction

concerns the art of sparrow hawking, providing information on the care of the animal and handling techniques. This aristocratic pastime had made its way into the leisure activities of the growing wealthy class of non-nobles and the author draws his information for this article from treatises such as the *Livres du Roi Modus et de la Roynne Ration*, the *Livre des Deduis*, (1354-1376), and what would seem to be personal knowledge (Brereton and Ferrier xlvi-xlvii). Once again, the paradox of adaptation of aristocratic sources and practices for his household and the strict prohibition of socializing with those of too great a rank carve out a new, unique identity for this family.

Examples of men wagering over meals and the overt borrowing from the *Jeu des échecs moralisé* implies the author's direct participation in such activities but also demonstrates his knowledge of the proper ways in which to do so. Wagering is the most simple and straightforward example of what Adams calls "contractual obligation and exchange," relying on honor and the exchange of a socially valuable commodity. Elsewhere, however, an anxiety over the limits of contractual obligation is expressed. The retelling of the "La Farce du Cuvier" in the article concerning wifely obedience ends less than humorously (234-6). A quarrelsome married couple decides to create compendiums that delineate their duties and rights toward one another, the narrator carefully explaining that this was necessary because the husband had not properly taught his wife and that it was now too late. When the husband helps his wife to cross a narrow bridge, he falls in, and she refuses to help him because such a task has not been included in her book. For Krueger, who observes that the wife's punishment is executed by a local noble who has her burned at the stake, "... (t)he tale starkly dramatizes the limits of written counsel. Born out of mutual mistrust, the 'cedule' fails to restore harmony and leads instead to the couple's dissolution. No book can anticipate every practical or moral dilemma. Household rules are worthless unless both partners adopt them in good faith" ("Identity" 30). While the underlying anxiety in this example is the potential failure of the didactic project, other readers might have taken away a very different message. The harsh justice that the wife

receives shows that there is a steep price to pay by those who do not uphold their end of an implied social obligation, whether explicit or not. Both the husband in the tale and the local lord recognize this precept; the guilty party is held accountable for her actions. Indeed, like in the other wagering *exempla*, the pedagogical undertaking might fail, but masculine solidarity and their common understanding of how society should be win out in the end.

What is important in the depictions of wagering men is that they all understand the stakes involved and assign the same value to them. Méhl, in his discussion of the stakes in medieval gaming, theorizes this common value attributed to the wager: “If the game cannot be reduced entirely to the stakes, the stakes are the game all while going beyond the game. The stakes, being a value, when bet, must maintain the same value once the game has finished. The link between game time and the time of daily life is reestablished by the stakes, thus allowing the intervention of authority to be justified within the sphere of play. Any object can become a stake. What matters is that it has an exchange value, representing the same interest for all, a same desire for it paralleling the shared anxiety of seeing it escape. This is what explains that the typical stake is the monetary sign itself or in any case an object that can be exchanged for money or translated into monetary terms. Of course, the value of the stakes varies from one social category to another, from a place or a time to another.”²³ As in the *Ménager*, what creates concord between men is a common understanding and a common value attributed to the stakes in question during moments of exchange. At issue is a demonstration of one’s ability to wield authority, to make oneself obeyed, and then to be able to furnish the value of interest in case of loss. Betting on the obedience of one’s wife in a gaming forum serves several

²³ English translation is the author’s: “Si le jeu n’est pas totalement réductible à l’enjeu, l’enjeu est tout le jeu en même temps qu’il le dépasse. Tout enjeu étant valeur, il faut que, misee, cette valeur demeure telle, le jeu terminé. Par l’enjeu est rétablie la liaison entre temps du jeu et temps quotidien, et justifiée l’intervention de l’autorité au sein de l’univers ludique. Tout objet peut devenir enjeu. Il importe donc qu’il soit valeur d’échange, présentant le même intérêt pour tous, le même désir parallèlement à la même angoisse de le voir échapper. C’est ce qui explique que l’enjeu type soit le signe monétaire lui-même ou en tout cas un objet que l’on puisse échanger contre de la monnaie ou traduire en termes monétaires. Bien entendu, la valeur de cet enjeu varie d’une catégorie sociale à l’autre, d’un lieu ou d’un moment à l’autre” (Méhl 265-66).

purposes. It allows a masculine public to witness the authority that one wields in the home and translates the belief in one's own competence as an administrator. Winning or losing allows the men to partake in a meal together at the end, providing for contest and reconciliation for all involved. One's social status does not determine who will be the winner; rather ability and authority are what is being displayed. Wifely agency is merely the source of laughter. Like the lord of Andresel who displays his aristocratic generosity, men are made to understand that it is not important if you win or lose, it's how you play the game.

These games allow for a low stakes renegotiation of power and influence between aristocracy and bourgeoisie, sublimating the violence that might surface as the result of a direct challenge to authority just as in the game of chess. This sublimation and the reality of potential violence are made explicit in the re-writing of the tale of Lucretia, the historical, or at least pseudo-historical, example of the Maillotin uprising. Both men agree on the value of the object of desire, the bourgeois wife, yet they employ different strategies to obtain the outcome they each seek. The noble resorts to force and tyranny, while the bourgeois husband uses carefully calculated submission to obtain that which is more valuable than his wife's chastity, his own survival and the perpetuity of a class project. The bourgeois husband escapes from a direct, violent confrontation in which he knows he will be the loser. In late fourteenth-century Paris, we're definitely not in Rome anymore...

Throughout the work, women's bodies and their possibility for exemplary behavior are made into commodities to the benefit of men. The three *exempla* drawn from the *Jeu des échecs moralisé* demonstrate this economy of exchange. The many lessons of the story of Raymonde teach the reader that betrayal is not an option and the virtue involved in sacrificing an immoral queen is rewarded by political appointment. In the story of Lucretia, the reader is made to understand that self-sacrifice of some members of a virtuous community will lead to the defeat of tyranny. Lastly, the story of the

child Papire shows that by being able to govern a woman in the home, those whose apparent status excludes them from governing bodies will ultimately be rewarded with political power, a very subversive message coming from a bourgeois author of the time.

However, leisure activities and political and aristocratic literary sources cannot alone define the values of this up and coming social class. In order to round out an understanding of the *Ménagier's* ethics, it is vital to understand his conception of work. Indeed, he encourages his wife to work hard and is not above describing domestic activities in great detail. The narrator, after repeatedly telling stories of productive leisure activities, tells an allegorical tale regarding the values of industry. His instruction here is no longer limited to his young wife, but rather addresses men more directly as he projects himself as a fictional character on his journey to the Castle of Labor.

Who's schooling who?: *Le chemin de povreté et de richesse* : A conduct book for newlywed husbands

An often neglected portion of the *Ménagier* reveals a project that goes beyond instruction for a young wife. This pedagogical presentation of a fourteenth-century French bourgeois ethos is rounded out by a conduct work for newlywed husbands supporting the idea that the *Ménagier* is as much about negotiating masculine relationships and authorial self-construction as it is about managing the household. Even as he praises leisure as a tool for social advancement, the author does not neglect that industry is an important component of getting ahead. At the beginning of the second distinction the narrator recapitulates his instruction thus far and expresses his fear that he might be boring his young reader. It could be said that this second distinction serves as a transition from a moralizing form of instruction to a more practical, specific household guide. His inclusion here of Jacques (or Jean) Bruyant's poem is an ideological reminder of the importance of hardwork before he goes on to cover gardening and true household organization (servants, wine, and horses). Little is known about Jacques Bruyant who composed *Le Chemin de povreté et de richesse* [The Way to Poverty

and Riches] in 1342 but his epistle had great success as it has been conserved in over fifteen manuscripts. In the Ménagier's text, it serves as a reaffirmation that the household in question is an economically productive one that embraces wealth and shuns idleness, placing these truly bourgeois values in an allegorical form that was more often associated with loftier, abstract philosophical ideals. Långfors sees in Bruyant's work an imitation of the *Romance of the Rose* with its inclusion of Dame Reason and other allegorical characters providing counsel to the addressee (59). For Krueger, "...it seems to represent the apotheosis of the Menagier's own ideals and aspirations. Although ostensibly included for the benefit of husbands, *Le Chemin de Pauvreté et de Richesse* appeals implicitly to the bourgeois wives who would assist them. This seemingly straightforward promotion of bourgeois enterprise also inscribes an opposing voice and problematic female reader" ("Identity" 34). Indeed, at the end of this dream-vision during which the narrator encounters allegorical characters who wish to distract him from Diligence and Perseverance which lead to the Castle of Riches, the wife questions his sanity when he recounts his adventures.

What is most telling about the author's inclusion of the text is his desire to leave it completely intact; he does not hesitate elsewhere to adapt sources or tell his own stories. This leads the critic to conclude, therefore, that Jacques Bruyant's text corresponds so accurately to his own intentions as not to modify it and supports what he has written previously. Past editions of the *Ménagier de Paris* have not included Jacques Bruyant's poem in its historical place in the work. Brereton and Ferrier omit it, along with portions of the Griselda tale and the entire tale of Prudence and Melibee, preferring to focus on those sections of the text which are the author's own or more personalized adaptation of other sources. Karen Ueltschi includes Bruyant's text in an appendix. Greco and Rose, in their English translation, restore the poem to its original place in the work in order "...to honor the intent of the author (and our readers) by presenting it in its entirety. Considering this compelling text as a whole is crucial to historicizing reading practices, understanding the author's purposes and

the late medieval audience's actual reading matter, and noting what they cared to preserve for use in their households" (5). Indeed, in its treatment of the relationships between classes and gestures of submission and obedience, Jacques Bruyant's poem provides a much more complete understanding of the *Ménagier*'s project of self-representation.

This allegorical poem is addressed to men primarily, enlarging the reach of the *Ménagier* beyond its purportedly feminine audience of one. As Greco and Rose note in their English edition, "(the) poem is ostensibly about a man's virtue rather than a woman's (...) so it may act as a kind of bookend or diptych with its counterpart in section 1.3 to show the young wife that a virtuous man is a hard worker, and that seeking riches can be morally acceptable as long as one does it through diligent labor. (...) And perhaps too this poem is included to demonstrate to that *next* husband what is expected of him" (178). In fact, what would seem to be expected of this next husband is much the same as what is expected of the feminine reader: obedience and industry. Jacques Bruyant's allegorical poem extols the benefits of honesty, virtue, and hard work. It is also a display of the narrator/author's versatility: he can govern and he can labor.

Striking the balance between industry and leisure and articulating a space between the lower aristocracy and the common laborer is the means of completing this truly bourgeois identity. The narrator repeatedly indicates that the bourgeois husband can participate in moments of social interaction with members of different estates, but his wife must respect a rigid segregation. As such, bourgeois identity is created through a series of gendered norms; a husband's comfort, leisure, and social negotiations are counterbalanced by a wife's simplicity, industry, and moral subjugation. For Méhl, the question of leisure time compels one to raise that of work, the allotment of time to one or the other making up the reality of the individual and by extension his identity.²⁴ The dreamer's arrival

²⁴ "En deçà de l'interrogation métaphysique qu'il inclut, le problème du moment des jeux intéresse au premier chef le sociologue. Conformément à la définition, inexacte mais communément reçue, l'homme qui joue ne travaille pas. Lorsque la question du

at the Castle of Labor at the end of the vision obliges the reader to question the social category with which the *Ménagier* might wish to associate. He adheres firmly to the value of work and, as in examples regarding the aristocracy, adopts practices that are not his own.

A tant se tut la chastellaine
Qui moult estoit d'angoisse plaine;
A besognier commencay lors,
Entente y mis, et cuer et corps.
Ainsi besongnay sans séjour
Jusqu'à tant que je vy le jour
Par les fenestres paioir cler:
Lors ma chandelle alay souffler,
Puis entendi à ma besoigne,
Sans querre y terme ne essoigne,
Jusqu'à heure de desjuner
Qui vault desjuner et disner
A la coustume des ouvriers.
De ceulx illec vis-je premiers
La manière et la contenance,
Qui vivoient en abstinence.
N'y ot si grant ne si petit
Qui ne préist grant appétit
En pain sec, en aux et en sel,
Ne il ne mengoit riens en el
Mouton, buef, oye ne poucin;
Et puis prenoient le bacin,
A deux mains, plain d'eau et buvoient
A plain musel, tant qu'ils pavoient.
Quant je regarday cel afaire,
Grant talent me print d'ainsi faire
Combien que pas ne l'eusse appris[...] (834)

With that the chatelaine, full of anguish, became silent. I dove into my work, applying all my effort-mind and body. I labored like that without respite until bright daylight shone through the window, and then I blew out my candle. I continued to apply myself to my task, without seeking either quitting time or break, until the breakfast hour- breakfast and dinner being one and the same according to the habit of laborers. For the first time I noticed the manners and the countenance of the laborers there, who lived in abstinence. All of them, large or small, took great delight in dry bread, garlic, and salt. They ate no mutton, beef, goose, or fowl. After eating, they took the basin full of water with both hands and gulped it down, as much as they could. As I watched this, I craved to do likewise, although it was not my custom. (205)

The dreamer arrives as a humble worker in the aristocratic dwelling that is the castle, accepting orders from the chatelaine who presides over this endeavor. The meal in which the

moment des jeux se pose, apparaît en filigrane celle du temps du travail et du temps des loisirs, celle de la part accordée à l'un et à l'autre dans la vie de chaque individu" (Méhl 228).

laboring dreamer partakes is much different than that of the previous meals enjoyed between men, the reward for demonstrating the behavior of a dutiful wife or the prize provided by others. The narrator, who makes it clear that he is not accustomed to this lifestyle but is more than happy to demonstrate his humility in order to prove his work ethic, celebrates the less sumptuous table which is laid before him. He also looks for the first time at the laborers that surround him, observing their manners and customs, the frugality in which they live. He reads the allegorical poem much as one is expected to read his book, as a celebration of a series of values.

For the bourgeois husband/author, two goals are accomplished through this dream vision performance. He demonstrates his submission and willingness to associate himself with the common laborer, a modesty trope that would not be lost on readers of a superior social class. At the same time, were his own laborers to be made familiar with this text, a possible goal since the author's intention is for his wife to share this book, they would see both a model for their own workday and a perceptive supervisor who takes a vested interest in them and is not above doing the same work that they do. The Castle of Labor, despite its aristocratic trappings, is very much a bourgeois venture.

Another dual message is sent in the poem's description of the end of the workday. After the dreamer has completed his tasks, he is rewarded by Toil with the care of Repose. He describes the physical sensations after a long day of work and the hunger that accompanies it, recognition of what the day laborers whom he describes in the remainder of the second distinction might also experience.

Lors m'alay tost habandonner
A l'œuvre, de cul et de pointe,
Je n'en fis oncques le mescointe,
Et tant besoignay que j'oy
Cueuvre-feu, si m'en esjoy,
Car lasses et vaincus estoie
De besongner, et si sentoie
Un appétit qu'on clame fain.
A ce point vint le chastellain
Travail qui me dit: Doulx amis
Bien doy amer qui cy t'a mis,
Car bien y as fait ton devoir;

Je m'en sçay bien apparcevoir.
 Bien voy que tu as sans faintise
 Huy en labour t'entente mise...
 (...) Congié te doing, en guerredon,
 D'aler à Repos le preudon
 Qui te fera ton corps aisier,
 Ta char et ton sang appaisier
 Que tu as huy moult esméu
 Pour l'engan que tu as éu. (835)

I abandoned myself to my tasks, from top to bottom. All in all, I never acted ineptly, and I worked so strenuously that when I heard the curfew, I rejoiced, because of weariness and weakness from the exertion, and certainly I felt that appetite called hunger. At this point, in came the castellan Toil, who said, "Fair friend, truly you must love the one who brought you here, for I am convinced that you have executed your duty marvelously. Indeed it is clear that today you have set your nose to the grindstone with enthusiasm. (...) ...as a reward I give you permission to retreat to Repose, the gentleman who will ease your body and relax your flesh and blood that you have so greatly exerted with the chores of the day. (206)

The acknowledgement of the dreamer's hard labor and his equation with the main narrator establish work as a universal value for laborers and the bourgeoisie. The comfort that his wife will provide him upon his return home, previously alluded to in the work, corresponds to the pleasures that Repose offers. It also demonstrates how the chatelaine, Toil, is capable of recognizing and rewarding work that is well-done. This affirmation of the bourgeois' merit and his workers' value provide satisfaction for all.

Demonstrating solidarity between workers and masters through shared tasks is not the only dynamic power relationship established between members of different classes in this work. Obedience once again comes to the forefront and the simultaneous expression of one's submission and personal authority create a nuanced understanding of the narrator's talents. As Greco and Rose contend, "The manual simultaneously allows us to observe in this narrative the tension in medieval society between what wives and loyal subjects should be (submissive) and what they surely sometimes were (malcontent and uppity)" (10-1). The narrator of *Le chemin de povreté et de richesse*, through the didactic voice of Reason an allegorical figure with whom a medieval audience might have been familiar in Jean de Meun's *Romance of the Rose*, is admonished to be obedient to his master should he be obliged to be a servant.

Et s'il advient que servir doies
 Je te deffent que tu ne soies
 Envers ton maistre courageux,
 Orgueilleux, fel, ne outrageux.
 Tousjours lui fay obéissance, (...)

Pour enseignement que tu truisses
 Au moins puis qu'amander le puisses,
 Tu le dois amer de vray cuer,
 Sans lui estre faulx à nul fuer,
 Et se tu l'aimes, tu feras
 Son vouloir et le doubteras
 En tous estas, j'en sui certaine,
 Car amours est si souveraine
 Que toutes vertus lui enclinent
 Et de lui obéir ne finent. (824)

Should it happen that you must be a servant, I forbid you to be insolent, proud, disloyal, or unreasonable toward your master. Always be obedient... (...) There is a lesson here, unless you can improve upon it. Respect your master sincerely, using no falsity with him on any account. Esteem for him obliges you to do his bidding always and to fear him. For Love is so sovereign that all forces bow down before her, and such a powerful virtue that you must take her into your heart without delay, for he who loves with the heart, fears. Right love, which requires obedience through its might, compels a man to awe and holds him in submission with no deception. But if someone fears, it does not follow that he has in him one bit of love. Love does not obey fear, nor does anyone love through compulsion. For certainly everyone knows that one truly fears that which one hates. Nonetheless, he who loves well fears and dreads- of this there should be no doubt. Therefore, revere your master and serve him loyally, thus meriting his care in return, because when he notices your integrity, he will behave properly toward you. He will be unable to be hostile. (194-5)

The introduction of the notions of love and fear of one's master and a loyalty that can vanquish hostility give very precise instructions to those who would be in the hire of the bourgeois narrator. They also show those who would be his superior the posture he is willing to adopt. Indeed, he understands relationships of power and hierarchy very well and is willing to perform them so that they may be maintained. This ideology is reminiscent of the tale of Griselda, told previously in the *Ménagier*, but in this case it is the narrator who humbles himself and fears a man. The awkward relationship between love and fear established in Bruyant's poem, whereby "one truly fears that which one hates" and yet love necessarily entails fear, shows how unnatural this form of submission is. This discomfort speaks to the hypocrisy that can be behind the "love" between man and master, or wife and husband.

Reason's lesson to the dreamer makes one form of submission easier to accept. By being her servant, he will be able to hold his head high before any other figure of authority.

Prens doncques en toy fermeté,
Vertu, force, et establié
A bien tenir les convenances,
Que je vueil que m'enconvenances
Pour avoir de toy séurté
Que tu me tendras loyaulté
Et que tous mes commans tendras
En quelque lieu que tu vendras
Et saches bien que mon service
Est au monde droicte franchise;
Qui me sert, puet partout aler
Et devant toutes gens parler
Baudement, sans baissier la chièr
Et sans traire le cul arrière:
Paour ne doit avoir ne honte
Devant pape, roy, duc, ne conte,
Ne devant autre justicier
Ordonné pour gens justicier,
Non voir devant home qui vive,
Car mon sergent à nul n'estrивe[...]. (829)

Therefore fortify yourself with certainty, strength, force, and constancy to keep well the covenants that I require you to swear to me. I need assurance of your loyalty and your pledge to keep my commandments wherever you go. Keep in mind that my service is the legitimate freedom in this world. He who serves me can go anywhere and speak before all people boldly, without bowing his head and tucking his tail under. He need not have fear or shame before the pope, king, duke, or count, or before any magistrate of justice, or indeed before any man alive. A soldier of mine disputes with no one, wishing to fix his thought on maintaining right and truth and sustaining it day and night. (199-200)

By adhering to Reason's teachings, the dreamer gains social recognition. He meets authority figures on equal terms and avoids the perils of the bourgeois obliged to sacrifice his wife's chastity for his own head during the Maillotin uprising. It also endows him with the ability to speak in public and be heard. Given the gains that Reason can provide and the social ascendancy implicit therein, this form of submission can only be voluntary.

Jacques Bruyant's *Chemin de povreté et de richesse* is above all a didactic project that works. The dreamer adheres closely to its teachings and awakes enlightened and ready to enact the principles that it contains. It models a form of acceptance and assimilation of precepts that would be useful to the feminine audience as yet another guide for conduct. And, as the husband is willing and able to

humble himself before those more knowledgeable than him, why would his wife not agree to do the same? The inclusion of the poem creates for a unity of values and provides yet another means to distinguish the bourgeoisie from the other social classes of the time.

The playful narrator of the *Ménagier de Paris* accomplishes more than just the instruction of a young bride. His text addresses a composite audience of men and women, providing an understanding of the desires and aspirations of an ambitious, urban Parisian at the end of the fourteenth century. His adoption of various voices and postures, his appropriation of sources both humble and noble, display a willingness to adapt to a quickly changing set of historical circumstances and social possibilities. His wife's role in the preservation of their estate and his role as a liaison with those outside of their household mirror the functions of the work itself. The narrator of the *Ménagier* carefully positions himself in relation to both the aristocracy and laborers, defining a series of bourgeois values that his wife must uphold. Bourgeois class identity is very much a gendered commodity.

Performance and posturing are the keys to demonstrating one's adaptability in the late-medieval Paris of the *Ménagier*. A remarkable uniqueness comes out of the narrator's ventriloquist act. His desire to imitate authoritative models as well as relate *exempla* near and dear to his heart and hearth create a multifaceted authorial persona. His chameleon-like tones that cross lines of class and gender are acceptable for him even as he focuses on containing the social circulation of his young wife. If she is the mainstay of this estate, masculine roles and positions become subject to change. At the same time, his desire for solidarity in the couple creates a closed space of identity. What a young wife would have taken from this act remains to be seen. Witnessing men who circulate tales about virtuous wives and thus earn new privileges could have encouraged women to do the same. Social

compensation is the reward for a lesson well-learned for both husband and wife. The accomplishment of worldly desire can only be undone by unjust tyranny.

Play, games, and wagers offer limitless possibilities for the rearticulation of social relationships and the negotiation of a place in the world in the *Ménagier de Paris*. Just as the participants in these activities seek amusement, the heterogeneous nature of the text entertains its audience. By striking a careful balance between work and leisure and establishing games with straightforward rules understood by all the participants in socially diverse communities, the book displays the author's understanding of fourteenth-century codes of behavior; his wish to uphold a series of ideals allows for the subtle expression of contestation and a claim to a stake in society. He decries the possibilities of aristocratic tyranny just as he willfully demonstrates his ability to be a faithful servant. As Staley suggests, the *Ménagier* "does not violate the stratifications of late medieval society...But the very fact that the rules for living needed to be written down for the next generation suggests the anxiety of loss that the rules are intended to remedy" (280). Beyond the fear of loss, such an undertaking on the part of the *Ménagier* suggests that there was indeed much to gain through careful self-representation and an expressed understanding of the parameters of the chess board of medieval society. In fourteenth-century France, making earnest out of game was a potentially fruitful endeavor.

Chapter Three: Franc Vouloir and the ties that bind in Eustache Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*

[...] il est cler et manifeste que a celui qui veult savoir politiques, il convient que il sache aucunement des choses qui touchent et appartiennent à la science de l'ame. (Aristotle, *Ethiques* 141).²⁵

It is clear and evident that he who wishes to know about politics should know something about that which touches and belongs to the science of the soul.

Deschamps's atypical preoccupation with marriage in the *Miroir de mariage* is a pretext to discuss power and politics, a means to renegotiate the difficulties of personal independence, authority, and political sovereignty in his experience of a late fourteenth-century France where opportunity could be found in crisis. The *Miroir* could be considered a self-reflexive moment in the literary practice of counsel, its exaggerations a parody of an already well established genre that expresses dissatisfaction with its very intellectual foundations. Although this text about marriage is not destined for a necessarily feminine audience, it contains many of the commonplaces and *exempla* that filled works of conduct for women such as the stories of Susanne, Samson and Delilah, and Jacob's wives. Conduct works are concerned with teaching wives the art of governing the household more than the nation. However, they complement the mirrors for princes' literature that repeatedly demonstrates how marriage was a highly political institution.

Deschamps's *Miroir* presents the horrors of a pedestrian form of bourgeois marriage, mired in the daily problems of supply and demand and quite ignorant of the higher enterprises of either moralizing or governing. It is the *Ménagier's* household gone wrong, perhaps a mocking illustration of a certain type of domesticity meant to dissuade the faint of heart from entering the institution of marriage. The lifestyle depicted would not have allowed an aristocratic audience to project itself fully into this world for anything other than amusement. Deschamps's text represents a collision of two

²⁵ All references to Nicole Oresme's translation of Aristotle's *The Nichomachean Ethics* (*Le livre de éthiques*) are taken from Albert Douglas Menut's edition, *Le livre de éthiques, published from the text of ms. 2902 Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*. New York: G.E. Stechert, 1940. This Middle French source text and the glosses and language of its translator, Nicole Oresme, shaped Deschamps's understanding of the Aristotelian work and the political vision he presents in the *Miroir*.

spheres of thought, one encouraging engagement in the material world and the other, contemplation. Franc Vouloir [Free Will] is the pupil or model ruler caught in the middle of a debate regarding his own marital future. He finds his plans to engage in spiritual marriage, as counseled by his trustworthy clerical advisor Repertoire de Science [Repository of Knowledge], carried away by the course of history. Repertoire, in spite of his academic baggage and lengthy, persuasive arguments illustrating the dreadful life of the married man, is no more able to direct the course of worldly events than he is able to stop moralizing all together.

These heterogeneous forms of existence, the “contamination” of the contemplative sphere by the worldly one, were a medieval philosophical conundrum, especially when the clergy had a vested interest in determining the course of political and social decisions. Making a clear choice between the contemplative life and the worldly life is reflective of an older medieval society neatly organized into estates with clearly defined tasks; a world no longer in existence in the late fourteenth century. However, the return to such a vision, repeatedly championed by Deschamps in the *Miroir*, was quickly becoming a pragmatic, moral, and philosophical impossibility with the advent of humanism. For what weight could the spiritual asceticism of the contemplative world have had in a universe on which the measure of mankind was soon to bear? It is obvious to any reader of the *Miroir* that the purpose and meanings of the work are complex and that Deschamps’s discussions of the dilemma are founded in contradiction.

Eustache’s misogynist maneuvering

Many scholars have argued that whereas Deschamps’s display of antifeminist lore was in keeping with the times, his discussion of women’s wiles and immorality was not necessarily meant to be taken at face value. Michelle Stoneburner encourages the reader to look at the connections that might exist between the misogynist tradition on which Deschamps builds and the political

“digressions” that intervene, especially given Deschamps’s status as an intellectual at the courts of Charles V and VI (145). Acknowledging that Deschamps’s advice to embrace spiritual marriage and avoid worldly unions would have been entirely impractical for an audience such as the entourages of Charles V or Charles VI or the *haute bourgeoisie*, she contends that the author had another goal in mind. She holds that the metaphor of a bad marriage is used to describe France’s conflict with England (147), and that the espousal of an ascetic life was meant to exhort England and France to make peace and engage in a joint war to take back the Holy Land (157), Philippe de Mézières having convinced Charles VI of the benefits of such an endeavor by the end of the 1380s (159). She draws attention to the political and economic nature of Aristotelian and medieval aristocratic marriage (146) and examines how the question of the legitimacy of heirs and questions of sovereignty (in the household *and* the nation) were very timely ones (151). She also recognizes in Repertoire de Science’s lengthy monologue a greater interest in decrying the sinful practices of the nobility and the clergy than in denouncing women and marriage (158). She argues that Deschamps must have broken off his lengthy political diatribe upon realizing that the initial purpose of his *Fürstenspiegel* (or mirror for princes) had already been fulfilled within Charles VI’s court by the adoption of Philippe de Mézière’s crusade strategy (159). Stoneburner’s hypotheses are intriguing, and her argument demonstrates two vital points. She establishes as irrefutable the link between discussions of women and marriage and political interests and underscores the fact that in the Middle Ages spiritual and political engagement were recurrent yet uneasy bedfellows. It is this discomfort that shapes the thought behind the *Miroir*.

Laura Kendrick has taken two very different and meritorious approaches to the *Miroir de mariage* in her exhaustive study of the work. In her first article on the subject, “Transgression, Contamination, and Woman in Eustache Deschamps’s *Miroir de Mariage*,” Kendrick, like Stoneburner, highlights the impracticality of Deschamps’s advice for princes and the bourgeoisie and assumes rather that he is following the *speculum* and allegorical literary practices of the time. She states

that “The multitude of late-medieval vernacular personification allegories witnesses to the great effort being made at this time to link the inside to the outside, to find a way to regulate interior conflicts by representing and resolving them in visible (‘mirroring’) forms” (“Transgression” 215). She concludes that by rejecting women in terms that define them as “impure,” moralizing writers of the day were seeking to protect a virtuous and endangered masculine society on a symbolic level, “obtaining and maintaining perfect closure and stability of the masculine body” (218-19), and that the vices imputed to women depended on the types of behavior of which man wanted to purge himself (222). She also sees a biographical element in what she deems a “regulatory obsession” on Deschamps’s part, corresponding to his celebration of the virtues of the ascetic lifestyle in other writings (225) and his praise of a sealed estate of either masculinity or chastity that would protect his precarious position in the *petite noblesse de robe* during a tumultuous century (229). Whereas this subtle psychological analysis of the *Miroir* is of great interest, the questions of masculine space brought up by Kendrick merit further consideration. Indeed, the link between inside and outside that mirroring forms sought to resolve poses problem for Deschamps. The inner, private, masculine world of contemplation is intruded on by the outside, public, feminine world of the household, an about face from previous examples of public masculine spheres and private, feminine domestic ones. This first chapter on Deschamps will discuss the masculine sphere of theory, counsel, and contemplation and the source texts upon which he bases his reflection. The homosocial bond between *Franc Vouloir* and *Repertoire de Science* is the dominating relationship in the *Miroir*. In the second chapter, the difficulty presented by the disorder of a feminine household shows just how messy the terrain of practice and implementation of counsel can be. Power becomes a gendered commodity enacted in domestic spaces.

In a 2008 article, Kendrick revises some of her earlier observations regarding the *Miroir*. In “*Le Miroir de mariage: mode d’emploi*” she summarizes her previous argument regarding the work by

qualifying the *Miroir* as “une démonstration de maîtrise de soi ou de ‘contenance’ donnée par Franc Vouloir ” [a demonstration of self-mastery or ‘restraint’ given by Franc Vouloir] and by explaining that Deschamps was furthering the tradition of dialectical entertainment at the court of Charles V. Kendrick feels that the ultimate purpose of the *Miroir* is the demonstration of the proper way in which to take counsel and make a decision through the popular form of a debate (“Mode d’emploi” 104-05). She asserts that the royal court audience would have assumed that the debate regarding marriage was merely a theoretical one and that the misogynist discourse deployed was not to be taken literally (106-07). Franc Vouloir’s demonstration of self-restraint is a model for self-government, as well as governing in general (115). She concludes by saying that the verbal jousting taking place at the court of Charles V went beyond that of mere university forms and norms, voluntarily lowering the social level of the aristocratic participants in order to allow them to debate trivial subjects, and that Deschamps’s composition is yet another way in which he responded to the court’s taste for light entertainment (116).

Whether the *Miroir* was composed to fulfill Deschamps’s own desire to provide his century with an encyclopedic moralizing treatise similar to the *Roman de la Rose*, asserting his position as an authoritative writer, a metaphor for the destructive conflict being waged between England and France regarding succession to the French throne, or a rhetorical exercise in decision-making, it can be safely said that all of these arguments point to a consensus that misogyny was not the final purpose of this work. It could very well have been a political weapon, however. The *Miroir de mariage* is all of these elements and more, but Deschamps’s discourse is highly combative as usual. Deschamps’s engagement in the social and political events of his time shaped all his compositions and his verse continuously defends a position, even if the position can change over time.²⁶ It could

²⁶ Thierry Lassabatère’s *La Cité des homes: La vision politique d’Eustache Deschamps* is the most exhaustive analysis of Eustache Deschamps in his political and historical moment. The two volumes that were the fruit of the Vertus conferences, *Les “Dictez vertueux” d’Eustache Deschamps: Forme poétique et discours engagé à la fin du Moyen Âge* (2005) and *Eustache*

be argued that the double nature of the *Miroir* is itself the product of an unlikely marriage, a hybrid text inspired by two late medieval literary traditions. With the source materials of mirrors of conduct for women and mirrors for princes, Deschamps creates a revolutionary reflection on agency in the political microcosm of the household. Above all, the obvious link that he establishes between marriage and the political future of the nation reveals the subtext which other works on marriage attempt to occlude.

Deschamps: the posture of authority, intellectual angst, and agency

Written at the end of his life, the *Miroir* dynamically summarizes the many contradictory or qualified opinions Deschamps held elsewhere during his career, a mirror of his own position as a public intellectual and poet and the preoccupations that his role as privileged observer of his time entailed.²⁷ What emanates from Deschamps's *Miroir* is the vehement expression of a personal responsibility regarding his reader, akin to the responsibility that Repertoire de Science expresses toward his disciple, Franc Vouloir. The sober, didactic tone and entertaining predicaments of the household demonstrate its double purpose within the royal court of Charles VI and other princely courts. How amusing the royal court might have found the suggestion that Folie was responsible for the misgovernment of the nation, especially given the poor mental health of the monarch after 1392, remains to be seen.²⁸ However, what the critic learns from Deschamps's many other works is that he seeks not just to please, but also to instruct his reader and urge for the reform of institutions.

The *Miroir*, despite its dependence on the moralizing tradition for material and form, is not the unconditional acceptance of older, authoritative texts. The many intellectual impossibilities created by the work express a profound dissatisfaction with a certain form of reasoning. The ironic

Deschamps, Témoin et modèle: Littérature et société politique (XIVe-XVIe siècles) (2008) edited by Lassabatère in conjunction with Miren Lacassagne have done much to further this project.

²⁷ For an historical vision of Eustache Deschamps's biography and role as court poet, see "Introduction" Laurie, Ian S. and Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi. *Eustache Deschamps: Selected Poems*. New York: Routledge, 2003.

²⁸ Charles VI, king of France, sank into spells of madness beginning in 1392 and from which he was not to recover during the remainder of his reign. See Françoise Autrand's *Charles VI: La folie du roi*. Paris: Fayard, 1986, for a masterly biography of Charles VI and a chronicle of his time.

positioning of the characters introduces a note of satire concerning easily recognizable figures; one might even go so far as to say parody. The hyperbolic excess and vehemence of these humorous passages, subject of the next chapter, undermine the text's very promotion of a continent way of life.²⁹ When the reception of the advice sought and the resulting decision are determined from the very outset (Franc Vouloir will opt for spiritual marriage), our understanding of the text cannot be limited to a proper curial model for seeking counsel. The *Miroir*, behind its seemingly impersonal allegorical figures, is a highly subjective piece. Repertoire de Science expresses opinions held by Deschamps in his other works. The reader, when faced with the contrasting weariness of the multiple allegorical poetic voices of the work and the passionate invectives that decry the current state of worldly affairs, senses that this is the expression of an intellectual system in which the poet himself cannot find a satisfactory response. The *Miroir de mariage* conveys the frustrated desire for a new manner in which to construct knowledge and navigate the vicissitudes of action versus contemplation.

This unfinished encyclopedic work might have come to a rest only with the passing of Eustache Deschamps, as is indicated by the scribe of BnF ms. 840, its only extant manuscript. However, it is worth asking whether or not the *Miroir de mariage* can come to true closure. Like the prolific poet's possibility for discourse, the possibility for contrary opinions seems endless. The protagonist, Franc Vouloir, is forced to choose between two imperfect alternatives, neither of which can provide a definitive solution for the challenges he faces. Even after he provides his answer to Folie (10,594-11,010), the text gets a second wind. Materiality and contingency are the stuff of worldly existence; a life of contemplation is forever intruded upon by historical, social, and political constraints. As no consensus can be reached regarding marriage, it would appear that more than anything it is intellectual inquiry that prevails.

²⁹ "En effet, nous pouvons situer le *Miroir de mariage* dans une longue tradition de casuistique et de débat concernant la maîtrise de soi et l'amour" ("Mode d'emploi" 107).

Deschamps himself had firsthand experience with providing counsel. Many of his poems are intended to send political messages to people in power. Through the myriad criticisms that his work levels at the ineffectiveness of worldly institutions, he might very well have been in pursuit of new ways in which to relate prescription and practice as a frustrated practitioner well-versed in courtly advice tropes. Reminders of the mirrors for princes' tradition are not an anomaly in a literary text from the long and tumultuous fourteenth century in France. However, the superposition of genres and the impracticality of the advice given do not provide the same space of certainty found in traditional mirrors. The grounded, plodding voice of reason is carried off by political invective at the end of the text.

The discursive spaces created by Deschamps reflect a failure to define and confine women, as well as other social actors; marriage becomes the metaphor for the failure of one worldly institution that represents all others. The *Miroir* is a debate, the externalized representation of an internal moral, philosophical, and psychological conflict between the desire to engage in the worldly social institutions of the time and a calculated withdrawal, motivated by a profound dissatisfaction, from all contingency in the interest of intellectual endeavors and spiritual salvation. It is the juxtaposition of two social and philosophical spaces (the worldly pursuits of establishing a household and making history versus the spiritual path of contemplation and personal salvation) which leads Deschamps to an irresolvable philosophical quandary. The *Miroir de mariage*'s mix of politics and misogynistic opinions about marriage is more than disconcerting; it questions the possibility of human agency to actually make its way through the labyrinth of worldly existence and the efficacy of the efforts deployed. Deschamps expresses the tensions and contradictions of the intellectual climate of the time through a textual representation of discord.

Will and The *Rose*

Deschamps, as the author of a mirror, does not uphold his contract with his reader. Rather than provide an authoritative position on his subject and a global vision, he goes far beyond the scope of marriage to demonstrate how political, literary, and spiritual authority can be abused. This chapter will focus on the two credible protagonists who produce this contradictory discourse, Franc Vouloir and Repertoire de Science, and the dialectical relationship established between them. Franc Vouloir, [Free Will], is an arbiter of his own destiny and a model for intellectual engagement; his name implies that he will be obliged to make a decision in the course of the work. Repertoire de Science [Repository of Knowledge] is a disembodied, encyclopedic voice, the personification of an accumulation, a technique of which Deschamps was so very fond. It is this friendship, and not marriage, that is the central relationship in the text. Like the other texts on marriage in this study, establishing and negotiating masculine relationships of influence and solidarity take the forefront, yet, have long been neglected by criticism.

Deschamps's choice of Franc Vouloir as a protagonist allows him to bring forth the contradictions that shape his thought. While many critics have discussed the *Roman de la Rose* as a source for the *Miroir de mariage*, none have explored what, in my view, is Deschamps's fascination with the notion of free will, an idea that Jean de Meun's text also ponders. For Sylvia Huot, Deschamps, unlike Jean de Meun, "chooses not to focus on Fortune—or attachment to Fortune—as the cause of human suffering; rather, it is a more general weakness of character, adherence to Folie, that is responsible for disasters as varied in nature and scope as original sin, cuckoldry, and the Hundred Years' War. Finally, by naming his protagonist Franc Vouloir rather than Amant, Deschamps grounds his allegory not in the psychology of love and desire, but rather in that of free will, the mechanism through which human fortune and misfortune, both personal and collective, is enacted" (132). Huot goes on to focus on the importance of different modes of reception of the *Rose*

by medieval readers, some who would have read only portions of the text whether owing to the manuscript to which they had access or the medieval predilection for selecting passages of interest, interpreted according to their tastes and view points (133). Huot asserts that Deschamps was one of these selective readers, most likely of the *K* text on which the Lecoy edition is based, who used the *Rose* as “a source of didactic material—both satirical and philosophical—to be mined, rearranged, and recombined with other material in the creation of a new text” (134). He provides an interpretation of the *Roman de la Rose* that is in keeping with his time (141). Nature’s discussion of free will in the *Roman de la Rose* must have struck a chord with Deschamps, as he then felt the need to spend over 12,000 verses contemplating the circumstances which could hinder the exercise of an individual’s free will, a moral quality he cherished above all else.

Free will and the possibility for choice were questions of interest for political and moral philosophy but not commonly subjects in conduct literature for women or texts concerning marriage. Deschamps’s use of free will in this context is original and incongruous. It situates his debate on marriage immediately in the sphere of ethics and politics and far from the actual institution of matrimony. The dilemma illustrated by Jean de Meun in Nature’s discussion of free will is strikingly similar to the situation of the protagonist Franc Vouloir.

Car quant, de sa propre nature,
 Contre bien et contre droiture
 Ce veust home ou fame atourner,
 Reson l’an peut bien destourner,
 Por qu’il la croie seulement.
 Lors ira la chose autrement,
 Car autrement peut il bien estre,
 Que que faceint li cors celestre,
 Qui mout ont grant poair san faille,
 Por quoi reson ancontre n’aille.
 Mes n’ont poair contre reson,
 Car bien set chascun sages hon
 Qu’il ne sunt pas de reson mestre
 N’il ne la firent mie nestre.
 Mes de sodre la question
 Comment predestinacion
 Et la divine presciance,

Plaine de toute porveance,
 Peut ester o volanté delivre,
 Fort est a lais genz a descrivre ;
 Et qui voudroit la chose amprandre,
 Trop leur seroit fort a l'antandre,
 Qui leur avroit neïs solues
 Les resons ancontre meües. (17057-17080)³⁰

For when a man or woman follows his or her own nature and wishes to turn against what is good and right, reason can divert him from this path, provided only he believe in her. Then things will go quite differently, for they can be different in spite of the heavenly bodies. If they do not oppose reason, the heavenly bodies undoubtedly have great power, but they have no power against reason, for every wise man knows that they are not her masters and did not give her birth. Now it is difficult to provide lay people with a solution to the question of how predestination and the divine prescience, which knows all things in advance, can coexist with Franc Vouloir. Anyone willing to try would find it very hard to make it understood, even if the arguments urged against it had been dealt with. (*The Romance of the Rose* 264)

Franc Vouloir's human "nature," exteriorized by the allegorical representations of Folie, Desir, Servitude, and Faintise [Folly, Desire, Servitude, and Trickery], will attempt to lead him down the wrong path. By carefully listening to the voice of reason, Repertoire de Science, he will choose an appropriate course of action. Deschamps's Franc Vouloir does not struggle against the stars and Fortune, but rather against everyday worldly forces that will condition his possibilities for action. The first struggle as identified by Huot is with the human weakness within, and a wrong decision could give birth to an external struggle with a hypothetical wife. Jean de Meun's program to explain the possible coexistence of human free will and divine prescience to the layperson is nothing like Deschamps's secular approach. The debate is not about whether Franc Vouloir will endanger his soul by choosing evil actions over good and God's foreknowledge of outcomes, but rather about whether he will retain free will, or personal agency, which will allow him to participate in speculative inquiry and avoid the quagmire of the household. This woman-run economic and political unit represents a danger for Franc Vouloir's existence. Womankind is not the dangerous but necessary means to propagate the species like in Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, rather she is the conditioning factor which limits the free man's ability to determine his own destiny and provide stability in a shifting worldly existence. The *Roman de la Rose* was not the only source of inspiration for

³⁰ From Jean de Meun. *Le Roman de la Rose*, vol. III. Ed. Felix Lecoy. Paris: Champion, 1975.

Deschamps; his choice of another intellectual source furthers the joining of the marital and the political.

Aristotle's *Le livre de éthiques*

Beyond the *Rose*, Deschamps's secular understanding of the notion of free will and his characterization of the allegory might find their inspiration in another fourteenth-century text. In Folie's initial exhortation to Franc Vouloir to wed, he cites his source.

Et supposé qu'om n'eust enfens,
S'est ce de soy marier sens;
Car nulle vraie policie
N'est sanz mariage assevie
Ne hostel ; et bien le verras
En Ethiques, quant tu vourras,
Et Pollitiques d'Aristote,
Qui plus a plain ce nous denote.
C'est tresdoulce conjunction,
Ce sont deux corps en union,
En une char par la loy joins,
Qui s'entraiment et près et loins.
Homs doit par dehors ordonner,
Femme doit dedenz gouverner :
Elle est si douce en sa parole,
Son mari sert, baise et acole,
Et fait, quant il est a martire,
Qu'elle le puisse getter d'ire. (209-226)

And supposing that one didn't have children, it still makes sense to marry because no polity or household is well served without marriage. This you will see in *Ethics* when you wish, and in *Politics* by Aristotle, which more clearly shows us this. It is an ever sweet bond, these two bodies together, one flesh united by the law, who love one another near and from afar. Man must command outside of the home, and woman must govern within: She is so gentle in her speech, she serves her husband, kisses him and embraces him. When he suffers, she does what she can to deliver him from fury.

Folie's enthusiastic description of marital bliss is not a faithful translation of his source; Aristotle viewed marriage as an economic and political institution above all else. It is the difficulty of making this concept a reality that Deschamps will express as the text goes on. His references to Aristotle are the curious adaptation of a principle in which he apparently does not believe. They are, however, in keeping with fashion.

From 1370-1374 Nicole Oresme translated Aristotle's *Nichomachean Ethics* (*Le livre de éthiques*) and *Politics* (*Le livre de politiques*) from Latin into French for Charles V as part of the monarch's great translation project.³¹ As such, using Aristotle as a basis for medieval political reflection was nothing new by Deschamps's time. As Menut states, the *Politics* and *Nichomachean Ethics* had been used as a source text by Thomas Aquinas's pupil Gilles de Rome in his mirror for princes, *De regimine principum* in 1284, and Brunetto Latino adapted the *Ethics* in the second book of his *Livre dou Tresor* before 1267 (5-6). Deschamps, having had access to the royal library and the volumes that were part of Charles V's translation project, was most likely well acquainted with the substance and texts of Aristotle's works (Evdokimova 58-9). Evdokimova focuses mainly on his use of *Politics* as a source for the relationship between the household and the greater political enterprise as can be inferred from the passage above that she too cites in her article. Deschamps uses the titles given to Aristotle's work by Oresme, *Ethiques* and *Politiques*, that Charles V's translator considered to be two parts to the same book, correctly details the author's name, thought, and takes the word *policie* to refer to different political units as does Oresme; for Evdokimova this constitutes sufficient evidence for the fact that Deschamps most certainly read Oresme's translations of Aristotle (62).

I would content that it would be an oversight to focus only on the *Politics* and neglect the way in which the principles of the *Ethics* inform the relationship established between Franc Vouloir and Repertoire de Science. The *Ethics* shaped Deschamps's understanding of free will, choice, friendship, the incontinence represented by Folie and his companions, and the speculative endeavor on the whole. The *Ethics* understood the polity to be an organization based on relationships between men, founded in friendship and hierarchy, in which competition and contestation could arise. It also founded the polity in a moral discourse, a moral discourse, which when transposed in the Middle Ages, was often found in guides to conduct and discussion of women's behavior. Deschamps's

³¹ Albert Douglas Menut, in his introduction to *Le livre de éthiques d'Aristote*, discusses Charles V's translation project at length and the controversy surrounding previous Latin versions and commentaries of the *Ethics* and *Politics*.

borrowings from the *Politics* are irrefutable, but it is his reading of the *Ethics* that prepares for the political discussion that ensues. Following Aristotle's organization, it is the philosophical understanding presented in the *Ethics* that sets the foundation for the *Politics*. Much as Oresme viewed them as two parts of the same work, they are also indissociable in Deschamps's mirroring vision of the kingdom of France.

Friends and Foes

Considerations on friendship create a masculine solidarity and a climate of trust and counsel from the very beginning of the *Miroir*. Repertoire's response to Franc Vouloir's query as to whether or not he should wed takes into consideration his friend's well-being and condones a life of contemplation rather than political engagement. The names of the four allegorical characters that attempt to persuade Franc Vouloir to wed, Folie, Faintise, Servitude, and Desir, demonstrate their lack of moral worth. Repertoire's singular voice is preferable to a plurality and above all he "views marriage as an institution that removes a man from the community of other men" (Huot 135). Thus, the relationship between husband and wife, the purported focus of a mirror of marriage, is immediately supplanted. Social and intellectual bonds between men will be examined, and the subject of women and marriage is the pretext for the conversation and the game of influence that will ensue.

What is at stake is the homosocial bond that organizes a moral framework, and by extension, the polity. Deschamps, in distinguishing between the false friend (Folie et al.) and the true (Repertoire), demonstrates how true friendship must protect the interest of its participants and spare them the unpredictable behavior of self-interested others.

Ce sont les amis de Fortune,
Qui suient l'estat et l'avoir,
Non pas le corps, je vous di voir
Mais l'ami de vraie amitié
Suit l'ami en adversité,
Non pour remuneracion,
Pour estat, pour possession

Ne pour chose que cilz li donne,
Fors pour l'amour de sa personne,
Et le poursuit com vray afin
Et porte jusques a la fin
De cuer, de corps et de chevance,
Sanz fiction de decepvance.³² (18-30)

These are the friends of Fortune who pursue status and belongings, not the person; I'm telling you the truth. But the true friend accompanies his friend in adversity, not for compensation, for status, for possessions, not for something that he is given, except for the love of his person. He follows him in truth and until the end carries his heart, his body and his means, without the fiction of deceit.

Distinguishing the true friend from the false not only reveals the Aristotelian foundation of the reflection but also appeals to a medieval tradition of heroic camaraderie between men. An aristocratic audience of the tumultuous fourteenth century might particularly identify with this position, recognizing the feudal, Arthurian, and chivalric subtexts within this discussion of Fortune, and immediately projecting the reader into a nostalgic world of male friendships. Deschamps, following Aristotle's discussion of friendship, contends that there is a type of friend who loves out of interest: "Et en ceste manière, ceuls qui aiment pour bien utile, il ne aiment pas les personnes pour elles, mais pour le proffit que ilz en ont ou actendent avoir" [And in this way, those that love out of utility do not love people for themselves but for what they gain or expect to gain] (*Ethiques* 417). The incipit locates the relationship between Franc Vouloir and Repertoire de Science in the realm of the true and good friendship, relegating the friendship that Folie, Desir, Faintise, and Servitude offer to the realm of the Aristotelian notions of utilitarian or pleasurable friendship.³³

The question of wealth and status and the praise of true friendship devoid of material gain hark back to the ideological roots of a feudalism based on friendship and reciprocity, a golden age serving a utopist function that by the time of composition was far removed from late medieval realities. If read within Deschamps's personal context these opening lines could be self-reflective,

³² All textual citations from *Le Miroir de mariage* are from the SATF *Œuvres complètes d'Eustache Deschamps*, ed. Le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud, 11 vols. Paris: SATF, 1878-1902. All translations into English are my own.

³³ *Le livre de éthiques* Book VIII distinguishes among three types of friendship: the utilitarian, the pleasurable, and the true (412-451).

distancing the writer from his material attachment to the court, reinforcing his emotional commitment to the sovereign while expressing his desire to provide direction in times of national ill-fortune. Mutual disinterest is praised and Deschamps suggests that making friendship a commodity compromises the value of counsel. Most importantly, however, the trope of the true friend lends credibility to the advice that Repertoire is about to give. Truth must prevail against “the fiction of deceit.” The discussion of friendship is an effective *captatio benevolentiae* in a historically turbulent time and serves above all as a demonstration that philosophical certainty is possible. Deschamps furthers this expression of commitment to truth in the next lines by stating that the true friend can be distinguished from the false one by his response to one’s missteps (31-41).

At the same time, in this discussion on the true nature of friendship, the schism between material reality and the lofty ambitions of spirituality is apparent. Whereas the friends of Fortune care more for what defines the friend in terms of social status and position, the true friend seeks to protect his friend’s essence and that which allows this essence to exist (the body and means of subsistence). In spite of the desired divorce between worldly and spiritual concerns, the true friendship that is to be established between Franc Vouloir and Repertoire has a necessary worldly component. *Contemptus mundi* cannot correspond to a *realpolitik* approach when survival is at stake. This constraint makes freedom from all contingency difficult to attain. Although the obvious parallel between Deschamps as the faithful servant bearing good counsel to his audience and Repertoire as the ideal pedagogue is established immediately, there is a problem of material realization present in the text. The anguish between what the prescriptive word can accomplish and the implementation of this advice beyond the limits of fiction is tangible.

Words and deeds

The unreliability of speech reveals false friendship and the philosophical tension regarding prescription and practice. The question of whether a friend’s word will correspond to his deed is of

concern to Franc Vouloir. The true friend must act and not only state his intentions: “Tel ami soient confundu!/De paroles et non de fait/Est maint ami qui ainsi fait” [May such a friend be confounded! A friend that behaves this way is a friend in word and not a friend in deed] (64-66). The narrator immediately denounces the bad friend whose acts do not live up to his speech.

This declaration poses a logical conundrum when the true friendship that will be displayed in the work is epistolary. Repertoire, much like his “knowledge,” is merely a compilation of *paroles*. As such, while his word might be judicious, his sphere of action is limited. The medieval encyclopedic penchant personified, Repertoire, as his name states, is the accumulation of the philosophical, literary, and historical tradition of *auctoritas*. While his analytical gloss commentaries might ensure the expansion and transmission of a certain type of knowledge, above all, they create endless discourse. Within this verbose style and the many conclusions that do not finish concluding, perhaps one could see a grain of parody. The sheer abundance of verbal production speaks to its inefficacy; Repertoire can no longer provide satisfactory resolutions to the problem facing the model citizen, Franc Vouloir. Franc Vouloir’s possibilities are determined by social expectations and relationships, historical facts, and material attachments. The resolution that Franc Vouloir enacts will be merely the disavowal of an action, a refusal confined to the text.

Franc Vouloir’s address to Repertoire resounds with the language of love. The goodness of their bond prevails over its fictional quality in keeping with Aristotle’s determination about the nature of true friendship: “Mais l’amistié de ceuls qui sont bons et semblables en vertu, elle est parfaite ; car telz amis veulent l’un a l’autre choses simplement bonnes et selon lesquelles il sont bons” [But the friendship of those who are good and alike in virtue is perfect, for such friends want one for another things that are simply good and according to which they are good] (*Ethiques* 419).

Treschers amis, vraiz et secrez,
Saiges et courtois et discrez,
M’amour, mon bien, mon esperance,
Mon confort, toute ma fiance,

Le soustenement de mon corps,
De ma vie et mort li drois pors,
Cellui en qui j'ay mon attente,
Savoir vous faiz que l'en me tempte
Et presse de marier fort. (1041-1049)

Dearest friend, true and secretive, wise, courtly, and discrete, my love, my goodness, my hope, my comfort and all my trust, my body's sustainment, the legitimate support of my life and death, he in whom my expectations lie, I inform you that I am being tempted and strongly urged to marry.

Repertoire responds to his friend in the same tone, demonstrating reflection and wisdom. He locates Franc Vouloir's problem in the dangerous worldly sphere.

Chers amis, j'ay ta lettre veue,
Bien advisée, et bien leue,
Et te voy ja plungié en l'onde
Des flos perilleux de ce monde. (1129-1132)

Dear friend, I have seen your letter, read it, and considered it well; I see you submerged in the wave of the perilous streams of this world.

The remainder of the incipit to Repertoire's letter (*Miroir*, Chap. XIV) expounds on the danger that lies in the institution of marriage and continues the maritime metaphor with which he begins. The maelstrom of domesticity lies in contrast with another aqueous metaphor, that of the Fountain of Compunction where he will encourage Franc Vouloir to seek solace and goodness (Chap. LIX). As such, Repertoire looks out for the welfare of his friend and encourages him to avoid what will imperil his very existence:

Te voy en grief oraige courre,
Dont je voy po homme rescourre
Qu'il ne couviagne en celle mer
De tourment sa vie blamer,
S'a l'un des deulx perilz s'ahert
Qu'il ne soit destruit et desert. (1139-44)

I see you running into a grievous storm, from which I see few men recover. It is not suitable to condemn one's life to this sea of torment. If he runs into one of these two perils, he may be destroyed or ruined.

Unlike the false friend, Repertoire is concerned for the bodily welfare of Franc Vouloir. Franc Vouloir, in addressing his letter to Repertoire, follows an Aristotelian principle of friendship refusing

the unworthy friendship of an entity as irrational as Folie or as incontinent as Desir and willfully choosing the good:

Mais les amis ne reaiment pas l'un l'autre ou entreament senz eleccion; et eleccion vient de habit. Item, les amis veulent bien a leur améz pour la grace des ames ; et tel fait ne puet venir de passion, mais il vient de habit. Et ceuls qui aiment leur ami pour la grace de luy, ilz aiment le bien de euls meïsme qui sont amans. Car quant le bon est fait amy, il est bon a celui a qui il est fait amy. Et donques chascun de eulz aime ce qui li est bon, et retribue chascun a l'autre equale chose en volenté et en espece. Car amistié est une equalité. Et les choses dessus dites sont mesmement et principalement en l'amistié des bons. (*Ethiques* 423)

But friends don't love once again or love one another without choice; choice comes from habit. Friends desire goodness for those they love for the grace of their souls; such a thing cannot come from passion but it comes from habit. Those that love their friend for his grace, they love their own goodness as lovers. For when he who is good becomes a friend, he is good to he who made him a friend. As such, each one loves what is good for him and renders to each one a thing which is equal in will and in kind. Friendship is equality. And the things stated above are principally found in the friendship of the good.

This first choice, that of the good and true friend over the false, gets at the heart of what Franc Vouloir is, a being endowed with the possibility to deliberate and decide. Franc Vouloir's love for Repertoire is passionate and a matter of life and death. Marriage, as will be seen later, compromises Franc Vouloir's survival, but Repertoire allows him to live. The register of his discourse, varying between vassalage and romance, would normally be directed to a superior or a courtly lady. The multiple cultural inferences speak to the strength of their bond and express the Aristotelian idea that in a friendship between equals loving one's friend is much the same as loving one's self. In fact, Franc Vouloir calls upon Repertoire regarding his own welfare and the bodily risk that marriage entails; Repertoire confirms this very real danger and responds as the true friend should, expressing his concern for Franc Vouloir's life and well-being. Equality as such is established behind a feigning submission on Franc Vouloir's part.

Franc Vouloir and his choice

What is known about Franc Vouloir or "free will" can be inferred from the options with which he is presented in the text. His self-defining discourse and the possibilities imputed to him by other characters provide a composite sketch of him. Franc Vouloir's defining characteristic is his

potential for decision-making. As stated by Kendrick, the *Miroir* is a text about how to take counsel and make a decision, a type of literature that abounded in the late fourteenth century. The questions of choice, will, and counsel were also addressed by Aristotle in *The Nichomachean Ethics*. Deschamps provides for a dramatization of this process, an allegorical *mise en scène* that would take the Aristotelian lesson from the philosophical to the fictional.

Interestingly enough, in this *Miroir*, marriage can define a man. It is Repertoire that imagines Franc Vouloir as the head of a household, and to be judged by the lifestyle he describes Franc Vouloir is either a member of the lower aristocracy or haute bourgeoisie. However, his marital status is much more important than his social class. Franc Vouloir is a man of some means, with sufficient property to ensure either his entry into the “*estat de mariage*” [condition of marriage] or the clergy with the social and cultural capital he would need to be successful in either endeavor.³⁴ The four pranksters that Franc Vouloir encounters serve, above all, to define what he is not. They are the individuals with whom one would not desire to engage in either social or political commerce. Folie and Desir oppose Franc Vouloir’s reason and self-governance. Servitude and Faintise contradict his freedom of spirit and his honesty. As the antithesis of Franc Vouloir, they reinforce his identity as the ideal subject perhaps on his way to becoming a ruler.

Choice is primordial in defining an individual’s character and Franc Vouloir’s apotheosis will be the choice that he makes regarding marriage. The four antithetical characteristics that are presented are also those displayed by the imaginary wife of Repertoire’s epistle. She, too, is what he is not and as such he cannot possibly choose a union that goes against Aristotle’s principle of true friendship. The make-up of the *Miroir*, composed of dialogue and not of action, makes it impossible

³⁴ Jean Batany asserts that the “*estat de mariage*” had a professional dimension in medieval estate and didactic writings in opposition to taking ecclesiastical orders, as one choice necessarily precludes the other in “Un drôle de métier: le ‘status conjugatorum.’” *Femmes, marriages, lignages: XIIIe - XIVe siècles: mélanges offerts à Georges Duby*. Brussels: De Boeck Université, 1992. 25-42.

to judge Franc Vouloir's true identity by anything but his reception of Repertoire's recommendations and his analytical capacity. This limited sphere of action renders Aristotle's assertion all the more real: "...Car c'est une chose qui est propre a vertu et doit l'en mieulx jugier les meurs d'un homme par le eleccion que par les operacions" [For this is something proper to virtue and it is preferable to judge the morals of a man according to choice rather than action] (*Ethiques* 184). This exemplary form of fiction allows the allegorical characters to exist only at the level of discourse; all action is reserved for the characters whose tales they rationally relate, observe, and analyze. The one character that becomes truly incarnate in the text is the horrific wife imagined by Repertoire. She is larger than life and, thus, cannot exist in the realm of philosophy. She pierces the confines of Franc Vouloir and Repertoire's discourse and history comes gushing in.

Choice should be conditioned by counsel in order to be valid. The restraint exerted by Franc Vouloir, his role as conscientious arbiter of the two opposing sides in the debate and his own destiny, makes him a vision of one of the possibilities for masculine existence at the time. Navigating his way through the abundance of opinions, he is, as Kendrick asserts, the idealized leader taking counsel. However, the choice with which he is faced, when it is framed by Repertoire, is not in fact a choice at all. Marriage is a path that will lead him to "destruction" and "ruin" (1144). The choice of marriage is a means to an end; choosing marriage will lead to death and destruction, choosing spiritual marriage will lead to happiness and fulfillment.

Aristotle distinguishes between choice and will, for one cannot choose something that is impossible without running the risk of insanity, and will represents the outcome or goal which one desires. Choice can only reflect the means to achieve a desired end result determined by will (*Ethiques* 185-6). Nicole Oresme, in his translation, provides a useful gloss for this distinction:

Car eleccion est de chose de quoy l'en doit avoir eü conseil. Et nul ne se conseille assavoir mon se il doit acquerir santé ou felcité. Et n'est conseil ne eleccion de nulle fin en tant comme fin, mais bien en

tant comme de chose ordenee a autre fin, et par ce appert que eleccion et volenté different. (*Ethiques* 186)

Choice is something for which one must have received counsel. And no one asks for counsel regarding whether or not he should be healthy or happy. And there is no counsel or choice for anything merely as an end result, but rather as something directed toward an end, and for this reason choice and will differ.

Deschamps's text would seem the very illustration of this principle. Franc Vouloir seeks happiness and salvation rather than suffering and mortal peril, an uncontested aspiration on his part. The question to wed or not to will become the choice that leads to these willful circumstances, a demonstration of the Aristotelian distinction between choice and will. Thus, the process of counsel regarding this decision can take place, illustrating the means by which to arrive at a desired end. Opinion and counsel become necessary elements as they provide for the decision that makes the protagonist what he is, the embodiment of will. The notion of freedom, Franc Vouloir as "franc," allows for this Aristotelian process to take on a national and political character.

What is in a name?: Reading "Franc Vouloir"

Franc Vouloir's identity reflects Jean de Batany's consideration of the theme of "franchise" elsewhere in Deschamps's works. Batany sees an expanded definition for this "franc" [free] man; not only is he the individual who is not a serf, but also the individual who has refused to remain subordinate to a lord or to a woman ('Estats du monde' 5-6). This dual notion of freedom or independence, for the man who has neither amorous nor political nor economic ties is an interesting one. The ideal "citizen" is thus the individual endowed with the power to meditate upon the advice of Reason and defeat his own shortcomings, a privileged, non-existent actor in society. It is this very freedom that relegates him to the contemplative sphere away from involvement in the world. His counterpart is the subjugated married man fallen under the dominion of Servitude. This recurring figure is represented alternately as Franc Vouloir projected into the state of worldly marriage or in the many illustrations of men who have become the servants of their wives. Franc Vouloir celebrates

his unbound state at the very beginning of the *Miroir* and shares his fear that marriage may deprive him of this very identity.

Suis plus frans que l'oiseil du raim,
Qui puet ou il lui plaist voler :
Aussi puis je par tout aler
Franchement et sanz nul lien. (523-526)

I am freer than the bird on a branch who may fly where he pleases. I too may go about freely and with no ties.

Franc Vouloir is free in more ways than one. It is the bodily freedom of movement that first concerns him. This spatial aspect of his predicament will later be replaced by intellectual and moral constraints suggested by Repertoire de Science. One might also infer that a political and social organization reposing on the foundations of a physical, bodily conception of the state of marriage cannot allow Franc Vouloir to thrive. Marriage is not a form of physical servitude for a wife, but rather for her husband.

Et ceste honte corporele
Porte le mari pour sa femme,
Mais non pas, ce croi, quant a l'ame.
(...)
En mal an est celui entré
Qui se veult mettre en tel servage,
Et qui ne scet pas en ce gage
Qui vaincra ou sera vaincus ! (622-639)

The husband carries the bodily shame of his wife, but not that of the soul, I believe. (...) He who places himself in this servitude has entered troubled times and does not know who in the gamble will vanquish or be vanquished.

The passage suggests that Franc Vouloir's servitude results from the illegitimate power wielded by a wrongful heir born to an adulterous wife. The marriage itself is defined in masculine terms. It is paradoxical that Franc Vouloir's bond with Repertoire is expressed through the language of love when marriage is a material *gage* that recognizes indebtedness or a martial metaphor of victory and defeat. This marital servitude could deprive Franc Vouloir of his bodily integrity but does not touch the soul. Bodily independence is compromised, yet the division between the material and the spiritual

is maintained, providing a way out. Another type of submission is preferable. Marriage in egalitarian, “masculine” terms is impossible, but the intellectual and spiritual kinship created by the rationality of Repertoire de Science is a means of liberation.

The subjugation that is marriage, replete with its militaristic language regarding “who will vanquish or be vanquished” might also represent France under the rule of Folie or the French under eventual English rule. Franc Vouloir’s identity comports a “national” aspect that is not negligible. The adjective “franc” can mean both “free” and “French” for the reader of the time. Thierry Lassabatère remarks that the word “franc” elsewhere in Deschamps’s poetic works is often understood as having this double meaning. Generally in the fourteenth century, “franc,” believed to be the etymological origin of “France,” was endowed with both a notion of interior political freedom from royal taxation and a notion of exterior political freedom for France from both the emperor and the Pope (“La personification de la France” 490). Franc Vouloir is the *honnête homme* of his day, the rational masculine agent endowed with civic grace. He characterizes independent thought and a “national” common will simultaneously, placing the text in a national historical context.

The second part of the composite name, the “vouloir” or will in Franc Vouloir, reinforces the multiple and contradictory meanings of the work. In Aristotelian terms, will represents a desired outcome but this desire is designated outside of Franc Vouloir and for him. His own self-interest has to be confirmed by the true friend and counselor. Franc Vouloir simultaneously explores the exercise of his own will and submission to Repertoire de Science’s advice. He is invited to abandon the irrationality of Folie and Desir in order to actively and wisely choose submission to reason.

In order to understand better the nature of will in this instance, Aristotle’s distinction of the involuntary versus the voluntary must be taken into consideration. Franc Vouloir through his voluntary submission to Repertoire’s guidance allows for his own personal will to remain intact if considered in light of Aristotle’s affirmation: “Et les choses desquelles le principe et la cause motive

est en nous meisme quant a les faire ou non, telles choses sont volontaires” [And those things which find their principle or motivation within us as to whether or not to do them are voluntary things] (*Ethiques* 176). This reflection also helps us to understand the position of the unreliable advice of Folie and Desir. Within this Aristotelian framework, actions motivated by the irrational passions of anger or concupiscence, although they are detestable, cannot be considered involuntary as they reside within human beings (183). What redeems humanity as a whole, and Franc Vouloir in particular, is the capacity for choice.

Et premierement, eleccion n'est pas concupiscence ne yre; car eleccion n'est pas commune as choses irraisonnables ou qui ne usent de raison, comme bestes mues et enfants ; car il ne ont pas en euls election, comme il est dit devant, mais ilz ont concupiscence et yre. Item, celui qui est incontinent œuvre par concupiscence et non pas par eleccion ou en eslisant. Et celui qui est continent, au contraire, œuvre par eleccion ou en eslisant et non pas par concupiscence. (*Ethiques* 184)

First, choice is not concupiscence or rage; because choice is not common to unreasonable things or who do not use reason, like beasts or children; because they do not have the faculty for choice, as said previously, but they have concupiscence and rage. Item, he who is not master of himself operates through concupiscence and not by choice or in choosing. He has self-mastery, on the contrary, works by choice and by choosing and not through concupiscence.

If the excesses of emotion and desire decried by Aristotle are transposed on Deschamps's text, we find them represented by the two false friends who attempt to counsel Franc Vouloir: Folie and Desir. In keeping with this Aristotelian logic, they cannot provide appropriate counsel on which to base a sound choice. Their very nature excludes them from a choice that would lead to “continence.” Marriage becomes a non-choice when advised by two such figures. This helps to explain the philosophical charge of what would otherwise be a personal life choice and speaks to the profound workings of Aristotle's thought behind Deschamps's text.

For Laura Kendrick, the question of “continence” or self-mastery developed in Oresme's translation of the *Ethics* and the illustrations depicting debates concerning love relationships found in the manuscripts confectioned for Charles V's could have determined Deschamps's choice of subject (“Mode d'emploi” 111-14). I would go beyond this assertion, for the *Miroir* is not merely inspired by the *Ethics*; it is an illustration like those found in the manuscripts from Charles V's library. A literary

celebration of Aristotle's work and Oresme's translations, it brings to life the moral and ethical notions concerning the responsibility of the individual toward himself, others, and society. The importance accorded to true friendship in the *Miroir*, as a basis upon which all other moral decisions, political and social institutions, repose, demonstrates Deschamps's adherence to this philosophy. Aristotle devotes Books VIII and IX to the kinds of friendships and the grounds of friendship, these notions have political implications for the philosopher as the ideal community is one that provides for the common good and happiness. The happiness of the speculative life is the fulfillment toward which Repertoire de Science encourages Franc Vouloir. The *Miroir*, as an apologia of Aristotelian thought, might also have been the means to effectively represent and transmit the value that Charles V had placed in these mirrors for princes to his son Charles VI at a historically crucial moment. At the same time, the lack of effectiveness of Aristotle's principles, deployed both by the false friends and Repertoire, show how even good counsel can go awry. One must be ever vigilant.

The Tropes of Counsel

If the *Miroir de mariage* follows this Aristotelian progression, the vision of free will, choice, and the personal agency that results render the text eminently political. While Repertoire de Science's name belongs to the stable contemplative sphere, Franc Vouloir's is initially inscribed in the moving realm of worldly action. Repertoire, by elevating Franc Vouloir through shared considerations of earthly and spiritual knowledge, follows a rhetorical maneuver found in the *Fürstenspiegel* or mirrors for princes tradition. The complicity between Franc Vouloir and Repertoire de Science is that of a model ruler's devotion to a counselor. As Franc Vouloir's intellect and independence of spirit are repeatedly praised, the reader, princely or otherwise, would have no difficulty identifying with Franc Vouloir. Repertoire de Science is a veiled allusion to the erudite adviser, well versed in the writings of his day, Deschamps's double and equal. Deschamps could very well have been modeling the behavior he would have liked his readers to have.

Franc Vouloir's model behavior as an attentive subject seeking advice from Repertoire corresponds to Judith Ferster's description of the position of the monarch in English mirrors for princes. She qualifies these works as containing a "mixture of submission and aggression, flattery and resistance" (Ferster 1). The praise of Franc Vouloir's intellect by flatterers and false friends paves the way for his acceptance of the gentle rebukes and heavy-handed guidance he will receive from Repertoire. By blaming Folie for the moral wrongs and political defeats of France, Deschamps is respecting an advice tradition that Ferster qualifies as "deferential in that it directs criticism to the king's advisers and his choice of advisers, rather than to the king himself... But in these political confrontations, we will see the blooming of the oppositional elements of the tropes of advice" (12). By illustrating the terrible consequences of following Folie, Repertoire consolidates his own stance as an example of sound judgment.

The elevation of Franc Vouloir, the praise for his intellect, and the encouragement he receives to ignore the inadequate and misguided counsel of Folie, Desir, Faintise, and Servitude and cleave to the teachings of Repertoire de Science is a paradigm commonly used in the *Furstenpiegel* in order to obtain the favor of the ruler and convince him to submit to "proper" counsel, that is the author's own. The rhetorical progression laid out by Deschamps in the *Miroir de mariage* is faithful to this project. Once the contract of counsel is established, veiled criticism or "the oppositional elements of the tropes of advice" as Ferster defines them, may be addressed. By using the methods and forms of mirrors for princes, Deschamps is able to ensure adherence to the spirit of counsel, even if the content does not initially seem to provide overt political guidance. He creates the *Miroir* to allow his audience to participate in this movement of elevation and leveling all while being obliged to recognize both the flattery of their own intellect or free will and the superiority of Deschamps's knowledge and erudite position. Returning to the trope of the true friend, unsolicited advice becomes welcome and acceptable when he has his advisees best interest at heart. Friendship in the

Miroir, as Aristotle demonstrates in the *Ethics*, is the foundation for politicized masculine relationships.

Le vray amy, se tu faiz mal,
Lui saichant, par especial
Le te dira pour toy garder
Lors doiz tu a ce regarder
Et s'aucuns besoings te court seure,
Vraiz amis est qui en celle heure
Apporte le sien, et avole
De fait et non pas de parole,
Sanz ton parler, sanz ta requeste. (31-41)

If you do wrong, the true friend will tell you as much when he learns of this, especially to preserve you, so you must consider this. And if you fall into need, a true friend is the one who will give of himself in this hour and come flying to your aid in fact and not in words, without you speaking or requesting it.

The true friend is one who comes running to your aid, “in fact and not in words, without you speaking or requesting it.” Thus, he looks out for the other’s best interest by informing him or her of their mistakes, acting upon what is said, and anticipating a friend’s needs. By providing a pretense for unsolicited advice, the narrator is also able to render his reader receptive to criticism that is veiled and perhaps unsolicited. This passage is reminiscent of what Ferster identifies as a mixture of “submission and aggression, flattery and resistance” (1) as the narrator endows the true friend with the power to act without solicitation, the submission to his friend being disguised as a form of aggressive, proactive behavior that has the recipient’s best interest at heart. This passage also underscores the importance of the coherence between act and deed, between discourse and practice. The upright, moral individual adheres to the precepts of a given discourse and translates them into action. Acting otherwise is mere flattery and dangerous for him who is the object of it.

Franc Vouloir, the narrator in this passage, goes on to define two forms of flattery. Sincere flattery and devotion differ from false flattery in intent only, with the goal of protecting the friend’s well-being. Franc Vouloir demonstrates his lucidity through his recognition that poor advice is furnished by an untrustworthy figure that masquerades as a friend and who:

Blandist, flatte, et va decepvent,

Et se tourne avecques le vent
Et consentira ta folie,
Pour toy plaire [...]. (43-46)

Gives compliments, flatters, and continues to deceive and he changes with the wind and will consent to your folly just to please you [...].

If bad advice is inconsistent and overly pleasing, good advice will not always be what the recipient wants to hear. Franc Vouloir prepares the reader for the entrance of the allegorical n'er do wells Folie, Desir, Servitude, and Faintise, lest their initial advice should be overly seductive for the reader. Since the arguments of Folly and his false friends resemble good advice in their appeals to domestic practicality and Biblical wisdom, this cautioning is warranted. Their initial approach is flattery and an appeal to Franc Vouloir's intellect, followed by biblical exempla of the destruction of Babylon after the death of King Balthazar, and a *realpolitik* approach to an inheritance despoiled by servants resulting from a lack of progeny. They levy several arguments in favor of marriage as the means of providing legitimate heirs; but, ultimately, they appeal to Franc Vouloir's intellectual capacities.

Et donques par plus fort raison,
Tu, qui es raisonnables hom
Et qui as ame intellectuelle
Perpetuel, saige et soubtive,
Doiz mieulx tendre a avoir lignée. (189-92)

And thus, with even greater reason, you, who are a reasonable man and has a soul that understands, that is perpetual, wise, and clever, should do more to have a lineage.

This latter observation is seconded by both the positive representation of Repertoire de Science, and the manner in which the allegorical characters that Franc Vouloir first encounters are immediately discredited. Desir, Folie, Faintise, and Servitude, along with their unflattering designations, are presented as “faulx amis fortunez qui pour decepvoir furent nez” [false fortunate friends who were born to deceive] who are looking out for their own self-interest more than that of their friends (77-8). One would assume that the examples that would be provided by this quartet of undesirables

would differ in nature from those presented by Repertoire de Science. However, the opposing sides in this debate cite the same ecclesiastical and ancient authorities to illustrate their remarks.

How then is one to decide who provides better counsel? While Desir, Folie, Faintise, and Servitude represent human weaknesses, Repertoire de Science is the culmination of *auctoritas* and scholasticism. Laura Kendrick remarks that it is significant that whereas the less credible counselors speak their arguments, Repertoire de Science and Franc Vouloir communicate through exchange of letters, as though both were studying the authorities (“Transgression” 212). It can be inferred then that written counsel, provided from an authoritative position, bears more weight than spoken advice. This careful positioning by Deschamps renders his audience more apt to accord truth value to Respository’s advice given the medium through which it is transmitted and, by extension, to his own writing.

While Franc Vouloir is flattered by his interlocutors, he himself chooses a position of humility in his request for advice. Even as the four false friends and Repertoire abound in examples and ideas, he admits his “ignorance.”

Mais j’ay de bon conseil mestier,
Pour opposer et pour respondre
A ce que fait m’avez espondre,
Qui touche ma mort et ma vie;
Et si a grant philosophie,
Exemples de Bible et de loy,
Ou petitement me congnoy,
Et mainte escripture autentique,
Et du moustrer belle pratique
Ou propos que vous n’avez fait ;
Et samble bien a vostre fait
Que les livres avez veus
Et estudiez et sceus.
Et suy simples et ignorent[...]. (478-91)

But I am in need of good counsel to oppose and to respond to that which you have asked me to explain and concerns my life and death; and if examples from the Bible and the law have great philosophy, I know but little.

And there is much authentic scripture and great rhetorical prowess in the responses that you proffer; in this you seem right at ease; you have seen many books and studied and learned them. And I am but simple and ignorant [...].

Franc Vouloir humbles himself before his unworthy counselors, flattering their learning, and expresses how high the stakes of this rhetorical match truly are. Marriage, as Repertoire confirms soon afterward, is a question of life and death. He also addresses his interlocutors' learning and their verbal prowess or "belle pratique," all admirable qualities for a late fourteenth-century aristocracy themselves most likely well-versed in the same rhetorical, religious, and philosophical background. In contrast, Franc Vouloir is modest regarding his own talents: "suy simples et ignorant," a humble pupil ready to be instructed by a worthy advisor.

The means to an end

This rhetorical posturing and self-abasement on the part of Franc Vouloir provide a model for Deschamps's ideal reader. This courtesy paid to the medieval ideal of modesty again allows the "humble" reader's easy identification with Franc Vouloir, an agent endowed with the power of arbitration and who desires to learn, but remains modest before knowledge and authority. Given such a position, a contentious spirit could not possibly exist. Or could it? Franc Vouloir is not ashamed to ask for advice, and this desire is the first one expressed. He then places himself in an educational context, both modestly presenting his power of recollection and his own familiarity with ancient knowledge:

Et si me samble que je vis,
Comme je fu enfant d'escole,
De Salemon une parole,
Qui disoit assez plainement :
« Se tu faiz rien, fay saigement,
Et resgarde en tous temps la fin. »
Et ailleurs disoit en latin,
De quoi le françois veult retraire,
Qu'om ne doit nulle chose faire
Sanz conseil, car qui de lui euvre ;
A bonne fin vient de son euvre ;
Mais ceuls qui d'eulx sanz conseil euvrent,

Souventefois s'en deshonneurent,
Et les autres ne se repentent
Qui a leur bon conseil s'attendent. (494-508)

And it seems to me that when I was a child in school I saw a dictum by Salomon that plainly said 'If you do something, do it wisely and at all times consider the end.' And elsewhere he said in Latin, which would be translated into French as follows, that we should do nothing without advice, for he who acts according to counsel, sees his work come to a good end. But those among them who act without advice are often times dishonored while the others who await their good advice do not repent.

What comes to Franc Vouloir's mind is yet another expression of his adherence to a politics of counsel and the principles laid forth in Aristotle's *Ethics*. How better to counter the example of a foolish Biblical king who allowed his kingdom to fall into ruin through unfortunate unions with concubines than by relating the words of a wise Biblical king? This reminder to pay heed to the end of all things is significant in many respects. A desired and happy outcome is obtained by heeding good advice and by ensuring that practice closely follows prescription.

For Aristotle, the outcome or end result of all human actions is happiness: "Et pour ce, se ainsi est que de toutes operacions humaines il soit une seule fin, celle fin est le vray bien humain et felicité" [And for this, it is such that all human actions have one goal only, and this goal is true human good and happiness.] (*Ethiques* 117). However, an ambiguity lies in Oresme's translation of the notion of "fin." While in this instance, "fin" is the goal or outcome of human actions, in a passage that could very well be the source for Deschamps's reference to Solomon, this same word means something entirely different. "Donques pourrait l'en doubter a savoir non se nul homme deveroit estre dit beneuré tant comme il vit, mais que l'en devroit attendre et resgarder la fin, comme disoit Solon, et qui mectoit cest opinion il s'ensuivroit que nul ne fust beneuré jusques a la mort" [So we could doubt whether or not a man should be considered blessed while he lives, but we should wait and look to the end, as said Solomon, who held this opinion, it would follow that no man could be considered blessed until his death] (*Ethiques* 131). The ambiguity that remains in Deschamps's adaptation of this passage, as to whether he should seek counsel in order to find the best outcome

possible or whether it is a matter of spiritual salvation, is the organizing principle of the entire work. Deschamps's irresolvable quandary is the uncomfortable duality between the tropes of political counsel and the illustrations of havoc wreaked in France owing to the poor counsel of Folie and the advice that leads to retreat from the material world into spiritual salvation. How can one write a mirror for princes celebrating the tradition to which it belongs when disengagement from the political is what is ultimately encouraged? Like Oresme's difficulty in bringing clarity to this Aristotelian "fin," Deschamps too finds that the concept of an endpoint, whether textual, physical, or spiritual, proves a problem. The difficulty in coming to a finite conclusion is a moral and philosophical one. The material world constantly intrudes on the ideals of the *Ethics*.

Problematic Materiality and Worldly Institutions

The masculine friendship between Repertoire de Science and Franc Vouloir and the contract of counsel to which they both adhere remain unattainable ideals that other masculine institutions defy. Repertoire de Science, quickly straying from a discussion limited to marriage, recounts the many woes that face the political institutions of late fourteenth-century France. If the first chapters of the *Miroir de mariage* and the epistolary dialogue that ensues between Franc Vouloir and Repertoire de Science create a discursive space of masculine political, social, and intellectual concord, the physical spaces that are portrayed within the work demonstrate discord. Clearly, the physical world of implementation escapes the philosopher's world of theory. The household and the French nation become intertwined in various ways, both escaping from the control of the men whose role it is to impart, follow, and perform the principles of counsel. In fact, marriage and the household are but the central metaphors for a series of social dysfunctions that explain the dire state of the nation. In each institution, whether it is the decadence of the clergy or knightly and noble negligence of learning, the divide between social ideal and social reality is what Deschamps decries.

The unfortunate consequence of marriage is other worldly institutions. As marriage produces offspring, it produces social actors that participate in these institutions. Parenthood itself confines one to worldly difficulties. Chap. XXII discusses the inconveniences brought about by having children, who, if they do not die young, are, at best, difficult to rear, could potentially bring shame on their parents, and then must be provided with a situation in the world. Repertoire briefly leaves the subject of women to relate in Chap. XXIII how trying to put a son through law school will make one wish they had not had children at all owing to the cost and bad mores he might acquire. At that, the child might be illegitimate. The other alternative, making him a knight, has its own dangers and costs as well and is also an unsatisfactory option. In Chap. XXIV, Repertoire with his avant-garde political correctness goes on to relate the pains of having a sickly or deformed child. Repeatedly, in a series of oppositions, he details how one state and its contrary are both undesirable: a child who dies at an early age versus a child who survives; a child who becomes a knight versus one who becomes a cleric; a healthy child versus a sickly one. For a society in which lineage and inherited social position provided for organization and continuity, Repertoire's neither/nor advice is problematic and greatly limits options. Impossibility is his *modus operandi*, never a very fruitful philosophical posture.

Repertoire goes so far as to undermine the very institution in which he hypothetically participates and from which he draws the resources for his argument, the educational system in place at the time. Much like the wife in this hypothetical marriage, for Deschamps the clergy and knighthood do not live up to the standards set forth for them by the conventional wisdom of the time. While he exhorts Franc Vouloir to adopt a life of study and contemplation, ecclesiastical erudition is contaminated by the reality of the Church. In his discussion regarding parenting, Deschamps addresses the question of sons who wish to enter the clergy:

S'ilz sont a aprendre deliver
De bon engin, de bonnes mours,
Tant y est plus grans ly amours :

.VI. ans les fault estre a gramaire
 Et a logique .vi. ans traire ;
 Puis les fault aller aux decrez
 Ains que ilz soient magistrez,
 Estudier .viii. ou .x. ans,
 Et s'ilz veulent estre bien grans
 Et docteur en theologie,
 Moult leur fault poursuivre clergie
 Jusqu'à my lieu leur eage.
 S'ilz n'ont prebende ou advantage,
 Trop sont leurs despens sumptueux :
 Ilz leur fault robes d'escureux,
 Housses, menteaulx fourrez de gris
 Et de menu vair, je te dis,
 Et de fin cendal pour esté,
 Livres qui n'ont pas pou cousté,
 Vivres, maison, gens et estude ;
 Et quant il est jusqu'à la bude
 D'avoir bien et estat mondain,
 Voy la la mort d'ui a demain
 Ainsis a le père perdu
 Le sien, son enfant, son escu,
 Et plaint le corps et la chevance,
 Et vit en grant desesperance. (2078-2104)

If they are inclined to study, sound of mind and morals, so much greater is the love: they must study grammar for six years and logic for six as well; then they must go to decisions if they are to be magistrates, study eight or ten years. If they want to be great and doctors in theology, they should pursue the clerical studies until middle age. If they have no Church revenue or privileges, their expenses are sumptuous: they need robes of squirrel, overcoats, coats lined with gray squirrel and with white squirrel fur, I'm telling you, and fine silk for summer, and books that cost not little, provisions, a house, servants and a study; and when they've succeeded at the end of their term to have goods and a worldly estate, there you see death from one day to the next. Thus the father has lost his wealth, his child and his shield and he grieves for his body and subsistence and lives in great despair.

In this instance, the father of the young man destined for the clergy finds himself financially ruined by this undertaking. What would at first seem to be participation in a desirable institution becomes a nightmare for the man who is required to make a career possible for his son. Once again, the ethical integrity that such a position promises is submerged by the material problems necessarily associated with it. The theoretical ideals that found the institution are supplanted by unsatisfactory worldly realities.

Education is at the crux of this paradox in Repertoire's mind. Whether for future members of the clergy, knights, or good wives, proper instruction would seem paramount to forming a just society. However, the reality of this process entails a material cost as seen in the example above.

Much as for good wives, virtue is acquired through personal implication in this process of self-improvement. Integral in medieval political thought was the Aristotelian notion that virtue is a habit acquired by effort (Coleman 53). This principle should make the didactic undertaking worthwhile. However, by exposing the costs of this instruction and the ways in which the recipients do not adhere to the principles laid forth, Repertoire draws a distinction between his audience (ideal citizen and pupil *Franc Vouloir*) and the rest of humanity for whom a lack of effort renders the didactic enterprise futile. The life of the mind is once more intruded upon by the material world.

Even knighthood is a failing and corrupt institution. Throughout his long letter, he returns frequently to this same subject and knighthood, “le plus hault mestier de tous,” [the most noble vocation of all] receives this same contradictory treatment from Repertoire (2213). The structure of the argument is strikingly similar to the arguments that are laid forth regarding both marriage, having children and the clergy; despite the philosophical and spiritual ideals that chivalry entails, it too becomes entrenched and corrupted by the contingency of daily life. From spiritual and political ideal, chivalry becomes a corrupt and mundane caste.

Chevalier doit estre entechié
De .vi. taiches principaument:
Dieu doit amer premierement,
Lui doubter, craindre et obeir;
Il doit avarice hair,
Ouir messe, Dieu reclamer
Son prince et son seigneur amer,
Son sang pour Jhesucrist espandre
Et le menu peuple deffendre,
Afin qu'il puisse labourer,
Et les nobles, par leur œuvrer,
Aient sur yceulx leur estat.
Se guerre est, saiche du debat,
Et ne se mette en souldoirie
Que pour la plus juste partie ;
Vive en l'estat qu'il veult mourir :
Si ne pourra s'ame perir. (2236-2252)

The knight must have the taste for six tasks principally: First, he must love God, dread, fear and obey him. He must hate greed, attend mass and pray to God. He must love his prince and his lord, and spill his blood for

Jesus Christ. He must defend the people so that they may plough the fields, and nobles, who through their work, may have estate over these others. In times of war, may he know how to fight, and take up arms only for the just and rightful party; may he live in the state in which he wishes to die, lest his soul should perish.

The ideal knight has a conservative function within Deschamps's social vision, as he is responsible for maintaining the estate of nobility and the moral integrity of his station in life. After this discussion regarding the moral imperatives of the knight begins a laundry list of the accoutrement that accompanies his functions: "Escu lui fault, espée et lance, cotte d'acier et garde bras..." [He needs a shield, a sword and a lance, armor and an arm guard] and ends with the expenses that accompany his keep (2342-2371). Repertoire again arrives at the conclusion that having a son who is a knight is not necessarily worth the investment that it entails, "Qui bon fil chevalier aras, qui tant de coust y metteras, et si mourra en my les champs?" [He who has a good knight as a son who will spend great sums on him, what if he dies in the midst of the battlefield?] (2373-2375). Much like marriage, knighthood entails the same difficulties in Repertoire's logic. While women are meant to maintain a household and provide heirs, the risk that they squander family riches and provide only illegitimate children is great. Knights are meant to maintain the wealth of the kingdom by providing security and territorial integrity so that economic work may be done. However, the perils of battle and the temptations that confront virtue make having a knightly son a great expense and a risk to both life and honor.

No one is spared in this encyclopedia of negation. The decline of the nobility is recounted in Chapters XLVIII-L. This estate meant to protect the nation has neglected learning and, thus, endangered the system Repertoire seeks to uphold. Deschamps sings the praises of past rulers who had their priorities in order.

Mais pas ne souloit ainsis estre
Comme il est, en l'ancien temps :
Les roys faisoient leurs enfans
Apprendre es .vii. ars liberaulx [...]. (8139-8142)

But days gone by, it did not used to be as it is now. Kings made their children learn the seven liberal arts.

Repertoire insists that learning is what is meant to bolster chivalry, providing its ideological framework and lending all its strength to those who were supposed to be strong. Chivalry without learning can only be an empty shell. Arguing in favor of learning is also an argument in favor of the existence of the very sort of text that relies on the literary and philosophical tradition cited, a text such as the *Miroir de mariage*.

La chevalerie s'adonne
A estre grant, puissant et forte,
Et ou l'estude a esté morte
Ou perie par accident,
A esté, et par consequent,
Chevalerie povre et vuide. (8190-8195)

Chivalry gives itself for task to be great, powerful and strong and there where learning has been put to death or has died by accident, thus as a consequence, chivalry is impoverished and empty.

Learning simultaneously provides for a strong noble class but also allows class distinctions to be maintained.

The noble who does not educate himself must educate others to rule in his stead. By maintaining the upper hand in the realm of knowledge, the wise noble maintains the respect due him by his subjects. They should in no case be elevated to equal ranks. This mirror is not intended to be the vehicle of social mobility.

Subgez furent humbles et doux
Ne furent ne fel ne estoux,
Et leurs seigneur qui furent saige
Les maintindrent en cel usage
Et ne les esleverent point. (8163-8166)

They were humble and sweet subjects; they were neither disloyal nor arrogant. And their lords, who were wise, kept them in this custom and did not promote them.

Undoubtedly, contemporary concerns might have weighed on the mind of the author. Knights maintain the subservience of the people for their own good; they protect them in times of conflict

such as those that Deschamps was able to witness first hand, not having been spared the consequences of the Hundred Years' War in his personal life.

Deschamps in the *Miroir*, as elsewhere, comes back repeatedly to the notion of the common good. This inverted power structure, whereby the commoner might receive an unmerited promotion, mirrors that of the wife who usurps power in the home, as we will see in the next chapter. The exhortation to return to tradition and maintain past systems functions in two ways, to maintain what has been acquired in the past and also to instill a conservative vision of all other institutions in the reader.

Ly peuples est reconfortez
En guerre par chevalerie,
Car chevaliers mettent leur vie
Pour deffendre le bien commun :
Ces .ii. estas couvient estre un :
La chevalerie et l'estude. (8217-8221)

The people is comforted during war by knighthood, for knights risk their lives to defend the common good: these two estates should be as one: knighthood and learning.

While *Franc Vouloir*'s education may serve to keep him free, it also serves to ensure the subjugation of others, all to the profit of society at large. By acknowledging the limited scope of this mirror cum conduct book, Deschamps's text may be understood in its truly conservative nature.

At the same time, one could see a certain degree of subversion and irony in addressing passages such as the following to a royal patron:

Comment son li noble si rude
Qu'ilz ont la science en despit ?
Dont ilz sont devenu petit,
Et povre en sont de jour en jour.
Depuis qu'ilz quirent le sejour
Que leurs enfans n'appreissent pas,
Ont fait regner les advocas,
Et a leurs serfs donné licence
D'apprendre les ars et science. (8222-8230)

How is it that nobles are so ignorant as to hold knowledge in disregard? Because of this they have become small, and poorer, day after day. Since they have sought out leisure and allowed their children not to learn, they have made their lawyers rule and have given permission to their serfs to learn the arts and sciences.

The irony of this position should not be lost on the contemporary reader. By arguing that nobles of times past privileged education and knowledge and that his contemporaries allow their children's education to go by the wayside, thus allowing jurists and peasants to rule and learn in their stead, he appeals to a certain form of feudal orthodoxy that had become increasingly impossible in the late fourteenth century. In fact, Deschamps's patrons were more than involved in a pedagogical project for both the young people in their charge and the court in general. The translation program of Charles V benefited the author himself as well as the rest of the household, and Deschamps's works are greatly indebted to this process. His involvement in the household administration could only liken him to the "advocas" that he abhors, as he was a member of the *noblesse de robe*. Again, the ideal laid forth in the *Miroir* decries the very reality that the work participates in. Were Repertoire's exhortations meant to encourage the wider consumption of works such as Deschamps's? Or rather, was this entreaty destined for the nobility meant to please a royal patron who depended on the knighthood in this time of national crisis and who might have detected a hint of subservience in the appeals of the writer? In any case, Deschamps's imprecations at times ignore his very position as a court intellectual. Could he be poking fun at the very process in which he engages?

While traditional conduct books often laid forth an idealized representation of the household that would have allowed for imitation and thus provided social security or ascension, the irony of Deschamps in these depictions of the domestic existence is resounding. His celebration of the status quo and a return to a certain form of social purity might have been attractive to those in power at the time, but not to those who sought gain from the turmoil of the end of the fourteenth century. By decrying these practices and celebrating contempt for the world, he harks back to a form of social existence that was no longer in vogue by his time. What is problematic is not only that social realities

no longer correspond to older, idealized institutions, but also the thinking and discourse that are used to support them is no longer effective. Deschamps's repeated demonstrations speak to a frustration with older modes of an idealized form of mirroring.

Repertoire's paradoxical methods and the problem of experience in the *Miroir de mariage*

Repertoire de Science best illustrates this intellectual difficulty. Materiality poses a problem for Repertoire de Science, constantly endangering his ideal, and so too does the question of experience. Without participation in worldly affairs, experience remains confined to the text. Repertoire readily admits to this in his demonstration to Franc Vouloir.

Et se tu ne crois en mes vers,
Et ne soies de femme experts,
Croy donques a l'experience
De ceuls qui tant eurent science,
Et qui par les femmes qu'ilz orent
Nous ont escript ce qu'ilz en sorent. (2447-52)

If you do not believe in my verses and are not expert with women, believe then the experience of those who were so very knowledgeable and because of the wives they had, wrote of what they knew.

The many examples of unfortunate men and husbands that follow (Socrates, Cato, Philip of Macedonia, Agamemnon, Samson, Hercules, John the Baptist) speak to Repertoire de Science's definition of experience. Chapters XXVI (2453) through XXXII (2972) recount the misfortunes of these exemplary husbands and their less than exemplary wives. However, far from being a lived experience, it is a literary one. Repertoire de Science's experience is limited merely to what he has learned from the books he consults in order to respond to Franc Vouloir's query. If Franc Vouloir is to exercise his faculty for choice, he must deploy material means to arrive at a desired end. Repertoire's form of secondhand experience is a contestable claim to knowledge.

At the same time, Repertoire exhorts his pupil to aspire to moral wealth that can only be obtained through worldly actions. In this illustration, the married man with children is condemned to

spend days full of trouble for a meager compensation. The lineage to which he aspires cannot compete with the ethical heritage he could potentially leave behind.

Las! trop est dolereus meschans
Cilz qui desir avoir lignée :
Jamais n'ara bonne journée
Fors triboul, penser et soussy ;
Tu le puez bien veoir icy,
Et certes nulz n'emportera
De ce monde, quant il mourra,
Que .II. choses, si com moy semble :
C'est bien fait, bon renom ensemble. (2376-2384)

Alas! Too pitiful a wretch is he who desires a family line: never will he have a good day without trouble, concern and worry. You may see it here very clearly, and of course no one takes with him from this world, when he dies, but two things it seems to me: one's good deeds and good reputation.

Whereas Repertoire delineates the negative aspects of making a son a knight or a cleric, the opinion that he holds at the end of the text demonstrates the internal contradictions in his thinking. By stating that the mortal man, upon his death, may take only two things with him, his good deeds and reputation, he does not recognize that performing good deeds and maintaining a good reputation are contingent upon participating in the social institutions of which he amply demonstrates the defects. His text is fraught with desire and discouragement, aspiration and illusion. This desire for correspondence and coherence between ideal and action are ultimately what Repertoire encourages Franc Vouloir to seek. However, while Repertoire supports a lifestyle without contradiction, he incessantly contradicts himself, making exceptions to each rule. Even marriage is acceptable in certain cases.

Marriage that results in material gain can be acceptable for Repertoire. For example, a knight who is older and has returned from campaigning may very well make a marriage in order to have children and enjoy the material benefits of land and an inheritance that such a union would provide. It would seem that there is ground for compromise regarding this institution of marriage for some individuals. A knight, once he has seen the world and is able to be physically present in order to

avoid the perils of an adulterous wife, may marry. Regarding knights who have returned from campaigns, he writes:

Aime ta femme, se tu l'as;
De moien eage la prandras,
Et tu seras d'eage moien :
Lors sera plus doulz le lien
Entre vous deux de mariage,
Et pourrez terre et heritaige
Acquester, et vir voz enfans
En bon estat encores grans,
Ne nulz ne te reprouchera
Ta demeure, car l'en sçara
Que tu aras par tout esté. (4327-4337)

Love your wife, if you have one. Take one who is middle aged and you yourself are middle aged; thus the tie of marriage will be sweeter between the two of you. You may acquire land and property and see your children in good positions when they are older. No one will question your household, for they will know that you have been everywhere.

Those that are in need of finances and a position in society are allowed to wed as well in Repertoire's opinion. They are encouraged in particular to wed older women who have the means to provide them with land, power, and finances and who are chaste.

Marriage is a means of social ascension for the poor young man with no worldly estate, a social ascension that is clearly prohibited elsewhere. This *realpolitik* form of marriage demonstrates its importance as both a political and economic institution and a manner in which to climb the social ladder. Far from withdrawing from the world, it guarantees total participation in the system and the spirit of this late form of feudalism.

Et s'en juenesse as povreté,
Et tu ne puez ton fait chevir
Pour ta povreté ne suir,
Et tu ne treuves bon servise,
Aucune riche vieille advise
Qui ait terre et gouvernement
Et grant finance promptement,
Mais que du corps ne soit blamée,
Et fay d'elle ton espousée ;
Prans lors argent, or et finance,
Et ton corps en honeur advance. (4337-48)

If in your youth you are poor and you cannot make your way on your own because of your poverty, nor inherit, and if you find no good indenture, find a rich old woman who has land, authority, and great wealth available but

who has not endangered her bodily reputation, and make of her your wife. Then take silver, gold, and the means and promote yourself in honor.

Repertoire's letter supports the separation and containment of the worldly sphere from that of the spiritual but the organization of his text undermines the legitimacy of this goal. His discourse is a continuous movement from contemporary examples regarding medieval institutions such as this one to examples drawn from Biblical sources and classical texts, a common organization in didactic works of the time that juxtaposes contemporary realities with an ecclesiastical and scholarly vision of knowledge, philosophy, and spirituality that is intended to serve as a foundation for the purported learned audience of this text.

This separation of the free-thinking individual from society, the containment of an idealized masculine world of power, is impossible not only on the level of practice but also in representations of late medieval society as well. Women might present "contamination" within this pure, masculine community, as argued by Laura Kendrick, but the series of frustrated ideals discussed by Repertoire leaves the reader with the exhortation of another impossible ideal, that of *contemptus mundi*.

Paradoxically, by inscribing *exempla* in a continuous history of learning and textual transmission weight is given to the historical involvement of the *Miroir* in contemporary affairs. Moving between the domestic and the public, past and present, family and government, makes the separation of worldly and spiritual spheres difficult to maintain. What might be an abstract rhetorical activity cannot be purely an intellectual pursuit. The deployment of rhetoric in mirrors for princes and other works of conduct leads to practical applications that are anything but imaginary.

De prudence, sapience et l'operacion spéculative

Necessarily, individual agency for the person who wishes to exercise their free will becomes difficult to practice in Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*. The sphere of contemplation, a privileged location in which Repertoire seeks to isolate the individual from the material world, is constantly infringed upon by the economic and political institutions in which agency could eventually take

place. At the same time, the actions and choices made in those domains are unsatisfactory. The ideal of *contemptus mundi* shapes Franc Vouloir who is meant to be a virtuous social actor. Marriage and all of the engagements and compromises therein make any ideal impossible to live up to. The irreconcilability between these two modes of existence, action and agency versus spirituality and contemplation, might be explained by the difficulty Deschamps has in reconciling Aristotelian “prudence” or practical wisdom and “sapience” or superior wisdom. The metaphor of marriage becomes a means to illustrate the tension between these two forms of knowledge, both necessary and useful in the social and political negotiations of the fourteenth century.

The administration of daily affairs, and thus politics and economics, relates to the realm of “prudence” as explained in Oresme’s translation of the *Ethiques*.

Car nous dison que bien conseilier est la principal operacion du prudent. Et nul ne conseille des choses qui ne peuent soy avoir autrement ne de quelles il ne est aucune fin laquelle fin soit ouvrable par nous. Et celui est simplement bon conseilier qui scet conjecturer et trouver selon inquisition de raison le plus tresgrant bien de choses ouvrables par nous. Et prudence n’est pas tant seulement de choses universeles ; mais avecques ce, il convient cognoistre les choses singulieres. Car prudence est active et toute accion est vers choses singulieres. [Oresme’s gloss] *Et pourroit l’en dire que prudence est commune et general et a plusieurs especes. Une est prudence monostique, quant est pour soy meisme ; et ceste retient le non commun et est appelle prudence. L’autre est prudence yconomique, quant ou gouvernement d’un hostel. L’autre est prudence politique, quant a la cite ou communité. Apres il divise politique. (Ethiques 344-345)*

For we say that to counsel well is the action of the person who is endowed with practical wisdom. No one advises things that one may not have otherwise or things for which the ends are unattainable. And he who is simply a good counselor knows how use conjecture and to find the best, most workable things for us by using reason and inquiry. Practical wisdom concerns not only universal principles; but along with this understands singular things; practical wisdom is active and all action is oriented toward singular ends. [Gloss] It could be said that practical wisdom is common and general and that there are several kinds. The first is monistic practical wisdom when it is for oneself, and this retains the common name and is called prudence. The other is economic wisdom and concerns household management. The other is political wisdom and concerns the city or community.

Repertoire, as the good counselor, therefore must be gifted with practical wisdom, able to guide Franc Vouloir in a world of action. As such, and as is seen repeatedly in the text, his implication and advice giving in the realm of the household and the polity lead him further toward the material sphere of agency. His encouragement to enter “spiritual marriage” and the contemplative sphere is suddenly much less convincing. The hollowness of his discourse on the Fountain of Compunction is

an indicator of this lack (Chapters LIX-LXII). At the same time, as soon as Repertoire discusses an institution and the possibilities it holds, the agent in question finds himself (for it is generally a male protagonist) ensnared by factors beyond his control. Prudence, the type of wisdom that allows for personal, economic, and political agency is impossible to attain according to Repertoire. This dissatisfaction with an Aristotelian ideal demonstrates the philosophical dilemma at the heart of late medieval political literature. One's actions are conditioned by outside forces, yet to escape from outside forces necessarily involves a withdrawal from the very domain in which governing is possible. The problems of power and agency brought up by these losing battles will be further developed in the following chapter. As it stands, the *Miroir* contains a very serious critique of the practical applications of late medieval political science.

So much for *prudence*, this foundational notion in the mirror for princes' tradition is found lacking. Instead, Repertoire privileges *sapience*, or superior wisdom of a spiritual order, as does Aristotle. Repertoire is able to justify both his existence and his advice to Franc Vouloir as such. This superior form of knowledge comes above all else, but necessitates a withdrawal from the world.

Et n'est pas sapience chascune science ; mais elle est science de tres plus honorables choses qui soient, et est aussi comme science qui a chief ou teste. Et se aucun cuidoit que entre toutes ou sus toutes les sciences et cognoissances la meilleur et la plus vertueuse ou honorable fust politique ou prudence, ce seroit inconvenient. Car ce ne peut estre, se il n'estoit ainsi que homme fust la tres meilleur chose de toutes celles qui sont ou monde. (*Ethiques* 342)

Superior wisdom is not particular knowledge; but it is the most honorable form of knowledge that exists and is like a science that has a head. If one were to think that of all the forms of knowledge and sciences the best, most virtuous and most honorable were politics or practical wisdom, this would be unfortunate. This cannot be for it would mean that man were the best of things in this world.

There is a paradox that lies in this Aristotelian distinction that shapes Repertoire's discourse and conditions the many contradictions that appear in the *Miroir*. If prudence is the virtue privileged in the political mirroring tradition, how can one write a mirror that encourages spiritual wisdom? The largely Aristotelian philosophical foundation for the mirror for princes' literature becomes shaky. A ruler cannot opt for the contemplative life. Deschamps's secular Franc Vouloir epitomizes this

difficulty, as he has great difficulty engaging with the superior, spiritual wisdom to which Repertoire leads him. Indeed, he does not enter into the discourse of contemplation even though his decision is to refrain from worldly marriage. His many objections and examples bring him repeatedly back to the active sphere as does the overall narration of the *Miroir*. Either by choice or necessity, the work breaks off with an historical demonstration of how Folie has destroyed the kingdom of France, or rather how the ideal of *sapience* renders a government based on *prudence* impossible.

Aristotle, like Repertoire, determines that the contemplative life is far superior to all others as it provides for “perfect happiness,” a state that all men should desire. If we are to follow through with this logic to its end, a political ruler cannot aspire to perfect happiness, for himself or for the nation. Franc Vouloir does not so much express this desire for perfect happiness as he does repeatedly state that he neither wishes to suffer nor cease to exist. Aristotle’s definition of the *speculatif* is a way out, yet these Aristotelian principles are repeatedly put to the test by the many combinations of circumstances in the *Miroir*. The *speculatif* is an intellectual quest that is privileged, shaped by the question asked and the advice received, by dramatized deliberation, and the debate between two opposing parties. In keeping with Aristotelian terms, it is the means that is of interest to Franc Vouloir and the end becomes a lost goal.

Et l’operacion de entendement, laquelle est speculer, differe des autres en estude, c’est-à-dire en appetit et inquisition de fin ; car elle n’appete nulle autre fin fors elle meisme. Et a en soy sa propre delectation. Et est par soy souffisante, et en vacacion ou en repos ; et est senz labeur, si comme il est possible en ceste vie humaine. Et en ceste manière le speculatif selon ceste operacion a en soy toutes choses que l’en attribue au beneuré. Et donques operacion speculative est parfaicte felicité de homme. Et convient que elle ait parfaicte longueur de vie ; car nulle choses qui appartiegne a felicité n’est imparfaicte. (*Ethiques* 522)

The act of understanding, which is contemplation, differs from the others under study, that is to say the desire for and inquiry towards an end, for it aspires to no other end than itself. It has in itself its own delight. It is sufficient in and of itself, in idleness and rest, it is without labor, as much as is possible in this human life. It is in this way that the contemplative man in this endeavor has all the attributes of the happy individual. Contemplation is man’s perfect happiness. It is worthy that it has the perfect life span, for nothing that belongs to happiness can be imperfect.

As such, the tensions and contradictions of the *Miroir*, personified by its multiple antagonists, illustrate the difficulty of applying Aristotelian principles to government. To speculate is not to rule, to speculate is to compose a *speculum* or mirror. By writing a medieval *miroir* in the true sense of the term, about such a trivial topic, Deschamps completes a very important philosophical task. He demonstrates the limits of a form of knowing when it is applied to the material world of action. One must place oneself outside of this form of knowing in order to reflect critically upon it; however, Repertoire's uneasy position and incessant return to the problems of materiality demonstrate that it is impossible for him to step outside of the system of knowledge which created him. Charles VI receives, from Deschamps, a vivid illustration of the political philosophy championed by his father and its unfortunate limits.

Another possibility also presents itself. Thierry Lassabatère, in an attempt to sum up Deschamps's many and varied political positions, asserts that "contradiction does not come from the internal logic of his discourse, but rather from its distance from and inadequacy regarding a moving reality" and that Deschamps's vision of reform late in life corresponded to the ideals of the Burgundian party (*La Cité* 568-9).³⁵ These policies of reform, with the revitalization of older institutions, carry with them an ambiguity, that of "all political action in general, does not [ambiguity] result from the inevitable opposition between a political ideal and the reality of power when exercised?" (569). The *Miroir de mariage* takes the question of the tension between political ideal and the possibility for political action to a new level, to question what the capacity is for "free" individuals to engage in the realization of their "will" in the material world. The problem goes beyond the political to become entirely philosophical.

³⁵ Author's translation from the French.

Beyond representing Deschamps's own political obsessions, the *Miroir de mariage* demonstrates how his pre-humanist thought arrived at a pinnacle at the end of his life. His approach to the concept of free will reflects Renaissance considerations on the notion. The concept of free will, influenced by Aristotle in the Middle Ages is "...associated with that of immateriality: the less a being is conditioned by matter and material forces, the freer and less determined is its activity" (Korolec 630). This is a state of affairs toward which Repertoire attempts to guide Franc Vouloir, so that he may truly come into his own nature that of an agent liberated from constraint, the definition of a necessary aspiration for the nation of France on the whole. However, the understanding of free will in the late medieval period and early Renaissance is not a stable one. As we have seen, the notion of free will migrates from Jean de Meun's spiritual conception of the question and his concern for divine prescience to Deschamps's definition of free will as a question of individual power and agency. A greater philosophical and historical process is at work.

Perhaps simultaneously pursuing the contemplative and worldly ideals is merely a poor foundation for both government and intellectual inquiry? Deschamps, in illustrating this struggle, is ahead of his time. Renaissance and Reformation understandings of free will took the same philosophical position. "Stated in its broadest terms, the cultural problem of the Renaissance and Reformation, with which the question of free will was directly concerned, was the fact and the consequence of a divorce between ethics and economics, between the moral and the expedient, between the spiritual and the material. While one set of values and one set of rules and injunctions applied to the individual's pursuit of goodness and spiritual well-being, an entirely different set applied to his conduct of business, political relations and the daily routines of worldly life" (Trinkaus 51). This would seem to be the very difficulty that Deschamps was expressing through Repertoire's ambivalent relationship to his pupil Franc Vouloir. In writing the mirror, Deschamps was able to circulate Aristotelian ideas and concepts through fiction, at the same time, he expresses frustration

with the limitations contained therein. Indebted to the translation project of Charles V, he demonstrates for Charles VI that mere textuality cannot solve the political problems of France.

The debate form is an ideal medium for demonstrating contradictory opinions and philosophical oppositions. Franc Vouloir, like the French nation, finds himself a house divided. In order to restore unity, Deschamps must appeal and move his readership to a national will that results in action and agency. “[...] [M]edieval thought on the question of the relation of individual well-being to the necessities of social life had by and large sought to unify, synthesize, or reconcile the two (...) This medieval tendency toward integration was also to be seen in the philosophic *summas*, both in the very notion that in one work the sum of all knowledge and insight on all spheres of life could be covered, and in their contents, which were frequently directly concerned with unification” (52). Deschamps, in the *Miroir de mariage*, acknowledges that this form of unification of the spheres of life is an unattainable goal. Instead, he depicts only disintegration and duality, of his protagonists, of the psyche, and of the household itself. His humorous, didactic *summa* is an active dramatization that one can neither comprehend all of the variables of a given situation nor account for the combinations of circumstances that render the implementation of ideals impossible. Retreat from the world is synonymous with an unproductive refusal to engage with the questions of power and agency. It does not provide intellectual satisfaction or an authentic spiritual existence in Franc Vouloir’s circumstances. This vision of Franc Vouloir anticipates Renaissance thinking. The fragmented text of the *Miroir* is a literary demonstration of the irreparable loss of a society and a system, an exhortation for a reform that must be founded in an entirely different construction of knowledge. As history would prove, the fight between two opposing factions, the Burgundians and Armagnacs, would consume France before a Renaissance consolidation of princely government could unite the nation.

Chapter Four: Eustache Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage*: The Wife and the Will

Mais du mari et de sa femme est tele comme l'amistié qui est en aristocratie, car en tele policie celui qui est le meilleur a plus de bien selon la quantité de sa vertu. Et en elle chascun a ce qui a luy est convenable, et ainsi est gardeee justice. (Aristotle, *Ethiques* 439)

Between husband and wife is such a friendship as that found in the aristocracy, for in this polity the best individual has more merit according to the quantity of his or her virtue. Within this polity, each has that of which he is worthy and as such justice is maintained.

The imaginary couple depicted by the erudite Repertoire de Science in Eustache

Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage* is far from the Aristotelian ideal of two virtuous individuals whose relationship resembles an aristocratic polity. Despite the Aristotelian philosophical grounding of the work, the relationships that fill Deschamps's *exempla* render his reception of the Stagirite's ideas ironic. Chapters XV-XLI, the beginning of Repertoire's lengthy explanation as to why the wise man should not wed, recount the misfortunes of a "povre dolereus," a poor unfortunate man, (Chap. XXXIX) who quickly becomes "li cornebaux, li coquehus," two insistent synonyms for a cuckold (3739). The *exempla* related by the narrator, the medieval commonplaces from the patristic tradition that filled other misogynist works with loquacious, uppity, libidinous women and the dangers that they present, do not have the same flavor in Deschamps's work. This portion of the text, if it can be taken with a grain of salt, is the most entertaining by far. The humorous exaggerations, improbable dialogues, and an ironic tone make it difficult for a contemporary audience, as well perhaps as a late medieval one, to take this antifeminist invective at face value. The true moralizing portions of this treatise, reserved for discussions of the clergy, nobility, and other defective medieval institutions, echo Deschamps's political poetry in which he engages with and participates in the mirrors for princes' tradition. This is certainly not the case for these comical depictions of life in a *ménage infernal* [hellish household]. The discordant tone of Deschamps's unlikely and highly personalized appropriation and adaptation of medieval misogynist conventions is a new and nuanced approach to the discord that concerns him most, the social and political tensions of the France of Charles VI.

Chaucer and Deschamps, again

Whether an unlikely reader of the *Miroir de mariage* or a translator of these same tensions and contradictions regarding women and politics, Deschamps's contemporary, Geoffrey Chaucer adopts a similar stance regarding his source material revealing dissatisfaction with previous models of authority, a certain playfulness, and poetic innovation. "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" in *The Canterbury Tales*, sums up what one could imagine being a resolution to the conflict that is at the heart of the first portion of the *Miroir de mariage*.³⁶ Alisoun, the Wife of Bath, is a kindred spirit to Franc Vouloir's potential spouse. Whereas in Deschamps's text it is Repertoire that narrates the woes that are in marriage, in Chaucer's text, the wife herself takes up the "sermon." In the encyclopedic fashion that Deschamps also adopts, she uses medieval stereotypes regarding women to explain why marriage is such conflicted institution for women as well, all while seeking a sixth husband. Her autobiographical "Prologue" arrives at a climax when she tears a page from the book of Wikked Wyves belonging to her fifth husband, Jankyn, an Oxford clerk, and a physical fight ensues. The concord at which they arrive might resemble one that the wife of Deschamps's text would have found desirable:

But atte laste, with muchel care and wo,
We fille acorded by us selven two.
He yaf me al the bridel in myn hond,
To han the governance of hous and lond,
And of his tonge, and of his hond also;
And made hym brenne his book anon right tho.
And whan that I hadde geten unto me,
By maistrie, al the soveraynetee,
And that he seyde, 'Myn owene trewe wyf,
Do as thee lust the terme of al thy lyf;
Keep thyn honour, and keep eek myn estaat'-

³⁶³⁶ John Livingston Lowes makes an argument for Chaucer as a reader of Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage* in two articles, one devoted primarily to "The Merchant's Tale" and the second to "The Wife of Bath's Prologue," "Chaucer and the 'Miroir de Mariage' I." *Modern Philology* 8.2 (1910) : 165-86; and "Chaucer and the 'Miroir de mariage' II." *Modern Philology* 8.3 (1911) : 305-334. Carleton Brown concurs with Lowes' argument for Chaucer's knowledge of the text in "The Evolution of the Canterbury 'Marriage Group.'" *PMLA* 48.4 (1933) : 1041-59.

After that day we hadden never debaat. (III 811-22)³⁷

Many a medieval wife might have liked to have seen such books burned, Chaucer humorously dramatizing the resistance that such works might have incited. “Soveraynetee” as described here, hints at the Aristotelian division of labor found in the *Ethics* and *Politics*. The desire for some form of agency in the household is reiterated in the tale that the Wife of Bath tells, in which a rapist-knight is sent on a quest by the queen to find out what it is that women truly want as the means to atone for his wrongdoing. The old woman whom he meets in the forest provides him with the solution to his conundrum, a piece of knowledge that he reports back to court, thereby saving his life.

Wommen desiren to have sovereynetee
As wel over hir housbond as hir love,
And for to been in maistrie hym above. (III 1038–40)

Much as Chaucer’s Wife of Bath and Jankyn, *governance*, *maistrie*, and *sovereyntee* are concerns that the inhabitants of the hypothetical household in the *Miroir de mariage* share. The reading of Deschamps’s *Miroir de mariage* by Chaucer or Deschamps’s reading of Chaucer’s marriage group are convenient historical conjectures, however, as Wimsatt contends “we will perhaps be better satisfied if we put aside the question of the direct relationship and deal with the two as poets who worked on different sides of the Channel in the same years with similar materials and with understanding and wit” (271). Deschamps and Chaucer are representative of an intellectual position which transcends mere influence and adaptation. For example, the language used by the Wife of Bath echoes the division of labor from the pseudo-Aristotelian text *Le livre de yconomiques* to which Deschamps himself refers; however neither Chaucer nor Deschamps deem that households that respect this division are possible.

³⁷ All citations from Chaucer’s poetry are taken from Benson, Larry D. *The Riverside Chaucer* (Third edition). Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Unlike the Wife of Bath, the young wife imagined by Repertoire de Science in his exhortations to discourage Franc Vouloir from marrying does not come out on top and the debate does not arrive at concord. It does not come to blows either. The wife simply disappears and the text breaks off with a historical digression concerning another conflict, the Hundred Years' War. Whether the headstrong wife gains *maistrie* or not, what is certain is that the masculine counterparts imagined by Deschamps and Chaucer cannot rule the roost either. The concept of marriage as a political institution which provides power and resources for male citizens is contested. Alisoun's husband dies; Franc Vouloir does not choose a wife or found a household. Maintaining agency is repeatedly proven impossible.

The rational masculine subject embodied by Franc Vouloir must abstain from engaging in a worldly marriage which would imperil his own existence. The narrator Franc Vouloir addresses the mortal peril that is marriage in Chapter IX "Comment Franc Vouloir pense a la franchise où il est et considere le servitude ou on le veult bouter" [How Free Will thinks about his freedom and considers the servitude to which others would like to subject him] (572-664); Repertoire de Science comforts him in this notion (1139-1149). As seen previously, marriage deprives a man of both freedom and will; Franc Vouloir's very identity is dependent on these two notions, he cannot possibly thrive, let alone exist. The riotous wife is the disobedient subject that renders participation in any worldly social or political institution an unattractive and unproductive possibility. Neither actor can exist in such a household.

An Unlikely Source

Repertoire follows the medieval literary commonplace that the thinking man should not wed, privileging spiritual marriage over earthly institutions. Deschamps openly acknowledges his dependence on Aristotle, yet his main source goes entirely unrecognized. Repertoire's letter was

inspired by Hugues de Fouilloy's *De Nuptiis Libri Duo*,³⁸ a text written by the twelfth-century author to dissuade a friend from marriage and encourage him to take religious orders (Engel 153). This ecclesiastical text is a curious choice for this curial writer. Deschamps adapted some portions of the text quite literally, such as the section concerning the Fountain of Compunction which is a faithful translation (Chapters LIX-LXII). He expanded others quite liberally, a highly personalized adaptation of the text conveying an authorial pleasure in the narration of his stories.³⁹ Inspired by Fouilloy's misogynist lore, Repertoire's descriptions contain aspects that also characterize the Wife of Bath: women are interested in material gain, are devious and cunning, unruly in public, overly talkative, and sexually insatiable.

However, the stereotypes deployed by Deschamps, perhaps tired with the wear and tear of several medieval centuries of ecclesiastical and moralizing writings, lack a certain genuineness coming from a writer whose formal originality and political engagement define his prolific corpus and his place in literary history as a herald of the early modern period. At the same time, he takes great joy in expounding and expanding these stereotypes into endless lists of relational difficulties and domestic objects. Deschamps's adaptation of clergyman Hugues de Fouilloy's twelfth-century text is a surprising choice for a writer whose tastes were less than ecclesiastical and whose sphere of influence was situated in the world of the court and the political happenings of the time. Nonetheless, the *Miroir de mariage*, like the majority of Deschamps's texts, is argumentative. As illustrated by Madeleine Jeay, it too alternates blame and praise in an authorial posture that is rarely neutral (200). This faculty for judgment, discerning proper courses of action from erroneous ones, particularly characterizes the *Miroir*, supporting Kendrick's argument that it is a lesson in decision-making. While the opposing advisers, Folie and Repertoire de Science, make laundry lists of Biblical and historical *exempla*, each

³⁸ Hugues de Fouilloy's text is found in the Latin version published in *Patrologia latina*, t. 177, col. 1201-1218C.

³⁹ For example, the mere mention of Samson in de Fouilloy's text (*Patrologia latina*, Cap. II, Col. 1206D), is expanded into Deschamps's Chapter XXVIII in which he relates the Biblical story in great detail.

referring to the same ideal, there is a recurring philosophical tension around the theme of counsel: the advice given is either misguided and not to be trusted, or, in the case of Repertoire's, cannot be enacted. Real world existence never matches the moral, philosophical, and spiritual ideals laid out in Repertoire's display of *auctoritas* and defeat is certain.

Problematic advice and debating debates

In this chapter, I turn from the masculine relationships studied in the previously to marital ones. Deschamps's portrayal of the unruly wife and the henpecked husband in the *Miroir de mariage* has a solid historical subtext concerning the possibilities for action in late medieval France. Repertoire and the imaginary husband are substitutes for this frustrated royal court writer invested in the well-being of the nation. Would he be heard? Can his advice, or any advice for that matter, ever be implemented? While contemporary critics of conduct literature confront the difficulty of recreating a historicized vision of prescription versus practice, Deschamps's text pokes fun at the concept but also laments the impossibility of the ideal expressed. What can be done with a misogynist tradition that draws two opposing conclusions from the same source material, that women are the devil's gateway and Christ's bride, to use the terms borrowed by Howard Bloch?⁴⁰ The dissatisfaction that he expresses with medieval institutions finds its theoretical structure in the metaphor of marriage. The contestation and contention found in the debate format can never provide for a happy end and a unitary, certain course of action. This is the question that underlies the problem of implementation at the heart of all advice texts: can the opposing visions of the same category, woman, be reconciled within one exemplary feminine figure, so that the contradictory advice itself may be resolved, taken to heart, and implemented? Unfortunately, the fate of the nation depends upon it.

⁴⁰ Chap. Three "'Devil's Gateway' and 'Bride of Christ'" in Bloch, R. Howard. *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love*. Chicago : U of Chicago P, 1991.

Ashley and Clark, in the introduction to their volume on medieval conduct books, make this ambiguous relationship explicit: "...conduct books provided a guide for literate readers to negotiate new sets of social possibilities. The conventional interpretation of conduct books is that they function in a straight-forward, prescriptive mode, subjecting their readers to a hegemonic regime of behavior. But this view leaves untheorized the link between prescription and historical practice—a lack of theorization that has tended to obscure the interest and utility of conduct literature for our understanding of medieval culture" (Ashley and Clark x). As the contemporary reader questions the success of these inconsistent understandings and guidelines and their reception by historical actors, the *Miroir de mariage* repeatedly presents the reader with ideals and their inevitable transgression, an utterly failed form of implementation. Through his model prince-subject, Franc Vouloir, Deschamps himself prefigured his masculine reader's difficulty in applying the principles contained in the text. What to make of the feminine reader, who could only have understood the text ironically, obliged to substitute the masculine subject for the universal subject if she were to find her place within the work? The first portion of the *Miroir de mariage* takes this masculine marital universe made up of fantasies, fears, frustrations, and antagonisms lightly. Advice literature which was becoming more and more successful had also reached a moment in the late fourteenth century in which derision, resistance, and parody had become possible, and Deschamps's *Miroir de mariage* speaks to this ironic philosophical position.

The household and its Aristotelian imaginary

Beyond the discursive and philosophical space of solidarity between the masculine protagonists Repertoire de Science and Franc Vouloir exists the concrete and localized space of the household. This arena of action and implementation is the *décor* for a power struggle between husband and wife. Deschamps's adaptation of portions of Hugues de Fouillois's *De Nuptiis* also

contains Aristotelian inspired ideals found in *Le livre de éthiques* and *Le livre de politiques*, along with the pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *Le livre de yconomiques*, all having been made available through the fourteenth-century translations produced by Nicole Oresme at the request of Charles V. However, the household envisioned is anything but what it should be. By transgressing the literary, religious, and philosophical precedents on which he founds his arguments, Deschamps demonstrates how even the most irrefutable of medieval political arguments, that the household should be the primary locus of economic production and political organization managed for the common profit of its inhabitants,⁴¹ cannot withstand when confronted with the misuse of personal agency.

Deschamps's Aristotelian source texts are not without their own lacks and contradictions. As seen previously, Ludmilla Evdokimova contends that this Aristotelian inspiration explains the rhetorical forms used by Deschamps, the source of the heterogeneous themes of the work, and ultimately, the conclusion that for the wise man, spiritual marriage is far superior to worldly marriage (59). Deschamps, if anything, displays the misfortune that marriage and the household are the foundation of the state. In traditional Aristotelian terms, without the family unit, resulting from the union of husband and wife and the children born from this marriage, economic activity, the village, and, by extension, the state would cease to exist (Sperling 87). For Deschamps, however, it would seem that France itself might cease to exist for these very reasons. The contradiction in Deschamps's text is also found within Aristotle, as explained by Evdokimova, who sees "...obvious conclusions coming out of this dependence [that of the ties between State and the family]: a corrupt State corresponds to a bad marriage and improper relationships within the family, and vice versa.

Deschamps proposes this conclusion by demonstrating in the *Miroir* that a mean wife and domestic

⁴¹ Liz Sperling develops these ideas in *Women, Political Philosophy and Politics*. Edinburgh : Edinburgh UP, 2001, "At a basic level, man's happiness cannot be sustained without replenishment of the base unit, man himself. In relation to this, women are essential and necessary to the continuation of the good state, their *telos*, and presumably happiness, being to reproduce male babies who will eventually take their place in future generations of statesmen. (...) But if this is wrong and women did understand their *telos* to be something other than that whar Aristotle portrayed, they were effectively under an obligation not to pursue it. Not only is it a fundamental rule of Greek political philosophers generally that doing what one wants is not consistent with happiness or, therefore, moral or communal good, but because Aristotle's teleological knowledge fixes a definition of happiness in the good state as he describes it, it would not be in the common interest for women to pursue a different *telos*" (87-8).

disputes on one hand, and a society's vices and misgovernment on the other, correspond harmoniously to one another. [...] ...in imputing France's misfortunes during the Hundred Years' War to Folie's government...it becomes clear that Deschamps's hero has no other choice but to definitively renounce marriage, because, as seen by Aristotle, he is obliged to recognize that, in a country governed by Folie, a family that conforms to moral principles is impossible."⁴² I would contend, however, that for our author one does not necessarily condition the other, that it is not Folie's government that renders a harmonious family life impossible, but rather that the ideals put forth in advice texts themselves founded in disagreement cannot provide for harmonious implementation. What Deschamps is saying through his humorous adaptation of the advice tradition is that identifying an ill or an ideal does not necessarily lead to a remedy.

These contradictions, inherent not only in Aristotle's writings but also in the Church's own cultural and historical exhortations to withdraw from the world and yet found the *cité*, get at the heart of Deschamps's frustrations. Deschamps's concern is for medieval political philosophy, and didacticism shares the same problem as any form of governance: legislation does not guarantee compliance and theory does not equate to practice. One's estate is not a guarantee of power in a changing late medieval world. His treatment of marriage alters our understanding of his nostalgic calls for the reform of a clergy and knightly class whose foundations are antiquated yet still desirable, where a return to a golden age is possible. Marriage, and by extension, women, are humorously inescapable, impossible to reform, but underlying the comedy therein is the serious premise that the disappointing reality of marriage cannot be reconciled with the actual needs society has for it.

⁴² Translation into English is the author's : "...la famille et l'État sont étroitement liés, et ils se conditionnent réciproquement. Des conclusions évidentes s'ensuivent de cette dépendance : au mauvais mariage et aux relations incorrectes au sein de la famille correspond un État vicieux et corrompu, et *vice versa*. Deschamps propose cette conclusion en montrant, dans le *Miroir*, qu'une épouse méchante et des querelles domestiques, d'une part, les vices de la société et le mauvais gouvernement, d'autre part, se répondent harmonieusement. [...]...tout en imputant au gouvernement de Folie les malheurs que la France subit pendant la guerre de Cent Ans. Après ces accusations, il devient clair que le héros de Deschamps n'a d'autre issue que de renoncer définitivement au mariage, car au vu des idées d'Aristote, force est de reconnaître que, dans un pays gouverné par Folie, une famille conforme aux règles de la morale ne trouve pas de place" (69).

The *ménage*, the household and home of the late fourteenth-century family, is defined by its occupants, and, from Deschamps's perspective, it would seem that it is the female occupants who determine its nature. Controlling the home does not depend solely on the will of the *pater familias*. His spouse has just as much, if not more, to say in how the household will be managed and perceived by others. The man of the household can provide the principles along which it is to be run, but in practice, things could go quite differently. Many conduct texts spend just as much time, if not more, imagining what could go wrong as envisioning the harmony of the ideal *ménage*, a paradox seen previously in *Le Livre du Chevalier de la Tour Landry pour l'enseignement de ses filles* and *Le Ménagier de Paris*. These scenes of disorder, loss, and chaos speak more to the anxiety of the authors than to the education of their readers. Deschamps is able even to parody the imaginary husband's anxiety when faced with an uncontrollable feminine "sovereynettee." In the *Miroir de mariage* it is the Aristotelian inspired portraits that Deschamps will paint of the ideal wife that provide a strong contrast with the descriptions of the imagined household. The incongruity is complete; they are far from the reality of the spouse that Franc Vouloir is about to find envisioned for him in Repertoire's letter.

The good wife

In three successive portraits of the ideal wife that will be painted in turn by Folie, Franc Vouloir, and Repertoire de Science, all parties agree as to what a good wife looks like; the portraits are virtually identical. They concur that the good wife is merely an extension of her husband, of his identity, his will, and his economic power. These portraits are the analogues to the morally sound "citizen," Franc Vouloir, and, inspired by the middle French translation of *Le livre de politiques*, they reflect the Stagirite's opinion that only virtuous individuals can shape ideal political microcosms.⁴³ Oresme's translation expresses his thought as such:

⁴³ See Liz Sperring's discussion of women, virtue and the state in the works of Aristotle "Plato and Aristotle: Androcracy Incarnate" in *Women, Political Philosophy and Politics*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2001 (80-98).

Car toute maison est partie de cite. Et donques convient il que la vertu ou disposition de maison soit partie de la vertu ou disposition de son tout, ce est assavoir de la cite. Et pour ce est il neccessaire que ceulz qui resgardent a la policie et a faire la cite vertueuse considerent a enseigner et discipliner lez enfans et lez femmes. (*Politiques* 75)⁴⁴

Every household is part of the city. Thus, it is suitable that the virtue or disposition of a household be part of the virtue or disposition of the whole, that is to say of the city. For this reason, it is necessary that those who oversee the polity and ensure its virtue take it upon themselves to teach and discipline their children and wives.⁴⁵

But what happens when wives cannot be disciplined? How is this Aristotelian ideal to be upheld?

The questions of virtue and morality are central in the *Miroir* but the inability to teach or discipline is even more central. Repertoire does not depict any husbands who successfully discipline or educate their wives. He does depict virtuous Biblical women. The difficulty of representing the educational process speaks to his pedagogical uncertainties. The redeeming social actors that he portrays are already virtuous in their own right and do not need instruction.

Good wives, as depicted in the *Miroir*, are like good citizens in that they respect the traditional division of labor and willingly accept subordination to the wise ruler or good husband. However, it is the portrait of the good, competent husband that is strangely absent. According to the prescribed standards of the *Miroir*, women hold the key to guaranteeing the common good, a paradoxical form of citizenship and agency thus become available to them. Much as Franc Vouloir the model citizen submits to his wise political adviser, Repertoire de Science, a wife's submission to her husband promises freedom and agency in the household. The imaginary wives' refusal to submit to their husbands' will is thus a political choice that smells of revolt in this micro-*cité*, reminding Franc Vouloir and Repertoire of the kind of resistance that they too could face.

While it comes as no surprise that Folie, Desir, Servitude, and Faintise present a positive portrait of Franc Vouloir's potential spouse, Franc Vouloir and Repertoire's portraits will also be

⁴⁴ All references to the middle French translation of Aristotle's *Politics* are from Nicole Oresme's translation, edited by Albert Douglas Menut, *Le livre de politiques: Published from the text of the Avranches manuscript 223. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series*. 60.6 (1970).

⁴⁵ Translations of this source are the author's.

strikingly similar to this model. Unsurprisingly, the tone of the four false friends' entreaty is political, going beyond either Christian or patristic arguments, and suggests that it is important to live in a marital state even without children. The word *policie* [polity] is first spoken by Folie, a middle French term that can mean "the state, a political or social organization, government, public administration" or "conduct or behavior."⁴⁶ The concept of state for Deschamps already implies a code of conduct and for Folie it includes marriage.

Et supposé qu'om n'eust enfens,
S'est ce de soy marier sens ;
Car nulle vraie policie
N'est sanz mariage assevie
Ne hostel ; et bien le verras
En Ethiques, quant tu vourras,
Et Politiques d'Aristote,
Qui plus a plain ce nous denote. (209-216)

And suppose that you didn't have children it still makes sense to marry because no true polity is well-served without marriage. You shall see this on your own in *Ethics* when you would like and in Aristotle's *Politics* that further informs us on this subject.

In other words, no government or home is worthy of this title without marriage, and good conduct relies upon it. Folie, the lead trickster, defines both the state and household as simultaneously ineluctable and desirable states in and of themselves since they are concomitant with marriage. At the same time, they are dependent on marriage to attain their fulfillment. The contradiction between the necessity for marriage and its resulting family unit to found the polity and the undesirability of marriage for he who wishes to remain *franc* [free] is an antagonism that Deschamps is unable to reconcile. Whereas Folie explains that marriage can be orderly and satisfy the needs and desires of a husband, *Franc Vouloir* and *Repertoire de Science* reaffirm the possible existence of an ideal wife all while presenting illustrations of marital relationships as well as other social relationships that dysfunction in the polity.

⁴⁶ Definition provided by *Dictionnaire du moyen français* (1330-1500) at www.atilf.fr.

Dividing but not conquering

The division of labor within marriage is referred to by all three characters, and the more general question of the division of labor in society will be taken up repeatedly by Deschamps elsewhere. However, it is the metaphor of marriage that first comes to represent a series of social ills. The first description of this division of labor is provided by Folie and it most closely follows the principles found in one of Oresme's translations.

Homs doit par dehors ordonner,
Femme doit dedenz gouverner [...] (221-22)
Elle gouverne son hostel
Et son bestail d'autre costel ;
Elle est guettant, saige et apperte,
Et voit que rien ne voist a perte ;
Elle veille sur ses sergens ;
Elle scet restraindre ses gens,
Quant mestiers est, et eslargir ;
Elle se scet taire et souffrir,
Espargnier scet et avoir soing
Pour le despendre a un besoing :
Ce ne fait pas mesgnie estrange,
Qui vuide l'escrin et la grange
Et ne pense fors de rober,
De po faire et de temps passer.
Matin lieve et se couche tart,
Car son cuer et sa pensée art
Tousjours a son gouvernement.
Eureux, se Salemon ne ment,
Est cilz qui treuve bonne fame ! (231-249)

Men must govern without and women within [...] She governs the household and the livestock. She is mindful, wise, and prepared and sees that nothing goes to waste. She oversees the servants and knows how to exercise restraint over the help; she knows what must be done and how to share out the work. She knows to be silent and suffer, to save and take care, to spend only on needs. Strangers to the household, who empty coffers and keeps, do not do this and think only of robbery, being idle, and passing the time. She gets up at dawn and goes to bed late because her heart and thoughts are always devoted to governing. Happy is he, if Solomon doesn't lie, who finds a good wife!

The pseudo-Aristotelian treatise *Le livre de yconomiques*, translated for Charles V, bears a striking resemblance with the division of labor and ideas found in Folie's description. He was not lying about his source.

And in order that the husband may prepare and look after the outdoor work of the homestead while the wife attends to and watches over the indoor work. And the husband must be strong, capable and robust for physical work while the wife is less able to perform outdoor tasks. And the husband is less given to repose and is more disposed to action or to the heavier occupations [Oresme's gloss] *Thus, the husband is more ardent, stronger, and more active; while the wife is less excitable, weaker, and more passive. And this opposition or difference of character has inclined them to different activities which are profitable and suitable for living together. And when this dissimilarity exists naturally and is well balanced in the habits of both, it is pleasant and agreeable. And in this regard, Solomon said that a man and wife who think alike and live peaceably together are a pleasure to his spirit, enjoying the praise and approbation of God and mankind.* (*Yconomiques* 815)

The head of a household should take into consideration four typical requirements connected with the business of managing his property: (1) he must have the capacity or the faculty for getting or acquiring; (2) the possessions must be protected or preserved, otherwise it would be pointless to acquire them; (3) they must be improved and kept in order; (4) they must be of use. (821-22)

It is fitting that the wife should have dominion and rule over all things within the house and that she should take care of all these things in accordance with the rules set forth above... [Oresme's gloss] *And this first rule we interpret to mean that the wife is responsible for the protection and arrangement of those items which concern the running of the household; but not of everything absolutely, for example, not of her husband's moneys or such matters. Nor is it intended that she should have the right to dispose of or to sell more than a few minor items.* (826)⁴⁷

Oresme's gloss referring to Solomon does much to support the evidence for Deschamps's borrowing from this text; Deschamps paraphrases this same idea and attributes it to the same source. The idea that women are to focus primarily on the household, outside tasks being reserved for men, is repeated in Aristotelian and pseudo-Aristotelian texts and in the *Miroir*. As such, women are responsible for the "gouvernement de maison" as it appears in Oresme's middle French (*Yconomique* 821). What does it mean to "govern" in this instance? It does not necessarily imply agency and decision-making power, but rather a role as an overseer, as someone who must maintain what is pre-existing. Yet, it also means to guide and ensure the conduct of an individual. As a supervisor, a wife's

⁴⁷ Nicole Oresme's translation of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Economics* is available in middle French with English translation facing in the edition by Albert Douglas Menut, *Le Livre de Yconomique D'Aristote. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society, New Series*. 47.5 (1957). Menut's English translation is provided here.

main duty is one of conservation, maintaining the resources and capital of the household against outside forces.

A reference to a “mesgnie estrange, qui vuide l’escrin et la grange” might not have been lost on the reader of the time. This “other, outsider or foreign household” that empties coffers and keeps could very well have been a reference to the outside enemy of the late fourteenth century, England, and their *chevauchées* that regularly devastated the French countryside. Conservation and maintenance of goods, territory, and capital were of utmost interest to French rulers of the time.

Deschamps’s interest in providing for the continuity of healthy institutions and of restoring defective institutions to their initial state responds harmoniously to this vision of the good wife. A good wife is characterized by her endemic nature and willingness to restrain and confine her behavior and person as well as the conduct of those around her. Conservation and the maintenance of what belongs to the household is the role of the good wife, much as the preservation of social and political institutions and national resources are inherent to the good ruler. One could go so far as to superimpose the roles of the monarch or the nobility on the wife’s position; they are the maintainers of the state who ensure that its resources do not go to waste. Deschamps’s conservative voice harks back to a French political golden age and finds an equivalent social model in the virtuous household. The good woman is one who voluntarily confines herself to the home and her domestic activities and the moral quality of this space is equivalent to her own virtue. Through his ability to point out lapses in virtue, Deschamps is positing himself as a morally just adviser. Franc Vouloir’s description of the ideal wife will further this concept of confinement to domestic space and an appeal to virtue, even as his potential spouse takes her place within an enlarged framework of courtly and religious values.

The virtues of place

By preferring a wife's virtue to her capacity to rule the roost, Franc Vouloir's description conforms to both medieval visions of Aristotelian ideals and to a series of traditional medieval expectations of women. As in many other medieval texts regarding women and marriage, Deschamps's multiple descriptions provide a composite drawing of what the ideal wife should be.

Mais avoir vueil femme benigne,
Humble, simple, po enparlée,
Bien besongnant, pou eslevée,
Juene et chaste de bouche et mains,
Saige et gente, et qui ait du mains
De .xv., .xvi. ou a vint ans,
Qui soit riche et de bons parans,
Qui ait bon corps et qui soit belle,
Et douce comme columbelle,
Obeissant a moy en tout,
Qui n'ait pas le sourcil desrout,
Ne ne regarde par decoste,
Mais soit tousjours près de ma costé,
Si non pour aler au moustier,
Quant aux jours qu'il sera mestier,
Et qui ne soit pas enfestée
Ne de saillir a la volée
Es rues pour ouir le bruit,
Nulle foiz de jour ne de nuit ;
Mais soit bonne et religieuse,
Et de sa besongne songneuse,
De son hostel a droit tenir
Et de son bestail maintenir,
Amer mon corps, garder ma paix,
Et se je des enfans lui fais,
Qu'elle les aimt, garde et nourrice,
Comme mere et douce nourrice,
Et espargne pour les nourrir
Et pour eulx a estat venir. (722-750)

But I would like to have a goodly wife, humble, simple, and not vociferous, who works hard and is not inclined to be uppity, young and chaste of mouth and hands, wise and well-bred, and who is at most fifteen, sixteen, or twenty years old. She should have wealth and be from a good family; she should be sound in body and pretty, gentle as a dove who obeys me in everything; she should not have a crooked brow, nor be cock-eyed nor look askance. I want a wife who is always at my side, except to go to mass on the days she should, who is not

interested in merriment and who does not go flying out into the street to listen to rumors at any time of the day or night. She should be good and religious, mindful of her task; she should care for her household and tend her livestock. May she cherish my body, keep my peace, and if I have children with her may she love them, keep them, and nourish them like a mother and gentle nurse; she should save to provide for them so that they may inherit our estate.

The question of women's silence, chastity, beauty, and maternal qualities paint a more Christian portrait of the ideal wife, in keeping perhaps with de Fouilloy's influence.⁴⁸ The imperative that a good wife "not go flying out into the street to listen to rumors" or leave her husband's side only to attend mass on the appointed days furthers the image of physical and spatial restraint mentioned previously. The moral imperative of virtue necessitates a division between public and private life and women's space in society. It would seem that there are spaces in which virtue can be practiced and that guarantee virtue, and spaces in which virtue is in danger. Since the wife is often responsible for maintaining her husband's "body and peace," and by extension society's virtue as a whole, her movement between spaces and controlling her behavior in public becomes tantamount to maintaining a good and just society. Her behavior must correspond to the moral imperatives set out for her. However, Franc Vouloir's idyll is soon interrupted by an inopportune thought. Such a wife is not to be found. The ideal is unattainable.

Et qu'ay je dit, beau sire Dieux?
Ou pourroit l'en tel femme querre ?
Je croy que pas ne soit en terre,
Ne je suis pas plus eueux
Des aultres, que j'aye touz seulx
Femme de tel condicion,
Car je voy sanz presumpcion
Tout de cler que chascun se plaint
De sa femme et que pluseurs taint
Sont de doleur et d'amertume. (774-783)

What have I said, dear God? Where would one find such a woman? I doubt that there is one such on earth! I am not luckier than others so that I may have for myself a woman of such a condition. I can see quite clearly and without presumption that each man complains about his wife and that many are colored by pain and bitterness.

⁴⁸ The critic is tempted to read the influence of Hugues de Fouilloy's text in the first lines Deschamps's description, "Et cum definisset, si pulchra, si bene morata, si honestis parentibus, si et ipse sanus et dives..." (*De Nuptiis Libri Duo, Patrologia Latina*, Col. 1203A).

Franc Vouloir's immediate recognition of the distance between theory and practice, of the "impossibility" of an ideal, is not just an antifeminist conclusion but representative of a neither/nor way of thinking that is pervasive in the text. In the comic passages, the potential spouse will do exactly the opposite of what is expected of her. Franc Vouloir's pining too becomes humorous.

The impossible wife

As such, the ideal wife is wise, alert, industrious, thrifty, long-suffering, silent, devoid of any greater ambitions outside of the home, and, unfortunately, nonexistent. The next portrait of the good wife is that of Repertoire de Science, and it contains elements of Folie's description as well as Franc Vouloir's. Whereas the latter maintain that Aristotle's *Le livre de ethiques* informs their position regarding the characteristics of the good wife, Repertoire de Science refers to pseudo-Aristotle's *Le livre de yconomiques* and Aristotle's *Le livre de politiques* and reaches a surprisingly similar conclusion much later in Chapter LII. He also states, like Franc Vouloir, that women simply do not meet the ideal set out for them.

Economiques, qui traicta
Et qui moult sçavoir couvoita
Des livres sur tous mariaiges,
Dit que sur les communs ouvraiges
Homme et fame ont labour pareil:
Dehors fait l'omme l'appareil
Des charrues et des labours
Aux champs, aux vignes et aux bours;
Femme doit dedans ordonner
La maison, bestail gouverner;
Les chamberieres, les sergens,
Restraindre, reslargir ses gens
Selon les temps, selon leur paine;
Femme a ce doit pener et paine.
Ainsis fut anciennement,
Mais il va trestout autrement,
Qu'elles veulent oiseuses estre
Et dominier en leur estre. (5461-5478)

Economics, that deals with and contains great knowledge of books on all marriages, says that regarding common tasks man and woman have equal labor: outside man maintains the equipment and works in the fields, in the vineyards, and in town. Woman must keep order in the house, and look after the cattle, the chambermaids, the servants; she must guide and distribute the tasks of the help according to the seasons and their work. Woman must work at this and as such she works. This is how it was in times past but now it is altogether different. They want their leisure and to rule the household.

Repertoire de Science, in language very similar to that of Folie's, also affirms women's management of the home and respects the division of labor between men and women described previously. He also insists on the equality inherent in their tasks. This vision of the ideal wife is immediately discredited as he illustrates how through lack of industriousness and pure frivolity the wife's daily household management will suffer and the common good of the household along with it. The "bad wife" displays two contrary characteristics: a naiveté in her public affairs that corresponds to Aristotle's argument that women are not fit for public life because they lack experience in the world and a conniving spirit determined to control the threshold between the household and the sociopolitical sphere. What Repertoire de Science suggests is that wives' interests are not aligned with those of their husbands and households and, through lack of virtue, laziness, and the desire to rule; they will ultimately despoil the community. Rather than being the virtuous building block of the model polity, marriage is the decadent institution that precedes all others. Unfortunately for the proponents of Aristotelian philosophy, for those for whom Charles V's instructional translation project would provide the keys for competent individuals to save an imperiled nation, the most vividly depicted character in the *Miroir*, the wife of the imagined household, throws a monkey wrench in the works. Deschamps's unruly feminine character, which he creates almost in spite of his intentions, demonstrates the limits of a literature of counsel.

The Language of Power, The Power of Language:

Car femme n'a plus grant science
Fors voulenté pour conscience. (1865-6)

For woman has no greater knowledge than will for a conscience.

Paradoxically, Repertoire's exhortation to avoid marriage and retreat from the world abounds with the language of governance, power, and worldly status. For an advocate of *contemptus mundi*, he

has much to teach about the workings of society. After reiterating many of the concerns Franc Vouloir addresses in his monologue, he begins his argument regarding women by anchoring their desires and existence in the material world. The first desires he attributes to these potential wives are those for “palaces” and “thrones.”

Et sces tu qu'il fault aux matrons
Nobles palais et riches trones,
Et a celles qui se marient,
Qui moult tost leurs pensers varient ?
Elles veulent tenir d'usaige
D'avoir pour parler leur mesnaige
Et qui est de neccessité,
Oultre ta possibilité,
Vestemens d'or, de drap de soye,
Couronne, chapel et courroye[...]. (1217-26)

And do you know that matrons need noble palaces and rich thrones and that the thoughts of those who marry change just as quickly? They would like to follow custom, to be able to discuss their household, to have all the necessities that are beyond your possibilities: gold clothing, cloth of silk, crown, hat, and belt.

Endless desire characterizes the wife. The hyperbolic symbols of power she would like to attain relegate the marital relationships that will be discussed to a political level. The wife has the pretension to be a ruler, a monarch with all of the necessary trappings. He also declares that for these women “deniers fault avoir en tresor/ et argent chascune journée” [You must have deniers in your treasury and silver everyday] (1232-33). The use of the word “treasury” leads the reader to assume that she is about to enter the universe of a royal or aristocratic household, far removed from the mercantile or bourgeois existence that will soon take center stage. This incongruous suggestion that what married women are seeking is power and gain, rather than the restraint and modest preservation of goods championed by the Aristotelian inspired descriptions of good wives, is explicitly illustrated by Repertoire. The simple household, the microcosmic “state,” quickly becomes encumbered by everyday material reality. The power sharing system that had been described in the earlier portraits of good wives, the foundation of conduct literature, is proven impossible in this household deregulated by desire.

The wife's aspirations for supremacy preclude any type of power sharing system. As Repertoire defines her ambitions through the metaphors of secular power, the husband's are endangered. No matter what talent a husband might have for governing in the political sphere, no matter his moral qualities or rightful status outside of the home, he will be defeated by his wife within the household.

Et encor soit ly maris saiges,
De droit escript et par usaiges
Gouvernans toutes les citez,
Et que ses noms soit recitez
Comme saiges en toute terre,
Ne puet il eschuer la guerre
De sa femme, puis qu'il l'a prise,
Ne la sarcine de l'emprise. (1617-24)

Even if the husband is wise, governing cities according to written law and custom, even if his name is hailed as wise throughout the land, he can avoid neither his wife's war, since he wed her, nor the strength of her grasp.

This description of "ly maris saiges," the wise husband, and his reputation as a "saige" throughout the land, might reflect a "wise" ruler of whom Deschamps was so very fond, Charles V. His technique of self-representation in the fourteenth century, depicting him as the astute monarch seeking counsel from clergy and secular sources, from tradition and texts, was well-known by Deschamps in his position as a court poet. He produced this very type of writing in his poetry. It is curious then that he would show, in this instance, how this project can fail, how one's public image does not guarantee one's success in the field of practice and implementation. One might be very competent indeed, but another actor could always thwart one's plans. Deschamps, through this feminine metaphor, is depicting the type of power that can derail the best of strategies, a rather interesting position for someone with pretensions for providing guidance in matters of governance.

A chorus of hapless husbands, the woes of whom are recounted by Franc Vouloir as he prepares to ask Repertoire de Science for advice, presents this very type of dilemma. Their wives are uncontrollable. Their complaints will be countered by the lamentations of the feminine characters

that are to follow. This linguistic battle, a contest of domestic misery, is what defines the workings of the household. In their vying to condemn each other's behavior, what matters most is being able to control the story told about marriage.

L'un dit que sa femme le tume;
L'autre dit «Ma femme est si male,
Que je ne puis aler en gale,
En esbatement n'en déduit!»
L'autre dit «La mienne me nuit»
L'autre dit «Ma femme est jalouse,
Despiteuse, felle, ayrouse
Avoir ne puis paix a l'ostel»
Et l'autre dit sur le costel
«Ma femme ne puet a ville estre»
L'autre murmure que le prestre
Vient trop souvent en sa maison.
L'autre dit une autre raison
«Ma femme dance voluntiers.»
L'autre dit «O les chevaliers
Va ma femme souventefoys. (780-99)

One says that his wife pushes him and makes him fall; the other says "My wife is evil, I cannot enjoy myself, have fun, or seek pleasure!" The other says, "Mine harms me;" and another "My wife is jealous, spiteful, wicked, and angry; I can have no peace at home." Yet another says in an aside "My wife cannot go into town." The other murmurs that the priest comes to the house a bit too regularly. One other gives another reason "My wife is too willing to dance." Another says "My wife goes to see knights very often."

Each of the husbands in question suggests the embarrassing admonition that his wife is in charge and that he is most likely cuckolded. Wives physically abusing their husbands, running about with priests or knights, and being jealous or spiteful are not only commonplaces in medieval antifeminist texts, but also in comedy. These elements make up the plot of texts such as the *fabliaux*. Often, weak husbands are bettered by their cunning wives so that medieval social order may be restored. The audience of a *fabliau* is then able to laugh at the dupe husband who deserves what he gets.

At this point in Deschamps's text, however, it is the husbands who display and express their inability to assert themselves in the household. This problematic form of self-representation is at odds with the narrative forms of conduct literature in which an authoritative (often masculine or

masculinized) voice presents his knowledge of and mastery over the domestic unit. Threats of punishment, violence, and dishonor abound in order to achieve this type of dominance; the narrative tone used presents certainties whereas Deschamps's text presents only impossibilities. In conduct literature, the author expects the addressee to meet the challenges set out for their behavior; in the *Miroir* the wife in question will live up to all of the negative expectations that are listed. In this chorus of hapless husbands, Deschamps's dramatizes the anxieties and fears that inspired the composition of didactic texts for women.

The wife that Repertoire imagines for Franc Vouloir will soon enact all of the behaviors announced by the disgruntled, ill-treated husbands, and more. Not only will she get the upper hand, she will make her motivations obvious and justify them with her logic and desires. The sheer excess of her speech and reasoning overpowers any objections. It is through her speech acts that the wife obtains power over her unhappy husband.

Ainsi l'enchante, ainsi l'endort
Ainsis a el droit et il tort
Ainsis fait elle a son mari,
Et dit que l'enfant est guarri
Par son veu et par son voyaige
Ainsis va en pelerinaige
Ainsis puet prandre son deduit;
Ainsis femme a son mari duit
En peu d'eure par sa parole;
Ainsis de ses maux lui parole;
Ainsis a sa corde le lie
Pour continuer sa folie.
Et tien pour vray que tant est vuide
Femme d'amour et sens, qu'el cuide
Que son mari soit le piour a,
Supposé qu'el l'ait le meillour;
Et chascuns maris sanz diffame
Cuide qu'il ait la meilleur fame,
Tant sont les maris enchantez
Entre vous, qui femmes hantez,
Advisez vous de trop tost croire
Toute parole n'est pas voire. (3117-38)

She enchants him and puts him to sleep. She is right and he is wrong. This is what she does to her husband, telling him that the child has been cured by her vow and pilgrimage, this way she can go take her pleasure, this way she leads her husband on with her speech in no time. She speaks to him about her ills, she binds him up in

her rope, so that she can continue her folly. He takes it for truth yet his wife is empty of love or reason; she believes her husband to be the worst, even when she has the best. Each husband without defame believes that he has the best wife, husbands are thus bewitched. Among you who keep company with women, beware of believing them, every word is not truth.

Subterfuge is the wife's highest art and her husband is exceedingly gullible. It begs the question of how such a credulous and ineffective husband could possibly exist given the plethora of misogynist works and conduct books that "inform" husbands and teach decorum to wives. The argumentative techniques of the wife speak to the pleasure taken by medieval audiences in the rhetorical arts; but the adversaries are not equal in this instance. The husband is utterly disarmed by his wife's sophistry. Her ability to misrepresent reality is at the heart of her ability to maintain power over him.

In the *Miroir's* portraits of the disobedient wife, Deschamps demonstrates how controlling representation and interpretation is not the prerogative of the individual endowed with the legitimate power to do so only. Repertoire's discussion of the discomforts of marriage is a polyphony of narrative voices, at times his own, at others, imagined "feminine" narrative voices whose complaints are many. Each voice strives to control the narrative, to determine how the household is represented and constructed. Representation is fundamental; an audience is always available to "see" what takes place there and what the household possesses. The linguistic control exerted by the feminine characters that depict the workings of the household is quite humorous. The speech and behavior of the wife do not correspond to the self-restraint celebrated in the idealized portraits of wives; rather, this wife is in continuous expansion, linguistically and materially. The flattered subservience and humble acceptance that she was supposed to express in her role as competent administrator are replaced by resentment of the burden that has been placed upon her.

Se tu lui charges la maison
A gouverner, c'est achoison,
Qu'elle a la paine, et non pas toy;
Obeir la te fault, par foy,
Et souffrir ce qu'elle dira,
Car souvent te reprovvera :
J'ay la querche, je m'embesongne
Ceens de toute la besongne ;

J'ay le soing de tout gouverner ;
Je ne sçay pas mon piet tourner
Qu'en vint lieux ne faille respondre.' (1785-95)

If you give her the run of the household, it's the opportunity for her to take charge and not you. By my faith, you must obey her and put up with what she will tell you. She will often blame you : "I am burdened down, I pick up all the slack here; I have to manage all the household; I don't know where to turn next because I am called upon in twenty places."

The idealized portraits of docile, subservient women who uphold domestic order are a reflection of a philosophical and religious tenant that holds that man should be master in his home, delegating tasks to others; yet in this case, the wife-narrator describes in detail not only how she does not wish to maintain the house but that it is nearly impossible. The many tasks quickly overwhelm her and she becomes a scold. This could be the fate of any wife who attempts to implement the *Ménagier's* advice on domestic economy. The reported speech of the wife, while confirming the misogynistic tenants of the *Miroir*, is humorous in its exaggerations and accumulations. The question of the reception of these vivid descriptions of misgovernment must be raised. Considering who is receiving this language of power opens up the possibility for multiple interpretations.

Multiple receptions and the case for comedy

The portion of the *Miroir* dedicated to the insubordinate wife is unique in that it multiplies the possible levels of reception, and thus, interpretation. The many narrators are able to send distinct messages to different audiences. At an intratextual level, the primary audience of the wife's speech is the projected husband to whom she is addressing her complaints; one could imagine that he would be greatly displeased by these very vocal displays and bewildered at how to impose his will; however, he is strangely absent. He exists solely as an addressee and an observer who hears what is said and sees what is taking place around him; always a witness, he is rarely as an agent.

Next, Franc Vouloir is the primary audience of Repertoire's display of knowledge, meant to take his counselor's message at face value: it is impossible to govern a woman. He witnesses the

wife's rebelliousness, the husband's passiveness, and takes in Repertoire's controlling representation of these events without question. He quickly realizes that he who pretends to govern ends up being governed. The external audience is attuned to Franc Vouloir's uncritical acceptance of Repertoire's advice, his position intended to mirror their own.

These external audiences, medieval or contemporary, are obliged to recognize both the humor in Repertoire's ventriloquist act and the previously mentioned wink at other forms of medieval comedy such as the fabliaux. Taking Repertoire's message literally is not as simple as it might seem. Franc Vouloir's credulity and Repertoire's insistent pedantic penchant mirror the gendered actors of dupe husband and garrulous wife in the examples being recounted. Repertoire, by creating a wife that speaks through him and like he does, becomes a parody of himself, of the authoritative misogynist tradition which is repeatedly defeated in the examples he provides. The many allusions to other comic forms, for the careful reader, provide a subtext which necessitates a critical reading.

Repository's diatribe is reminiscent of the misogynist tradition in general, but it also adopts the ambivalent position of the fabliaux, "conte à rire en vers" [comical tales in verse], of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Like the fabliaux which expose the power struggles of the domestic world for all to see, the intimate workings of the household are made visible to the audiences of the *Miroir*. Often, the struggle for the upper hand occurs in a married couple; the trickster wife comes out on top, and the husband is duped. The fabliaux, just as this portion of the *Miroir*, express great interest in the material world where objects become the props in exchanges of power. The same fabliaux feminine stock characters are found here, too: the libidinous young wife, the meddling older woman, and the aiding and abetting servant. The result is also the same: the oblivious, inept husband loses

control over his wife and the household; he loses control over the very foundation of this institution, sexuality.

The fabliaux subtext, a bed of controversy

Elements of the narrative tropes of the fabliaux are mentioned on numerous occasions by Repertoire in his invective against marriage. The humorous exaggeration of his many arguments leads the critic to wonder just how serious Deschamps's intentions were in this text. A medieval audience would most certainly have recognized certain stock plots, such as the Matron of Ephesus paradigm that is found both in the fabliau "De celle qui se fist foutre sur la fosse de son mari"⁴⁹ and "The Wife of Bath's Prologue." In this plot, a recently widowed dame takes advantage of her husband's demise in order to meet her next suitor. In "De celle qui se fist foutre," the widow laments her husband's death and wishes for her own passing as she sits on her husband's tomb. A knight arrives to "comfort" her in her bereavement. He promises that he will kill her, just as he has killed many before, through sexual intercourse. Interestingly, the widow's *joie de vivre* returns. In "The Wife of Bath's Prologue" another libidinous widow instrumentalizes her "grief" in order to court a new suitor; Alisoun spies a handsome pair of legs behind her husband's coffin that pique her interest (III, 587-599). Deschamps participates in this tradition, too. Repertoire warns Franc Vouloir that his wife could have a very similar reaction to his untimely passing:

Et sçavez vous qu'il advendra?
Du service, obseque et les lays
Oir voudra parler jamais,
Excepté d'une courte messe;
Et regardera, en la presse
A porter le deffunct en terre,
Quel mari elle pourra querre
Et avoir après cesti cy. (1970-77)

⁴⁹ In *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux (NRCF)*, Vol. 3. Ed. Willem Noomen et Nico van den Boogaard. Assen and Maastricht: Van Gorcum, 1986, 375-403 and 466-71.

And do you know what will happen? She won't hear of a service, funeral, or legacy, except for a short mass. She will look at the crowd scurrying to bury the deceased to see what husband she could seek after this one.

One of the most well-known commonplaces regarding widows, this example would have been recognized immediately by a medieval audience as a comic staple, inflecting the serious nature of Repertoire's admonitions.

Another humorous passage for an audience well-versed in the fabliaux tradition would be the husband's laughable response to the devious plan of the wife and her chambermaid. The adulterous wife is pregnant and she and her servant devise a plot so that the husband will feel responsible for his wife's feigned unhappiness and compelled to atone for it. In many fabliaux, the maidservant serves two roles, either assisting the lady of the house in tricking the dupe, or as a stand-in for the lady of the house whom the dupe does not recognize.

“Il couvient que je le vous die,
Pour refraindre vostre maniere.”
-Certes, tu diz voir, chamberiere;
Comment la pourray je appaisier?
“Je ne sçay alez la baisier
Et reconforter sur son lit;
Soiez avec elle ou delit
Criez mercy de la besongne,
Priez lui qu'elle vous pardongne
Et ne vous adviengne jamais
Soiez toudis en bonne pais,
Promettez lui joye et amour.”
-Voluntiers, mais en grant cremour. (3672-84)

“I must tell you, so that you may change your ways/temper your anger.” —Certainly, chambermaid, you are telling the truth. How can I appease her? “I don't know, go kiss her and comfort her on the bed. Be with her and do her delight, cry for mercy during the task, ask her to forgive you; say that you'll never do it again; be forever in peace; and promise her joy and love.” —Straight away, but I am filled with fear.

The unsuspecting husband follows the guileful chambermaid's advice. He goes into his wife's room in order to make peace with her.

“Certes, de grant amour vous aim!”
Lors la prant li homs prins a l'ain
Li cornebaux, li coquehus
Et a force monte dessus,
Et a grant paine a celle place,
Afin que bonne paix se face,
Gist a elle li bons eurez,

Li cornuz empeliçonnez
Dont li deduis ne plaist c'un po.
Lors commence a crier haro,
Et dit pour ce qu'elle se doubte
D'un autre qui souvent la boute
« Ha sire, Dieux bon gré en ait!
Hui m'avez vous un enfant fait;
Certes, je croy que suys ensainte. (3737-51)

“My love for you is great!” and so the man, having taken the bait, takes her in his arms. The cuckold, the foolish, horny goat, climbs on top of her; with great pains he does her bidding and lies with her in order to make peace in this auspicious hour. The blinded cuckold takes very little pleasure at the task. She begins to cry out with joy, and for this reason one might doubt that another mounts her often. “Oh, sire, God bless! You have gotten me with child today; surely, I think I’m pregnant.”

This “love scene,” its language explicit in the same way as many fabliaux, shows just how powerless the husband is. He cannot decipher truth from fiction. He is misled by the two women of the household. Perhaps more revealing is that he takes no pleasure from doing his conjugal “duty;” their physical interaction merely serves as a confirmation of the wife’s power over him. He might not be beaten in anything but the figurative sense, but he is cuckolded and happy at the thought that the child is his.

The meddling mother-in-law and the satire of advice

The husband is provided with several exercises in anti-conduct. The chambermaid and the libidinous wife are not the only members of this community of crafty women. Both attempt to give advice to the husband that he takes to his own detriment. This precept, that women can only give misleading advice that is damaging to the husband’s best interests, is even better illustrated by the interventions of the wife’s mother. Her insistent requests and henpecking, her interference in the running of the household, and her usurping of the husband’s role of educating the young wife, conform to medieval considerations of older women. Her words and actions also demonstrate that there is an alternative source of influence and power that has intruded in the household. She encourages the husband to allow his wife freedom of movement, so that she may better learn to behave in society. She defends her daughter’s behavior rather than policing it, the role normally

attributed to women family members in advice texts. One has only to think of the contrast between the following passage, and the wise women relatives and neighbors that were to provide sound advice for the *Ménagier's* young bride (*Mesnagier* 26).

Certes, beaus filz, vous avez tort,
Qui ainsi ma fille tenez,
Et sanz raison suspeçonnez. (3162-4)

Surely, son-in-law, you are wrong in the way that you are treating my daughter, suspicious of her without reason.

The mother-in-law gives the young man advice as to how he should treat his wife and what she should be able to do. She repeatedly tries to convince him that this will be to his advantage:

Tu ne la dois jamais rebrandre,
S'elle va aux nopces et corps,
Car on y fait de beaus recors
Et oit on mainte bonne chose. (3252-5)

You should never scold her for going to weddings and gatherings, for there is where we make beautiful memories and hear many good things.

The mother-in-law assures the young man that such social activities will instruct the young wife as to how she should behave in society. She insists on the benefits that this will bring his household and gives many examples of the type of decorous behavior in which the daughter will participate. Adding yet another level to the narration, the words of other women in the imaginary community are recounted by the mother-in-law that Repertoire imagines. Their social interactions, the inefficiency of their ceremonious arrivals, departures, and peace offerings, and the invitations into the home that follow, reach new heights of comedy. These practices among women speak to the class consciousness that informs the mother-in-law's opinions. If conduct literature is the means for negotiating new sets of social possibilities, this passage makes a mockery of the novice's attempts to participate in the process. That the mother-in-law encourages the young man to incite his wife to learn these codes is a *mise en abyme* of the very process at work in the didactic text. Readers are expected to learn and implement new behaviors. The exchanges imagined mock this process:

"Prenez, je ne prandray pas, dame.

Si ferez, prenez, douce amie.
 Certes, je ne le prandray mie;
 L'en me tendroit pour une sote.
 Baillez damoiselle Marote.
 Non feray, Jhesucrist m'en gart
 Portez a ma dame Ermagart.
 Dame, prenez, sainte Marie,
 Portez la paix a la baillie.
 Non, mais a la gouverneresse.”
 Lors prant et despiece la presse,
 Et les autres prannent après.
 La fait on grans poses et très
 Et certes honnie seroit
 Celle qui celle paix prandroit. (3298-3312)

“Take it, for I won’t take it, my lady. Yes, you will, take it, dear friend. Most surely, I will not; I’ll be taken for an idiot. Take it Miss Marote. I will not, may God keep me from it, take it to lady Ermagart. Lady, take it, by Saint Mary, take the peace to the sheriff’s wife. No, not there, take it to the governor’s wife.” So then she takes it and breaks through the crowd, and the others take it afterward. There are halts, pushing and pulling. Of course, she who would take the peace would be most certainly condemned.

An audience could only laugh at the officiousness of this scene and the others in Chapters XXXV-XXXVII. Repertoire’s narrative register ranges from comedy to solemnity according to his subject. What comes out of this passage is an illustration of the dangers that await the husband when his wife leaves the home and her ineptitude at creating a positive image of the household among outside observers. However, the community of women illustrated functions in the same manner as the wife. From her mother who advises her in matters of social deportment to her *commères* or gossips, there is agreement in this feminine gathering about how things should be run. The desire to treat members of the upper echelons of society as they should be treated, the multiple, comical displays of deference, make a mockery of these types of exchanges and the process by which one learns to participate in them.

However, a doubt remains about whether the advice is misguided (proper social deportment *is* central to conduct works) or whether it is the moral quality of the individual giving advice that is circumspect. The mother-in-law seizes the moment in Chap. XXVIII to teach her son-in-law a few sound lessons on the proper government of his household. The counsel she gives echoes precepts

given to men in didactic literature as a whole; her exhortations to uphold one's estate and not endanger the existence of the household are reminiscent of many passages of the *Ménagier de Paris*.

A l'en veu maint homme cheoir.
De tous poins, beau doulz filz, retien
Laisse le mal et fay le bien.
Mieulx vault restraindre son estat
Un petit que cheoir tout plat
En povreté, pour le tenir
Trop grant; vueille t'en souvenir. (3489-3494)

We see many men fall. At all times, good sweet son, remember to leave evil aside in order to do good. It is better to limit one's estate a bit rather than falling straight into poverty for having tried to be too grand. Do remember this.

Her reminder that one should not risk all of one's wealth for the sake of social ascendancy and a larger estate does represent the conservative paradigm of conduct literature as a whole. Whereas this literature is often regarded as a means of self-promotion and a guide to navigating new and better social possibilities, the message of the conduct authors themselves is to stay within one's social class. Both the *Ménagier* narrator and the Chevalier de la Tour Landry, as seen earlier, explain in detail the dangers of social pretension and celebrate the endemic values of their estates. The mother-in-law, all while exhorting self-restraint, encourages her daughter to go out and participate in the conspicuous consumption that will help her household to receive recognition and approval from other social actors. The comic tone of her epistle and the ridicule to which the character of the wife is exposed on the part of the internal and external audiences suggest that Deschamps is making a mockery of the very efforts that are behind didactic literature. It is a failed enterprise from the very beginning, for a male author or husband cannot possibly hope to impose his will on a woman. The *Miroir* hints at Deschamps's critical position regarding these texts: their entreaties that condone conservative behavior all while preparing the individual to improve their situation are in complete contradiction with one another. The contradictions of the *Miroir* are founded in the same form of reasoning.

The logic of the fabliaux, a highly public exchange

This is also the logic of the fabliaux, an inherently conservative genre; “the fabliaux as a group are profoundly conservative, even reactionary, compositions, using humor to preserve and enforce a status quo considered to be natural or even divinely instituted” (Lacy 37-8). In these comic texts, the upstart who aspires to a better life becomes the dupe and is punished by another character, often the wife, at times another man. Essentially, fabliaux husbands deserve what they get because they had aspired to something beyond their reach. Commonly, a rich peasant attempts to become a knight,⁵⁰ or a bourgeois is miserly and, despite his social ambition, cannot learn the lesson of aristocratic generosity.⁵¹ The echoes of the fabliaux genre and the insistence elsewhere in the text that one should respect the original boundaries of one’s estate, take Deschamps’s use of misogyny to another level. Misogyny is the basic, conservative penchant that becomes a code to encourage other conservative behaviors among male readers. Far from being a work of conduct for women, Deschamps takes the coded language of didactic texts and others like the fabliaux to achieve his desired intent: encouraging his reader to see through the fatuousness of social striving in order to adopt political and social behaviors and a return to tradition and original, uncorrupted institutions that might actually preserve the nation.

How an audience understands this opinion depends on their discernment of humor in the *Miroir*. Lisa Perfetti encourages readers to examine the “comic transactions” between the participants in medieval comedy in order to properly grasp their meaning (*Women and Laughter* 19). It would seem at first that the passages related to the discomforts of domesticity expounded upon by Repertoire are to be shared with a masculine audience (Franc Vouloir and the external audience), among whom there would be unanimity regarding the scurrilous behavior of the wife. However, the positions of

⁵⁰ See Noomen and van den Boogaard, “Berangier au lonc cul” *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux (NRCF)*, Vol. 4, (245-277 and 416-423).

⁵¹ See Noomen and van den Boogaard, “De la borgoise d’Orliens” *Nouveau recueil complet des fabliaux (NRCF)*, Vol. 3, (337-374 and 459-465).

the two masculine protagonists are hardly neutral. Franc Vouloir could only be aghast at the vivid descriptions of an institution in which he might ineluctably participate. Taking them very seriously, he expresses sheer terror at this thought.

Repertoire, his poetic voice itself an encyclopedic accumulation of commonplaces that resembles his lengthy lists of common, household objects, should realize the gravitas of his discourse for Franc Vouloir. But, the joke is on them: Repertoire's presentation of an ineffectual husband whose stupidity elicits laughter, his poetic digressions, and accumulations of material references incite the reader to question his credibility. His very name is ironic, if one will read it that way, he is as much a "repository" as is his discourse, a layering and stratification of knowledge where if one looks, a ready-made answer is found to any query. Nonetheless, repositories are intended to conserve; they are not dynamic structures but rather accumulations of static elements organized into categories. They are, in fact, of very little assistance in the field of play, agency, and social negotiations. Franc Vouloir's irrational fear, suggesting his complete and utter lack of faith in a man's ability to exert any type of social or political agency, can be humorous to any audience, medieval or contemporary, but it comes from a recognition of the failure of the principle of a repository. Franc Vouloir relinquishes his own task, decision-making, out of a lack of conviction. This can be neither "frank," nor the incarnation of "will."

Pleasure at play

Deschamps's language reveals another motivation behind the text entirely. The poetic devices, accumulations, tripartite verses, and hemistiches reveal that, as an author, he is fully inscribed in the pleasure of the text for the text's sake, in a way that is far from typical of any type of didactic literature for men or women, or even mirrors as a genre. The serious import of what Repertoire is supposed to be teaching is lost in the limitless expansion of his verse and in the trivial

nature of the objects that amass there. The playfulness of the text reveals a loss of faith in any type of systemic approach to knowledge; its indeterminism speaks to the uncertainties of existence that cannot be codified.

Repertoire, as the teller of these tales, addresses his internal audience, Franc Vouloir, and his external audience. The obvious delight taken in frightening the young man destined for marriage is doubled by other forms of narrative gratification. Perfetti, in her discussion of the fabliaux, explains how fabliaux wives, even as they draw physical or material rewards from their tricks, find their ultimate pleasure in the jokes that they play (“The Lewd and The Ludic” 19). For her, fabliaux husbands never understand how they have been bested; this “knowledge [is] enjoyed only by the woman, the narrator, and us” (20). In the *Miroir*, who the “us” is becomes a complicated question. In this story of the oblivious, cuckolded husband, the women involved, the wife, the mother-in-law, and the chambermaid, obviously derive satisfaction from getting the best of the masculine head of household. The “us,” Franc Vouloir and “us” the readers, understand the husband’s predicament on two levels. Whereas Franc Vouloir identifies intimately with this husband as an extension of the self he could become, we do not, whether this “we” was the medieval audience concerned or the “we” of the contemporary reader. On the contrary, Franc Vouloir’s identification allows for a doubling of the husband character, creating another degree of humor for us. The husband is foolish, but Franc Vouloir might be even more so through his credulity and wholehearted acceptance of his double’s credulity. The audience is able to take critical distance from the weight of Repository’s teachings, fully grounded in the possibility of being social agents in their own right. Franc Vouloir, and the husbands who are his doubles, are a safeguard against true social anxiety.

Repertoire, in addressing his two audiences, plays a much more ambiguous role. He achieves the desired effect he wants to have on Franc Vouloir, yet the reception of his message by the external

audience is determined by their critical distance from the subject of the debate itself. Should one wed or enter into spiritual marriage? Given the impracticality of such a choice for a medieval aristocratic audience, they would have been in just such a position to receive the fabliaux-like humor of Deschamps's work. As contemporary readers, "we" have even more difficulty believing in the sincerity of the text. Convinced of the possibility of human agency, Repertoire's neither/nor arguments about any and all worldly endeavors leave us perplexed and disenchanted with this encyclopedia of impossibility.

Much then can be made of the multiple expressions of desire in the *Miroir*. The impetus for all forms of action and agency, this willful character Desir, after all, is the second false friend to take up the case for marriage. Many critics have remarked that conduct literature is a site for the expression of desire and the definition of what social actors, men and women, should desire (Rose 394). The *Miroir* is witness to a proliferation of desires, whether the material and sexual desire of the female protagonists, the frustrated desires of the unfortunate husband, Repertoire's desire that Franc Vouloir perpetuate the clerical institution in which he himself participates, Franc Vouloir's desire to retain his own agency, or Deschamps's desire to have a positive influence on the society he sees around him.

Conduct literature defines what an agent "should" want, punishing transgressive desire and rewarding desires that seek the "common good" of the household or the kingdom. Mirrors for princes either presume a leader's desire for the common good or attempt to instill it within him, to the extent that the leader's desire and the common good become indistinguishable. In the *Miroir* the endless expansion of desire, whether material, political, or spiritual, undermines the continence and self-policing that Repertoire attempts to instill in Franc Vouloir. Franc Vouloir's very name, with insistence on "vouloir" [to want], inscribes him in a paradigm of desire.

Inordinate Desires

The imaginary wife typifies outrageous, immoderate desire. Her appetites, her wishes, and will to power preoccupy the majority of the reflection in Chapters XV-XLIII. The first series of unreasonable desires to be displayed, in long lists, are the objects that she would like to possess for the household. The reader is to assume that these wishes are contrary to her husband's who most certainly follows the precept that Repertoire defines: "Theophrastes dit sanz doubtence que bonne vie est continence" [Theophraste says, without a doubt, that the good life is a continent one] (2427-8). The usual logic of conduct literature as a place where masculine desires regulate social organization is undone. In this instance, it is the wife who defines what the material comforts of the household are (as opposed to the *Ménagier* who defines comfort and expects his young wife to provide it) and takes it upon her to make it happen. This form of independent agency, the wife both defining and fulfilling desires in the microstate, leaves no room for the husband much less a playing field for his actions.

As the triviality of daily married life is laid forth in explicit detail, the humor of these passages cannot be denied. Ranging from servants to furniture, cloth goods to kitchen utensils, the household is visible for all to see. Chapters XV and XXXVII consist almost entirely of lists of sought after objects. This interesting foray into everyday history moves from the wife's bodily adornments (Chap. XV) to her household goods (Chap. XXXVII); this progression creates a continuity in which the household becomes an extension of her material body. The home is more than woman's space: it is constructed by her, intended to contain her, and represents the transience and excess that the ecclesiastical tradition so readily assigned to women. It is the site of desire. Action on the part of the husbands in question becomes impossible amid not only the material barriers, but also the barriers erected by the wife's will. The field of practice is a cluttered one.

The wife explains that for the husband to maintain his place in society and create a respectable household for all to see he must participate in conspicuous consumption. Deschamps's medieval readers must have been very aware of these ostentatious signs and their social significance.

Je voy bien femme d'avocas,
De povres bourgeois de villaige,
Qui l'ont bien, (pourquoy ne l'arai ge?)
A .iiii. roncins atelé
Certes pas ne sont de tel lé
Ne de tel ligne com je suy.
Par ma foy, encor ne vi je huy
Femme qui mieulx le doie avoir,
Et si ne seroit pas sçavoir
A vous qui estes riches hom,
Que je, dame de la maison,
Entre les aultres n'apparusse
La plus grant, et que je ne fusse
Pour vostre estat et reverence
Femme de plus grant apparence
Que ces pauvres femmes ne sont,
Qui maintes bonnes choses ont. (1274-90)

I see the wives of lawyers, and poor village bourgeois, who have it [a carriage] harnessed to four nags, so why shouldn't I? They certainly do not have my clout, are not from such a lineage as mine. By my faith, didn't I see just today, a woman who should have it better? Otherwise shouldn't you, who are a rich man, know that I, lady of the house, should appear to be the most grand among the others? For the sake of your estate and reverence, I should have a better appearance than these poor women who have so many nice things?

As the imaginary wife speaks through Repertoire's letter, her feminine voice articulates what she "sees" in the public arena and what she desires for her domestic space. She discusses "ces pauvres femmes...qui maintes bonnes choses ont" [these poor women...who have so many nice things] (1289-90), the objects their husbands provide for the household (1291), and what she thinks her husband should provide. Consumption is competitive. Like in all households portrayed in conduct literature, there is no intimacy in this home; on the contrary, all of its facets and dynamic relationships are under the scrutiny of the public eye.

The wife's desires are inspired by what she sees in the world around her; yet, this principle is at the very foundation of didactic literature. This process is meant to elicit desire in the reader, a desire to attain the degree of perfection and plenty before their eyes. One is presented with an

enviable, class-identified model and, thus, should seek to emulate it. The wife might be a better reader of conduct works than one might first suspect, and capable of deconstruction at that. At the same time, the insistent tone of the wife and her lengthy lists of feminine needs serve to make these attractive objects undesirable to Franc Vouloir, model ruler. By rendering the desires of the other unappealing, the objects in question are effaced; agency, the definition, expression, and eventual fulfillment of desire, becomes the primary concern for the participants in this power struggle. However, the wife's desires will reach new heights of perversity in Chap. XXXIX.

Outrageous appetite

The immoderate wife conceals a danger defying logic; she might very well devour the nation. The gullible husband, tricked by his wife and her chambermaid, discovers this unsavory penchant in Chap. XXXIX. Not only is the heir apparent not his own, but satiating the hunger and thirst of this pregnant wife will be no easy task. He “souffre sa voulenté jusques ara elle enfenté” [suffers through her whims until the child is born] (3777-78). It is important to note that it is her “voulenté” [will] that is the source of his suffering. Will becomes a source of wifely agency to which the husband must capitulate. He is obliged to do her bidding. The poet establishes a long list of her many hankerings, ranging from ashes to the spleen of a baby pig, to a whole host of vegetables, game, and beverages (3783-3843). The effect of this passage is largely comic, each new request beginning with “Or veult” [then she wants]. The incessant repetition of “veult” expresses the weight of these feminine cravings for the husband and the limitlessness of the wife's ridiculous appetite. In a feeding frenzy worthy of a Rabelaisian giant, the wife has some very specific requirements regarding drink. She asks that her husband go to the many corners of France to find the following:

Vin de saint Jehan et vin d'Espaigne,
Vin de Ryn et vin d'Alemaigne,
Vin d'Aucerre et vin de Bourgongne,
Vin de Beaune et vin de Gascongne,
Vin de Chabloix, vins de Givry,
Vins de Vertus, vins d'Irancy,

Vins d'Orliens et de saint Poursain,
(Avoir tel femme n'est pas sain),
Vin d'Ay, vin de La Rochelle,
Garnache fault et ganachelle :
Vin grec et du vin muscadé (3815-3825)

Saint John's wine and wine from Spain, wine from the Rhine and wine from Germany, wine from Auxerre and wine from Burgundy, wine from Beaune and wine from Gascony, wine from Chablis and wine from Givry, wine from Vertus, wine from Irancy, wine from Orléans and Saint Poursain, having such a wife isn't healthy, wine from Ay, wine from La Rochelle, Grenache wine, oh, sweet, little Grenachelle, Greek wine and muscadet.

While the wife has obviously not heard about the dangers of consuming alcohol during pregnancy, her great thirst for the best that French soils can provide has geographical and historical resonance in the midst of the Hundred Years' War. This effect is completed by another series of important topographical references, the sources of the different waters she would like to drink.

Or vault de l'eau d'un putel,
Ou de l'eau de la fontaine,
Du puis, de Marne, eau de Saine,
De Loire, de Dordogne, et d'Oyse
Et d'Esne, et couvient qu'on y voise. (3836-3840)

Then she wants water from a pond, or water from a fountain, from a well, from the Marne, from the Seine, from the Loire, from the Dordogne, from the Oise, and from the Aisne, and one had better hop to it.

This is not a coincidental accumulation of topographical features; they create a symbolic geography for a late medieval French audience. Their political significance as strategic areas in the conflict between France and England would not have been lost on a reader of the time and speaks to the greater message behind the scenes of the depraved wife and her household. Deschamps's stake in the welfare of the French nation during the Hundred Years' War is expressed through the portrait of the unreasonable wife; her ungovernable behavior will devour the resources that have been accumulated by the husband. The domestic struggle between husband and wife for political and economic agency and the promise of the reign of an illegitimate power (the child that she is carrying) can endanger the existence of the "household" that is France.

Not all of the place names listed have the same import in Deschamps's symbolic map. Spain and Germany, along with the Rhine River, served as a limit to the French national territory and the

sources of either external threats or support; other places in the list were the subject of conflict in the Hundred Years' War. A major source of contention between France and England was the wine-producing Duchy of Aquitaine or Guyenne, held by the Plantagenet family since 1259 upon their signing of the Treaty of Paris with Saint Louis as discontent vassals of the King of France (Autrard, *Charles VI*, 55). The arrival of Philip of Valois on the throne in 1328 was the opportunity for Edward III to contest the succession and define the borders of Aquitaine to his advantage. The French, in return, reasserted their right to administrative control over the territory.⁵² Deschamps's narrator mentions a number of contested locations within and around this region: Gascony, La Rochelle, and the Dordogne River.

The narrator also turns his attention to the region of Burgundy, a duchy whose political family was close to the French throne and would play a significant role in the later part of the war. Philip of Burgundy, uncle to Charles VI and advisor to this new monarch, had been made duke of this prosperous region in 1361 and had acquired both wealth and territory upon his marriage with Margaret of Flanders in 1369, previously promised to Edward III of England's son (17). Philip of Burgundy and his son John were also patrons of Deschamps (Laurie 11). Within this region, Deschamps's narrator mentions Beaune, Auxerre, Givry, and Irancy. He also mentions territory at the heart of the traditional French vision of the nation, the Loire and the city of Orléans, fief of Charles VI's brother. Deschamps had served as bailiff of Valois to Duke Philip of Orléans and his wife Blanche between 1375 and 1380 (6-7). Like Orléans, other places mentioned might serve as Deschamps's signature and reflect his own personal geographical stakes in the Hundred Years' War. As is well known, Deschamps's home in Vertus in Champagne was sacked in August 1380 by Thomas of Buckingham and in 1381 he was given the castle at Fismes in Champagne by Charles VI

⁵² See Desmond Seward "Valois or Plantagenet ?" *The Hundred Years War : The English in France 1337-1453*. New York : Penguin, 1978. 19-41.

(9). He mentions places close by such as wine-producing Ay, and the Aisne and the Marne, rivers that run through the territory of Champagne. Other places might reflect his position as bailiff of Senlis, having taken oath in February 1389, his jurisdiction running from Pontoise to Compiègne connected by the Oise river (13).

This geography, whether a personal or political kind of activism, forms Deschamps's own historical vision of the constitutive parts of the French nation. In this example, these soils provide the fruits that feed an illegitimate heir, one that squanders resources and could ultimately be the ruin of the household it will inherit. The child that the dissident wife bears is one that will eventually deprive the husband of his possessions, much like the English soldiers who feed off the spoils of the land during their *chevauchées* all while seeking to deprive the "legitimate" Valois family of their rule of the nation. The problem of succession, one element among others in the genesis of the Hundred Years' War, is reflected in Deschamps's obsession with the legitimacy of agency and social and political power.

The surprising political turn

The misery of having a pregnant wife in the home with her many demands and cravings is not just a trivial flight of fancy. The wife's desires reveal more than a stereotypical misogynist exaggeration; they represent the peril of the French nation. Folie, the main mischief maker, is accused of having rendered France vulnerable, exposing its armies to the losses at Crécy and Poitiers, major setbacks for the French in the Hundred Years' War in Chapter XCIV. The loss of the battle of Poitiers would lead to the treaty of Brétigny, an agreement that had its disadvantages both for France and England. In the concluding section of the work, Deschamps briefly recounts other military defeats in the history of Christendom, before slowing the tempo of his historical overview and turning his attention exclusively to the horrors of the Hundred Years' War. The fear of intrusion into

domestic or national space, the concern over resources and their conservation, and the question of the legitimacy of power and control over both space and commodities represented earlier on in the discussion regarding the insubordinate wife are brought forth again at the end of the *Miroir* in a very detailed historical and political invective. This time, the struggle is not over who will rule the roost, but rather who will rule the nation.

The Battle of Poitiers, a key defeat that would lead to a humiliating peace agreement at Brétigny, is mentioned by Franc Vouloir in the accusations that he levels against Folie.

On ne sçavoit qui yert amis:
Moult y ot lors de garnisons
De chasteaulx et de traïsons
Faictes, pourparlées et dictes,
Nouveaux pons, nouvelles guarites,
Pais partiz, et les contrées
A diverses gens rançonnées:
Marne, Sayne, l'Oyse et Yonne,
Loyre, le Chier et la Dourdonne
Estoient prinses par les pas. (11422-31)

No one knew who their friends were: there were many garrisons and castles built, treasons committed, negotiations and declarations, new bridges, new watchtowers, countries divided, and the lands of many people ransomed: the Marne, the Seine, the Oise and the Yonne, the Loire, the Cher and the Dordogne were taken by arms.

Curiously, the Marne, Seine, Oise, Dordogne, and Loire rivers are found once again in this description, also territories made to support the wife's appetite. In 1358 and 1359, the Touraine, Anjou, and Maine were in fact signed over to Edward III by a defeated King John so that the English monarch would relinquish his claim to the crown of France (Harriss 405). The Loire and Cher rivers run through this territory.

Deschamps's personal geography, his regions of Champagne and Picardy, are put at risk by Folie once again. However, in this instance, it is not a foreign invader that causes a dilemma but rather internal strife. Franc Vouloir describes the territories that were subject to the uprising in 1358 against Charles V who was attempting to take back control of the capital which had come under the

sway of Etienne Marcel in his rallying of the Parisian bourgeoisie and other municipalities in Picardy and Champagne. This rural revolt took place against the local nobility in the spring of 1358.⁵³

En Beauvoisins estoit la presse
De tuer femmes et enfens
Des nobles, telz estoit li temps,
Et de leurs maisons demolir,
Ardre, derober et tolir;
En Valoys fut, en Picardie
En Champaigne tel jaquerie. (11436-42)

In the Beauvaisis was the skirmish, killing the wives and children of nobles, such were the times, destroying their houses, burning them, stolen and taken away; such was the uprising in Valois, Picardy and Champagne.

Jean le Bon's absence from the national territory, having agreed to be a hostage in England after the 1356 defeat in Poitiers, did nothing to restore order to the French nation. The regent, his son Charles V, was having his first experiences at ruling France. These defeats would shape his policies as monarch and culminate in his successful campaign to take back the territories lost to the English in 1360.

The *Miroir de mariage* breaks off with a list of French cities concerned by the treaty of Brétigny in 1360, a treaty that granted a fair amount of French lands to Edward III of England yet obliged him to renounce his claim to the French crown (Harriss 405). It also ensured the return of King John to French soil with the payment of a considerable ransom. Again, the geography described in this passage is reminiscent of that mentioned in the pregnant wife's wine list, creating a correlation between the seemingly unrelated discussions of disobedient wives and historical misfortunes. The questions of lineage, inheritance, and legitimacy are brought to the forefront once more.

In this penultimate Chapter XCVI entitled "D'aucuns traictiez entre le regent de France et les Anglois près de Paris en esperance de paix," Franc Vouloir accuses Folie for his involvement in the defeats of the French nation. It would seem that Franc Vouloir was an eye witness to this historical

⁵³ See Raymond Cazelles's discussion of this social warfare in Chapter XXXIII « La guerre sociale » in *Société politique, noblesse et couronne sous Jean le Bon et Charles V*. Geneva and Paris : Droz, 1982, 318-353.

event: “Et moy, qui de ce temps la suy, sçay bien que lors y envoya” [I who was there know well who was sent] (11840-41). Leaving the page of the text, the protagonist of the *Miroir* becomes a historical actor in the destiny of the nation, a much larger role than that first assigned to him of choosing between worldly and spiritual marriage. He has become a political actor in his own right, the antagonist of Folie.

The description of the treaty of Brétigny has all the trappings of the juridical language in which Deschamps was well-versed. Tropes of agreement and the vocabulary of charters are present in this portion of the *Miroir*.

C'est que le roy par le traicté
 Edouart, qui nous faisoit guerre,
 Aroit, oultre toute la terre
 Qu'en Gascoingne tint et Guienne,
 Toute la terre comme sienne
 Que le roy de France y avoit,
 Et ainsi comme il la tenoit
 Et que ses ancesseurs la tindrent.
 Et puis après au traicté tindrent
 Que la conté, ville et chastel
 De Poitiers, Qui fut fort et bel,
 Tout Poitou, le fies de Thouart
 Et Belleville de sa part,
 Et encor autres villes maintes,
 La cité et chastel de Saintes,
 Tout Xantonge, que je ne mante,
 Deça et dela la Charente,
 La cité, le chastel d'Agen,
 Et tout Agenois, or m'enten,
 Pierregort, chastel et cité,
 Et tout Pereguis, c'est pité,
 Lui fut puis livré, et Lymoges,
 Sanz excepter chasteaux ne loges,
 Tout le pais de Lymosin,
 Caours et tout le Caourcin.
 Tarbe, ville, pais et terre
 Et de Bigorre vouldt requerre
 La conté, qui lui fut donnée,
 La terre, pais et contrée
 De Gaurre, et encor ot il mesmes
 Chastel et cité d'Angolesme,
 Et le pais d'Angolesmois;
 Encore ot il a celle fois

Through this treaty the king
 Edward, who was waging war on us,
 Would have, beyond all the land
 In Gascoigne and Guyenne that he already had,
 All the land as his
 That the king of France had there,
 As he held it
 And his ancestors had held it.
 And then after the treaty he would have
 The county, city and castle
 Of Poitiers, which was mighty and beautiful,
 All of the Poitou, the fief of Thouars
 And Belleville for his behalf,
 And many other cities,
 The city and castle of Saintes
 All of the Saintonge, call me a liar if you will,
 On this side and that of the Charente,
 The city and castle of Agen,
 And all the Agenois, if you follow me,
 The Périgord, castle and city,
 And all the Périgieux, it's a pity,
 was all handed over to him, and Limoges
 Without leaving out the castles and outer buildings,
 All of the Limousin,
 Cahors and the surrounding region.
 Tarbe, city, country and land
 And of La Bigorre he sought
 The county, which was given to him,
 The land, the country and the countryside
 Of Gauré, and he even received
 The castle and city of Angoulême
 And the territory of the Angoumois
 And again at this time he received

De Roddès chastel et cité,
 Et Rouergue a perpetuité;
 Et encor mist en son eschac
 Que se Foyez ne Armagnac,
 Perregort, le conte de l'Isle
 Tenoient ne chastel ne ville
 Ne de Lymoges le [viconte,]
 En tous les pais que je compte,
 Qu'au roy anglois fissent hommaige
 Es diz lieux de leur heritaige
 Pareillement et sans offence
 Qu'ilz faisoient au roy de France
 Et tous devoirs acoustumez ;
 Ainsis fut li faiz pourparlez.
Item le dit roy d'Angleterre
 Dubt ravoïr trestoute la terre
 Que tindrent ses predecesseurs
 Et qui fut a ses ancesseurs,
 Qu'il vout au traictié reclamer,
 Qui est a Monstreul sur la mer;
Item la conté de Ponthieu,
 Sanz excepter ville ne lieu,
 La ville et chastel de Calays,
 Et tout environ a eslays,
 Merc, Sangates, Hame, Coulongne
 Et, pour mieux valoir sa besongne,
 Wales, Oye et appartenances,
 Seignouries et appendances,
 Les boys, rivieres et marès
 Jusqu'à l'angle au grant lac, et près
 De Guïnes jusques au Fretin,
 Villes, chasteaulx, terres, usines,
 Que le derrain conte de Guïnes
 Tenoit en la dicte conté,
 Avant ce qu'il fust trespasé.
 Et a toutes les seignouries,
 Que cy dessus sont esclarcies,
 Aux foiz, aux droiz, et aux hommaiges,
 Aux ressors et aux heritaiges
 Et a tout ce qui s'en despent,
 Le roy de France et le regent
 Durent renuncier au proufit
 Du roy anglois, par leur escript,
 Et de ses hoirs, et leur bailler,
 Sanz mal engin, comme heritier,
 Les diz lieux, sans faire l'estrange
 Dedens la Saint Michiel archange,
 Ensuiant une année après
 Au plus tart, et en seront près
 Au dit jour, et sanz nulle faille. (11922-12005)

The castle and city of Rodez,
 And the Rouergue for ever;
 And again included in his booty
 Whether it was Foix or Armagnac,
 Périgord, the count of l'Isle
 Holding either castle or city
 Or the viscounty of Limoges
 And all the countries that I count,
 Who paid homage to the English king
 In the lands of their heritage
 Exactly as they had and without of offense
 As when they had belonged to the king of France
 And all the habitual duties ;
 So went the negotiations.
Item the said king of England
 Had to have all the land again quickly
 That his predecessors had held
 And that belonged to his ancestors,
 That he wanted to claim once more through the treaty,
 That's to say Montreuil sur mer;
Likewise for the county of Ponthieu,
 Without excluding any city or place,
 The city and castle of Calais,
 And the surroundings, all at once,
 Mec, Sangate, Hames, Coulogne
 And, to further secure his claim,
 Wales, Oye and their territories,
 Lordships and domains
 The woods, rivers, and marshes
 To the angle of the big lake, and near
 Guïnes all the way to Fréthun,
 Cities, castles, lands, farms
 That the last count of Guïnes
 Had in the said county,
 Before he passed away.
 And to all the domains,
 That are listed here above,
 By faith, by law, and by homage
 By jurisdiction and by inheritance
 And everything that depends upon it,
 The king of France and the regent
 Had to renounce in favor of
 The English king, in writing,
 And in favor of his heirs, and declare them,
 In good faith, as heirs,
 The aforementioned places, respecting these terms
 By the feast of Saint Michael archangel,
 in the course of the following year
 At the latest, and that they would be ready
 Upon the said day, without fail.

This very accurate description of the agreement of Brétigny anchors Deschamps's text in its historical reality.⁵⁴ The passionate invective of Franc Vouloir expresses Deschamps's own profound engagement with a historical event that had taken place over twenty five years before the composition of the *Miroir*. In the interim, times had changed. After the humiliation of 1360, under the stewardship of Charles V upon his coronation in 1364, France knew happier times. The English were gradually pushed back thanks to the military strategy of Du Guesclin and the unsuccessful political maneuvers of John of Gaunt who attempted to establish multiple alliances in Spain (411-9). The Black Prince had largely neglected the new regions under his control after 1360 and was thus unable to secure the loyalty of the local population who felt a certain allegiance toward the French crown. However, by the time that Deschamps was to take up his pen to compose the *Miroir*, some time after 1385, Charles VI having been on the throne for over five years, tensions between France and England were building. At this same time, Deschamps breaks off the composition of his *Miroir*, a strange, heterogenous work, with the list of hostages who were sent to Edward III to guarantee that the treaty of Brétigny would be upheld (12061-12103). His earlier portrayals of the difficulty of governing when confronted with an uncontrollable, foreign actor in the home had become a historical reality for Charles VI.

Although in recent studies, some scholars have posited that the expression of misogynistic ideals is not Deschamps's main ambition, his concern being rather the righting of political wrongs; it is my contention that the humorous depiction of misogynistic commonplaces has a political motive. They represent the problems posed to individual agency when not all parties involved in an enterprise are devoted to the keystone of Aristotelian politics, the common good. By endorsing limited economic and social roles for women and wives and depicting the contrary in order to better

⁵⁴ See Gerald Harris *Shaping the Nation : England 1360-1461*. Oxford : Clarendon, 2005 (405-7) for a description of the treaty of Brétigny and a map of the territories conceded to the English.

denounce the institution of marriage, Deschamps's insinuation is that any institution will fail without virtuous actors. Weak husbands, like misguided warriors and a corrupt clergy, make for squandered fortunes. By using marriage to enter into his discussion of predominantly masculine institutions, Deschamps suggests that the solution to France's problems is a "re-masculinization" of the nascent nation that cannot come from either conduct literature or treatises on governance.

Scholars have defined the nation as a gendered fraternity, "a masculinist or a heterosexual male construct," and Mrinalini Sinha concludes that nationalisms very often provide women with the role of being the biological reproducers of an ethnic group, the reproducers of the boundaries of this group, the participants in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and transmitters of its culture, the signifiers of ethnic/national difference, and the participants in national, economic, political, and military struggles (Sinha 12). The fictitious wife of the *Miroir* takes up these roles and misperforms them all humorously. Deschamps did not fear contradiction, but rather demonstrates how the intentions of a masculine authority intent on regulating internal affairs can be consistently frustrated by a contradictory desiring figure.

The havoc that war creates cannot be overcome by the organizational principles of either Aristotelian philosophy or self-discipline; retreat from these processes and withdrawal from the world is equally ineffective. Mired in the world of reality, agency being an uncertain possibility, Deschamps presents a pessimistic vision of the tropes of counsel. The humoristic depictions of women allow for the audience to momentarily laugh at the laudable attempts of an inept man to control his household and the polity; a cathartic reprieve from otherwise dim historical and political prospects. For this to be a paradigm of how to give and receive advice, of how to take counsel and make a decision, different instances of counsel, of subterfuge, make for a world of contradictions. Advice is given in relationship to a concrete circumstance requiring action, but how is one to listen to advice regarding government when governing is impossible? Why give it in the first place?

Just as women move between the public and private spaces in the fabliaux to the detriment of their husbands and fathers, exemplary women circulate as well. Their tales, whether in conduct literature or texts that defy generic definition like the *Miroir*, become gendered commodities among men, a symbolic currency with which to discuss authority and angst. The movement of women characters in *exempla* in general, either doing good works or inspiring insidious thoughts and deeds, are another form of traffic in women. If Gayle Rubin calls for an exploration of the economics and politics of sex/gender systems behind the “exchange of women,”⁵⁵ one might deduce also that texts about marriage, whether written for women or for men, can reveal new understandings about the economic and political dimensions of a society. By exchanging stories about good women and bad, male writers and readers obtained a form of exemplary capital, a virtuous mantle with which to secure their participation in the management of affairs of state. At the same time, assigning the principles of disorder to feminine elements was the means by which to distance oneself from instances of misgovernment, feminize and thus discredit those who would be responsible for them, or re-create a masculine consensus regarding the common good motivating action. If the *Miroir de mariage* is a self-reflexive moment in this process, a tragicomic parody of idealized counselor and independent ruler, Deschamps only further encourages a return to the fundamentals of masculine institutions and an escape from the ridicule of failure within the home and the State.

But does Deschamps not get caught up in his own game? Of the many literary characters of the late Middle Ages, the Wife of Bath, a masculinized narrator in her own right, understands the power of discourses on marriage and how they can act as a commodity among men. Using the foundations of misogynist discourse to secure her next amorous union, her prologue represents the power that such *exempla* had for what in her case is an audience of men. Indeed, she beats them at

⁵⁵ See Rubin, Gayle. “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the ‘Political Economy’ of Sex.” *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1998. 533-560.

their own game, reserving both mastery and sovereignty over the narrative for herself in much the same way that misogynist texts and conduct literature as a whole sought to reserve authority for the male speaking subject behind the narrative voice. For McTaggart, "...the Wife ends up collapsing the idea of sovereignty as self-governance into the idea of mastery: sovereignty becomes the ability to define not only one's own desire but, more importantly, the other's desire" (McTaggart 46).

Deschamps, like the Wife of Bath, by seeking to control and regulate a discourse on marriage to define masculine desire and provide for the possibility of masculine agency, both literary and political, places himself in the same unstable, ambiguous position as Chaucer's narrator. The *Miroir*, a debate intended to have a definite outcome in favor of spiritual marriage, encourages the reader to reflect critically on the pedagogical process in which they are participating and the philosophy underlying it.

Conclusion

Fragmented vignettes, troubled accounts of authority, and moralizing that could very well miss its aim are the hallmarks of medieval marriage discourse. A conclusion apt at synthesizing these works that seek to be comprehensive compendiums of knowledge and instruction for and about women and marriage can only be the recognition of the impossibility of the systematizing aspirations of the writers themselves. Thus, attempting to account for the different messages and ideals of these heterogeneous works can only lead to a conclusion that is as fragmented as the works themselves; any final vision must be the claim to a space to qualify opinions, express reservations, and bring to light the very contradictions and differences which were the objects of inquiry. If these texts teach a lesson it is that claiming authority reveals only the desire for authority; it is no guarantor of its existence.

The impetus to arrive at unity from fragmentation is omnipresent in medieval texts and mentalities, Sarah Kay identifying the “monologic” nature of medieval didactic works (3). It would seem, however, that texts regarding marriage tolerate the creative possibilities of the disintegration that they illustrate just as they seek to eliminate it. Ellipses in time and logic are easily reconciled in a world where the symbolic currency of a narrative is often more important than its development. The nostalgia for a glorious past and the fear of decadence and impending failure are not defeatist commonplaces but rather the critical tools with which to forge a new future. A chaotic movement from a vision of hegemonic, rigid forms of authority to negotiated exchanges of textual wisdom up and down the social hierarchy; the swapping of stories about women as the tokens of masculine virtue and capabilities, while they do not provide for enviable sovereignty, create new types of authorship endowed with the value of discursive and socially constructed truth.

A pedagogical undertaking reveals more about the construction of knowledge in the society that produces it than it does about the lesson to be learned. Building knowledge can take preeminence over the content or the behavior of those who are meant to learn and interiorize its guidelines. The feminine addressee in these works is merely a fictional construct, significantly less authentic than the masculine pseudo-autobiographical narrative persona who creates her. His desires become hers; his fears reveal the uncertainties of agency and the instability of his own subjectivity. What conduct literature for women, mirrors, and texts concerning marriage provide for through imagined forms of behavior are the possibility of subjectivities that both resist and adhere to modes of prescription or forms of power and sovereignty. The feminine objects created by their male authors are manipulated for their purposes, exhibiting the potential fear or admiration, rejection or emulation that they inspire. The paradox is that while they teach subservience they also teach their audience the difficult negotiations of becoming full-fledged early modern subjects. They teach self-fashioning in their attempt to fashion the other. If the feminine audiences of these works imitate the authors' methods rather than their *exempla*, they risk learning something quite subversive and unintended.

These (pseudo-?) autobiographical texts, whose authorial "I"s provide intimate understandings of what the world should be and what the world is not, are more self-revealing than truly informative or pedagogical. The masculine subjectivity that is created and recreated is composed of the objective feminine parts of its discourse; that is of the many feminine "characters," if the exemplary women whose stories they repeatedly tell can be called that. Whether the subject constructs its discourse or the discourse constructs it subject remains to be perceived by the careful reader seeking either method or model.

Eustache Deschamps, in his amalgamated parody of the two mirroring traditions destined for women and princes, occludes the possibility of a feminine audience all together, preferring to create masculine allegorical figures to represent the processes of education that were taking place in the speculum tradition in general and revealing the unstable philosophical foundations of the genre. He makes the unacknowledged masculine audience of these works explicit by giving voice to *Franc Vouloir* and *Repertoire de Science*. The absent male readers who could potentially (and did) purchase, consume, and circulate any type of mirror, the courtly audiences who could have read Deschamps's *Miroir*, are conspicuous by their very absence.

Mirrors and works of conduct generally bring to life myriad social subjectivities; they are a laboratory, a space in which different forms of authority can be tested, the consequences observed, and approaches modified subsequently. This empirical exercise could expiate and provoke anxiety simultaneously, create and diminish tensions; it is a safe, fictional forum in which to carry out the intellectual work of daily political life. The ethical principles that founded the Aristotelian polity are transferred back to the institution of marriage; defining an ethos of marriage was the means to dictate the most intimate daily functioning of a social actor all while providing a persuasive performance beyond all reproach.

The Power of Self-Representation

What the Chevalier de la Tour Landry, in the company of his clerics and family, and the *Ménagier de Paris*, surrounded by his gaming masculine homologues, disclose is the realization that self-representation was an extraordinarily powerful tool at the end of the Middle Ages. The playful, fictional authorial postures, their self-depictions as the masters of their households, the image of oneself surrounded by the representatives of moral authority, literary or clerical, gave a paradoxical weight to a seemingly trivial discourse. These authors show that they understood the cultural codes

that granted power. They also demonstrate their awareness that power and sovereignty are fragile, that resistance can come from those considered weak and thus meriting the subservience to which they were confined. An uneasy hierarchy required dramatic visual and verbal techniques to maintain one's superiority. The men portrayed do not hesitate to resort to illustrations of physical violence should the verbal means to a necessary end fail.

Different forms of resistance and disorder are portrayed by each author. The immediate concern of the Chevalier is lineage. The illegitimate blood lines that haunt his narrative divulge his uncanny understanding of the ideas that would found the debate between the knight and the cleric in *Le Songe du Vergier*. He who can decide on the legitimacy of a union between husband and wife wields power in the world. One is left to wonder what strange form of paternity could be found between the Chevalier de la Tour Landry's portrayal of self and household and the social allegories that would seem to be his intellectual descendants in the mirror for princes attributed to Evrart Trémaugon. For the *Ménagier de Paris* narrator, disorder is akin to discomfort in the household; fleas in the bed and smoky chimneys can oblige a man to leave his home (Krueger, "Identity" 25-26). However, behind his disorderly, incomplete text, a very systematic mind resides. His chaotic narration is, like the many scenes that he depicts, a wager; by enticing his reader to enter this contest with him, he lays down the cards that he has in his hand. At his disposal are a variety of solutions and oppositional techniques that he can use in a given situation. The instability of his text and identity are the very factors that will allow him to assert a bourgeois form of agency in uncertain times. Eustache Deschamps, final figure in this series, is representative of all of these postures and more; he completes the intellectual panorama of the possibilities for texts on marriage in this study.

Eustache Deschamps, a courtier-poet involved in the negotiations of power that took place in and outside of the court between important historical figures and their lesser administrative

personnel, he himself being one of the latter, took things a step further in his production of male figures seeking, at the very least, personal sovereignty. The lengthy written epistle that *Repertoire de Science* addresses to Franc Vouloir, with its many anecdotes, bits of Biblical and Ancient wisdom, commonplaces regarding women, and prominent desire to renew medieval society through its institutions, is a mirror of the mirroring form. *Repertoire*, an accumulation of medieval learning, is entirely ineffective in the material world. Although Franc Vouloir adheres firmly to his advice, he cannot negotiate the simple situation with which he is confronted without a genuine fear for his own ability to act. At the same time, the prudence required to navigate the material world cannot be reconciled with the superior wisdom necessary to navigate the moral world. What is a man to do? Deschamps, through whatever authorial frustration he himself might have experienced, resorts to parody, to a critique of his own sincere critiques. Marriage is merely a pretext for discussing and transforming the foundations and methods of medieval knowledge in his text. The late medieval obsession with the institution of matrimony shows how any ideal, once expressed, becomes the subject of contrary discourses. A repeatedly illustrated cultural ideal wavers between being upheld and defeated, these possibilities portend authoritative success and failure and demotion from the ranks of the worthy.

Ethics and the marital idyll

Much as in courtly romance, where amorous attachments either drained knights of their capacity to participate in chivalric acts or inspired them to greater prowess, in fourteenth and fifteenth-century texts, marriage had taken on some of these same contradictory characteristics. As illustrated by Deschamps, it either denied men their material agency or frustrated their intellectual or spiritual endeavors. The institution placed men in a compromising position, providing an arena in which to exhibit their ability to govern the basic economic unit of the family, wield justice, and be

the moral guarantors of the household through visible displays of governance and virtue (of a spouse, daughter, or themselves). However, it also allowed a space to fail in all of these undertakings. The reasoning that one can only succeed in an institution in which one's "natural" masculine superiority is guaranteed renders depictions of failure all the more poignant and meaningful; they question the very foundations of medieval understandings of the world and man's place in it as a moral agent. Marriage, thus, became the new controlling narrative, the institutionalization of an ethos far more powerful than chivalry because it lent both spiritual and worldly power.

Medieval marriage discourse, furthering the purposes of a heteronormative and homosocial ideology, became a means to establish ties of solidarity between men. When feudal vassalage had lost the emotive pretexts of love, loyalty, and service to become a political institution based on material interest and designed to buttress royal sovereignty, another institution had to be found to take its place, to cover relationships of domination and subservience with the redeeming veneer of a moral ideal and masterly strategy. Praising the virtue of the husband in the household and reminding the wife-subject of her duties were akin to praising the virtuous and wise king in his nation so that one's own submission could be carefully occluded. The quest had to be transmuted into a more urbane search, purposeful for new times; the perils of the forest and the uncertainties of the supernatural that the heroic knight could overcome were supplanted by an ungovernable Feminine Other in the home.

An institution to renew other institutions

The metaphor of medieval marriage makes the institution an incubator to reflect upon and restore other institutions. There is a micro strategy in place in the late medieval period, the smallest political unit of the nation designed to restore order and provide a strict definition of responsibilities so that others might follow suit. This form of medieval metonymic thinking of the household as

nation or the body as polity allowed for critical distance from the larger project under way. It was also an easy point on which to find consensus in a time of dissension; if those who wanted to stake a claim to governing could not agree on the course of the ship of state, they could at the very least agree on the functions of the household. Moreover, no one, especially not the clergy, could argue with moral principles founded in an ecclesiastical tradition that provided for masculinized, divine sovereignty. After all, as the *Ménagier* so carefully teaches us, it is the way that households relate to other households that erects a set of boundaries and class lines. The *Ménagier* allows his reader to witness what may circulate between these social classes; stories penetrate other spheres more easily than men.

The bondage of male bonding

Deschamps spends more time exploring the notion of friendship between men than the relationship between husband and wife. The dilemma of distinguishing false friends from true ones demonstrates how marriage texts can be just as concerned with establishing appropriate relationships between men as between husband and wife. One has only to consider the freshness and originality of the character Franc Vouloir versus the tired, timeworn, exemplary women illustrated in Repertoire's invective to understand that constructions of masculinity are at the heart of this work. The ambiguous and merely grammatical genders of *Folie*, *Desir*, *Servitude*, and *Faintise* help to redefine a set of strictly masculine characteristics for the two unambiguously male characters, Franc Vouloir and his wise counselor. They are men because they are not allegorical forms of subjugated irrationality. The friendship of Franc Vouloir and Repertoire de Science epitomizes how marriage and counsel can create a new set of ties, replacing older, feudal, martial interests with shared intellectual pursuits. The hegemonic nature of the discourse regarding marriage, its strict codification and definitions, is not only a set of expectations to which the feminine recipient is held, but it is also

a guide for conduct to which men are held. Whether it is the incompetent, cuckolded husband in the *Miroir de mariage* or the anxious Ménagier concerned about winning the game and proving his work ethic, the redefinition of social links between men create rigid behavioral norms. Does the will to power necessarily provide for liberation? Or rather, does one become the very slave of the notion that one seeks to promote at all costs? The business of sovereignty is a serious one, so serious that it is best to explore its scope in a forum in which one's masculine superiority is assured. Where could this be more "natural" than in the institution of marriage?

Circulation and exchange

In a time when currency, capital, and the circulation of wealth were vital to defending the land, the practice of circulating idealized textual models of virtue created a parallel moral economy in late medieval France. If the authors of these texts repeatedly turn to material and monetary values and the constraints therein, it is because they understand the parameters of this new economy. In their study of works of conduct, Armstrong, Tennenhouse, and their contributors rely upon the anthropological paradigm of the exchange of desirable women in the creation of political and economic organizations: "If it is true that in other cultures the rules that govern kinship relations also regulate the political economy, and that kinship relations are in this respect one and the same as political relations, then we must also assume that whatever it is that makes certain objects of sexual exchange more valuable than others also provides the basis of political authority" (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 2). I would argue that beyond representing this kinship system works regarding marriage express the symbolical aspect of these exchanges through fiction. More important than the actual transactions involving daughters and wives is the exchange of narratives concerning the practice of the traffic in women. One might have a limited amount of actual feminine capital; an aristocrat such as the Chevalier de la Tour Landry only had three daughters to go around, but his text

allowed him to participate in a moral commerce transcending national borders and class lines. In the late Middle Ages, an ethical kinship founded in masculine virtues was preferable to physical ties of kinship that, as these stories repeatedly detail, could easily be undone. The discomfort of biological kinship, succession being the very cause of the Hundred Years' War, resulted in an intellectual quandary for political science. That such a vital system could rest upon the will of a feminine Other who had long been defined by her desire and desirability was simply unacceptable. As much as these works seek to suppress feminine desire, they return incessantly to the way it escapes control and the perils that this poses for institutions. The voracious wife of Deschamps's *Miroir* is the illustration of the dissatisfaction that arises from this principle; her most basic appetite devours the household and the nation. Exchanging tales of women is a more certain venture; one can more easily restrict their behavior within the confines of the page because they are brought to life for that very purpose.

Competition is also a function of this moral economy. Like the couple formed by Alisoun and Jankyn in Chaucer's *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, husbands and wives compete in order to have the upper hand in these *exempla*. Men and women are invited to participate in the social exchange of exemplary behavior; the women addressees being invited to play their part in the very methods that the masculine narrators depict. By allowing for men and women to read about instances of comical vying, the real-world stakes of the historical and political contests that were happening outside of their front doors were made more manageable. Condoning these contests and expressing the anxiety that they entailed was a way to master both. Each player expressed his comprehension of the rules of the game. By validating these contests, one showed their commitment to a series of social rules. The sisters depicted by the Tour Landry compete for suitors. Men in the *Ménagier* compete for influence in the world and wager on their wives' virtue. Repertoire competes with the adversaries in the *Miroir* to have the final word on marriage and decisively influence the political status of Franc Vouloir. By

mirroring forms of competition in their narratives the authors recognize implicitly that their discourses will enter this competition in their stead.

Legitimate forms of cooperation between men can be another tool for ensuring one's place. Repertoire and Franc Vouloir forge a philosophical union that is more legitimate than any marriage. The Chevalier enters a masculine cohort of aristocrats with the reciprocal duties of wielding justice and recognizing the legitimacy of each other's possessions, power, and status. The Ménagier enters into contest with his equals and humbles himself before those that are his social superiors, cooperating when the need is great and competing when the stakes are relatively low. However, these principles only apply to masculine social actors. Cooperation between women is necessarily defined as collusion; wives, their mothers, and chambermaids challenge a husband's sovereignty; sisters found illegitimate lineages that rob their fathers of cognizance and control. These masculine political actors implicitly recognize that cooperation between subservients presents a real and present danger to those at the top of the hierarchy. The threat of peasant and urban rebellions that were taking place at the time might not have been very far from their minds. Once cooperation and competition had been mastered, one could turn to the necessary business of preserving one's capital and controlling risks in the late medieval moral economy.

Preservation and risk, Conservation and progress

The symbolic economy of conduct and marriage texts creates a system of virtuous assets and behavioral liability. Marriage is a joint-venture; an honorable wife can be a benefit; a poorly behaved wife can endanger the very economic institution that the couple creates. Risking the circulation of tales of virtuous wives means putting one's own social and cultural capital on display. If the husband wagers on his ability to govern and does not succeed, the whole discourse itself is discredited.

Repeated illustrations of worthy, powerful men are investments for the future. A wife is an uncontrollable variable and educating her well can solidify the social capital she can provide.

A common fictional problem with medieval wives, since they are not meant to accrue capital through their own efforts but rather to fulfill a role of conservation in the household, is that they cannot be put into direct circulation without incurring risk, hence their value as merely symbolic currency. It is when the wife goes to the marketplace that trouble ensues; she either disperses the family fortune or is adulterous and disrupts the legitimate transfer of power and goods. The figure of the virtuous wife must necessarily be preserved and the only means to accomplish this is through fiction. The household, like the state, is founded on a notion of right; through injustice the material possessions of a household can be spirited away quickly by a disloyal figure.

Even though the wife in this venture is assigned the task of conserving the household, at the same time, husbands are paradoxically wagering on the unstable identities of women in general. For one man to win the wager of wifely virtue, another must lose. These masculine narrators, whether the *Ménagier* or *Repertoire*, follow this schema. They simultaneously tell stories of financial, political, and material ruin with those they seek to educate assigned the hypothetical responsibility for these outcomes. The wife becomes a metaphor for the ephemeral nature of the worldly, unpredictable course of history that the late medieval masculine subject must confront. The past cannot be preserved, but by repeatedly enacting its destruction it is possible to forge a future. When political and historical outcomes are assigned ethical value depicting winners and losers who are unable to control the outcome of the contest due to an uncontrollable variable lightens the moral burden. Women represent fortune and fate; the household provides a venue for domesticating the anxieties they provoke.

The conservation of the household and the nation were timely topics. It can only be hoped for those attempting to consolidate their sovereignty that they do not meet the fate of Lot. Lot's downfall, above all else, was his loss of consciousness, his lapse into unawareness. Texts about marriage seek to heighten consciousness among men lest they should lose their way as patriarchs. By repeating the value of self-restraint, whether it be controlling risk, circulation or defining that which must be preserved, male authors display the value they place on self-control. Its loss is their demise. Preserving this awareness through the vehicle of the text was an important cultural and political strategy because it allowed one to identify, repeatedly, that which one must not surrender.

A genealogy of virtue

Perhaps one of the greatest anxiety-inducing medieval ideas is that virtue and worth should be transmitted through family lines. The estate system, so carefully championed by these class-conscious works, was upheld by birthright and carried with it a certain number of social responsibilities and standards. The works that I have studied explore the perceived threat of the failure of this system. The *Ménagier* feels obliged to make a cogent case for upholding his *estat* to his young wife; the Chevalier adapts the *Miroir des bonnes femmes* to create a discredited lineage that deforms the virtuous principles of the patriarch and that he can no longer recognize as his own; *Repertoire* returns repeatedly not only to the decline of social institutions but also to the neglect of their responsibilities and the subsequent chaos that this brings about. *Mirrors for princes* and *mirrors regarding marriage* work along the same principles, that inheritance is insufficient, one must also make a public display of carefully interiorized virtue; doing the contrary can bring about the loss of one's social position. This shakes the very foundations of medieval society and its certainties. These texts that display tension and angst find their genesis in the irreconcilable contradiction that is at the root of medieval culture; one is born worthy yet must prove him or herself worthy through good

deeds. At the same time, these books teach the socially ambitious to become worthy authors in their own right. Conduct books sought to create a genealogy of virtue in a series of transfers from husband to wife, fathers to daughters, and mothers to daughters. However, as illustrated repeatedly, circulation cannot be mastered. To instill possibly immoral subjects with virtuous principles went counter to the ostensible purpose of texts that sought to define rigid boundaries. These books were intended not just for reading in the family circle or a homogeneous class. Despite their mission to preserve and conserve within their circles, they travelled between castes and estates, the educators providing an estate-oriented discourse from those who did not share their social identity.

Written genealogies of virtue brought with them the inevitable frustrations of textuality and discourse. Ideals are without substance whereas texts are inscribed forms of materiality. Ideals, in order to be expressed or realized, must be incarnated in the text or implemented through the repeated actions of performance. Jumping the gap from page to practice, from discourse to embodiment, raise the question of the very reality of discursivity. Like incantatory formulas, does proffering a principle make it real? These texts explore all the means by which things could go wrong, illustrating and examining the distance from pronouncing a precept to enacting it. The added gap of encouraging another to behave according to specified norms introduces the possibility for noncompliance. The pragmatic household is squared against the problematic layers of these repositories of knowledge replete with impossible yet necessary ideals. The turn in the construction of medieval knowledge toward a virtue-based system could confine the thinker; repeatedly portraying the intent to confine betrays the unintended effect such discourses could have on those who produced them.

Losing your head

This pedagogical system functions on the repression of feminine sexuality. These preceptors seek to inform their readership that education cannot take place otherwise. Women are repeatedly shown transgressing the legitimate boundaries for sexuality established by the marital union, and they are punished for their personal agency (or it is at the very least suggested that they should be). Meanwhile, they are assigned legitimate partners by the narrators; either socially desirable husbands in the Chevalier's case, the narrator or a potential second husband in the case of the *Ménagier*. However, *Franc Vouloir* and *Repertoire* illustrate the end result of this practice; the principles of conduct literature for women, if carried to their logical end, suggest that masculine sexuality must be regulated as well. *Franc Vouloir* loses his very nature if he chooses to enter into sexual union with a woman. He can no longer reflect or express desire or will; he can no longer exist as an autonomous agent. The faculty for reason is threatened by the physical body. The cuckolded husband in the *Miroir* loses his awareness of that which is taking place in his home; *Lot* loses consciousness; the *Ménagier* suggests temperance in all sexual matters, and the Chevalier must repress the narrative of courtly love in order to participate in the pedagogical endeavor which provides him with an authoritative existence. The unforeseen conclusion that one is obliged to draw is that conduct literature encourages men to control their sexuality in order to control feminine sexuality. Otherwise, like *Lot*, the masculine protagonist risks losing his head.

Thus, while the household is seemingly an extension of the feminine body and the masculine will, it is also a male political body. Much the same logic brings Theresa Tinkle to conclude regarding exegetes Jerome and Chrysostom that “[t]heir attempts to regulate the feminine body mask their attempts to govern the self, to manage an uneasy but ever present sexual desire”(31). The masculine narrators of conduct literature attempt to control the domestic locus of power symbolized by their

wives' bodies in preparation for exerting control over the social and political loci that are their own bodies and the body politic.

Scholars of conduct literature have long considered that the works that they study articulate socially acceptable forms of desire and, as such, create desirable objects. They define what men desire and what women are desirable to men. At the same time, as seen in Eustache Deschamps's parody of the genre, they show the unstable foundation that desire can be for social organization. Try as one might, desire can never be truly controlled; irrationality is the defining characteristic of desire. Thus, if desire creates political institutions these very same institutions function irrationally, as illustrated by the government of Deschamps's antagonists, *Folie and Desir*. It might very well be that "...literature concerned with women and the vicissitudes of sexual love is no less political than literature that deals with men and the official institutions of state" and that "where this relationship between personal and public experience can be shown to hold true, we must see representations of desire, neither as reflections nor as consequences of political power, but as a form of political power in their own right" (Armstrong and Tennenhouse 2). However, desire or will cannot be forms of political power without their necessary opposite, the unforeseen, uncontrollable, and undesirable vicissitudes of fortune and failure. Agency, whether generated by its rational, conscientious form of will, or its irrational form of desire, must be synthesized to include both of these principles. The only means by which to do this is to define that which is not agency and cannot make a claim to authority, that which is not the subject. The feminine fulfills this role in these political texts.

The Lot complex in medieval discourses about marriage

It is perhaps the Lot complex that best defines the parameters of medieval discourses about marriage. As authoritative, paternalist authors sought to instill the values of patriarchy in young women and control their sexuality, they unintentionally provided for a potentially antagonistic

reception and recovery of their teachings. These moral authorities created new possibilities for feminine subjectivity that were profoundly rooted in a narrative of resistance while simultaneously confining themselves in the cave of their own discourse. By making the institution of marriage an instrument for social renewal, they inadvertently implicated another irrational subjective presence to be dealt with. Indeed, in medieval works concerning marriage, as Polhemus writes, “Women move from sacrificial objects to reasoning subjects” (10). Feminine readers were exposed to both the content and methods that created medieval society and its political institutions. They were presented with precise examples of reasoning and the analytical and methodological means to amass knowledge. Chaucer’s larger than life character, the Wife of Bath, shows how conduct could be immediately subverted and the methods of the masculine narrators implemented to the detriment of those who attempted to use them to gain sovereignty. Beyond fiction, women authors like Christine de Pizan had integrated this lesson as well. In seeking an expression of free will and national will, the authors created an unintended form of dependence on those they attempted to subjugate. These patriarchal Lot figures and the seed of their medieval learning had to be preserved by the very daughters they hoped to discredit. The authoritative Alisoun had to master the precepts of conduct in order to aspire to sovereignty.

Experience, though noon auctoritee
Were in this world, is right ynogh for me
To speke of wo that is in mariage;
(Chaucer, *The Wife of Bath's Prologue*, III 1-3)

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