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William Horn

**Women In (and) Between Men
in Fourteenth-century English
Dream Allegories**

Birkbeck, University of London

February 2021

Declaration

I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Signed

Date

23 March 2020

Abstract

This thesis identifies structural patterns of gender in relation to mediatrix figures in fourteenth-century English dream allegories. Personification's reification bridges the gap within hierarchies of masculine identity through an interceding femininity. In a dream allegory, the mediatrix appears inside the symbolic field of a narrating identity to reconcile a developing masculine assertion of identity with a patriarchal power. The feminine mediatrix performs this reconciliation by representing patriarchal power in terms which can be understood within the experience of a developing masculine identity. Thus, the mediatrix appears in order to vanish: the mediatrix is a femininity between masculine identities that articulates the way in which those masculine identities were always already united within the chain of patriarchal power.

Allegorical structures of gender flourished throughout the medieval period and beyond. In order to better understand how allegorical gender structures shift and evolve to meet the needs of new literary voices, this thesis has isolated one particular scene of gender structuring: fourteenth-century English dream allegories. Personifications whose relationship to the dreamer are rooted in social matrices of gendered expectations are crucial operators in the literary function of these texts, providing insight into how received traditions of allegorical gender altered and was altered by an emerging literature.

This thesis charts the movement of concepts of the gendered mediatrix in three phases. Part I examines the discursive traditions of gender structures that existed in medieval literature prior to the fourteenth century. Part II studies two Chaucerian translations of medieval dream allegories, the *Boece* and *The Romaunt of the Rose*, to consider what those gender structures looked like as they arrived into Middle English literature. Part III investigates two original fourteenth-century English dream allegories, *Piers Plowman* and *Pearl*, to parse how those gender structures developed the figure of the mediatrix in new ways.

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Notes on the Text

The text of this thesis contains 97,374 words out of a 100,000 word limit.

The thesis presents quotes originally written in Greek, Latin, and Middle French in duplicate, where critical editions of the original language texts make this possible. To preserve readability, extended quotations in the original language are located in Appendix I, except where the thesis refers directly to the original language quotation.

This thesis refers to several objects and illustrations. Due to copyright, these cannot be reproduced directly in the thesis. However, links to the images or official catalogue descriptions thereof are listed in the footnote citations and in the manuscript section of the bibliography.

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Introduction

Fourteenth-century English dream allegories use personification to manifest the struggle for identity in a universe which was notionally ordered by a divine power but which was, in lived experience, fractious and chaotic. Allegorical bodies mediated between the symbolic unity of a cosmological order and the disarray of the material world. By making an abstract cosmological structure tangible in allegorical bodies, gender became an operator of cosmic sense that facilitated allegory as an ontological mode.

Gender serves as a referential ontology that guarantees the structure of identity as innate. In a patriarchal system, masculinity guarantees itself as the innate structural power of the world. When that structure collapses, an allegorical feminine alterity occurs as a wound. Two kinds of women manifest in medieval dream allegories within this wound: the first, the mediatrix, sutures the wound by reconciling the flow of masculine identity; the second, the anti-mediatrix, rifts the wound wider, threatening to irreconcilably disrupt the flow of masculine identity.

These allegorical women present a being-for-men, a body that must be interpreted, in order to be synthesized into an ordering sense that can reconform experience into a stably patriarchal structure of identity. It is that very paradox, of a male that can only become masculine through a mediating feminine encounter, that this thesis wishes to investigate. Simone de Beauvoir's famous declaration, 'On ne naît pas femme: on le devient' [One is not born a woman: one becomes it], also nods to a number of other vital insights about gender, including one that is vital for this thesis: the becoming-it of gender is what patriarchal systems phobically project upon women.¹ The dream allegory's phantasmal economy of gendered signifiers overflows with fantasies of women that had, as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick writes, 'a kind of ultimate importance in the schema of men's gender constitution – representing an absolute of

1 Simone de Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 15. The translation is my own.

exchange value, of representation itself, and also being the ultimate victims of the painful contradictions in the gender system that regulates men.²

These women serve as an other that manifests the lack innate to the very experience of gender.

In the symbolic systems analysis of Jacques Lacan, this is the lack on which the

dialectic of the advent of the subject to his own being in the relation to the Other turns – by the fact that the subject depends on the signifier and that the signifier is first of all in the field of the Other. This lack takes up the other lack, which is the real, earlier lack, to be situated at the advent of the living being, that is to say, at sexed reproduction. The real lack is what the living being loses, that part of himself *qua* living being, in reproducing himself through the way of sex. This lack is real because it relates to something real, namely, that the living being, by being subject to sex, has fallen under the blow of individual death.³

The very possibility of alterity occurs in the harrowing lack of universality, of oneself as otherable, hence the Lacanian paradox of a subject that can only come to signify itself through the terms of the Other. The self becomes irrevocably divided based on the irreparable wound of the body. Gender emerges, in the patriarchal instance, as opposition from the trauma of a sexed individuality, as the constituent nullification required for a positive substantiation.

A vanishing feminine mediation provides masculinity with its radiating void of being from which it can cohere. Luce Irigaray articulates this masculine violence of the gendering void:

The logos is immutable because it is secretly nourished by the most extreme of pleasures: mimicking oneself before any other has begun to be. Scion that will doubtless represent his progenitor-father in his form. But the price they pay is that the Self of that re-production suffers a fall and thus reopens the question of how they come to be alike. Through the woman-mother? Receptacle for the spawning of images, where they can measure the faithfulness of their resemblance to the model of sameness ... The Father will seal over the mystery, draping it in the authority of his incontestable law. Such assertion of power should not be brought to account.

² Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 134.

³ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (London: Karnac, 2004), p. 205.

And it only repeats the same thing over and over again: the absolute identity to self, without any possibility of contradiction for/in that sovereignty.⁴

The structuring logic, the *logos*, preassembles an identity which must be reproduced. An inevitability of outcome orients bodies towards a goal. Those bodies become judged insofar as they represent the capacity for that outcome; any anterior horizon is elided. That which is is what will be: anything that is not becomes the nonsense of the orientation, the nonsignification of the inscription. This demand for a structuring unity does not, however, erase alterity, but rather contains alterity as a mode of its becoming. Hence Jack Halberstam's point about the complex dynamics of a gendering that interpolates alterity within the self-privileging *eidos*:

Sometimes female masculinity coincides with the excesses of male supremacy, and sometimes it codifies a unique form of social rebellion; often female masculinity is the sign of sexual alterity, but occasionally it marks heterosexual variation; sometimes female masculinity marks the place of pathology, and every now and then it represents the healthful alternative to what are considered the histrionics of conventional femininities.⁵

Gender merges possibilities into roles. Gender performs itself as a theater of bodies. In dream allegories, this theater of bodies literalizes possibilities into roles through personification: the reason these male dreamspaces overflow with women is the need for alterity to dramatize the progression towards self as a horizon.

Gender, as a grammar of being, underscores Julia Kristeva's point about that 'what semiotics had discovered is the fact that there is a general social law, that this law is the symbolic dimension which is given in language and that every social practice offers a specific expression of that law.'⁶ Gender structures enact the symbolic violence of the law through linguistic strictures. Cultural

⁴ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 357.

⁵ Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 9.

⁶ Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. by Toril Moi, trans. by Sean Hand and Leon S. Roudiez (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 25.

expectations about gendered embodiment are baked into the constructing grammar which precipitate those expectations. The strangely circular atemporality of this idea highlights the paradox of the social law: the social law justifies what the social law prescribes. As Judith Butler argues, 'The [gender] norm has no independent ontological status, yet it cannot be easily reduced to its instantiations; it is itself (re)produced through its embodiment'.⁷ Production which reproduces its own cause aligns the embodied experience with an ontological expectation that characterizes the experience of gender. Sara Ahmed builds from this insight to recognize how paradoxical phenomenological reciprocities frame gender production in terms of an assumptive, invisible substantiation which creates its own ontological expectation through the lensing of a perceptive rubric that determines the ways bodies experience social possibility.⁸

In understanding how fourteenth-century English dream allegories redeployed tropes of gender, this thesis hopes to isolate and highlight how patriarchal gender includes a devolved alterity as a necessary but problematic mode of its becoming. In that task, this thesis relies heavily on numerous medievalists who have paved new roads into medieval gender structures. Using Rita Copeland's semiotics of embodiment to articulate the spiritualization of medieval gender, Barbara Newman's articulation of the intercessionary feminine dynamics to constitute the function of the mediatrix, Ruth Mazo Karras' careful perception of the entwined nature of masculinity and femininity to recognize how they become mutually developmental, and Elizabeth Robertson's foundational work on the use of personification in dream allegories, this thesis hopes to advance a deeper recognition of the nature of the relationship between medieval patriarchy and constructions of femininity. Additionally, this thesis relies on some of the pioneering attempts to integrate post-Lacanian feminist theory in medievalist

7 Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 48.

8 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 54-61.

studies, specifically those by Erin Felicia Labbie, Louise Fradenburg, and Elizabeth Scala.⁹

By isolating a particular poetic moment of medieval allegorical gender in fourteenth-century England, a complex and constantly shifting system of medieval gender can be teased apart in such a way that it develops insight into the mechanisms of gender construction that occurred throughout the medieval period and beyond. In paying close attention to these dream allegories, this thesis does not homogenize differing ideas of gender present in these works; on the contrary, the flux of intellectual concepts and poetic intentions remains a core focus of this thesis. Rather, this thesis explores the underlying mechanisms of gender systemification which facilitate the capacity for allegorical gender to allow for thematic interrogations of ontological embodiments. The purpose of this study remains the investigation of allegorical gender use rather than adjacent concepts such as gender belief or gender experience.

To accomplish a proper analysis of the use of allegorical gender in fourteenth-century English dream allegories, this thesis is presented in five chapters organized into three parts.

The first part, consisting of Chapter I, outlines the polyvocal lineages of the allegorical gender discourses that appear in fourteenth-century English dream allegories. Chapter I traces various threads through a tapestry of medieval allegory, gender, and ontology to demonstrate the intricate conceptual legacies which the dream allegory genre inherited. The purpose of this demonstration is to provide a medievalist literary framework by which to measure the concurrences and differences which fourteenth-century English dream allegories achieved in their particularity.

The second part, consisting of Chapter II and Chapter III, examines the way the dream allegory genre entered Middle English literature by analyzing two Chaucerian translations of influential dream

9 For representative examples, see Erin Felicia Labbie, *Lacan's Medievalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); L.O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, and Chaucer* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); and Elizabeth Scala, "Historicists and Their Discontents: Reading Psychoanalytically in Medieval Studies," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 44.1 (Apr., 2002), pp. 108-31.

allegories. Chapter II analyzes the gender thinking used in *Boece*, the Chaucerian translation of Boethius' influential allegory *De consolazione philosophiae*. Although Boethius' work is not technically a dream, Lady Philosophy does appear to the narrator at a moment of altered perceptual awareness. Furthermore, the poem had a clearly potent influence on the development of the dream allegorical genre. As such, the work provides valuable insight into the development of the conceptual framework of gender in fourteenth-century dream allegories. In particular, Chapter II highlights the way that elevated femininity provides a transcendental framework for metaphysical interrogation of a seemingly subverted patriarchal order. Chapter III analyzes the allegorical gender use in *The Romaunt of the Rose*, the partially Chaucerian translation of the *Roman de la rose* by Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Chapter III demonstrates the way that allegorical femininity substantiates masculine egos in a patriarchal hierarchy through displaced desire. Both works are taken for their own textual values in understanding what allegorical gender meant in the genre in fourteenth-century England. Although these translations are read against the background of their original texts in order to better understand their functional identities, the point of this study is not to compare the alterations of the translations against the conceptual frameworks of the originals, but rather to understand how those dream allegories were perceived within the idiosyncratic frameworks of fourteenth-century England. The intention of this part of the thesis is to ground the poetic moment of fourteenth-century English dream allegories in their conceptual roots. This grounding allows for an informed identification of what allegorical gender meant in this poetic moment as it branched away from its literary lineage.

The third part, consisting of Chapter IV and Chapter V, examines the theoretical developments of allegorical gender in two dream allegory poems written in fourteenth-century England. Chapter IV examines a problematic feminine mediation in the reward for service which sustains a hierarchical, patriarchal order that occurs in *Piers Plowman* during the Lady Meed episode. The struggle to control Meed allegorically serves to articulate a feminine mediation which embodies the struggle for control.

Chapter V, which focuses on *Pearl*, examines a contemplative feminine projection which invites the reader to participate in salvation through the assumption of a spiritual femininity that unifies into a masculine divine. Gender serves to allegorically construct a certain form of contemplative participation in a patriarchal divinity. Both poems use gender to generate relational conduits between significatory layers of a patriarchal creation. By studying how these uses of gender construct ideas of femininity and masculinity, this thesis seeks to demonstrate the usefulness of a specific form of medieval gendering in an ontological struggle for the experience of being in a problematic divine order.

Following these three parts, the thesis will conclude by prising apart the conceptual differences in allegorical gender that occurred in these four allegories and their theoretical backdrop to emphasize the continuum of allegorical gender use in the poetic moment of fourteenth-century England. Some closing remarks on medieval gendering can thereby be proffered.

Gender remains one of the most crucial sites for social theory in contemporary discourse. This study into a specific form of gender use in the medieval period provides some necessary background for this ongoing theoretical project. In particular, this thesis underscores the way that patriarchy uses gendered mediation to substantiate its order through its own subversion. Although the medieval period can sometimes feel isolated from current debates about gender, there is a reason why post-structural gender studies continually returns to the medieval period for clarity about the development of gender use. Fourteenth-century Middle English literature presents an active period of vernacular development in which the underlying precepts of gender in linguistic expression are adapted from earlier traditions. The works studied in this thesis portray gender use as an inflection point for the emerging identity of English literature. Many of the gender structures that persist into English literature, from the Early Modern period to contemporary writers, are rooted in some of these dynamics of mediating allegory. To understand the ways gender substantiates identity, especially within a patriarchal system, one must investigate the void of that identity which the appearance of gender mediates.

Part I:

Allegorical Traditions

Chapter I: Allegorical Traditions of the Gendered Body

Gender in fourteenth-century English dream allegories develops from medieval traditions of body interpretation. In order to prise apart the complex ways in which dream allegories deployed gender, medieval gender must first be understood in its contextual density. This chapter pursues traditions of body interpretation through five intersections of gender key to the literary perspective of dream allegories: medicine, mysticism, intercession, grammar, and dreams. These intersections are places where the body is ordered within a hierarchal system of signification, thus they contribute to the way in which gender parallels the functions of allegory. Dream allegories use gender to expound their intellectual purposes, because medieval gender inscribes ideas about the cosmos into the body in the same way that personification does.

Medieval gender is a deeply complex and polyvocal subject, so this chapter seeks only to highlight the specific traditions of body interpretation relevant to the dream allegory genre. The intersections highlighted in this chapter help identify the theoretical underpinnings of gendered personification in fourteenth-century English dream allegories. These intersections supplement the convex, and at times contradictory, conceptual elements that furnished the dream allegory with the figure of the mediatrix (a feminine entity who reconciles masculine agents when they confront each other across a hierarchical divide). As such, this chapter will weave these sections together, such that each section resembles an arc on a circle, the sum of which will provide a frame in which one can picture the polyvalent traditions of allegorical gender.

In particular, this chapter examines the ways that medicine, mysticism, intercession, grammar, and dreams constructed gender to provide a framework for interrogating cosmological truths through the way those abstractions can be manifested at the level of mortal knowledge. Specifically, this chapter makes the following points: first, Aristotelian medicine privileges the male body as the prime

telos of the human form, relegating the female body to a space of negative alterity contained within the scope of a properly male being; second, Christian mystical literature uses rhetorical gender fluidity to construct a religious femininity to experience the gap between the mortal and the divine; third, the gaps of identity in which this intercession occurs are sites for patriarchal inscriptions on feminine alterity, creating mediatrix figures to reconcile confrontations of hierarchical masculine agencies by bringing masculinities together in a vanishing femininity; fourth, gendered personification's grammatical roots contribute to gendered allegory as a mode of other-speaking which parallels gender displacement because of the way they abstract the experience of the body; and fifth, an internal, revelatory space of other-speaking arose in Neoplatonist Christian mysticism as the place of the interpretive dreamworld, which recasts spiritual truth in symbolic material to grant the dreamer access to the divine, situating the dreamer-narrator's first-person relationship to allegorical personifications in the context of an approach towards patriarchal authority.

Each of the intersections listed above will be explored in a section of this chapter.

Gendered Medicine: Expectations of the Body

How did medieval medicine gender the body? A good place to start this reading would be Aristotle. Aristotle's *Organon* was, after all, mostly translated by Boethius, thus situating it alongside one of the most important developments in medieval allegory.¹ Aristotle's influence went far beyond Boethius, however: Aristotle's biological essentialism was a major influence on the development of medical, teleological, and theological understandings of the body (particularly in the way all those three understandings combined into one conceptual continuum). A medieval physician approached the body

¹ Rita Copeland, "Ancient sophistic and medieval rhetoric," *Latin Grammar and Rhetoric: From Classical Theory to Medieval Practice*, ed. by Carol Dana Lanham (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 261.

as an object prescribed by theory, and Aristotle was often considered to be the greatest philosophical authority, often earning, as in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa theologiae*, the standard epithet 'philosophum' [the Philosopher].² Even Galen, another major medical authority for the medieval period, defers to Aristotle on some philosophical matters.³ Aristotle's role as a standardized origin point of philosophical authority situates his writings at the heart of the medieval worldview.

Aristotle was a key figure in the construction of medieval sex difference. *The History of Animals*, a vital text for medieval natural science, privileges men over women in almost all species:⁴

The fact is, the nature of man is the most rounded off and complete, and consequently in man the qualities or capacities above referred to are found in their perfection. Hence woman is more compassionate than man, more easily moved to tears, at the same time is more jealous, more querulous, more apt to scold and to strike. She is, furthermore, more prone to despondency and less hopeful than the man, more void of shame or self-respect, more false of speech, more deceptive, and of more retentive memory. She is also more wakeful, more shrinking, more difficult to rouse to action, and requires a smaller quantity of nutriment.⁵

The male is complete, whereas the female is alterior to the male, and thus exists as a devolved dependency which relies upon a male referent. Aristotle views women's inferiority not as an incidental difference but rather as the result of difference itself: anything which differentiates women from men is the result of degeneration from the unity of male form. In Aristotle's philosophy, form contains the essence of a being's purpose: coming into its form is the goal (*τελος*, *telos*) of a being's activity.

Aristotle's condemnation of the devolved female body leads directly to his judgments of behaviors he genders feminine. Aristotle's description of the ways in which women are incomplete is a series of gendered stereotypes: women cry too easily, women are untrustworthy, women are hysterical.

2 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. by Fathers of the Dominican Province

<<https://dhspriority.org/thomas/summa/FP/FP025.html#FPQ25OUTP1>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], I.25.1.

3 Jan Papy, "The Attitude Towards Aristotelian Biological Thought in the Louvain Medical Treatises During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century: The Case of Embryology," *Aristotle's Animals in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, ed. by Carlos Steel, Guy Guildentops, and Pieter Beullens (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 1999), pp. 318-9.

4 The exceptions are bears and leopards.

5 See Quotation I. Aristotle, *The History of Animals*, trans. by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/history_anim.html>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], Book IX.

In Aristotle's view, women cannot achieve perfection, because their bodies are incomplete, and so any perceived deficiency in their behavior is read as the result of a biological incapacity. Feminine behaviors are read as symptoms of an internal, essential lack in the female body. For Aristotle, behavior is embodied: gender constructs sex. This gender is, in turn, constructed by the soul, creating an ethical judgment of gendered embodiment. Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* couches its definition of the soul's progression towards virtue in the same terminology used to expound gender difference: the human good (ἄνθρωπινον ἀγαθόν, *anthrôpinon agathon*) is the activity of the soul (ψυχῆς ἐνέργεια, *psychês energeia*) to attain a perfected completion (ἀρίστην καὶ τελειοτάτην, *aristên cae teliotatên*).⁶ *Energeia* orients the soul to a prescribed *telos*. By framing gender in these terms, Aristotle condemns women for the way their *energeia* supposedly falls short of achieving male *telos*. The elective capacity of moral behavior moves towards an innate completion of form which Aristotle renders patriarchally masculine. In his view, the female form manifests an essential failure for a soul to achieve male *telos*, so feminine identities must be judged for the faults that resulted in their bodies.

Medieval Aristotelians followed Aristotle in structuring gender according to a judgment of the propriety of bodies. Avicenna believed that 'a weakness in the informative virtue', referring here both to the quality of semen and the menstruum, results in a female being conceived.⁷ Insufficient seed lacks the proper *logos* of the seed, resulting in a body alterior, and therefore deficient, from the *telos* that results in a properly male form. Even within maleness, judgments of form still prevail, as male bodies are themselves interrogated for their inability to comply with an idealized male form. This supposed failure is not equivalent to femaleness, but rather produces an 'epicene morphology', as in the *Problems* of Pseudo-Aristotle:

6 Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. by J. Bywater, Perseus <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0053>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], I.7.

7 M. Anthony Hewson, *Giles of Rome and the Medieval Theory of Conception: A Study of the De formatione corporis humani in utero* (London: Athlone Press, 1975), pp. 174-5.

Now the effeminate by nature are so constituted that little or no semen is excreted in the place in which it is excreted in those whose condition is according to nature, but into this region [of the anus]. And the reason is that they are constituted contrary to nature; for though they are male, they are in such a state that this region [of the genitals] in them is necessarily deformed. The deformity causes either complete destruction or distortion. But it is not the former; for then a woman would come to be. So it is necessary that the secretion of semen be perverted and moved toward some other place.⁸

Appeals to nature help to enforce a hegemonic standardization of the body by preasserting the patriarchal authority that grades bodies. Expectations of the body are projected into nature such that difference becomes necessarily difference: when the expected body is not produced, the body, not the ideology, is rejected.⁹ Male bodies that do not uphold a patriarchal ideal are distortions, and female bodies are complete destructions, of what nature is expected to produce. This 'deformity' is then ascribed to problems that inhibited the proper natural process of production, as when the *Supplementa problematorum* by Pseudo-Alexander, included in some manuscripts alongside Pseudo-Aristotle, insists that sex develops after conception when semen nourishes the fetus: a male is nourished by pure semen, whereas a female mixes the semen with blood to create milk.¹⁰ For medieval Aristotelians, the sexed body is really one body improperly refracted through degradations of nature, therefore justifying a patriarchal worldview, a cultural domination by a lineage of supposedly proper bodies, as natural.

In this worldview, intersex bodies complicate the space of not only the improperly male male, but also the improperly male female. Regarding intersex genitalia, the thirteenth-century Aristotelian surgeon Guglielmo da Saliceto argued that the 'possessor [of a genital protrusion] was a woman, and

⁸ See Quotation II. Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems*, trans. and ed. by Robert Mayhew (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 167-70.

⁹ For a discussion of hegemonic centrality's appeal to nature, see Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 274-8.

¹⁰ Pseudo-Alexander, *Supplementa problematorum*, ed. and trans. by Sophia Kapetanaki and Robert W. Sharples (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), p. 93.

yet the libido it engendered was decidedly male (since she desired as men do).¹¹ Here the same type of gendered intervention upon the body occurs when bodily expectations are subverted. The body produces male behavior, despite being interpreted as female. The way in which a female form is perceived to mimic the male body gives rise to the imputation of masculine behaviors. A gendered understanding of the development of bodies occurs prior to the body's actual generation, and so the body is read as the outcome of that developmental process. Pregendered generation of sex difference becomes visible, often as an absence of 'what should be there', on all the bodies its expectation produces.

A notion of gender as the judgmental consequence of physical activity which occurs prior to birth helps to explain the strange ways in which reproductive processes were read by medieval Aristotelians as explanations for gender. For Aristotle, the connate *pneuma* of the semen is hot because it is a physical manifestation of celestial fire, an aethereal expression of spirit into form, the generative encounter of *telos*.¹² The male body serves as the locus of soul, the seat of agency. This explains why Giles of Rome, a late thirteenth-century scholastic, felt the need to argue against Galen's assertion that the female body produces a seed of its own that develops a fetus in tandem with semen.¹³ Giles' argument is that the female *menstruum* becomes too watered down by the female body to be capable of developing into an active seed.¹⁴ The gendered consequences of Giles' view are straightforward: the male body is privileged as an agent because only it facilitates the activity of creation. Reproduction, for Giles, is a process in which the male body acts upon the female body, and the female body receives the act and dilutes it into a solidified material.

Aristotelian differences between reproductive fluids underlines how patriarchal sex difference

11 Leah DeVun, "Erecting Sex: Hermaphrodites and the Medieval Science of Surgery," *Osiris* 30.1 (Jan., 2015), p. 27.

12 Hewson, *Giles of Rome and the Medieval Theory of Conception*, pp. 97-8.

13 Armelle Debru, "Physiology," trans. by R.J. Hankinson, *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, ed. by R.J. Hankinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 278.

14 Hewson, *Giles of Rome and the Medieval Theory of Conception*, p. 69.

privileges the male in the encounter with female alterity. Avicenna emphasizes 'the property of a *spumositus* or "foaminess" in the male seed, a process of rarefaction arising from the action of heat and admixture with air'.¹⁵ This connection between heat and activity allows a connection between coldness and passivity to be made. The heat of semen is consubstantial with masculine agency in the same way that the wateriness of menses is consubstantial with feminine subordination. This bifurcation provides a sex essentialism that forms a binary. Avicenna physicalizes this bifurcation by declaring that women develop in the left side of the womb, while males develop in the right side, and intersex fetuses develop in the middle of the womb.¹⁶ (This belief, also expressed by Bartholomaeus Anglicus, is derived from Galen, suggesting that Galenic medicine was syncretically incorporated in places where medieval Aristotelians found it useful, even in the more partisan scholars).¹⁷ The intersex child will have 'both natures', according to Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, though they are tacitly interpreted as male on account of patriarchal self-privileging.¹⁸

Sex essentialism is a gendering process that reproduces sex. The body always already means the embodied. In his thirteenth-century encyclopedia *De proprietatibus rerum*, Bartholomaeus Anglicus moves fluidly between a description of male heat, suggesting that menstrual humours present in women are burned out in the male body, and a description of masculine agency, suggesting that business and travel also burn out the menstrual humours.¹⁹ He then quickly develops this point into a generic misogynistic passage about the relative capacities of men and women. For Bartholomaeus, reproduction reproduces the bodies of its participants as sex difference. The way in which bodies are composed for and participate in sexual reproduction produces their masculinity or femininity. The male

15 Hewson, *Giles of Rome and the Medieval Theory of Conception*, p. 96.

16 Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, *Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus's De Secretis Mulierum with Commentaries*, trans. and ed. by Helen Rodnite Lemay (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 117. No critical edition of the Latin text, nor its commentaries, currently exists.

17 Bartholomaeus Anglicus, *De proprietatibus rerum*, trans. by John of Trevisa, ed. by Jurgen Schafer (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1976), p. 72.

18 Pseudo-Albertus, *Women's Secrets*, p. 117.

19 *Ibid*, p. 74.

becomes the masculine, and the female unbecomes the masculine into the feminine.

Although the biological position informs the social position, expectations of the social position are already read into the biological position. As a result, the female body retains misogyny in a nascent, ghostly form; natural bodily processes are read as signs of the socially signified. A healthy female body becomes the spectral essence of the degraded woman. Isidore of Seville's entry for *menses* veers into the transgressive hypernatural power of menstrual blood:

If they are touched by the blood of the menses, crops cease to sprout, unfermented wine turns sour, plants wither, trees lose their fruit, iron is corrupted by rust, bronze turns black. If dogs eat any of it, they are made wild with rabies. The glue of pitch, which is dissolved neither by iron nor water, when polluted with this blood spontaneously disperses.²⁰

Menstrual blood becomes corruption *par excellence*. Menstruation's power to degrade the natural world parallels the woman's status as a degraded man. The impure matter of women flows from the impure nature of women. After all, one of Giles of Rome's conditions 'likely to give rise to the generation of females is a lack of purity in the matter'.²¹ Inside the female body, menses that develop into women are corrupt matter; outside the female body, menses corrupt matter. This corruption reflects the conception of the female body as a degenerate male body. In this way, the inferiority of the female body becomes physically internalized.

Male ontic centrality reifies the feminine other in the female body as an objectifying dehumanization: the female body becomes the deprivileged woman. A fourteenth-century commentary on Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' *De secretis mulierum* furthers this anti-menstrual trope by arguing that 'women are so full of venom in the time of their menstruation that they poison animals by their glance; they infect children in the cradle; they spot the cleanest mirror; and whenever men have sexual

20 See Quotation III. Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. and ed. by Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 240.

21 Hewson, *Giles of Rome and the Medieval Theory of Conception*, pp. 174-5.

intercourse with them they are made leprous and sometimes cancerous'.²² Whereas Isidore focused on the impurity of menstrual blood, this commentary goes even further by emphasizing the impurity of the woman who is menstruating. Contact with her blood is no longer necessary for corruption; rather, the woman retains its poison in her gaze. Her very ability to 'look out' from her own body, the protosubjective ontic necessity, is inscribed with the sheer toxicity of the degraded female. This negative inscription produces the negative gendering of femininity: Pseudo-Albertus suggests that women sometimes place iron in their vaginas in order to wound the penises of their unsuspecting partners.²³ Men are threatened by intercourse from both sides of the sex-gender bind: women, as a result of their female reproductive processes, have the capacity to infect men with a serious disease; female reproductive processes, as a result of taking place inside women, have the capacity to inflict men with a serious injury. Misogynistic fear creates a continuum between perceived social inadequacies (women's deceptiveness and vindictiveness) and perceived biological inadequacies (the toxicity of menstruation).

Bodies cause the behaviors which backpropagate into the bodies which generated them. The medical is the social. There is no modern disciplinary differentiation present in these passages. Aristotle is writing a taxonomical work; Avicenna is writing a medical work; Pseudo-Albertus Magnus is writing a gynecological work; Giles of Rome is writing a scholastic disputation; Isidore of Seville is writing an etymological work; Bartholomaeus Anglicus is writing an encyclopedia; but they all discuss the same principles in similar ways. These works' respective genre frames are blurred by a discursive continuity. The body melts out of its context into a multidisciplinary theoretical plasma. The discussion of female bodies is always already a discussion of women (theologically, socially, etc.). Cultural perceptions of

²² Commentary A, *Women's Secrets*, p. 60.

²³ Pseudo-Albertus, *Women's Secrets*, p. 88.

bodies create places at which certain social structures can derive an embodiment.²⁴

Gender contextualizes the experience of bodies according to its delimitations. For instance, an early fifteenth-century English medical text says that 'syncopis', a fainting fit, occurs in men as the result of a sudden burst of sorrow or joy.²⁵ Women, however, suffer syncopis under much more bodily conditions.

[Syncopis] cometh to women þorow beryng of a deid child, for þe veynes brekyn and blood floweth owt more þan it schulde. Oþerwhile it cometh of to myche strechyng of þe moder as whanne it is to myche j-streigt in-to þe rizt syde, oþer in-to þe lift syde, oþer upward, oþer downward. Oþerwhile it cometh of begynnyng of conceyuyng for wi[t]h-holdyng of blood þat scholde kyndly flowe ne were here conceyuyng. Oþerwhile it cometh in þe iiij monþe, for þe soule of þe child bi-gynnyth þanne to worche in his body. Oþerwhile it cometh in þe ix monþe whan þe child is a-boute to passyn owt fram his moderis wombe.²⁶

While male *syncopis* is the bodily consequence of an emotional activity, female *syncopis* is the bodily consequence of a bodily process, even when those processes involve the same sort of deep emotional activities that cause male *syncopis*. A miscarriage, which surely has the potential to produce sudden sorrow, only causes *syncopis* because the veins break during the process. A woman's emotional response is reduced to bodily referents in a way from which men are exempt in this passage. Emotional expression, even when expressed as bodily for both men and women, is nevertheless more bodily for women, because they are denied the personal experience of that expression. The body both implies gender prior to its performance and genders the performance. The inward emotional states of a woman are embodied through the way her body is read medically. The patriarchal development of this embodiment deprivileges experiences of the female body according to patriarchal views of gendered

24 Julia Kristeva, "Women's Time," *The Kristeva Reader*, trans. by Sean Hand and Leon S. Roudiez, ed. by Toril Moi (London: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 196.

25 *System of Physic (GUL MS Hunter 509, ff. 1r-167v): A Compendium of Mediaeval Medicine Including the Middle English Gilbertus Anglicus*, ed. by Laura Esteban-Segura (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), p. 198.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

inferiority.

The conjugate of misogynistic deprivileging is patriarchal privileging. The anti-menstrual trope is paired with the pro-seminal trope. Through the positive power of semen, conception becomes a male act in a female site. Averroes, after Aristotle, argues that

[T]here are movers which do not pertain to the genus of that which is moved [by them], such as semen setting the menstrual [blood] in motion, so that it becomes man, or the heat [produced by] incubation which sets the egg in motion, so that it becomes a bird. We say, however, that it is evident in most of these moved things that they are [set in motion] by a combination of more than one mover, such as the father sets the semen in motion, and the semen the menstrual blood. And if this is as described, the mover, which necessarily must be one and the same as that which is moved, [either] in quiddity or by relation or similarity [to the proximate higher genus], is the ultimate mover, since it is this which supplies the proximate moved [thing] with the potency whereby it moves.²⁷

Men are elevated over women into a higher genus reproductively, meaning that men are higher up Averroes' chain of entelechies. The theory is that God, absolute agency, is the first cause, which effects a finite series of gradated cause-and-effect relations.²⁸ All actions are therefore sequential echoes of the single divine act of creation. In the context of reproductive medicine, this theory of entelechies suggests that men delimit women by reproducing through them. A man moves his semen which moves the menstrual blood which moves the woman to conceive. Children are caused by their father through their mother. A mother intermediates the father-cause and the child-effect; she is the matter acted upon that enacts the child. The transitory mother is delimited as a relation: although she becomes pregnant and bears the child, it is the father who truly conceives the child.

Women's position in between a male cause and his effected child binds their reproductive role to a mediation. Women occur in a gap between the act and the result, such that their agency is constricted

²⁷ Averroes, *On Aristotle's "Metaphysics": An Annotated Translation of the So-Called Epitome*, ed. and trans. by Rudiger Arnzen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), p. 65. Brackets are reproduced from the text in this and subsequent citations of this work.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

within the delegated horizon of the action's realization. Male reproductive authority is coextensive with an autonomous masculine space. Patriarchal primacy occurs within this space from which women are barred. For Averroes, the 'active'

means whatever acts on itself or on another thing. This is [shown by the fact] that the potentiality of generating man from [menstrual blood] inherent in menstrual blood is prior to the potentiality of generating a grammarian inherent in it. This is so because the proximate disposition of apprehending grammar is established only posterior to establishing the form of man.²⁹

The potential of menstrual blood to conceive is metaphysically prior to the essential horizon of the child. The potential to become a grammarian is bracketed by the potential to be born. Since the potential of menstrual blood to conceive man is itself bracketed by the power of semen to quicken it, human agency is bracketed by male physicality. Human agency is lower on the chain of entelechies than the male body. Male ontic centrality metaphysically overlays the physical. For Averroes, the cause underlies the effect's entelechy as a substrate: the effect's form is the perfection of the predispositions imparted by the cause, similar to how 'from the boy the man comes to be ... that which is prepared is disposed for receiving the end, but the end is not disposed for receiving that which is prepared'.³⁰ The cause delimits its effect's agency: the creative potential of the effect is the perfection of the cause's *post rem* agency. The unmoved mover is the field of possibility whose creation is constriction: every movement from the unmoved mover narrows the field of possibility.

Alteration of material in the style of a grammarian, while a somewhat neutral example for Averroes, held additional resonances for his Latin readers. In the ninth century, several manuscripts attest to *apologia* for either the use of pagan grammars or the study of classical literature in order to

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 99-100.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 133.

develop language skills necessary for scriptural study.³¹ The consensus was that the form (or vessel) of pagan literature was valid, i.e. their grammatical instructiveness, but the specific content was invalid. In this case, the grammar was neutrally open to intention, and the grammarian is the one who moves that grammar into an effect which can be independently judged. Grammar, despite its pagan provenance, is justified by its feminine relation to the masculine grammarian, whose agency bears the burden of judgment.

In the medieval Aristotelian sense, it is Aristotle's hot *pneuma* that serves as the transmission of desire, an act of soul upon matter. The *pneuma*, this instancing of the divine into formal causality, is the generative component of semen. Heteronormative patriarchal desire enacts the male soul in the female object of desire, manifesting in that object the activity of the *energeia* upon matter to form another member of the *species*. Desire is the flow of entelechies of *telos* down a hierarchical chain of male subjectivities. Male desire is the constituent unit of 'any systemicity', as Luce Irigaray elucidates, that 'sets itself up pompously as an authority in order to give shape to the imaginary orb of a "subject," that 'defends itself phobically in/by this inner "center" from the fires of the desire of/for woman'.³² This citadel of subjective desire allows men to inhabit 'a securing morphology' that is 'able to look out'.³³ This is the colonizing gaze that privileges ontic centrality as the being for whom other beings appear meaningful. The female body, in this patriarchal reproductive paradigm, becomes a body subject to masculine cultural interchange as a being-for-others.

The feverishly imaginative concern that a menstruating woman can, as Isidore believed, 'poison animals by their glance' can be read as part of the phobic defense of subjectivity. Female reproductive fluids problematize the subjectivity invested in male reproductive fluids. For a medieval Aristotelian, menstruation is the haunting remainder, the Lacanian *das Ding* (something which refuses

31 Vivien Law, *Grammar and Grammarians in the Early Middle Ages* (New York: Longman, 1997), pp. 140-4.

32 Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian Gill (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), p. 144.

33 Ibid, p. 144.

symbolization because of the precarity it presents to an ideology), of the dehumanizing violence of patriarchal subjectivity.³⁴ The suppression of the female body's active role in reproduction is a major conceit in Aristotelian medicine, as opposed to Galenic medicine, which considered the womb to actively grab semen, as well as emit its own semen.³⁵ The essentialist productivity Aristotelians ascribe to forms leads to an interpretatively sexed body which deprivileges a binary which represents the degradation from a proper unity. The close connection between Aristotelian theory and patriarchal sexuation is indicative of the medieval approach to allegorical gender.

A degraded binary occurring at the moment of human unity helps to explain reproductive superstitions. Reproductive sex depicts two states of a presumed binary coming together to recreate a unified form, so a patriarchal system needs to deprivilege each incidence of the female that cannot be ensconced in the male. Subordinating menstruation to ejaculation is a systematizing moment of patriarchy. Pregnancy, as the creation of a human being, becomes a natural site for a fight over what the creation of a human being is and who is ultimately responsible for it, hence why the process of ensoulment, or the entrance of spirit into matter, is read through a gendered lens. Michael E. Goodich writes,

Pierre Bersuire's [fourteenth-century] encyclopedic article on infancy presented a moralized account of prenatal life through a gloss on Constantine the African. He applied the principle that the natural world is imbued with symbolic transcendental messages which assist us to understand the Creator. The womb is likened to the Church or the Christian faith, the proper site for the nurturing of the penitent or believer. The semen is the word of God or the preacher's sermon, which animates the obedient soul germinating in the womb.³⁶

The womb is where matter manifests the spiritual, whereas semen is the agent of the transcendental

34 Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller, trans. by Dennis Porter (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 65-8.

35 Armelle Debru, "Physiology," trans. by R.J. Hankinson, *The Cambridge Companion to Galen*, ed. by R.J. Hankinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 278.

36 Michael E. Goodich, *From Birth to Old Age: The Human Life Cycle in Medieval Thought, 1250-1350* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1989), p. 84.

soul. Dualism of soul and substance serves as the justification of a hierarchical sex difference. The Church, the earthly body of believers, is the womb; the word of God, the spiritual testament of belief, is the semen. Privileging semen as the form of animation situates menses as 'formless matter', matter without *telos*.³⁷ For Bersuire, the essential nature of the human being lies outside of the female body, requiring a male intervention. The womb becomes a mere 'site' capable of 'nurturing' matter effected to a form by the male missive. Gender calibrates the proper responsive behaviors of a bodily hierarchy. Women's bodies, stripped of reproductive causality, receive the gendered expectations of a nurturing femininity.

This view, in which pregnancy is the realized potential of semen, creates a problematic space of female mediation. Failures of sperm become investigations of the womb, such as in the late fourteenth-century *Interrogations on the Treatment of Sterility*, which, according to Monica H. Green, becomes '*an interrogation of women*'.³⁸ If a couple cannot conceive a child, then the fault must be with the female body that cannot realize the potential inalienably inherent in semen. Moreover, this patriarchal paradigm moralizes pregnancy against the woman: twelfth- and thirteenth-century French and English law repeatedly devised punishments for women 'deceiving' men through false pregnancies, abortions, or even miscarriages.³⁹ This moralized investigation firmly fetters a woman to her bodily processes in a way from which men are exempt. She is the one who must own her bodily processes. The man imparts his transcendence, then himself transcends: his action is complete, so he is no longer chained to the outcome of the pregnancy. The woman is not so lucky: any difficulty of the pregnancy is hers to bear morally.

Augustine encapsulates the way in which men escape the judgments of pregnancy in *De bono*

37 Irina Metzler, "Disabled Children: Birth Defects, Causality and Guilt," *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), p. 173.

38 Monica H. Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 90. Italicization reproduced from the text.

39 Fiona Harris-Stoertz, "Pregnancy and Childbirth in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century French and English Law," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 21.2 (May, 2012), pp. 263-81.

conjugali:

Ideoque non sicut uni uiro etiam plures habere licebat uxores, ita uni feminae plures uiros nec prolis ipsius causa ... Occulta enim lege naturae amant singularitatem quae principantur; subiecta uero non solum singula singulis sed, si ratio naturalis uel socialis admittit, etiam plura uni non sine decore subduntur. Neque enim sic habet unus seruus plures dominos, quomodo plures serui unum dominum ... Plures enim feminae ab uno uiro fetari possunt, una uero a pluribus non potest (haec est principorum uis)⁴⁰

[So though it was possible for one man to have several wives, it was not similarly permitted for one woman to have several husbands ... By nature's hidden law, things which dominate love to be unique [sic], whereas not inappropriately those which lie below them are subordinated, not merely as one to one, but as several one to one, should natural or communal logic allow it. One slave does not have several masters, as several slaves have one master ... Several women can be made pregnant by one man, but one woman cannot become plurally pregnant by a number of men. Such is the power of dominant elements.]⁴¹

For Augustine, a man is dominant, unique, a master, individuated, whereas women are iterative multiplicities subordinated bodily through pregnancy. Again, it is nature from which this 'lege' is derived, having been instituted by 'ratio naturalis', echoing the Aristotelian 'logos'. Augustine participates in the same systemification of sex difference that Aristotle helped to institute, creating a logocentric hierarchy which privileges its patriarchal entelechial lineage.

Thus, Aristotelian sex difference creates an othered woman. When the goal of the human body lies across the divide of sex difference, the female body becomes a devolved alterity. The male form, in its innate completeness, gazes out at the female form to judge the elements lacking for completion. This gaze provides the paradigm by which a male narrator can develop an incomplete identity through a specular feminine as the appearance of gender. Dream allegories make use of this alterity to represent the space of becoming gender within a patriarchal system. Women bear in their bodies the marks of incomplete gender. This incompleteness becomes a mediating site, where men, as in the reproductive

⁴⁰ Quotation IV: Augustine, *De bono coniugali, De Sancta uirginitate*, trans. and ed. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 38-39.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

process, judge disruption of masculine self-projection as a feminine space.

Gendered Mysticism: Socialized Spirituality

What is a specular feminine? Why does femininity appear in the ghostly liminality between an agency and ordered intention? Alterity, the result of patriarchal deprivileging, characterizes the mystical experience of knowledge that is incompletely represented by physical signs as the feminized mystical space of the other.

Hildegard of Bingen provides a direct link between Aristotelian sex difference and the rhetorically feminine spiritual discourse which mystical otherness accorded. It is useful to consider Hildegard, both as one who 'represents the final phase of early medieval or "monastic" medicine, before the end of the twelfth century brings a shift away from monastic and cathedral schools to universities as centers of medical instruction', and as a female intellectual who encountered male gender discourse from a different position.⁴² This difference manifests in that, unlike medieval Aristotelian, Hildegard offers an anti-seminal argument: 'when the human transgressed God's command he was transformed both in body and mind. For the pureness of his blood was turned into something different so that he emits the foam of semen instead of pureness'.⁴³ She further suggests that semen is a 'venenum' [poison].⁴⁴ Although Hildegard values semen much less than later Aristotelian scholastics, there is still a degree to which both systems account for semen as the same type of substance. Like Aristotelians, Hildegard places semen as a transitory retainer of the original creative act: Adam's body retains the content of his transgression against God through a degraded substance. Semen is a

42 Margaret Berger, "Introduction," *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine: Selections from Cause et cure*, trans. by Margret Berger (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1999), p. 7.

43 See Quotation V. Hildegard of Bingen, *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine*, p. 39.

44 Ibid, p. 39.

consequence of original sin that denotes the fallen mortal's paradoxical experience of being characterized by what has been lost. Man's immaculate unity with God's creative absolute is severed through sin and replaced by the sexual desire to procreate. In this way, Hildegard undoes the Aristotelian *telos* but only to the extent that she reinforces a patriarchal gender binary through biblical means.

Similarly, Hildegard changes the address at the end of the wedding at Cana parable to be a bridegroom (*sponsum*) addressing a bride (*sponsam*), then glosses this bride as both Adam and Eve, whose degenerative reproductivity receives spiritual purification through the ability to generate Christ's human form.⁴⁵ The bride stands for mortal reproduction, and the divine bridegroom shall, like turning water into wine, deify the process into Christ's birth. In Hildegard's figuration, reproduction undertakes a feminine preservation of masculine divinity. This feminization of reproduction grants spiritual license to the female body as generative in its own right. Hildegard both privileges and deprivileges the female body in ways which conflict with the reproductive systems conceived by male writers while still arriving at ultimately patriarchal conclusions.

Hildegard's increased feminine agency derives largely from the way she abjures physical bodies entirely as distractions from humanity's true spiritual nature. Hildegard writes that 'Prima enim inceptio hominis per delectationem, quam serpens in pomo primo homini insufflavit, exoritur, quia tunc sanguis viri ex delectatione' [The primal conception of a human being stems from the pleasure that the serpent blew into the primal human by means of the apple, because then the man's blood is agitated by pleasure.]⁴⁶ In the context of Hildegard's sexual matrix, pleasure is anti-transcendence: it is earthly delight in earthly material. Refocusing reproduction from the intention enacted through it to the act

45 Anne L. Clark, "Here Comes the Bride: Re-Envisioning the Wedding at Cana in the 12th Century," *Church History and Religious Culture* 95.2 (2015), pp. 164-5.

46 For the Latin, see Hildegard of Bingen, *Causae et curae*, p. 60. For the English, see Hildegard of Bingen, *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine*, p. 44.

itself makes the act no longer the empty essence of the sign but rather an act filled by its own enaction: pleasure poses a problem for Hildegard, because it deemphasizes the allegorical nature of reproduction.

Allegorical reproduction is crucial for Hildegard, since reproduction is, for her, a divine process. Hildegard describes ensoulment as occurring when a 'virilem ventum' [living wind] enters the fetus and develops it into a viable spiritual vessel.⁴⁷ The fetus has a spiritual development alongside its physical development. Hildegard even envisions a purely spiritual sublimation into physicality, a reproduction that could exist in prelapsarian Eden.⁴⁸ Pregnancy and birth are signs of spiritual displacement. Hildegard contends that, during birth, a woman's body is torn by the same eternal energy that tore Eve from Adam's rib.⁴⁹ Birth reproduces the divine act of sexual differentiation. The woman's body, the physical site of birth, gives way to the divine bodily intervention which draws forth a new being. The woman's role in pregnancy is doubly displaced: first, it is man's semen which arouses her blood to conceive; secondly, it is God's creative energy that transforms the fetus into a human being. The female body is the vanishing point at which man's energy encounters God's energy and is guaranteed by it. A pregnant woman giving birth bears bodily witness to the mortal encounter with the immortal, where the effect of semen is supplanted by the effect of the soul. The female is metonymized as reproduction: she is the physicality of procreation. For Hildegard, this may not necessarily be a negative status, as this allows women to mystically realize the image of God. The feminine space of intervention provides a meaningful realm of spiritual agency.

However, this intervention is hierarchically subordinated to patriarchal self-privileging. For Hildegard, reproductive difference indicates man's worthier nature:

From the strong and rightful nature of man, his blood has semen because flesh was made from

47 For the Latin, see Hildegard of Bingen, *Causae et curae*, p. 100. For the English, see Hildegard of Bingen, *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine*, p. 45.

48 Hildegard of Bingen, *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine*, p. 53.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 49.

earth. But, from the true nature of woman, she has no semen because it is weak and thin. She discharges merely a weak and sparse foam because, unlike man, she does not consist of both earth and flesh but was only taken from man's flesh[.]⁵⁰

Men have semen because they are the direct embodiment of the ordinating *species* mankind. As for women, their 'true nature' as secondary counterparts deprive them of semen; they possess only a pallid counterpart. Hildegard's question is not about why males do not have wombs, nor is it about the spiritual significance of sexed bodies in a religious, heteronormative paradigm, but rather it is about why women do not have semen, since her argument rests on the fact that semen is the proper form. Lack of semen is a lack. The male body is prior to sexed difference, so sexed difference produces the female body as deviation. In this framework, sexed difference is always already an interrogation of the female body as deformed, an imperfect reproduction of the divinely crafted original. To Hildegard, 'therefore, she is weak and fragile and a vessel for man'.⁵¹ Women are robbed of agency: they become vessels in which men store their agency. This denigration is moralized against women: Hildegard believes women only began to menstruate after original sin, and that menstruation further weakens women.⁵² If all sexed difference is, for Hildegard, problematic derivations from original sin, then female bodies must be interrogated for themselves as difference.

Hildegard repeatedly affirms the subordination of women and chooses to ground this subordination as biological. Even though there always remains the teasing possibility of female spiritual autonomy in Hildegard, she never goes beyond patriarchal limitations, hence Elisabeth Gössman's point about the female *imago Dei*:

Like Renaissance women, Hildegard is also an ardent defender of the female *imago Dei* ... In

50 See Quotation VI. Hildegard of Bingen, *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine*, p. 44.

51 *Ibid*, p. 44.

52 Joan Cadden, "It Takes All Kinds: Sexuality and Gender Differences in Hildegard of Bingen's 'Book of Compound Medicine,'" *Traditio* 40 (1984), p. 171.

contradiction to male theologians who regard the *imago Dei* as a quality of the soul *ubi sexus nullus est*, Hildegard connects *imago Dei* with the five senses of the body by which the human being becomes *sapiens, sciens, intelligens*, which is her *analogia trinitatis*. While in scholastic theology the subordination of woman makes her dissimilar to God, Hildegard connects it with wisdom and *timor* in woman.⁵³

Gössman notes how Hildegard's echoes of standard misogynistic delimitations of feminine spirituality still recognize strengths in feminine spirituality even as it is delimited. Sex difference gives women a space that cannot be contained in men. Hildegard constructs a kind of complementary binary of religious virtue, in which women's secondary position grants them unique and necessary supporting roles in church life. There is a constant push-and-pull between advancement of patriarchal spirituality and annexations of gendered spirituality for feminine mystical devotion. Sexed difference does not always privilege male spirituality over female spirituality, but rather often merely finds a complementary interdependency, even where one attains primacy. For example, Hildegard reads body hair as a consequence of heteronormative gender complementarity rather than as a sign of male superiority.⁵⁴ Both male and female bodies are subjects of spiritual scrutiny from which neither emerges whole.

However, there is never any true escape from the extent to which Hildegard genders spiritual capacities. The biological is always the spiritual for Hildegard. Hildegard assigns both sex and virtue at birth: depending on the semen of the father and the relationship between the parents, a child is ineluctably condemned to a sex and a temperament.⁵⁵ Individuals exhibit personalities and virtues depending on the relationship between their sex and their dominant humour; some of these combinations suffer blistering denunciations from Hildegard.⁵⁶ Furthermore, gender and virtue are

53 Elisabeth Gössman, "Ipsa enim quasi domus sapientiae: The Philosophical Anthropology of Hildegard von Bingen," *Mystics Quarterly* 13.3 (Sep., 1987), p. 150.

54 Hildegard of Bingen, *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine*, p. 51.

55 *Ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 56-65.

predetermined in the child's body by the parents: Hildegard writes that whether a son or daughter is produced depends on the strength of the father's seed, and whether that child is virtuous or bitter depends on the health of the relationship of the parents.⁵⁷ For Hildegard, the body is a product which ineluctably reproduces the outcome of a reproduction process. Gender, and its performance, are a kind of bodily damnation from which the soul must escape through renunciation.

Hildegard's most drastic declaration violently subordinates the female soul to patriarchal spirituality:

Had Adam transgressed prior to Eve, this transgression would have been so severe and incorrigible that the human would have fallen into such a grave state of incorrigibility that he would not have wanted to be saved nor could he have been saved. Because Eve transgressed first, [her sin] could be more easily eradicated since she was weaker than the male.⁵⁸

The inferiority Hildegard attributes to women prior to original sin is profound in its violence. She expels the possibility of Christ's redemption of man should it have been a man who had incited the need for redemption. The very possibility of a spiritual life is predicated on women's inferior spiritual natures. In the face of such intense sexualization of spirituality, it is difficult to fully follow Gössman to her conclusion that Hildegard 'is deeply convinced of the equality of the sexes in the social as well as the spiritual realm'.⁵⁹ Perhaps a better term for 'equality' could be 'complementary interdependence'.

There is a modern temptation to ascribe to the fruits of an extraordinary medieval female intellectual career a protofeminist resistance to patriarchy, but could it be more medieval to read Hildegard's position the other way? What if Hildegard's major preaching expeditions are compatible with her staunch opposition to the ordination of women?⁶⁰ Hegemonic kyriarchy does not necessitate

⁵⁷ Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 80-1.

⁵⁸ See Quotation VII. Hildegard of Bingen, *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine*, p. 41.

⁵⁹ Elisabeth Gössman, "Ipsa enim quasi domus sapientiae," p. 151.

⁶⁰ For information regarding Hildegard's preaching and her opposition to female ordination, see Margret Berger,

dissociative misery on the part of the oppressed. Medieval patriarchy's gender violence could allow a system of ecclesiastical gender that sustains a harmonious identity within a delimited horizon, similar to what Augustine Thompson eloquently argues in his examination of Hildegard's gendering of religious life.⁶¹ Hildegard's status as a woman does not preclude the possibility that she actively collaborated with patriarchal gendering in her writings. Rather, it seems quite likely that the patriarchal otherness of women was a vital part of her mystical experience of femininity. The otherness of women, rather than being a limiting factor on mystical experience, was instead one of the great generative capacities of mystical experience. It is also important to recognize that Hildegard was controversial, and that her works were debated at the 1147-8 Synod of Trier.⁶² She was breaking new and important ground for medieval women, and those accomplishments should be considered as part of how she reconstituted what the patriarchal otherness of women could provide.

Hildegard's gender structures use patriarchal otherness to create an authentic space of feminine spirituality that intercedes between God and mortals. She creates a gendered mysticism that spiritualizes femininity as the properly social mode of devotional practice. Hildegard's vision of spiritual femininity can be best understood through her interpretation of the archetypal spiritual woman, Mary, as Barbara Newman elucidates:

Because this mystery [of the Incarnation through Mary] was accomplished by means of a woman, it is evoked in visions that also highlight the feminine dimension of divine reality. Hildegard saw this as the dimension in which mediation or, at a higher intensity, union between Creator and creature can be achieved ... Thus, feminine symbols convey the principle of divine self-manifestation; the absolute predestination of Christ; the mutual indwelling of God in the world and the world in God; and the saving collaboration between Christ and the faithful, manifested sacramentally in the Church and morally in the Virtues.⁶³

"Introduction," *On Natural Philosophy and Medicine: Selections from Cause et cure*, p. 8.

61 Augustine Thompson, "Hildegard of Bingen on Gender and the Priesthood," *Church History* 63.3 (Sep., 1994), pp. 349-64.

62 Marina Warner, *Monuments & Maidens: The Allegory of the Female Form* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p. 188.

63 Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley: University of California Press,

Femininity serves as the proper social articulation of mystical principles like the presence of God in the world. Mary bears the divine masculine in its material form. Mystic devotion, which seeks to unify with the divine immateriality from a material vantage point, becomes the feminine dimension of spirituality.

Hildegard was not alone in articulating femininity as a mystical experience. Mystical experiences of femininity were a common rhetorical trope in devotional literature regardless of the writer's or reader's sex. A common trope, appearing for instance in Thomas of Hales' thirteenth-century work of Marian devotion, *Lyf of our Lady*, is to include an address to the reader as if they were women at a moment of significant pathos, summoning a feminine responsive mode from the reader regardless of their sex.⁶⁴ The Marian nature of this work inherently addresses its contemplations to a mystic otherness of women, in which the reader can devotionally participate. The religious experience of expressive alterity nurtured gendered fluidity as speculative transits of hidden truths: femininity became the place of otherness in which one could access that which had been hidden from the norm. Femininity, as a gendered set of behavioral assumptions, supplied a steady stream of assumptive imagery for those rhetorically addressing a reader in a gendered social context. For example, in Bernard of Clairvaux's twelfth-century letter to a recalcitrant monk, he genders himself according to his tone:

And I have said this, my son, not to put you to shame, but to help you as a loving father, because if you have many masters in Christ, yet you have few fathers. For if you will allow me to say so, I begot you in religion by word and example. I nourished you with milk when, while yet a child, it was all you could take ... But alas! How soon and how early you were weaned ... Sadly I weep, not for my lost labor but for the unhappy state of my lost child ... My case is the same as that of the harlot Solomon judged, whose child was stealthily taken by another who had

1987), p. 45.

⁶⁴ Sarah McNamer, *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 126.

overlain and killed her own. You too were torn from my breast, cut from my womb. My heart cannot forget you, half of it went with you[.]⁶⁵

Bernard genders his parental relationship with the wayward monk according to the terms in which that parenting is expressed. When Bernard discusses his firmness of discipline and his desire to teach, he expresses himself as a father; when Bernard discusses his compassion and his desire to nurture, he expresses himself as a mother. In this female state, Bernard adapts a female morphology, breastfeeding the monk and gestating him in a womb.

Breastfeeding is a common trope for Bernard: he includes it in his *Life of Malachy*, he praises Aleth for breastfeeding her children instead of relying on a nurse in *Vita prima*, and an anonymous thirteenth-century biography of Bernard recounts that he learned wisdom from suckling the breasts of Mary.⁶⁶ Breastfeeding as a devotional metaphor underscores the authenticity accorded to the relationship between a nurturer and a dependent: an early fifteenth-century account in the Vatican Court Records considers wet nurses to partake authentically in motherhood.⁶⁷ In applying the breastfeeding metaphor, Bernard stresses the genuinely affective relationship between a spiritual elder and a Christian in need. Bernard is not the only writer to think of spiritual nursing: in the late eleventh century, Anselm of Canterbury imagines Paul birthing and nursing Christians.⁶⁸ For Bernard, however, both sexes nurse: he considers male affective bleeding to be the same outpouring of instructive love as that of female nursing.⁶⁹ Bernard envisions a coextensive bodily function of pouring out fluids that can nourish the

65 See Quotation VIII. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Letter I*, trans. by Bruno Scott James, qt. by Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 116-7.

66 Monica H. Green, "Making Motherhood in Medieval England: The Evidence of Medicine," *Motherhood, Religion, and Society: Essays Presented to Henrietta Leyser*, ed. by Conrad Leyser and Leslie Smith (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 191-4.

67 Debra Blumenthal, "'With My Daughter's Milk': Wet Nurses and the Rhetoric of Lactation in Valencian Court Records," *Medieval and Renaissance Lactations: Images, Rhetorics, Practices*, ed. by Jutta Gisela Sperling (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013), p. 110.

68 Emma Percy, *Mothering as a Metaphor for Ministry* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 33-4.

69 Elissa Hansen, "Making a Place: *Imitatio Marie* in Julian of Norwich's Self-Construction," *Reading Memory and Identity in the Texts of Medieval European Holy Women*, ed. by Margaret Cotter-Lynch and Brad Herzog (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 190.

yearnings of a dependent. Fluidity between expressions of masculinity and femininity across a continuum of coextensive bodily enactments allows Bernard to assume whichever rhetorical position proves necessary.

The point of examining this fluidity is not to determine whether Bernard authentically felt any such discursive gendering, but to highlight the way in which Bernard's social frame is gendered and even sexed according to the terms of his relationship to another man. Womanhood was a role that could be adopted rhetorically as one exhibited traits, such as nurturing, that were gendered feminine. Walter Hilton's fourteenth-century translation of *Stimulus amoris* provides a particularly arresting example of the mutability of the female in males.

[B]ehold our sweet child Jesus in his mother's arms sucking of her blessed breast. And I shall fond [sic] to suck with him, with all the faith that I have, and thus shall I temper together the sweet milk of Mary virgin with the blood of Jesus, and make to myself a drink that is full of hele ... And him that I ere found in mother's womb, I feel now how he vouchsafeth to bear my soul as his child within his blessed sides. But I dread over soon to be sperred out from the delices that I now feel. Certainly if he cast me out, he shall nevertheless as my mother give me suck of his paps and bear me in his arms.⁷⁰

The dizzying pace with which Jesus transitions from child to crucifixion and from male to female indicates an atemporal collapse of the gender binary. The male can freely invoke femininity to furnish new masculine possibilities. This spiritual singularity retains the temporally-sustained duality insofar as that duality is expressed as a notion of singularity. Male and female experience are both parts of the experience Hilton conveys. For this mystical tradition, the female is not an external other but an internal other that can be passed through. Christ sucks at the breast of Mary, but then the mystic sucks at the breast of Christ, his own virgin mother. Christ is borne from Mary's womb, but then the mystic's soul is borne from Christ's spear piercings. Is the mystic mixing Mary's milk with Christ's blood intended to indicate a female-male breastfeeding transubstantiation? What does it mean to suck

70 Walter Hilton, *The Goad of Love*, ed. by Clare Kirchberger (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), p. 51.

sustenance from Mary alongside Christ? The gendering in this passage is dense and at times multiply determinative. Womanhood is a disjunctive sublimation of the suppressed male precisely because womanhood is the otherness suppressed by the male.

Where medieval Aristotelianism emphasizes the materiality of women's bodies in the reproductive process in order to suppress the feminine and establish masculine ontic centrality, the devotional mode emphasizes the rhetoricity of femininity to suppress the feminine for masculine projection. The reproductive processes of the female body become metaphors open to the experience of masculine agencies. As Liz Herbert McAvoy writes of Aldhelm,

Within Aldhelm's rhetoric, the discourses of fecundity, impregnation and birth normally attached to the female body are detached from that body (and, by implication, that of the text's recipients) and reconfigured as metaphysical agents of ecclesiastical teaching and its pastoral mission. In effect, therefore, Aldhelm's crafted discourse brings about a rift, or, in the words of Luce Irigaray, a *schism* which separates off what Irigaray terms 'matter-body' from a culturally constructed 'body' which is nothing but a 'socially valued, exchangeable body [and] a particularly mimetic expression of masculine values.'⁷¹

Masculine values appear within the exchangeable female body as it becomes a metaphysical feminine rhetorical stance towards divinity. Metaphysical encounters with the projection of divine masculinity along the ecclesiastical hierarchy occur through an internalized, abstracted stance of femininity. God's divine masculinity moves through the strata of clergy towards the lay populace, itself temporally ranked, in such a way that a reproductive femininity serves as a useful rhetorical metaphor for one's position within that flow of patriarchal authority.

This rhetorical femininity held the potential for a profound gendered relationship with Jesus. The form-male/matter-women binary provided female mystics with a gender-based justification for their spiritual life. Caroline Walker Bynum writes,

⁷¹ Liz Herbert McAvoy, *Medieval Anchoritisms: Gender, Space and the Solitary Life* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 82-3.

Modern claims that women were deprived of a sense of self-worth or forced into denial of their sexuality by the traditional association of woman with the physical also miss the point: these women found physicality, as they understood it, redeemed and expressed by a human God. Contrary to what some recent interpretations have asserted, thirteenth-century women seem to have concluded from their physicality an intense conviction of their *ability* to imitate Christ without role or gender inversion ... If the Incarnation meant that the whole human person was capable of redemption, then what woman was seen as being – even in the most misogynist form of the Christian tradition – caught up into God in Christ. And if the agony of the Crucifixion was less sacrifice or victory than the redemption of that which is human (matter joined to form), then the Crucifixion could be imaged as death or as eating or as orgasm (all especially human – bodily – experiences). Women mystics seem to have felt that they *qua* women were not only *also* but even *especially* saved in the Incarnation.⁷²

Medieval gender dynamics did not prohibit women from active spiritual participation, no matter how virulent or totalizing the gendering of women proved. Indeed, women were invited to participate in the theological community as uniquely qualified agents of religious experience at specific, gendered points. Christ's role as God incarnate parallels the conception of women as matter activated by male form. Through Christ's sacrifice, matter was instrumental within the idea of salvation. Women, with more claim to matter within the Aristotelian worldview, participate in this redemptive elevation. Women were better suited to devotion to Christ than were men on account of their metaphysically sexed role. This gender justification was further incorporated into the heteronormative structuring that figured monastics, particularly but not exclusively nuns, as brides of Christ. For example, 'Hildegard of Bingen actually dressed her nuns as brides when they went forward to receive communion'.⁷³ Hildegard's nuns were being presented to Christ in a manner that held deeply significant and erotic cultural resonances.

Being a bride of Christ was a complex part of monastic theology that recalls traditions that predate some of Aristotle's medieval influence. A ninth-century Bavarian homily emphasizes the

72 Caroline Walker Bynum, *Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991) pp. 149-50.

73 *Ibid*, p. 134.

spiritual nature of marriage to Christ in order to allow for men to participate in chastity for Christ.⁷⁴

The homily focuses on the way in which pollution of the body through sin renders the soul adulterous, thereby conceiving all bodily experience as open to the loss of the soul's chastity. In this homily, being a bride to Christ is spiritualized against the body. Conversely, however, Christ's role as bridegroom would sometimes be rendered in lists that enumerated the advantages of Christ as a bachelor in decidedly worldly terms, for instance that

he is eloquent, wealthy, wise, attractive in appearance, powerful, noble – and immortal. This last quality is clearly not for the human bridegroom, however idealized, but in general the list converges – perhaps more closely than coincidence can account for – with the image of the attractive knight found in the romances of Chretien de Troyes. This is not to say that Chretien influenced the preacher [Gerard de Mailly]. More probably, they both reflect generally current social assumptions. However, this means that Gerard's list would have struck chords in the imaginative and fantasy life of many listeners.⁷⁵

The physical and temporal desirability of Christ metaphorizes the spiritual desirability of a union with God. This metaphor operates not only on sexual desire but also includes the desire for patriarchal power in which sexual desire is regulated. For instance, the thirteenth-century Katherine group legends of female saints petition Christ as a legal creditor rather than as a bridegroom, emphasizing the service they have rendered him.⁷⁶ A relationship to Christ articulated in temporal terms plays upon his masculinity, both its power and its desirability. Thus, context is important in understanding what a marriage to Christ means. There was no enduring consensus on the subject. Even by the late fifteenth century a case was upheld in which a nun was allowed to remarry her husband since she was never able to issue consent to her ecclesiastical marriage, having already done so with a man.⁷⁷ The equivalence

⁷⁴ David d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage: Symbolism & Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 31-2.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷⁶ Sarah Salih, *Versions of Virginity in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), p. 73.

⁷⁷ David d'Avray, *Medieval Marriage: Symbolism & Society*, pp. 186-7.

between consent issued to a man and consent issued to Christ represents a significant blurring of the precise nature of what marriage to Christ truly is. Part of the problem with this kind of marriage is that the need for clergy to be unmarried remained the subject of a complex regulatory process that sought to ensure the sacrament of marriage was codified only for laity.⁷⁸ The tension between the need to fulfill sacraments and the need for clerical celibacy was a driving force in the imaginative frameworks of a spiritual marriage with Christ, so spiritual marriage is by its very nature conceptually tense and unstable.

This meant that Christ as bridegroom was a richly available ambiguity for Christians attempting to articulate their sexuality within a gendered spiritual system. This was especially true for nuns. A nun's relationship to Christ was a defining factor of who she was on this earth and in her body. Thus, the gendering to which these women were subject was interpreted through the lens of their vocation, which allowed them to repurpose patriarchal gendering to religiously reinforce their identities.

If Jesus provided an elevated masculinity which structured devotional gendering, then Mary did the same for femininity. Mary's prominence in the development of Catholic theology underlines the extent to which she proved a useful and popular feminine exemplar. Cyril of Alexandria, responding to the Nestorian heresy which suggested that Mary was not the mother of the divine Christ, merely the mother of his human form, argues that Mary's role as the Mother of God marks, as Antonia Atanassova articulates, 'the significance of the incarnation as the decisive point in history at which God transforms history from within and, by becoming human, enables human beings to return to him'.⁷⁹ Mary's body provides humanity contact with God. She transforms the impossible masculine divinity of God the Father into the accessible masculine divinity of Jesus Christ: her body translates divinity from spiritual

78 Anke Bernau, "Gender and sexuality," *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography*, ed. by Sarah Salih (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), p. 106.

79 Antonia Atanassova, "Did Cyril of Alexandria Invent Mariology?" *Origins of the Cult of the Virgin Mary*, ed. by Chris Maunder (London: Burns and Oates, 2008), pp. 106-9.

inaccessibility to physical proximity. Hence the devotional trope of Mary enclosed in the garden: she is a feminine enclosure in which paradise reemerges.⁸⁰ Nestorius' heresy was so problematic precisely because it eliminated the transitional space of the spiritual feminine which Mary represented in her title of *Theotokos* (child bearer of God) rather than Nestorius' alternative title of *Anthropotokos* (child bearer of a human form). Mary's feminine complementarity to the masculine God is where salvation hangs in the balance.

Thibaut de Champagne's thirteenth-century Marian lyric 'De grant travail' emphasizes the importance of this gender dynamic to salvation: she sits on the throne of heaven beside God, and her feminine mercy softens God's masculine justice to allow humanity to be savable.⁸¹ In this lyric, Mary performs the role of a mediatrix, intervening between God and humanity, allowing grace to intercede between justice and sin. Mary's appearance between God and humanity suggests spiritual femininity as an intervening space between otherwise irreconcilable masculinities. The divine order sustains its paradoxes through assumptive moments of alterity in which the paradox is mediated and disappears. The mediatrix role brings Mary's femininity to the forefront of her religious importance. It's not just that Mary, through femininity, mediates between men, but moreover that spiritual femininity reaches its apex in Mary's ability to unify hierarchical masculinities. This became explicit in the use of Mary as a feminine exemplar for women to emulate. Wealthy mothers and prospective husbands sometimes commissioned Books of Hours with illustrations of Mary alongside instructions on how women ought to behave.⁸² The details of these illustrations often changed according to what performances of femininity the commissioners hoped to receive. Mary did not prescribe gender but received gender as prescription. Works of Marian devotion, rather than enforcing a particular, preexisting femininity,

⁸⁰ Miri Rubin, *Mother of God: A History of the Virgin Mary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 311.

⁸¹ Daniel O'Sullivan, *Marian Devotion in Thirteenth-Century French Lyric* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), pp. 43-4.

⁸² Joelle Mellon, *The Virgin Mary in the Perceptions of Women: Mother, Protector and Queen Since the Middle Ages* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2008), p. 41.

instead often reveal the fluid expectations of femininity.

Mary justified the divine provenance of gender expectations. Women's experiences of bodies overlaid with gendered expectations were themselves projected upon Mary. One such appeal was the practice of wearing strips of parchment with the *Magnificat*, a Marian hymn derived from Luke 1:46-55, during the process of labor.⁸³ This practice wrapped women's bodies in the Marian exemplar. Just as in Aristotelian appeals to Nature, appeals to Mary inoculated against gender anxiety by referring to a guarantor.

Femininity, as an othered space, was as much a rhetorical mode useful for religious experience as it was the result of medieval sex difference. Femininity can be experienced internally, when one's identity encounters its own alterity. In dream allegories that depict the struggle for a masculine identity within an internal space, the consoling mediatrix becomes an appealing trope for portraying the other-speaking mode of gender displacement. The experience of allegory, of reading an altered symbolic space hidden from one's normal condition, is an experience of femininity within a patriarchal structuring order. The mediatrix (and anti-mediatrix) figures studied in Parts II and III of this thesis rectify (or exacerbate) patriarchal gaps through the specular appearance of female personifications.

Gendered Intercession: Feminine Alterations of Masculine Order

Femininity, when socialized, becomes a specular appearance that intervenes in patriarchal disorder. The specular feminine as a vanishing intercessional space within masculine hierarchies indicates female alterity appeared within masculine power structures as a wound.

Gendered intercessions in a patriarchal hierarchy can be seen in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer.

⁸³ Diane Watt, "Mary the Physician: Women, Religion and Medicine in the Middle Ages," *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), p. 43.

Constance's extended appeal to Mary during *The Man of Law's Tale* plays with the complex and at times conflicting gender structures of the mediatrix: Eve, as the tempted woman, irrupts prelapsarian masculine unity; then Mary, as the Mother of God, loses her child as restorative justice; later, Mary is implored to intercede with God to save a sinless child, since she should be empathetic to this shared trauma; then the child's earthly father is eschewed to allow for the child's spiritual father to be invoked.⁸⁴ Reproductive sex difference gives way to gender once more, but this time in an allegorical way that explores the precarity of justice in a patriarchal system. Mary suffers in the space between God and humanity: original sin results in God manifesting into Christ, and a mortal woman saves her child only through an appeal that emphasizes the child's spiritual father, but both of these cases are refracted through Mary as a bereaved mother. God and humanity reconcile their respective losses (the fall of humanity and the life of a child) through feminine suffering. Social fault lines disappear in a vanishing feminine mediation that rectifies structures of failed masculinity: the earthly father, who cannot prevent social injustice, is eschewed in favor of a spiritual father who can.

Chaucer's deployments of Mary as a mediatrix figure recall a lengthy literary legacy of the personification of Nature, as Roberta Magnani explains:

In her oblique identification with a Christianised (assistive and maternal) Nature, Mary remains an allegory, that is a rhetorical construct or envelope to be over-written with meaning. Following the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition, much like Mary, Nature is 'vicaire' or an intermediary at the service of the superior power of God, the ultimate patriarch. By silently and obliquely aligning Natura with Mary, I contend that Chaucer's narrative recuperates the agential potency of which the classical goddess was progressively divested in her Christian re-imaginings.⁸⁵

Chaucer participates in the allegorical tradition of Nature, but he chooses to recontextualize Nature

⁸⁴ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Man of Law's Tale, The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ll. 826-61, p. 99.

⁸⁵ Roberta Magnani, "Chaucer's Physicians: Raising Questions of Authority," *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), p. 57.

within Marian devotion. In his allegorical thinking, the female mediatrix operates similarly to the female curator of male creation. They both serve as an intercessor between men and 'the ultimate patriarch'. Both Nature and Mary mediate between the creator and his creation. Feminine reproduction of a masculine intention organizes femininity as subsequent to masculinity. This *post rem* gender assumption supposes a system where the development of feminine capacities occurs as a response to an asserted masculine authority. Feminine potentiality occurs in a devolved authorial space circumscribed by masculine privilege.

From where did Chaucer derive these tropes of Nature the mediatrix? A likely influence, even if only obliquely through the influence of other Chaucerian predecessors, is Alain of Lille's twelfth-century allegory *De planctu Naturae*. As Suzanne Conklin Akbari explains,

In his *Du planctu Naturae*, Alanus de Insulis calls Nature a mirror in order to emphasize her ability to convey divinity to mankind; but in his *Summa de arte praedicatoria*, he remarks that, in a mirror, 'the right parts appear to be on the left, and the left appear to be on the right'. Similarly, the mirror of the text has the ability simultaneously to reveal meaning and to deceive ... The transparent mediation between subject and object, between reader and meaning, is the unreachable goal of language; in particular, it is the goal of allegory.⁸⁶

Alain's notion of the mirror is sex-coded according to Aristotelian medicine, in which the side of the womb in which semen settles determines the sex of the child: the left side produces females while the right side produces males.⁸⁷ The reflection's inversion parallels the gender binary. The male is reflected in the female. Nature reproduces this relationship in her own status as a mirror. A male God is reflected in a female Nature. This reflection is not an equal exchange. As Alain states in his *Liber parabolarum*, 'The reflection in a mirror is not real. Woman's apparent trustworthiness is an illusion'.⁸⁸ The female

⁸⁶ Suzanne Conklin Akbari, *Seeing through the Veil: Optical Theory and Medieval Allegory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 7.

⁸⁷ Hewson, *Giles of Rome and the Medieval Theory of Conception*, p. 174.

⁸⁸ See Quotation IX. Alain de Lille, *Liber parabolarum, Ten Latin Schooltexts of the Later Middle Ages: Translated*

state is the illusion of the veracity of the male state that should not be trusted. The woman is mere appearance by virtue of being the one who appears. Male ontic centrality, the privileged position of looking out from one's body, is the starting state of the gendered mirror. Reversed gender only functions one way, because there is no actual female on the other side looking through: she is an illusion. A mirror displays a response to the form that poses in it. Feminine response is limited by its nature as a response, as it does not have independent content. The mirrored female appears only when she is alterior to the male, only when she is a response. The privileged male assumes itself prior to a difference phobically projected onto the female, whose appearance becomes the appearance of difference. Luce Irigaray twists this exact phobic projection to her own insight:

The reflections in the mirror are not taken to be real, all the less since the appliance on which they appear is seen and remains while the images disappear, but Matter is not seen either with the images or without them. If, then, there is, really, something in a mirror, we may suppose objects of sense to be in Matter in precisely that way: if in the mirror there is nothing, if there is only a seeming of something, then we may judge that in Matter there is the same delusion and that the seeming is to be traced to the Substantial-Existence of the Real-Beings, that Substantial-Existence in which the Authentic has the real participation while only an unreal participation can belong to the unauthentic since their condition must differ from that which they would know if the parts were reversed, if the Authentic-Existents were not and they were.⁸⁹

Alain's pretension to matter is the archetypal delusory substantiation that seeks to integrate form into authentic hegemonic development from Source. The crisis of identity threatened by the fleeting nature of form is phobically projected onto alterior but uncanny forms: the female figure is needed to deviate from the male figure in order to ensure the latter's proper derivation from an authentically substantiative existence.

This belief is informed in part by the trope of one sex in two varieties, discussed earlier in medieval Aristotelian reproductive medicine. The female is not a separate sex but simply an inferior

Selections, ed. and trans. by Ian Thomson and Louis Perraud (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 1990), p. 214.

⁸⁹ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, pp. 174-5.

version of the only sex, which is properly reproduced in the male body. Alain's gendered mirror uses female specularity to inform his notion of allegorical writing. The male subject is reflected in the female object to embody the reader and meaning in properly gendered forms. The male authorial persona inspects, considers, and understands the female allegorical figure. The relationship between a male authorial persona and a female consoling personification is a specific type of gendered relationship that intersects with patriarchal heterosexual desire. This gendered specularity is reinforced by male heterosexual desire. In *De planctu Naturae* Nature appears to the authorial persona and is immediately subjected to an exhaustive *blazon*, which culminates in an explicit sexual evocation:

And faith spoke other parts [of her body], which a more secret habitation held aside, to be even better. For in her body lay unapparent a more beautiful form, of whose joys the countenance offered a foretaste: yet, as this very form made known, the key of Dione had never opened the lock of its chastity.⁹⁰

The female body is presented to the male interpreter as an object of which he can have a sexual 'foretaste', while her virginity isolates her as available to consume, since she does not belong to another man. This body, however, is clothed in meaning: she wears a diadem with a variety of allegorical jewels, she wears a garment which glitters allegorical colors and which depicts an allegorical parliament of fowls, and she wears a tunic which similarly displays colors and animals.⁹¹ Alain here follows the earlier example of Lady Philosophy's torn garment in Boethius' *De consolazione philosophiae*.⁹² The bodies of both these allegorical women is the site of her allegorical potential, and her allegorical meanings serve to sexualize her body through the desire of men to acquire their allegorical content.

90 See Quotation X. Alain de Lille, *The Complaint of Nature*, trans. by Douglas M. Moffat <<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/alain-deplanctu.asp>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], Prose I.

91 Ibid, Prose I.

92 Boethius, *De consolazione philosophiae*, Perseus <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0121%3Abook%3D1%3Asectio%3DP1>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], I.p1.

Alain's sexualized Nature relays the creative intention of a masculine divinity with an external sexed representation presented to an interpreting male mortality. She presents herself to be read for the masculine intention it harbors. As Kellie Robertson notes,

Nature is a hybrid of internal forces and actual things. The material birds, plants, and rocks on Nature's dress point us to something else and to themselves at the same time ... The drama at the heart of being human in Alain concerns the extent to which man can fathom the divine imperative behind nature and consequently conform himself to it.⁹³

Physical objects on Nature's dress are both the tangible elements of her domain and the function of her divine imperative. The dreamer must perceive the objects written on Nature as expressions of the divine masculinity that generates her allegorical identity. After this perception is achieved, the dreamer must then proceed through an additional step of conforming themselves to that divine imperative that Nature's appearance embodies. Thus, the desire in which Nature's appearance is enmeshed demands conformation of identity to the greater masculinity written onto the woman's body.

Nature's dual role as desired object and interpretable allegory melts together when the narrator describes her 'meque suis innectendo complexibus, meaque ora pudicis oculis dulcorando, mellifluis sermonis medicamine a stuporis morbo curavit infirmum' [encircling me in her embrace and sweetening my lips with modest kisses, [and also she] made me well, who was weak and sick with stupor, by the honey-flowing balm of her speech].⁹⁴ She embraces and kisses him while also soothing him with speech. Her body and her meaning become one. For Alain, the allegorical Nature is a spiritual mandate presented as a sexual object for a subject to consume.

Nature's gender-as-grammar and gender-as-sex entwine and become mutually conducive to

93 Kellie Robertson, *Nature Speaks: Medieval Literature and Aristotelian Philosophy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), p. 171.

94 For the Latin, see Alain de Lille, *De planctu naturae*, Prose III. For the English, see Alain de Lille, *The Complaint of Nature*, Prose III.

Alain's metaphorical contemplation of a “productive” humanity. Jan Ziolkowski writes,

Nature contends that natural and grammatical law concur on the matter of genders: there are basically two genders, masculine and feminine, although some masculine words lack their *signaculum* and are treated as neuters (pr. 5.43-46 = 457B). In grammatical terms *signaculum* refers to the masculine ending of a noun, but in real life the *signaculum* (distinguishing trait) of a man would be his genitalia. Having fixed the meaning of the genders, Nature now specifies the one *naturalis constructio* that she granted to Venus. The masculine is to join itself to the feminine and never to the masculine, for such an irregular combination would not eventuate in procreation.⁹⁵

The proper signification of grammatical gender is the productive coextension of moral sexuality.

Grammar that literally cannot generate is the sign of an infertile sexuality. The speech of problematic genders becomes nonsense: they are excluded from the domain of sense by their inability to produce sense within the grammatically heteronormative edifice.

By highlighting the signification of gender in this way, Nature prescribes a type of gender activity. Her sermon is fueled by the principle in which 'Deus imperat auctoritatis magisterio; angelus operatur actionis ministerio; homo obtemperat regenerationis mysterio' [God by decree determines a thing; the angel by action fashions it; man submits himself to the will of the controlling spirit].⁹⁶ This angel fashions the divine will into what man must obey. Between the male God and his male subject is the object through which they communicate. Alain's use of Nature indicates his reliance on gender to assert this objective femininity.

The sex of active nature trembles shamefully at the way in which it declines into passive nature. Man is made woman, he blackens the honor of his sex, the craft of magic Venus makes him of double gender. He is both predicate and subject, he becomes likewise of two declensions, he pushes the laws of grammar too far. He, though made by Nature's skill, barbarously denies that

95 Jan Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex: The Meaning of Grammar to a Twelfth-Century Intellectual* (Cambridge: The Medieval Academy of America, 1985), p. 35.

96 For the Latin, see Alain de Lille, *De planctu naturae*, Prose III. For the English, see Alain de Lille, *The Complaint of Nature*, Prose III.

he is a man.⁹⁷

Grammar helps construct metaphysical structures as if metaphysics was a language. Alain, who uses a great deal of grammatical thinking, reinforces his metaphysical assertion of a heteronormative gender binary through grammar in a similar manner. Man, the subjective agency, should use woman as the object on which to predicate his activity. By engaging in sex outside of the role prescribed by this binary, man 'denies' his gender, and becomes 'of double gender'. Queer experience is the prohibited anti-sense of the heteronormative structure, because this experience fatally undermines the feminine othering into the communicative object. The woman, as other, receives speech. This receptive role stores the active sense of male speech; she is inscribed by male meaning.

Female mediating allegory is useful, because it creates an explicitly visual surface in which two ontic projections may meet. A woman is a mirror of a man, because a woman is the one forced to be a body, whereas a man inhabits an agency which actively sorts through bodies for meaning and potential. Alain represents Nature, an allegorical mediatrix, as a divine automaton which takes the ineffable will of God and materializes it into an angelic body capable of manifesting that will. Nature serves both capacities, justifying the use of allegory, since, as Susan K. Hagen puts it, 'allegory was understood to depend heavily on one's ability to perceive and imagine visual manifestations of God's being and truth'.⁹⁸ A quasi-divine woman, therefore, is the readable surface that presents the truth of the male creator to the interpreting male subject. Allegorical women are symbols in a complex male language used to express linguistic impossibilities. As Akbari argues,

[A]llegory conveys meaning that cannot be expressed directly through ordinary language. That is, by avoiding the limitations inherent in literal language, allegory creates meaning *within* the

97 See Quotation XI. Alain de Lille, *The Complaint of Nature*, Metre I.

98 Susan K. Hagen, *Allegorical Remembrance: A Study of The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man as a Medieval Treatise on Seeing and Remembering* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1990), p. 146.

reader, bypassing the inevitable degeneration of meaning as it passes through the obscuring veil of language. The paradox, of course, is that it is this veil which makes the transmission of meaning – the revelation – possible. Allegory is trope when it is expressed through language; but it is intelligible image at the moment of the reader's illumination.⁹⁹

This paradoxical space of veiled annunciation requires an alterior sensibility in order to function. The logic of subjects at two planes of existence – one divine, one mortal – needs a projection in order to shadow the impossible infinite in the terms of an interpretable finitude. Women serve this function visually representing otherness, upon which men can project content. Men become neutral, but women bear the mark of the otherness of gender.

Gendering as othering functions in relation to heteronormative strictures which delimit the gendered as the other. Sara Ahmed expounds this concept by noting how

[t]he line of straight orientation takes the subject toward what it “is not” and what it “is not” then confirms what it “is.” ... The woman's body becomes the tool in which the man “extends himself.” The naturalization of heterosexuality as a line that directs bodies depends on the construction of women's bodies as being “made” for men, such that women's sexuality is seen as directed toward men.¹⁰⁰

The male heteronormative demand for women to be predicated on reciprocation allows for male ontic centrality to encounter the woman as gender and sexual desire simultaneously. The female response to the male is the act of gender that ignites this kind of heterosexuality. Femininity, not masculinity, is sexualized through appearance, precisely because heterosexuality is directed at the other, and the patriarchal other is the masculine-conceptualized feminine. Slavoj Žižek argues a similar point in a discussion on the Lacanian Lady of courtly love:

99 Akbari, *Seeing through the Veil*, p. 9.

100 Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 71.

[B]efore we embrace the commonplaces about how the Lady in courtly love has nothing to do with actual women, how she stands for the man's narcissistic projection which involves the mortification of the flesh-and-blood woman, we have to answer this question: where does that empty surface come from, that cold, neutral screen which opens up the space for possible projections? That is to say, if men are to project on to the mirror their narcissistic ideal, the mute mirror-surface must already be there. This surface functions as a kind of 'black hole' in reality, as a limit whose Beyond is inaccessible.¹⁰¹

The ideal feminine is projected onto women for the sake of its interpretation in an internal male struggle for the achievement of a narcissistic self-idealization that incorporates in itself the delimited alterity of an inaccessible other that is encountered as if it is necessary. There is a flaw in the patriarchal system which creates the mirror space upon which men project their narcissistic self-idealizations. This flaw is the space of the impossible Lady of courtly love, because it is also the space of the female-embodied abstraction. This space operates as the event horizon, a beingness which cannot be seen except as difference, but which serves as a necessary gravitational center for the systems that orbit it. Courtly lovers use feminine alterity as a site in which they can instantiate their own gendered identities, a sexualizing and sexualized struggle for what is withheld from men in the desire for an impossible woman.¹⁰²

Therefore, the Lady is valuable to these lovers insofar as she displaces their gender burden. In fact, some monks felt the burden of gender precisely because of this heteronormative framework of the female-embodied abstraction. Jacqueline Murray notes how these monks'

very attraction to women in the intellectual or spiritual realm was inhibited by their bodies and overshadowed by their uncontrollable sexual desire. For a man who liked women, castration, mystical or actual, would appear to have been one means by which soul and body could remain pristine. Anxiety about the deleterious effects of women's company was not, then, always the result of misogyny. There is a sense in which both Peter Abelard and Hugh of Lincoln can be

¹⁰¹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: On Women and Causality* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 91.

¹⁰² James A. Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 182.

seen to have disliked or feared their own bodies more than they disliked or feared women.¹⁰³

The interpretation of male bodies by men included their own notions of an improper physical desire for women who were constituted as intellectual or spiritual. The problem with an embodied abstraction is that it problematizes the abstract with the incidence of the bodily. The body underlines the abstractions which generate its position within an ontic framework.

The struggle to cohesively involve these heteronormative desires in an embodied abstraction of femininity underscores a common problem many religious intellectuals had during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Many ecclesiastical figures undertook an altered masculinity that proved difficult to reconcile with the military class upbringing which provided the church with many of its officials.¹⁰⁴ In order to circumvent this difficulty, many writers chose to depict their spiritual pursuits of the mediatrix within a heteronormative framework of desire. For example, in the hagiography of St Edmund of Abingdon, a young canon places a ring on the finger of a statue of Mary as a form of betrothal; in other versions of this story, the canon engages an earthly marriage but is visited by Mary on his wedding night, and she exhorts him to remain true to their marriage.¹⁰⁵ The pursuit of Mary fulfills medieval masculine expectations about virility through a specular woman. Another way of reasserting masculinity in the religious life was to militarize it. Henry of Huntingdon praises Wulfstan and St Germanus for ecclesiastical acts likened to 'defending their castles and rallying troops to victory'.¹⁰⁶ The religious life is a spiritual war that requires military men. Ecclesiastical masculinity

103 Jacqueline Murray, "Mystical Castration: Some Reflections on Peter Abelard, Hugh of Lincoln and Sexual Control," *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, ed. by Jacqueline Murray (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), p. 85.

104 Jacqueline Murray, "Masculinizing Religious Life: Sexual Prowess, the Battle for Chastity and Monastic Identity," *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 27.

105 Carolyn Diskant Muir, "Bride or Bridegroom? Masculine Identity in Mystic Marriages," *Holiness and Masculinity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 69.

106 Kirsten A. Fenton, "Writing masculinity and religious identity in Henry of Huntingdon," *Religious Men and Masculine Identity in the Middle Ages*, ed. by P.H. Cullum and Katherine J. Lewis (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2013), p. 75.

repurposes the gendered terms of secular masculinity rather than rejects it.

The gendered body, rather than intervening in religious experience, contributes to spiritual identities. The body is marked by spiritual encounters, but the spiritual life is also affected by the body. The former can be seen in Galenic medicine's suggestion that a healthy soul results in humoral balance. Galen's view was popularized in the eleventh century by Constantinus Africanus, and later affirmed in the thirteenth century by the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council.¹⁰⁷ The latter can be seen in Augustine's idea that the spiritual body (*corpus*) was partially constituted and defined by the flesh (*caro*).¹⁰⁸ For Augustine, one's spiritual life emanates out of the experiences in which the flesh participates. The body gives rise to spiritual experience.

These ideas were not converse precepts, but rather complementary ideas that demonstrate the belief in the body and the soul being two sides of a continuum. The late thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century physician Arnau of Villanova, as Joseph Ziegler writes,

employs the terms *sanitas* and *salus* interchangeably. In his medical texts they mean spiritual health. His spiritual texts are saturated with concepts such as *sana doctrina* (sound teaching), *sana mens* (sound mind), and *sanitas* as spiritual health. This shows that, at least linguistically, Arnau the physician and Arnau the spiritual mystic perceive the object of their activity as one and the same thing: health.¹⁰⁹

Arnau collapses differentiations of spiritual and bodily health by considering them as two symptomatic surfaces of the same interconnected system. Not only are physical and spiritual healing connected, but also they in some sense require one another, such that any good spiritual text should contain medical advice, and *vice versa*. In this way, religious experience is an experience of the body.

107 Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa, "Heavenly Vision and Psychosomatic Healing: Medical Discourse in Mechtild of Hackeborn's *The Booke of Gostlye Grace*," *Medicine, Religion and Gender in Medieval Culture*, ed. by Naoë Kukita Yoshikawa (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2015), p. 72.

108 Patricia Dailey, *Promised Bodies: Time, Language & Corporeality in Medieval Women's Mystical Texts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), p. 29.

109 *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8.

Spiritual experience of the body is an important site for patriarchal structures of gendered behavior. In his *Dialogus miraculorum*, the thirteenth-century Cistercian monk Caesarius of Heisterbach recounts only one case where socially disruptive behavior caused a demonic possession: a woman, who had just been cured of a previous possession, defied a priest's orders to remain for thirty days at the shrine of her healing and thus was repossessed. As Sari Katajala-Peltomaa notes, part of the necessity for this punishment was how 'a lay woman contesting a priest's teaching was a potential threat to social hierarchies'.¹¹⁰ Deviation from social hierarchies creates problematically gendered behavior that causes writers to reach for a spiritual explanation of that behavior. The refusal of gendered obedience causes this woman to resume her demonic state. The social sphere invokes the spiritual to explain problematic gender performance.

The connection between the bodily and the spiritual leads to a sex difference grounded in religion, similar to how Hildegard complicates and partially rejects Aristotelian sex difference. In Jerome's late fourth-century letter to Eustochium, widely reproduced in the middle ages, he sexes spiritual resistance to the devil by saying that 'Omnis igitur adversus viros diaboli virtus in lumbis est, omnis in umbilico contra feminas fortitudo' [In his assaults on men, therefore, the devil's strength is in the loins; in his attacks on women his force is in the navel].¹¹¹ Sexual difference overlays spiritual difference, especially in how those differences are problematized. Gratian, in his twelfth-century canon law commentary *Decretum*, asserts men as the head of a marriage and women as the body of a marriage, situating the alterity of women as the very experience of the body.¹¹² He buttresses his point

110 Sari Katajala-Peltomaa, "A Good Wife?: Demonic Possession and Discourses of Gender in Late Medieval Culture," *Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Marianna G. Muravyeyva and Raisa Maria Toivo (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 77.

111 For the Latin, see Jerome, "Ad Eustochium," ed. by F.A. Wright, Perseus <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:2008.01.0566:letter=22&highlight=umbilico%2Cumbilicus>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. Jerome, "Letter 22: To Eustochium," trans. by W.H. Fremantle, G. Lewis and W.G. Martley, *New Advent* <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3001022.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

112 Marie A. Kelleher, "Later Medieval Law in Community Context," *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 135.

by quoting Isidore of Seville's seventh-century *Etymologiae*, which derives the word *vir* (man) from *virtute* (virtue) and the word *mulier* (woman) from *mollitie* (softness), suggesting again a spirit/body divide within the gender binary.¹¹³

The united body/mind of marriage emphasizes men and women as the united halves of the mortal condition: the male-spirit married to the female-matter. Peter Abelard affirms this view in his twelfth-century autobiography.¹¹⁴ In the thirteenth century, theologians like Thomas Aquinas conceived of this difference as a second order difference:

The image of God, in its principal signification, namely the intellectual nature, is found both in man and in woman ... But in a secondary sense the image of God is found in man, and not in woman: for man is the beginning and end of woman; as God is the beginning and end of every creature. So when the Apostle had said that "man is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man," he adds his reason for saying this: "For man is not of woman, but woman of man; and man was not created for woman, but woman for man."¹¹⁵

The image of God is a two-tiered reflection: God reflects his intellect in humanity, of which both men and women are constituted, but God only reflects his liminal nature in men, who themselves contain women in the same way they are themselves contained. Women are therefore only a second order creation of God: men are a creation of God and are contained in him, and women are a creation of Adam's rib and are contained in men. Man's relationship to woman is therefore an inferior/interior parallel of God's relationship to man. For Aquinas, women are an interior creation of man. Women are the bodies that envelop the male *nous* and figure the relationship between the male agencies that pass through those ideas. Since Eve is the body that develops the male image of God into a second order of creation, she is already herself an allegory, a nonliteral physicality that represents in a lower-order

113 Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, p. 242.

114 Peter Abelard, *Abelard & Heloise: The Story of his Misfortunes and The Personal Letters*, trans. by Betty Radice (London: The Folio Society, 1977), p. 52.

115 See Quotation XII. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New Advent <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1093.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], I.93.4.

liminality the intention of the higher order. Eve embodies the 'reciprocal imaging' of the image of God.¹¹⁶

Gender mediates the experience of spiritual truth. The mediatrix bears the junction of the spiritual and the physical. As such, the mediatrix is the site for gender as allegory. The body that refers to and is composed by intangible concepts collapses the difference between the physical and spiritual. The mediatrix appears at the point in which the physical and spiritual conjoin. This appearance creates a social space in which the contingently chaotic patriarchal order can be unified with an omnipotent divine intention. In the dream allegories studied by this thesis, a mediatrix (or anti-mediatrix) appears at the disjunction between a disordered patriarchy and the divine intention, and their gendered performances explain that disjunction.

Gendered Grammar: Structures of Bodily Meaning

What is an allegorical woman? What does it mean to personify the abstract in the feminine? The answer to this begins in the basic point that abstract nouns receive a feminine declension in Latin, but the story of the personified feminine becomes increasingly complex as the genre of medieval allegory develops from classical Latin sources.¹¹⁷

Using rhetorical femininity to construct a male poetic identity through alterity was already part of the classical period: Ovid, Horace, and Propertius all performed this trope in their own ways.¹¹⁸ The medieval allegory in particular owed many conceits to a popular fifth-century allegory, *Psychomachia*

¹¹⁶ James J. Paxson, "Personification's Gender," *Rhetorica* 16.2 (Spring, 1998), pp. 168-9.

¹¹⁷ Masha Raskolnikov, *Body Against Soul: Gender and Sowlehele in Middle English Allegory* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), p. 32.

¹¹⁸ *Defining Genre and Gender in Latin Literature: Essays Presented to William S. Anderson on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by William W. Batstone and Garth Tissol (New York: Peter Lang, 2005). For Ovid, see Gregson Davis, "From Lyric to Elegy: The Inscription of the Elegiac Subject in *Heroides* 15 (Sappho to Phaon)," pp. 175-91. For Horace, see Elizabeth Sutherland, "Literary Women in Horace's *Odes* 2.11 and 2.12," pp. 193-210. For Propertius, see Ellen Greene, "Gender and Genre in Propertius 2.8 and 2.9," pp. 211-38.

by Prudentius. Part of Prudentius' popularity was his Christianization of classical tropes: he borrows from the Pauline letters to establish his poetic precepts.¹¹⁹ Prudentius takes these pre-existing tropes and combines them in complicated ways. The genders of the *Psychomachia* become more than just declensions. In fact, the warriors of the *Psychomachia* are ambiguously gendered, moving between their dual roles of male epic warriors and female abstractions. S. Georgia Nugent argues:

The allegorical warriors of this poem are certainly not the traditional male warriors of epic, but neither are they fully female. It would be more accurate to say that they are females who take on not only the clothing but also some of the attributes of males. The paradoxes of such gender-crossing show up quite explicitly in the battles with Superbia and with Luxuria. In the former, the Vice Superbia casts aspersions on the opposing forces for their lack of manly bellicosity (*imbellesque animos ... gelidum iecur*, *Psych.* 237-38) – but they're *not* men. Again, Superbia expresses shame at even engaging in battle with a female band (*quam pudet ... / cum virgineis dextram conferre choreis*, *Psych.* 240, 242). But – the careful reader wants to object – Superbia herself *is* female ... In the crucial battle with Luxuria, Sobrietas finds it necessary to upbraid her comrades by charging them with effeminacy, taunting them particularly with the charge of cross-dressing (across both gender and cultural lines). So overcome by Luxuria's blandishments are her fellow Virtues that Sobrietas fears they might even stoop to wearing perfume and stepping delicately in flowing silk ropes, Eastern-style. Indeed, they might go so far as to confine their manly hair with a golden headband (*ut mitra caesariem cohibens aurata virilem . . .*, *Psych.* 358). Oh horrors! But hold on – this is the “manly hair” of *women*.¹²⁰

The personified women of the *Psychomachia* are ambiguously gendered: they are held to a male standard while simultaneously being notionally recognized as women. Throughout the poem, if the reader insists on a strictly grammatical approach, then some of the poetic action becomes nonsensical, or at least contradictory. Without appreciating the polyvalence of the literal and allegorical levels of the text, one misses entirely the wry tone which simultaneously exults in and elides the personifications' gendered masquerade.

What is the *Psychomachia*? Literally, it is the soul war. These women represent the virtues and

119 Ralph Hanna, “The Sources and Art of Prudentius' *Psychomachia*,” *Classical Philology* 72.2 (Apr., 1977), pp. 108-15.

120 S. Georgia Nugent, “Virtus or Virago? The Female Personifications of Prudentius's *Psychomachia*,” *Virtue & Vice: The Personifications in the Index of Christian Art*, ed. by Colum Hourihane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 17.

the vices of the sinner's soul. These personifications are delimited constants that mark the spiritual journey towards godliness. Gender is the operant of this dialectic, as the poem makes clear:

mirantur euntem
 Virtutes tolluntque animos in uota uolentes
 ire simul, ni bella duces terrena retardent.
 confligunt Vitiis seque ad sua praemia seruant.¹²¹

Animos is the plural accusative of the grammatically masculine *animus*. Hope's ascendancy creates the division into gender: the eponymous *psychomachia* is the allegorical war which, through femininity, escapes the masculine war of earthly things; and yet, in order to create this divide, the virtues and vices are also opposed. The virtues and the vices inhabit genders that are allegorically unstable: their literal sense is always falling into their allegorical sense. In this way, the femininity of these personifications relies on the constant fear that they will not be feminine. Ascendancy into the moral abstract is here a male act: the *duces* caught between parallel wars are the problematic spaces that measure the distance between the proper spheres of the feminine abstractions. The displacement into femininity is a masculine space, because this rhetorical femininity is already a displacement of masculinity: where the literal disappears, the masculine reappears. Personification allegory relies on a phantasmal interior space where these sorts of interchanges can occur freely. These texts rely primarily on the uncanny apparitional gambit that substitutes external sense, the literal, for the internal sense, the allegorical horizon.

The complexity of allegorical gender play in the *Psychomachia* was not missed by its medieval readers. In a codex containing the *Psychomachia* from eleventh-century Liège, an excerpter appended a glossary which displayed a noted interest in the intricate flexibilities of grammatical gender, including

121 Prudentius, *Psychomachia*, The Latin Library <<http://www.thelatinlibrary.com/prudentius/prud.psycho.shtml>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], ll. 306-9.

words that differed in gender between Greek and Latin, words that could have multiple gender declensions, words whose gender changed in diminutive form, *et cetera*.¹²² Medieval readers of the *Psychomachia* expressed interest in the ways mutable grammatical gender influenced the poetics of Prudentius' allegorical figures. Indeed, the Liège codex also contains a grammar primer by Aelius Donatus which 'looms largest in late antique and medieval grammar'.¹²³ Part of the popularity of Prudentius is the way his gendered allegory creates new space for understanding how Latin structures the experience of the body and the soul.

Allegory and gender, as structural interpretations of the world, are practical deployments of grammar. The connection between grammar and its uses in allegory and gender is present in Quintilian's first-century *Institutio oratoria*, who invokes Nature's propriety of motherhood to justify the moral stature of an orator.¹²⁴ Rhetoric, at the point at which it becomes a question of public morality, invokes allegorical womanhood as the provenance of its moral goodness to justify the art. The need to appeal to allegorical womanhood in order to translate private rhetorical study into a good social act demonstrates the way in which allegory and gender evolve out of social grammar. Grammar goes beyond the page and structures the relationships between bodies in a gendered way. Allegory, as part of rhetoric, inhabits the lively intersection of literary culture and civic discourse. Grammatical study is not a private rigor but a form of public intellectualism.¹²⁵

The public nature of rhetoric informs how allegory, a rhetorical trope, is perceived. Tropes were, according to Donatus, any word which 'transferred from its proper signification to a likeness that is not

122 Robert Gary Babcock, *The Psychomachia Codex from St Lawrence (Bruxellensis 10066-77) and the Schools of Liège in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017), pp. 114-5.

123 *Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300-1475*, ed. by Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 82.

124 Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, trans. by H.E. Butler
<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Quintilian/Institutio_Oratoria/home.html>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], XII.1:2-13.

125 Rita Copeland, "The History of Rhetoric and the Longue Durée: Ciceronian Myth and Its Medieval Afterlives," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 106.2 (Apr., 2007), p. 185.

proper to it for reasons of embellishment [*ornatus*] or necessity'.¹²⁶ A trope enacts linguistic displacement to facilitate a higher level of meaning than is available in the literal sense the sentence supplies. This displacement overdetermines its words as signifiers: the meaning gives way to a second-order meaning in which the original meaning is a constituent function. When a trope is used, the reader is invited to perceive how the inherent sense of a phrase contains within itself the possibility of perception of an external sense. The trope annuls the self-contained nature of the word: the word's meaning bleeds out to its context. While all words and phrases, as units of a sentence, are already employed in a contextualized sense, tropes redouble the contextualization beyond the linear construction of a sentence. A sentence strings together units of sense to construct a larger meaning. A trope redoubles the units of sense to demonstrate how the sensibility of construction is its own larger meaning. Allegory materializes in words the intent of the speaker. The speaker structures their conceptual intent in a manifested body of words.

This concept was described by medieval grammarians as the function of the *intellectum*, or grammatical subjectivity. Petrus Hellas, in a twelfth-century commentary on Priscian's sixth-century grammar, articulates that 'Speech [*locutio*] is similar to a painting, for just as a painting represents and depicts a thing, in the same way speech, too, depicts an understanding [*intellectum*]. For speech-acts [*locutiones*] do not come into being unless to represent an understanding'.¹²⁷ Petrus conceives of speech as denotative expressions of the *intellectum*. His painting analogy operates on the mutual representation of a thing through a medium: an artist paints figures; a speaker articulates *intellectus*. Speech-acts are signifiers of a signified *intellectum*. In the sentence, these signifiers are linked like the lines of a drawing to depict the *intellectum*. For Petrus, words that govern dependent clauses take the words in that clause 'into a construction with itself to make the construction complete – *not*, however, to

126 Aelius Donatus, *Ars grammatica, Medieval Grammar and Rhetoric: Language Arts and Literary Theory, AD 300-1475*, ed. by Rita Copeland and Ineke Sluiter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 86.

127 Ibid, p. 455.

determine the meaning'.¹²⁸ The sentence does not in itself perform a parallel contextualization to the rhetorical trope, rather a trope is something more: it represents subjectivity within the signifier. Tropes are modes of linguistic style. The *intellectus* of *locutiones* is no longer passively depicted from linear constructions of self-contained meaning. Rather, the *intellectus* invades *locutiones* to represent itself as a *locutor*. A trope renders the signifier as the signified of the speaker.

What did grammatical subjectivity mean to a medieval grammarian? Grammatical subjectivity was considered to be a major part of scriptural study, as in John 1:1-3: 'In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt: et sine ipso factum est nihil, quod factum est'.¹²⁹ The divine 'Verbum' produces 'omnia per ipsum facta sunt'. Divine language is reality, as in the first chapter of Genesis. John 1:1's 'In principio erat Verbum' parallels Genesis 1:1's 'In principio creavit Deus caelum et terram'. The creativity of God is the word of God, as in Genesis 1:3: 'Dixitque Deus: Fiat lux. Et facta est lux'. All that exists is the language of God. To understand God is to look at reality as God's speech and recognize through linguistic displacement the spirit of God. The Word is God: grammatical subjectivity is the divinity of expression. The signifier is the signified to the extent that the speaker is reified in language. The meaning of units of sense within the sense world is the expression those units codify. Grammatical subjectivity develops in part through mystical contemplation, as in Bonaventure's thirteenth-century exhortation to read the sense world as the signification of a divine exemplar:

The creatures of this sense world
signify
the invisible attributes of God,
partly because God is
the origin, exemplar and end
of every creature,

¹²⁸ Ibid, pp. 458-9.

¹²⁹ John 1:1-3, Bible, Vulgate, Sacred Texts <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/index.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. Further citations from the *Vulgate* in this chapter will reference the verse in the body of the text.

and every effect is
 the sign of its cause, the exemplification of its exemplar
 and the path to the end, to which it leads¹³⁰

God's intangible divine will produces the characteristics of all tangible things in accordance to a signficatory process in which the object represents a specific intention of a creator. Allegorical possibility is delimited through the unequal reciprocity of sense and signified. Recognizing the hidden spirit of a sense requires an understanding of how the attributes of the sensible allegorically signify their circumscribing exemplar.

Because of this mystical grammatical function, theological and grammatical thinking converge upon the allegorical sense. The scriptures were recognized by medieval theological grammarians as using allegory as a mode of revelation. In the twelfth century, Hugh of St Victor considered allegory to be one of the three ways the Bible rhetorically expresses its meaning, specifically separating it from tropology in general.¹³¹ Thomas Aquinas also considers allegory in scripture to be the signified of the signified which 'presupposes' the literal sense.¹³² Most notably, the scriptures themselves perform this function on other parts of scripture. In Galatians, Paul, interpreting a passage of Genesis, writes: 'Scriptum est enim ... quæ sunt per allegoriam dicta'.¹³³ Linguistically interpreting the divine is a theological necessity. Perhaps this is why the fourteenth-century Wycliffite Bible glosses the word 'allegory', its first appearance in English, 'as "goostly vndirstondinge[.]"'¹³⁴ Spiritual understanding requires meditation on the world as a divine text. Reality is linguistic intention signifying a reality-

130 See Quotation XIII. Bonaventure, *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St Francis*, trans. by Ewert Cousins (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 76.

131 Hugh of St Victor, *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St Victor*, trans. by Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), p. 120.

132 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I.1.10, New Advent <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/1001.htm#article10>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

133 Galatians 4:22-4, Bible, Vulgate, Sacred Texts <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/gal004.htm#024>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

134 E.G. Stanley, "Allegory Through the Ages, As Read Mainly in England and As Seen Anywhere," *On Allegory: Some Medieval Aspects and Approaches*, ed. by Mary Carr, K.P. Clarke, and Marco Nievergelt (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), p. 2.

speaker (as in Genesis 1:3).

Allegory traverses a divine hierarchy through symbolic representations of subjectivity. For the sixth-century patristic Cassiodorus, allegory is what allows the reader of the Bible to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

Now the whole depth of divine Scripture is expressed in such common language that everyone immediately takes it in, but buried within it are hidden senses of truth, so that the vital meaning must be most carefully sought out. What contributes most of all to our understanding that is really divine is the fact that ignorant men are known to have been able to explain most subtle things, and moral men eternal things, but only when filled with the divine Spirit.¹³⁵

Allegory allows a reader to move beyond the strict sense denotation of the word of God to become filled with the divine spirit of the Word. Cassiodorus advocates a rhetorical approach to scripture, as in his commentary on Psalms which contains symbol notations to indicate different tropes as well as some diagrams.¹³⁶ The idea is to teach students to read Psalms as a text rather than merely to explicate meanings didactically.

Reading the overdetermination of language meant, for patristics like Cassiodorus, trying to grasp the higher order unity of meaning which imbued language with rhetorical tropes. Rita Copeland writes, 'As symbolic power, as sanctioned marker or sign, the hierarchy of allegorical/spiritual and literal senses has the power to act on reality by acting on the representation of reality, the power to produce what it designates[.]'¹³⁷ Reality is a productive designation, the result of the figuration of the spirit into the literal. Allegorical thinking is here the way one perceives the spirit back out of the literal through figuration. Allegory calls attention to the layering of signification in speech, becoming an

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 214. No critical edition of the Latin text yet exists.

¹³⁶ James W. Halporn, "After the schools: grammar and rhetoric in Cassiodorus," *Latin Grammar and Rhetoric: From Classical Theory to Medieval Practice*, ed. by Carol Dana Lanham (London: Continuum, 2002), pp. 50-6.

¹³⁷ Rita Copeland, *Pedagogy, Intellectuals, and Dissent in the Later Middle Ages: Lollardy and Ideas of Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 84.

experience of speech as a mode of other-speaking.

Other-speaking serves as the primary function of allegory in the development of a discourse structure that forges connections between grammatical structuring and gender displacement, making it a crucial function in this ideological frame. The clearest example of this connection is Martianus Capella's *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, in which the combination of intellect and study is framed as a marriage, and maidens representing the seven arts are gifts of that marriage.¹³⁸ A scholar's desire to study is represented in the proliferation of a number of allegorical women which invite the narrativizing agency to pursue their signification, their being-for-others, into higher spheres of meaning. The allegoricization of philology into an allegorical bride Philology projects gender into abstract knowledge in order to embody the desire of an encounter: the philologist acquires Philology as he might have expected to acquire a wife and her property.

This shift is facilitated by Capella's Neoplatonist outlook.¹³⁹ Neoplatonism is a reworking of Plato's hierarchy of forms which emphasizes the metaphysical structures of ontology. The ethico-ontological imperative of the Neoplatonist writer Plotinus, as expounded by his student Porphyry, was 'to rejoin, or become fully identified with, one's personal nous or true self in the intelligible world, from which one's soul has descended into Becoming and embodiment, to reverse the process of descent by detaching oneself mentally from material conditions and from the emotions they provoke'.¹⁴⁰ This is the same structure of intellectual ascendance through allegory seen in Capella's work. Intellectual movement into allegorical layers of meaning records the eidetic reduction of material circumstances into a truer, higher sphere of meaning. Counterbalancing this abstraction requires the personification of

138 Martianus Capella, *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii*, Biblioteca digitale di testi latini tardoantichi <[http://digiliblt.lett.unipmn.it/xtf/view?docId=dlt000355/dlt000355.xml;brand=default](http://digiliblt.lett.unipmn.it/xtf/view?docId=dlt000355/dlt000355.xml;brand=default;)>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], Book I.

139 Danuta Shanzer, *A Philosophical and Literary Commentary on Martianus Capella's De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii Book I* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 18.

140 Steven Strange, "Porphyry and Plotinus' Metaphysics," *Studies on Porphyry*, ed. by George Karamanolis and Anne Sheppard (London: Institute of Classical Studies, 2007), p. 24.

that abstraction so that it remains intelligible. Gender expresses the abstractions of interiority into an exterior space manipulatable through social poetics. This textual abstraction allows for a direct investigation into the layers of meaning which overdetermine the denotation of the allegorical phrase.

Grammatical subjectivity creates polydeterminate, transcendental meaning that allows for bodies to allegorically represent abstract concepts. Personified bodies cohere the intangible with the tangible in the same way that gender performs perceptions of the body. Gendered personifications allow a narrative dreamer to perceive the structures which generate bodies.

Gendered Dreams: Neoplatonic Revelation Through Allegorical Femininity

The dreamspace is a revelatory alterity in which symbolic bodies fill the space between social experience and divine order, a phantasmal layer in which the internal displacements of gender become wounds generative of allegorical embodiments.

A reason why dreams served this function was the enduring influence of Neoplatonism. The best way to articulate this Neoplatonic space is through Pseudo-Dionysius, a primary vector of Neoplatonism in both high and late medieval thought, due to his Christianization of antique philosophies.¹⁴¹ For Pseudo-Dionysius, a soul is locked in a concentric unity, but, when ascending to a higher view of the One, the soul moves into a spiral pattern that synthesizes it into a wider unity.¹⁴² Allegory becomes the method by which one recognizes divine meaning in mortal experience. As Pseudo-Dionysius believes,

141 Jean Leclercq, "Influence and noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages," *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, ed. by Paul Rorem (London: SPCK, 1987), pp. 25-32.

142 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names, Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, ed. by Paul Rorem (London: SPCK, 1987), p. 78.

Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself. It ensures that when its members have received this full and divine splendor they can then pass on this light generously and in accordance with God's will to beings further down the scale.¹⁴³

A physical denotation manifests an abstract truth. In this way, Neoplatonist allegory reaffirms hierarchy through its suspension. Hierarchy is suspended for long enough to allow the body to experience the originality of its entrance into a hierarchy. Bodies provide liminal revelations of powers that supersede them. Intermixture of the tangible and intangible allows for a transitory and revelatory elevation of physical beings into spiritual reality. When these bodies become inscribed with gender, especially within a patriarchal system in which bodies themselves are gradated descents from the divine source, the result is, as in *Capella*, a specular femininity reflective of inscribed truth, subjective voids overlaid with being-for-others. Totalistic hegemonization of meaning inscription bends the dreamspace into a place where masculine agencies experience themselves, and their positions within hierarchies, as the proliferation of female bodies. So thoroughly engrained into the core of the dream allegorical genre is this conceit that not even one of the most subversive reinterpretations of medieval personification allegory, Christine de Pizan's fifteenth-century *Le livre de la cité des dames*, achieves total freedom from hegemonized femininity-for-men: the vision ends in an exhortation to women to fulfill their performative duties for men as manifested virtues.¹⁴⁴ Gender provides the hierarchical means for the interplay of allegory and signification along the layers of inscription of the image of God as liminal agency.

Neoplatonism takes this theme from Plato's *Timaeus*, 'the lone dialogue of Plato (partially)

143 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy*, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, ed. by Paul Rorem (London: SPCK, 1987), p. 154.

144 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, trans. by Rosalind Brown-Grant (London: Penguin, 1999), pp. 237-40.

translated into Latin and widely available in the Middle Ages'.¹⁴⁵ Part of the *Timaeus* describes how the demiurge created all souls as men:

And if a person lived a good life throughout the due course of his time, he would at the end return to his dwelling place in his companion star, to live a life of happiness that agreed with his character. But if he failed in this, he would be born a second time, now as a woman. And if even then he still could not refrain from wickedness, he would be changed once again, this time into some wild animal that resembled the wicked character he had acquired. And he would have no rest from these toilsome transformations until he had dragged the massive accretion of fire-water-air-earth into conformity with the revolution of the same and uniform within him, and so subdued the turbulent, irrational mass by means of reason. This would return him to his original condition of excellence.¹⁴⁶

Women are considered as a middle term between men and animals. The metaphysical duty of man is to bring his composite elements into a harmony with the 'original condition of excellence' through the activity of reason. Men are conceived as the dialectical transformation of chaos into reason. Animals are the material of a soul's chaos. Between man and animal, between reason chained to chaos and chaos chained by reason, is woman, both chaos and reason in a flux of 'wickedness'. This wickedness is a deviation of sameness: man's transcendence is located on the chain of homoessential formativity: at one end, absolute sameness, is the transcendent soul, the moral man harmonized with the original condition; at the other end, absolute divergence, is the animal, the wicked man who has immorally diverged as far as possible from the original condition. Women are already moralized as the unoriginal, that which cannot be synthesized, (im)pure alterity.

The extent to which a woman is the other is the extent to which she is contained in the moralized horizon of male possibility. Irigaray argues a similar point in one of her discussions of the *Timaeus*, noting how '[t]he movements of that "other" would take place only *inside* the sphere of

145 Jeffrey Bardzell, *Speculative Grammar and Stoic Language Theory in Medieval Allegorical Narrative: From Prudentius to Alan of Lille* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 85-6.

146 See Quotation XIV. Plato, "Timaeus," trans. by Donald J. Zeyl, *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. by John M. Cooper and D.S. Hutchinson (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1997), p. 1245.

sameness, hemmed in by its orbit. Impacts occur only in an *oblique fashion*, incidentally, and serve (only) to show and confirm the encirclement of/by self-identity of Sameness, Being'.¹⁴⁷ Otherness is delimited by Sameness. Sameness contains Otherness as a moment of its own (un-)becoming: Otherness is the irreducible, uncanny encounter of the incidence of Sameness when it is not the same. This is the problem of the sex binary in a patriarchal configuration: what is a man to do when he encounters a woman, a thing that is both him and not 'him'?

A similar notion of Otherness-in-Sameness defines allegorical theory for Julian of Norwich. She believes that the flesh is given to sin, but the soul never assents to it, as in every soule that shal be save is a godly wille that never assent to synne, ne never shall', which evinces a duality of creation: the body is a contingent covering made of 'the slype of erth' whereas 'mannys soule is made of nought - that is to sey, it is made, but of nought that is made'.¹⁴⁸ The somethingness of the body differentiates it from the soul made of pure godliness prior to that which is made. This division renders a Christian's spiritual journey as an internal hearkening to an element of pure creation prior to the degraded slip of flesh, as Jennifer Garrison writes: 'The difficulty that believers encounter in their struggle for union with God is not the intangibility of God since the soul and God are already united. Rather, the challenge lies in the human capacity to understand that union.'¹⁴⁹ Like Augustine's aforementioned incision of *caro* inside the *corpus*, Julian first divides the soul and then circumscribes the difference. A believer achieves spiritual enlightenment based on the ability of their outer soul to understand the way in which their inner soul is already united with God. The outer soul is still constituent of the soul, but it is not the soul's essential self. The inner soul is closer to God, and so envelops the outer soul as a degraded step from God within the soul's unity. Julian's idiosyncrasy in this passage is to envision this passage

¹⁴⁷ Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, p. 321.

¹⁴⁸ Julian of Norwich, *The Shewings of Julian of Norwich*, ed. by Georgia Ronan Crampton, Middle English Text Series <<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/crampton-shewings-of-julian-norwich>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], Chapter LIII, ll. 2164-6, 2189-90.

¹⁴⁹ Jennifer Garrison, *Challenging Communion: The Eucharist and Middle English Literature* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2017), p. 111.

through unity towards God as a journey going inwards, rather than outwards.

Could this possibly be an effect of Julian's status as a woman, and therefore her exclusion from the 'looking out' privilege of the male gaze? For readers of Julian like Chaucer, there is a nervous tendency to ascribe a supposedly problematic femininity to her work, as Karma Lochrie writes of the Prioress' brooch echoing Julian's *Revelations of Divine Love*:

Chaucer's portrait [of the Prioress], I would suggest, is not a personal attack on Julian of Norwich, but it is an invocation of Julian's work by way of criticizing a late medieval spirituality associated with women that emphasized affective devotion, used human love and domestic relationships to understand divine love ... Lollardy provides Chaucer's framework for critiquing orthodox spirituality of the feminine variety at the end of the fourteenth century.¹⁵⁰

When a prioress is subjected to Chaucer's satirical tendency, it is precisely the gendered perception of their affective devotion that is lampooned. The inward progression into mystic understanding of God is also, for male readers, an inward progression into a female body, which is then negatively contrasted to the patriarchal privilege of projecting outwards from the body. It is strange that Chaucer, whose oeuvre provides a series of landmark works of internally revelatory dreamscapes rich with allegorical human relationships, should have this very objection. When femininity appears as its own field of possibility, with its own internal worlds, all sorts of paradoxical arguments seem to proliferate. Mediating femininities are ideologically powerful, and it is that very power that makes them capable of generating so much confliction.

The internalized divinity-other of the soul appears also in other Chaucerian sources like Macrobius, who argues, from Plato, that the soul contains an upper, rational part which acts as a conduit to divine knowledge beyond the limitations of material knowledge. How does one access this higher part of the soul? The answer lies in the narrative aperture through which Macrobius considers

¹⁵⁰ Karma Lochrie, *Heterosyncrasies: Female Sexuality When Normal Wasn't* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), p. 63.

this problem: his commentary on a dream (*somnium*). Macrobius' meditations on the rational soul require him to consider the revelatory content of a dream. The dream manifests the latent possibility of higher meaning at which physical knowledge can only hint.

Macrobius' dreamscape is the place in which allegorical elevation into higher knowledge can occur. Macrobius typifies the *somnium*, or the interpretive dream, as one that 'tegit figuris et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significationem rei quae demonstratur' [conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding].¹⁵¹ Allegory and *somnia* enact the same revelatory principle in which the interplay of objects illustrates an intangible concept or narrative. Truth in the allegorical dream is transcendental: one understands what is being displayed only by learning how to look beyond what is displayed. The allegorical dream is the 'hidden presented', or a transmission of knowledge recognized only in the context of the knowledge of the transmission. The Book of Daniel is a source for Macrobius' formulation of the allegorical dream, as it clearly states 'Deus in caelo revelans mysteria qui indicavit' in the 'somnium tuum et visiones capitis'.¹⁵² Dreams are therefore biblically demarcated sites for revelations of divine mysteries.

The interpretation of dreams in the dream allegory can be more complex, however. Chaucer's use of Macrobius' *fantome* describes the dreamstate of his *House of Fame*.¹⁵³ As William A. Quinn suggests, this ambiguity suggests '[t]he House of Fame (the thing, the dream, and the text) explores the *terra incognita* between an objective signifier and a subjective determination of the signified, between

151 For the Latin, see Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiani, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis*, ed. by Jacobus Willis (Berlin: Teubner, 1963), p. 10. For the English, see Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Macrobius*, trans. and ed. by William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 90.

152 Daniel 2:28, Bible, Vulgate <<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+2&version=VULGATE>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

153 William A. Quinn, "Chaucer's Recital Presence in the "House of Fame" and the Embodiment of Authority," *The Chaucer Review* 43.2 (2008), p. 172.

the perception of a *res* and the interpretation of its *signum*'.¹⁵⁴ In *The House of Fame*, however, Chaucer encounters figures of authority within his dream that present understanding beyond the limits of his own sphere of understanding. His dream figures represent a higher order of synthesis with God that his dream ambiguously compresses into the possibility of uncertainty and misinterpretation. The eponymous House of Fame represents the area in which speech is re-embodied (and properly re-sexed) in a twilight realm to be judged.¹⁵⁵ Themes of the anxiety of the self *qua* a transcendent aesthetic pervade the poem. Chaucer's narrator feels his confusion and inferiority in a dreamspace where the bodies around him are more densely symbolic than his own.

This is the Neoplatonist allegorical dream dilemma: how does one approach a higher synthesis within the terms of a material dissonance? As Peter T. Struck puts it, '[Plotinus'] view of the One as an entirely transcendent entity that also still (somehow) manifests itself in visible, tangible, concrete reality, sets out a paradox that is a natural incubator for allegorical thinking'.¹⁵⁶ Neoplatonism uses allegory to explore this paradoxical space where visible bodies signify transcendent concepts. An allegory pairs a denotative scene with a connotative theme. Personification allows complex metaphysical ideas to interact in a symbolic social structure. However, through Aristotelian sex difference and Timaeian ideas of deviation, physical bodies already represent transcendent states. Gender is already a source of allegorical thinking. Bodies are already allegories. The paradox is resolved by being affirmed: a transcendent entity can represent itself in tangible bodies, because those bodies already signify metaphysical truths.

How do specific connotations of gender interact with the textual-spiritual ascendancy of understanding in Neoplatonic allegoricization? Silvestris' text *Cosmographia* provides an exemplary

154 Ibid, p. 173.

155 Geoffrey Chaucer, *The House of Fame*, *Riverside Chaucer*, third ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), ll. 1070-83, pp. 360-1.

156 Peter T. Struck, "Allegory and Ascent in Neoplatonism," *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. by Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 59.

moment of gendered allegory:

Mercury travels around the orbit of the sun on a closely contiguous path, and thus is often heralded by the very power whose herald he is. Because of the law which governs his orbit he rises at times about the sun, and sometimes lurks beneath him. Compliant and indecisive, Mercury does not point to the coming of misfortune in the affairs which he governs by his stellar clarity. Rather his relations with other powers vindicate or corrupt him. Joined with the madness of Mars or the liberality of Jove, he determines his own activity by the character of his partner. Epicene and sexually promiscuous in his general behavior, he has learned to create hermaphrodites of bicorporeal shape. This god held a slender wand in his hand, and his feet were winged, lightly shod and bound, as befitted one who performed the office of interpreter and messenger of the gods.¹⁵⁷

Mercury has an epicene, hermaphroditic nature because of his queer subversion of a gendered law. If Mercury is the 'interpreter and messenger of the gods', then this queer subversion is precisely the moment of gender instability of transmission in the allegorical hierarchy of meaning. Mercury's unstable sex is an allegorical mode: he is the grammatical trope by which an activity is determined by the activity of another: interpretation is an activity in response to a communicative activity. This doubly active maleness creates a problematic gender space in allegory within a grammatical context. The character of Mercury's partner remains equally ambiguous and effective: Mercury switches activities depending on his partner. Perception requires a definitive integration of the intellectable and the intellectual understanding, wherein the former asserts the latter as constituent of its content, but Mercury's subversive nature creates an open mediation in which a perceived outcome has to be read back through any number of possible causes.

Mercury's epicene role in the *Cosmographia* is similar to the role of the phantasm in John Buridan's fourteenth-century commentary on Aristotle's *De anima*. The soul has access to intellectual knowledge, but the soul's position in the body allows for intellectable information which has no

157 See Quotation XV. Bernardus Silvestrius, *The Cosmographia of Bernardus Silvestrius*, trans. by Winthrop Wetherbee (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 103.

external source: this is the phantasm.¹⁵⁸ The body dilutes the conduit of the upper register of the soul with corporeal noise. Experience of the dreamspace requires a projection out of the limited corporeal frame into the full potentialities of the soul, but this experience is problematized by embodiment. Projection into the dream personification could misfire into mere projection of the body into the abstract. This problematized embodiment has, as in the Mercury example, a strange experience of gender which does not conform to the proper allegorical self-estrangement.

This queer gender redeployment shows up in Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*. As Adin Esther Lears points out, 'The Dreamer's complicated gender is evident' from 'the Dreamer's physical and psychological infirmity' which interrupts the dreamspace and renders the Dreamer too 'passive and impotent'.¹⁵⁹ The Dreamer's bodily experiences prevent him from a proper participation in the dreamspace, and this preclusion has gendered consequences due to the association between activity and masculinity in the Neoplatonist dream vision. This inability to properly participate in the dream vision may inform the way in which the encounter with the Black Knight ends unsatisfactorily. The pallid knight struggles to sing, and his 'song's connection to voicedness becomes increasingly attenuated in the poem's suggestion that the song locates itself as inscription on the knight's body. The references to the knight's difficulties with voice narratively frame, in the sequence of verses, the object of his verses'.¹⁶⁰ When the verse transmission of the dream vision breaks down, the allegorical message becomes inscribed on the bodies of its figures. Once more, bodies retain the failure for allegorical transcendence through the dream vision. The Dreamer's inability to fully sleep marks his sluggish participation in the dream as impassive, whereas the Black Knight's inability to complete his song marks his objective presentation as an allegorical body. In Chaucer's dream allegories, bodies display

158 Jack Zupko, "Change and Identity in Buridan's *Intellectio* Theory," *Later Medieval Metaphysics: Ontology, Language, and Logic*, ed. by Charles Bolyard and Rondo Keele (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), pp. 145-9.

159 Adin Esther Lears, "Something from Nothing: Melancholy, Gossip, and Chaucer's Poetics of Idling in the Book of the Duchess," *The Chaucer Review* 48.2 (2013), p. 209.

160 Seeta Chaganti, *The Medieval Poetics of the Reliquary: Enshrinement, Inscription, Performance* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 44.

the precarity of the dream transmission.

At this juncture, the analysis of allegorical gender arrives at fertile ground for interrogations of fourteenth-century English dream allegories. The complexity of the ways that fourteenth-century English dream allegories use gender are responses to a long and complex literary heritage, which this chapter has explored and explicated. The fact that dream allegories, as a genre, took on allegorical gender as an ontological discourse is unsurprising given how allegorical gender structured medieval ontology. Allegorical gender provides the basis for substantiation desire within a social order reproduced through ontic alterity. This basis allows for a divine order to be devotionally contemplated through gender. This capacity of allegorical gender serves as a major conceit of the allegorical mode which allows for dream allegories to make use of gender as a form of ontic mediation between layers of signification. During the medieval period, this allegorical capacity contributed to the development of a gendered discourse which reflected an internalized problem of the ego within an incompletely represented order. The embodiment of this supposed misrepresentation required a mediation, and this space nurtured the uses of gender that dream allegories pursued in the medieval period. As this thesis will show in the remaining chapters, the uses for this gendered mediation varied, but the underlying principles which provided those uses resonated with allegorical gender thinking of the medieval period in such a way as to produce a poetic reckoning of embodied struggles within a conceptual sphere.

The struggle for the body's meaning creates a gendered interiority which reflects personified ontological representations as a unified alterity. Unified alterity allows the displaced subject to sustain the ego across the gap of failures of an ontological expectation to manifest. The way gender mediates the incarnation of the struggle for identity creates a number of important tensions in fourteenth-century English dream allegories.

Part II:

Allegorical Interpretations

Chapter II: *Boece* and the Feminine Conduit of Masculine Unities

In the *Boece*, a male narrative persona experiences the failure for a patriarchal structure to socially secure his masculine performance as a gendered failure that requires the consoling intervention of a mediatrix. A fictionalized Boethius, believing he has been subverted by the allegorical woman Fortune, engages in a dialogue with another allegorical woman, Philosophy. In this dialogue, Boethius lists his complaints against Fortune's anti-mediatrix disruption of the unity between the worldly patriarchy and the divine order, but Philosophy addresses each complaint by widening Boethius' perspective to higher, more philosophical viewpoints in which Fortune's contingencies do not disrupt the divine order. If Boethius is willing to adhere to the consolation of philosophy, then his masculine performance is secured, regardless of the contingent failures of earthly society.

This framework makes use of all five areas of gender explored in Part I. The failure for masculinity to cohere is projected upon women, in this case Fortune and the muses, as in Aristotelian medicine. Boethius experiences an internal femininity, Philosophy, that allows him to rhetorically perceive the divine, as in gendered mysticism. This internal femininity mediates social disruptions that threaten the metaphysical logic of patriarchal systems, as in the social mediating function of the feminine mediatrix. The mediatrix achieves this consolation by enjoining the male narrative persona to recognize the divine intention that orders reality, as in grammatical subjectivity. This perception of the divine results in revelatory symbology that structures gendered bodies, as in Neoplatonic dreams. The *Boece* is an important literary marker, because it demonstrates the ways all these ideas influenced the dream allegory genre that Middle English receives in the fourteenth century.

The *Boece* demonstrates four further points about the gendered role of the mediatrix.

First, the mediatrix performs femininity successfully to the extent that it repairs masculinity. Boethius' worldly misfortunes result in the failure for his gender performance to socialize his identity.

Philosophy rectifies this by helping Boethius to recognize the spiritual nature of his gender performance that supersedes material failures.

Second, the improper femininity of Fortune demonstrates the way in which the discursive masculine transit of alterity subjugates femininity as a moralized, anticipated response to masculine subjectivity. In the Boethian view, Fortune's refusal to properly adhere to Boethius' gender performance reflects negatively on Fortune, rather than Boethius. The mediatrix is a responsive mode to masculine subjectivity; any exercise of independent agency in the feminine intervention leads to an improperly feminine anti-mediatrix.

Third, the anti-mediatrix, because she presents content anterior to hierarchical masculinities, is believed to represent nothing. Philosophy considers Fortune to be a contingent lapse that folds back into itself when hierarchical masculinities are reunited. The anterior space of the anti-mediatrix is a void. Philosophy consoles Boethius by giving him a worldview that collapses Fortune back into her void, such that her agency evaporates.

Fourth, the feminine mediatrix vanishes back into masculinity when her purpose is complete. The mediatrix cannot stand on her own: she requires agencies to mediate. Each mediatrix possesses no inherent content of her own, but rather symbolically presents the concepts necessary to heal the lacuna at which the mediatrix appears. In this way, femininity retains its status as alterity: only when otherness persists can femininity appear. When unity is achieved, femininity fades into the union of masculinities.

Each of these points will be explored in their own section of this chapter.

Reading the Woman Within: The Internal Mediatrix

What is the purpose of the dialogue in the *Boece*, and how does Philosophy achieve consolation

through it? *Boece* dramatizes Boethius' attempt to understand the value of social morality in a chaotic world that often rewards immorality. Philosophy embodies Boethius' search for answers, an internal speaker who convokes Boethius' monologue into a dialogue. As Olga Malinovskaya argues,

[Philosophy] does not seem to represent the ultimate truth, rather than the continuous search for it. Philosophy is not necessarily the culmination of the metaphysical introspection, which Boethius-the-character undergoes as a cure for his initial discontent, but a prerequisite to such. ... The difficulty of metaphysical introspection [for Boethius] lies precisely in the limited point of view to begin with, when the mind is still turned towards the material world. This can be overcome with the help of the allegorical personification of intellectual concepts ... Boethius presents personification itself as a pre-condition of metaphysical introspection, the movement of the mind away from the concrete world of changing fortunes and objects of sensory perception. In other words, in the *Consolation* Lady Philosophy gives voice to a point of view or rather to the consecutive points of view that raise the mind towards *theoria* and provides for a staged revelation, activating the cognitive register of reception necessary to it.¹

Philosophy allegorically embodies the possibility of philosophy, of reinterpreting 'what is' through 'why it must be so'. The consolation of philosophy is the recognition of that 'why' in the 'what', thereby reinterpreting the chaos and suffering of the 'what' in the divinely ordered and morally just 'why'. She is the soul's love of wisdom constantly engaged with the stubborn flesh in an endless oscillation between mortal existence's two cosmological poles of materiality and spirituality. Boethius contains Philosophy as a spiritual mode: she constantly cajoles him to her level of spiritual understanding, not by changing any material circumstances, but rather by recalling to Boethius the proper spiritual interpretation of those circumstances.

The Boethian tradition developed concepts of an internalized, elevated duality into a singular feature of their linguistic redeployments. This relationship between Boethius and Philosophy was not ancillary to the theme of *De consolazione philosophiae*, but a key component of its thematic mechanics.

¹ Olga Malinovskaya, "Personification and *abstractio* in Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*," *On Allegory: Some Medieval Aspects and Approaches*, ed. by Marry Carr, K.P. Clarke, and Marco Nievergelt (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2008), pp. 59-60.

Translators picked up on these themes in their own attempts to articulate them, even before the late medieval period. For instance, King Alfred's late ninth- or tenth-century translation 'refers to the narrator as Mind (*mod*) and Lady Philosophy as Wisdom (*wisdom*)'.² The Mind is the bodily form of the ghostly, spiritual Wisdom. King Alfred's translation interprets the bodily nature of Boethius and his search for wisdom by personifying the narrator as Mind. The divide between Mind and Wisdom suggests the earthly unity of Mind in which Wisdom remains the ghostly thread weaving the Mind into the larger theological harmony.

Sexuation is the force that internalizes this duality into a coherently contiguous split. At one juncture, the *Boece* amplifies the gendered nature of this duality by preserving an idiosyncratic recalibration of the Latin by Jean de Meun. The Latin original describes the movement of the providential ordinance cycling through 'eadem nascentia occidentiaque omnia per similes fetuum seminumque renouat progressus', but Jean renders 'fetuum' as 'de sexez semences de naturez maslez et femeles'.³ Chaucer continues with 'And thilke same ordre neweth ayein alle thinges growynge and fflynge adoun, by semblable progressions of sedes and of sexes (that is to seyn, male and femele). And this ilke ordre constreneth the fortunes and the dedes of men by a bond of causes nat able to ben unbownde'.⁴ The order of divine providence occurs through sexed progressions. The order of causality manifests sex alongside its constraint of fortunes and deeds in an unfathomable systematization of providence. Sexed bodies inextricable from the progression of divine providence contextualize how the female personifications interact with Boethius' masculine unity.

2 Philip Edward Philips, "The English Tradition of Boethius's *De consolazione philosophiae* with a Checklist of Translations," *Vernacular Traditions of Boethius's De consolazione philosophiae*, ed. by Noel Harold Kaylor, Jr. and Philip Edward Philips (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2016), p. 223.

3 For the Latin, see Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae*, ed. by James J. O'Donnell, Perseus <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0121%3Abook%3D4%3Asectio%3DP6>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], IV.p6. For the French, see Jean de Meun, *Li livres de confort de philosophie, Sources of the Boece*, ed. by Tim William Machan and A.J. Minnis (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2005), IV.p6.

4 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Boece*, IV.p6, p. 452. All subsequent citations of *Boece* in this chapter will be in the form of a parenthetical line number.

In *Boece*, paternalistic views of reproduction constrict the sexed duality of the soul into a transitive mode between levels of the patriarchal chain: the soul translates divine maleness into mortal maleness. This masculine unity of the body extends the properly male justification of divine patriarchy. Boethius' soul derives its power from the form in which this power is bestowed akin to reproduction:

Alle the lynage of men that ben in erthe ben of semblable byrthe. On allone is fadir of thynges; on allone mynstreth alle thynges ... He encloseth with membres the soules that comen from his heye sete. Thanne comen alle mortel folk of noble seed. Why noysen ye or bosten of your eldres? For yif thow loke youre bygynnyng, and God your auctour and yowr makere, thanne nis ther none forlyned wyght or ongentil, but if he noryssche his corage unto vices and forlete his propre byrthe. (III.m6)

God the Father, as father, paternally guarantees all bodies a spiritually noble birth. The soul that spiritually activates the body as a site of meaning retains the male mark of God's seed as a sign of nobility. The soul is the junction between two layers of being as an event in the patriarchal chain of causality. Movement towards the spiritual involves the body through time as an act of the soul.

The prose development of Boethius' growing awareness of consolation occurs through a feminine recontextualization of a masculine unity. Chaucer's prose rendition of the work genders this femininity as subordinate by refusing that femininity its verse moment of elevation into pure form. This new gendering follows from Trevet's commentary on this passage, which argues that, in a disembodied state, 'the soul receives forms from God by which it attains knowledge.'⁵ Knowledge is embodied in forms the soul receives in a disembodied state: alienation from self creates anterior embodiments which serve as signifiers of divine authority. An elevated female signifier restores the link between the masculine material and the masculine divine. Philosophy consoles Boethius' suffering by appearing within him as a signifier capable of catalyzing his internal progression towards divine truth beyond the

5 Lodi Nauta, "The *Consolation*: the Latin commentary tradition, 800-1700," *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. by John Marenbon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 265.

temporal subversions of Fortune.

Feminine personifications enact the verse moments of the prose progressions of Boethius' consolation. They perform temporal motions according to a sequence that entwines Boethius to a *logos* capable of ascending to divine understanding.⁶ They signify the elevated content of the distinct stages of Boethius' internal journey: the muses portray the domineering emotional totality of his material grief, Fortune contains in her identity the accusative frustrations of Boethius' struggle to reconcile his material grief with his spiritual consolation, and Philosophy emerges from alterity to restore Boethius to a spiritual consolation. All these allegorical women embody internal stages of Boethius' consolation. The muses, the lowest of these feminine personifications, appear at the allegorical moment of Boethius' material abjection. These feminine muses justify Boethius' emotions through the conceit of constraint. In a state of 'wepyng' he is 'constreyned to bygynnen vers of sorwful matere ... For lo, rendyng' muses of poetes enditen to me thynges to ben writen, and drery vers of wretchidnesse weten my face with verray teres' (I.m1). Imaginary women act as semi-deified causes of Boethius' own emotional state. His 'verray teres' result from the 'drery vers' the muses 'enditen' him to write. Boethius's sorrow does not initiate his verse, but rather results from the verse initiated through him by the muses. The word 'enditen' is one of dictation, an inspiration to be repeated by an amanuensis.⁷ This verb is transitive: the muses 'enditen to me thynges'. What he writes is prescribed for him; Boethius is the scribe of the verses of his own sorrows. In this way, Boethius is not responsible for the expressions of grief that Philosophy will later abjure: rather, his text is generated by a female intervention, which must then be replaced, as a palimpsest, with a divine inscription of what he should say, that is, the consolation of Philosophy. A useful paradox: on one hand, he is not responsible for what the muses compel him to say; on the other hand, the muses have no content in themselves, they merely encourage

⁶ Eleanor Johnson, "Chaucer and the Consolation of *Prosimetrum*," *The Chaucer Review* 43.4 (2009), pp. 457-8.

⁷ OED, 'indite, v'. <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/94620>>

Boethius to generate his own verses. The dynamic struggle for Boethius is circumscribed within his agency, a battle for which of his internal modes will be negated. The external paradox of Fortune, in which one is compelled towards a moral duty that may or may not actually receive any just response from society, has become an internal paradox, one that Boethius can resolve within himself. This conceit is not lost on Chaucer: *The Book of the Duchess* also 'transfers the responsibility for what was said from [the narrator's] waking self to the vagaries of dream, and thus renders possible a more intimate picture of his patron's loss'.⁸ Internalization into the allegorical scene renders the thematic tensions more intimate while also requiring a certain abdication of self into a pseudopassive witness, and in the vagaries of this loss appear women which vanish.

In *Boece*, the internal performance of resolution appears as a battle between a properly feminine mediatrix, Philosophy, and the improperly feminine anti-mediatrix, Fortune. The femininity of these figures is judged by the extent to which their gendered performance vanishes into a reconciliation with hierarchical masculine authority. Fortune disrupts the patriarchy by refusing to accord Boethius a socially instantiated identity for his gender performance, whereas Philosophy reconciles patriarchy with divine authority by demonstrating that Boethius' gendered performance is a spiritual duty that the world cannot interrupt. Boethius must adopt a wider view of his gender, one that travels up the self-privileging retroactive trace towards Source, in order to resolve the wound of its worldly annulment. Femininity appears in his experience of gender failure: proper femininity returns him to masculinity, whereas improper femininity compels him deeper into an unregulated femininity-for-itself.

Concentrations of Identity as Nodes of Subjective Progression

⁸ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), pp. 208-9.

Fortune concentrates Boethius' sorrow by embodying his experience outside of his identity. Boethius compares his past with his present through a juxtaposition of the ways Fortune has treated him: 'Whil Fortune, unfeithful, favouede me with lyghte goodes, the sorwful houre (that is to seyn, the deth) hadde almoost dreynt myn heved. But now, for Fortune cloudy hath changed hir deceyvable chere to meward, myn unpietous lif draweth along unagreeable duellynges in me' (I.m1). The contrast between the living death of Fortune's faith and the deathless life of Fortune's fickleness emphasizes Boethius' emotional subjugation to the whims of Fortune. When Fortune was faithful to Boethius, death could have drowned him without him noticing. Now that Fortune is unfaithful to Boethius, he lives a miserable life, aware of every hour that death eludes him. Life and death alternate with activity and contemplation along the axis of Fortune's faith. Fortune is faithful: Boethius lives a deathly activity. Fortune is unfaithful: Boethius lives a deathless contemplation. This paradigm shifts the weight of activity from Boethius to an allegorical woman.

The power that Boethius believes Fortune holds over him makes him a passive recipient of her allegorical content. His actions are irrelevant: although he was an honest participant in 'boondes of thynges' that God 'knyttest' (I.m5), still he is tormented by Fortune. He has no agency over his fate. He can only contemplate his lot in life, with no power to effect any change. For Boethius, however, life bears no contemplation: 'Thilke deth of men is weleful that ne comyth nocht in yeeris that ben swete, but cometh to wrecches often yclepid. Allas, allas! With how deef an ere deth, cruwel, turneth away fro wrecches and nayteth to closen wepynge eien' (I.m1). Death operates a cruel paradox: death should come to 'wrecches' to whom 'Fortune cloudy hath changed hir deceyvable chere', but instead sneaks up on those 'in yeeris that ben swete' with Fortune's 'lyghte goodes'.

This paradox cements Fortune's activity over Boethius state. Fortune's change does not rob Boethius of an activity he previously held. Rather, Fortune, as the one who changes, is the activity. Death, as something that happens to someone, demonstrates the inefficacy of those held in either

position by Fortune. Those who live in Fortune's favor decry the death that happens to them; those who live in Fortune's disfavor long for the death that eludes them. Boethius' state is not the result of Fortune's action but is rather the very measure of Fortune's action. Boethius in both the past and the present is subject to Fortune. Fortune's demeanor towards Boethius enacts her power over him. Agency is prescribed by Fortune. Fortune's whims dictate Boethius' emotions.

Experiences of Fortune contextualize male subjectivities. This shift is present within the text as the justification for the allegory: Boethius' master-student debate with the allegorical Philosophy makes use of the real grievances between the political men with whom Boethius has feuded. He stresses his virtue by noting 'How ofte have I resisted and withstonden thilke man that highte Connigaste' and 'How ofte eek have I put of or cast out hym Trygwille, provoste of the kyngis hous' (I.p4). He takes the time to name some of his accusers like Cyprian, Opilion, and Gaudencius (I.p4). He compares his situation to the historical example of Canus's defense against the accusations of Gaius Caesar (I.p4). These historical men ground the poem's allegory to justify its content. They are the earthly names the text allegorically elevates into an inclusive figure of Fortune. Boethius concludes his complaint to Philosophy by saying, 'We men ... ben turmented in this see of fortune' (I.p4). Fortune's inconstancy is Boethius' loss in a political struggle with several men. Men are tormented by Fortune, who is delineated in specific men.

By concentrating his experiences in allegorical women, Boethius creates internal objects by which to waymark his personal journey. The imaginary women of the *Boece* allegorize the political and emotional struggles of historical men. These women operate in an elevated imaginative concentration internal to Boethius the narrator (but not necessarily Boethius the writer, who has a retrospective distance between the textual subjectivity): Boethius as a transitive move between Fortune and the muses recontextualizes those women as orbiting around Boethius. He becomes central through a conceit of submission: the muses cajole him to versify his despair; Fortune's whims are merely the

alternations of Boethius' fortunes. The discursive allegorical concentration is a space oriented by Boethius' internal needs.

Allegorical concentration is layered over subjective internality in a spiritual hierarchy. Philosophy's entrance is a descent, a transmission: her body incorporates the allegorical external into an elevated feminine form that directly addresses the personal internal. She descends from 'aboven the heghte of myn heved' from a position which overlooks 'the comune myghte of men' (I.p1). She descends from outside; she sees beyond. Her appearance to Boethius presents a dual surface that simultaneously participates in Boethius' space while indicating the incapacity for the space to contain her: 'The stature of hire was a doutous jugement, for somtyme sche constreyned and schronk hirelven lik to the comune mesure of men, and somtyme it semede that sche touchede the hevene with the heghte of here heved' (I.p1). Philosophy descends into Boethius' internal space in an uncanny way that retains her external elevation. She is both appearing to him and appearing beyond him.

Philosophy's body marks her dual status as internal and external. The doubling of spatial magnitudes in Boethius' perception of Philosophy's body is allegorically relevant, because Philosophy's signified role is to convey the wisdom of spiritual transcendence into the spiritual enclosure of the student: 'And whan sche hef hir heved heyere, sche percede the selve hevene so that the sighte of men lokynge was in ydel' (I.p1). This use of 'percede', or 'pierce', has a mystically transcendent meaning that occurs both in this passage and in contemporaries like Langland and Gower.⁹ The word can mean that one opens up an avenue of contemplative access into Heaven. This resonance is not necessarily present in *De consolacione philosophiae*, in which the phrase 'quae cum altius caput extulisset ipsum etiam caelum penetrabat respicientiumque hominum frustrabatur intuitum' more conservatively echoes the

⁹ Definition 5, Middle English Dictionary <<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/m/mec/med-idx?type=id&id=MED32913&egs=all&egdisplay=open>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. See also 'pierce, v.', OED <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/143599>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

preceding passage about the indeterminate location of the head.¹⁰ 'Percede' has a deeper spiritual connotation than 'penetrabat', an artifact of the cultural differences between the two versions.¹¹ In the *Boece*, Philosophy's visual indeterminacy upon the coordinates of mortal reality signifies communication between earthly existence and divine providence. Philosophy's head is a portal to heaven; the wisdom of philosophy can lead one to a closer unity with God. Philosophy's body is marked by her allegorical significance. Boethius struggles to see Philosophy properly, leading to the necessity of their ensuing dialogue.

Boethius' encounter with Philosophy is a process of internalizing the external transcendence of her allegorical content. Philosophy's body is what initiates their master-student relationship.

Philosophy's appearance invites Boethius to read her, as Emily Steiner argues:

Lady Philosophy invites Boethius to read her as a “set piece”: he learns something about her by reading her costume allegorically, which in turn prepares him to be her student. Her status is expressed as stature – philosophy is a lofty if human science – and as material richness – though an enlightening pursuit, philosophy is ransacked and abused by unprincipled persons. In short, Philosophy's appearance is Boethius's initiation into profitable reading, and it is in reading female nobility that he accepts her as an instructor.¹²

Philosophy should be read for consolation, and so Philosophy presents her body (and her dress) as a text to Boethius to initiate him into his consolation. Philosophy manifests philosophical texts to engender the allegorical scene out of Boethius' interiority. She personifies his activity. She signifies a revelatory space in which he can be enlightened as to the actual nature of his situation. The dialogue between Boethius and Philosophy is, allegorically, a feminine appearance which Boethius reads to

10 Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae*, ed. by James J. O'Donnell, Perseus
<<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0121%3Abook%3D1%3Asectio%3DP1>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], I.p1. Subsequent citations of *De consolatione philosophiae* in this chapter will be in the form of a section number and a link.

11 'penetro', *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, Perseus
<<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0059%3Aentry%3Dpenetro>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

12 Emily Steiner, *Reading Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 24-5.

subdue his own internal anxieties.

The equivalence between Philosophy's body and the texts Boethius reads influences several of the illuminations that adorned manuscripts of the Boethian tradition. Most notably, three of the four illustrations of Philosophy in MS Douce 352, a c. 1460 manuscript of Jean de Meun's translation, depict Boethius simultaneously reading books and conversing with Philosophy.¹³ All three illuminations feature a book, and Boethius' eyes focus on the text rather than on Philosophy, emphasizing Philosophy's appearance as the phantasmal layer which occurs through the text: her appearance is the allegorical result of Boethius' reading. The other image of Philosophy, in which no books are depicted, the illustration on f. 48v, features Boethius in his most animated pose. This illustration precedes Book IV, which features the most densely interactive segments of the dialogue, and so the pose of scholastic disputation that the image presents suits the place in the work in which it appears. Intellectual extemporization was often interpreted as another type of reading. Bernardo Gui, in his early fourteenth-century hagiography of Thomas Aquinas, recalls how Aquinas spoke so clearly that it seemed as if he was reading aloud.¹⁴ Aquinas' clear dictation creates a closed reading-speech-reading loop: what is read is verbalized to be written. The translation between the two modes occurs seamlessly and dissolves quickly into each other. This relationship to reading and sound was very close for older, more authoritative sources like Isidore, who remarks that 'Praeterea purum et honestum oratoris eloquium carere debet omnibus vitiis tam in litteris, quam in verbis' [The pure and chaste speech of an orator should be without all faults, as much in letters as in words].¹⁵ Oration and writing are interpreted

13 MS Douce 352, f. 18r, 30r, 48v, 66r. <<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/47880b55-55be-44a1-aa4f-f6cfc149aad4>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. See f. 48v for the depiction of Philosophy without books.

14 For the Latin, see Bernardo Gui, *Vita sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, *Fontes vitae sancti Thomae Aquinatis*, ed. by D. Prümmer (Tolosae: Revue Thomiste, 1912), p. 184. For the English, see Bernardo Gui, *The Life of St Thomas Aquinas: Biographical Documents*, trans. by Kenelm Foster (London: Longmans, Green, 1959), p. 51.

15 For the Latin, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. by W.M. Lindsay, LacusCurtius <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/L/Roman/Texts/Isidore/2*.html>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], II.19. For the English, see Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 75.

as separate modes of the same discipline and are thus equivalent duties for the skilled rhetorician. Thus, even though a book does not physically appear in the f. 48v illustration, nevertheless the concept of reading lies implicit in the image.

These themes are already present in fourteenth-century manuscripts of the Boethian tradition. For instance, a miniature of Boethius holding a book and pointing at it adorns the start of the text in MS Burney 130, a late fourteenth-century manuscript of *De consolazione philosophiae*.¹⁶ Prefacing the text in this way produces a metalayer of meaning: read this book for the consolation of philosophy. The *Consolation of Philosophy* as a title points to the work's value as a text: one encounters the consolation of philosophy through the philosophic investigation that is supplied by the act of reading. This illustration renders literal the allegorical fiction of the work.

The allegorical presentation of a woman's body naturally produces gendered expectations of the male erotic gaze. Philosophy presenting her body to be interpreted by a man genders this scene in a way of which many medieval readers were very aware. Matthew of Vendôme's popular, twelfth-century schoolboy text *Ars versificatoria* embellishes Lady Philosophy's blason by including moralizing comments about rouge: 'Lady Philosophy is not painted with artificial charms but rather is seen clearly to produce an almost divine aura and to loathe any hint of the weakness of human nature ... Her cheeks, unadulterated by false color, glow with the rosy hue of exercise'.¹⁷ Matthew eroticizes Lady Philosophy's femininity to appeal to the male gaze to the extent that he feels the need to clarify that Philosophy does not rouge her cheeks. Philosophy's body is sexually interpreted by the male gaze focused on her natural 'charms' that 'glow' with a healthy 'rosy hue'. Certainly, Matthew's text possesses a wry, adolescent aesthetic, intended to keep his students' attentions, so it is not surprising that he also

16 MS Burney 130, f. 3v <<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=3786>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

17 Matthew of Vendôme, *The Art of Versification*, trans. by Aubrey E. Galyon (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1980), II.5, p. 64.

eroticizes Lady Philosophy, but the fact that this exaggeration can weave so naturally into a description of Philosophy exhibits the eroticism latent in the medieval interpretation of Philosophy's body.

Philosophy, even in the particularity of her allegorical embodiment, still remains an object of the male gaze. Indeed, Philosophy's ancient heritage is brushed aside in Boece so as not to prevent Philosophy from being physically attractive. She has 'a lifly colour' and 'swich vigour and strengthe' that although 'sche was ful of so greet age ... men ne wolden nat trowen in no manere that sche were of our elde' (I.p1). Although Boethius invokes her ancient, allegorical nature, he still recognizes the signs of life that allow for Philosophy to remain at least latently erotic.

Patriarchal heteronormative desire for the feminine embodiment of allegorical content participates in the fully material nature of male sexual violence. This latent eroticism can be seen in the image of Philosophy's torn clothes. She is partially stripped in a scene of sexual assault: 'Natheles handes of some men hadden korve that cloth by violence and by strengthe, and everich man of hem hadde boren away swiche peces as he myghte geten' (I.p1). Men brutally rip apart her clothes in the greedy desire to own the allegorical content of her clothes. The 'handes of some men' are violently upon her, leaving her flesh partially exposed. Her clothes signify intellectual advancement through philosophy, and so men are trying to reap the rewards of that advancement, but the image of them doing so is one of them violently stripping a woman. Philosophy's allegorical content concentrates into her body erotically. The allegorical intent of the scene is conveyed through a depiction of sexual violence. This eroticism makes clear that Philosophy's allegorical femininity is never fully abstract. Her womanhood persists in Boece as an object of titillation for the heteronormative male gaze.

This eroticism is not exclusive to Philosophy. When Philosophy drives away the muses, she calls them 'commune strompettis' who have 'aprochen' Boethius (I.p1).¹⁸ She even calls the muses

¹⁸ The language in this passage is similar to the dismissal of Meed by Conscience in *Piers Plowman*, as discussed in Chapter IV. The dismissal of problematic feminine allegorical figures as prostitutes is a trope that recasts their elevated

mermaids, decrying them for being fatal seductresses (I.p1). Philosophy delegitimizes the muses' control over Boethius by denigrating their elevated femininity into a sexually debased femininity. Philosophy and the muses vie for the control over Boethius through a competitive femininity. Philosophy debases the femininity of her opponents, moralizing her gender performance as superior.

Boethius, in a state of allegorically externalized passivity, functions as the male onlooker that justifies this competitive femininity. These muses present a secular poetry of Fortune, forcing Boethius to write his laments within the scope of Fortune's embodied allegorical content. Implicit in Philosophy's need to intervene is her desire to develop Boethius' experiences beyond the limits of Fortune's embodiment into a transcendence which Philosophy occupies. Philosophy's rebuke of the muses initiates her confrontation with Boethius' participation in Fortune's system.

Feminine virtues fundamentally characterize the moral expectations of the performance of womanhood before male desire/adjudication. This system involves gendering as a key site of conflict because of the perception that Fortune fails to properly perform feminine nurturing. Her unfeeling aloofness condemns her as an anti-mediatrix, a woman who deceives through her incomplete femininity. Fortune's inadequate gender coding contrasts the properly feminine example of Philosophy. Fortune 'is so hard that sche leygheth and scorneth the wepynges of hem' (II.m1), whereas Philosophy 'with the lappe of hir garnement yplited in a frownce ... dryede myn eien, that weren fulle of the waves of my wepynges' (I.p2). The medieval aestheticization of women significantly stressed the feminine virtue of mercy, and affronts against this expectation of mercy received vitriolic replies from both men and women alike. For example, Alain Chartier's 1424 poem *La belle dame sans mercy*, in which a woman refuses a failed suitor's formulaic romantic warbles, a fate so terrible the suitor subsequently dies of grief, was so controversial for its depiction of its titular antiheroine that it garnered, not only a series of confrontational epistles, but also no less than eighteen response poems that sought either to

gender into a materialized, degraded femininity.

condemn the dame in court for murder or comedically exaggerate or otherwise alter the dame's behavior.¹⁹ The lady without mercy seems to have struck a nerve in the popular interpretation of poetic gender.

Of course, the most problematic part of Chartier's poem is that it is a poem. This strict gendering reflects more on an idealized, poetic discourse than it does actually lived experience. Medieval courtesy literature did sometimes offer practical advice for young women on how to efficiently turn down men's advances. Jacques d'Amiens' thirteenth-century *Art d'amor* presents an example prior to the *Boece*.²⁰ Christine de Pizan's 1405 *Le trésor de la cité des dames* presents an example closer to the poem by Chartier.²¹ The poetic figuration of elevated gender is a distinct field of meaning with some overlaps with lived experiences of gender but which is not constrained by it.

Nevertheless, these concerns exhibit the extent to which these elevated gender tropes held societal investment. Chaucer's oeuvre plucks in tune with the underlying literary harmonics that eventually led to Chartier and the querulous reception of his poem; take, for instance, the way Blanche in *The Book of the Duchess* reverses her initial rejection of the knight once she learns the genuinely chivalrous nature of his love:

So whan my lady knew al this
My lady yaf me al hooly
The noble yifte of hir mercy[.]²²

Mercy, which, of course, leads directly to a relationship. The feminine moral structure within the paradigm of courtly love demands reciprocation as an act of mercy: women are expected to acquiesce

19 Alain Chartier, *Alain Chartier: The Quarrel of the Belle dame sans mercy*, ed. and trans. by Joan E. McRae (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 8-21. For a discussion of the poetic continuations of Chartier, see Emma Cayley, *Debate and Dialogue: Alain Chartier In His Cultural Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 136-88.

20 Diane Bornstein, *The Lady in the Tower: Medieval Courtesy Literature for Women* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), pp. 38-9,

21 Christine de Pizan, *The Treasure of the City of Ladies*, trans. by Sarah Lawson (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 69-72.

22 Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess*, ll. 1268-70, p. 345.

to male desire, because their elevation to the status of lady removes them from earthly autonomy. The knight's rebuke of Fortune overlaps his exposition of her duplicitous nature with a critique of her inability to live up to the imputations of the male gaze. She

baggeth foule and loketh faire,
 The dispitouse debonaire
 That skorneth many a creature!
 An ydole of fals portrayture
 Ys she, for she wol sone wrien;
 She is the monstres hed ywrien,
 As fylthe over-ystrawed with floures.²³

Fortune scorns unmercifully, whereas Blanche gifts her mercy to the knight when she adequately recognizes its topical propriety. Fortune's image flickers over this duplicitous lack of mercy: she is a false image of godhood, she hides the monster's head, she is filth covered with flowers. These visual metaphors dwell on how her duplicity tricks the male gaze. The knight problematizes how the male gaze interprets Fortune as beautiful to explicate why she is unmerciful. By calling Fortune 'fylthe over-ystrawed with floures', the knight diverges Fortune from the many floral examples of romantic womanhood, from the eponymous rose of the *Roman de la Rose* to the Lady Marguerite praised by Chaucer in the F Text of the prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, and by both Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart in their poems sharing the title *Le Dit de la Marguerite*.²⁴ Chaucerian Fortune's fickleness complicates the nature of her embodiment, thus conflating her allegorical content with her reception within the heteronormative male gaze. The contrasts between Fortune and Philosophy allegorically manifests in how their performances of femininity are graded.

²³ Ibid, ll. 623-9, p. 338.

²⁴ For Chaucer, see *The Legend of Good Women*, ll. F.40-225. The daisy is called 'she', 'an emperice', and transitions seamlessly into Queen Alceste. Compare with the much more neutral G Text prologue, ll. G.40-157, in which the daisy is treated more literally as a flower. For Guillaume de Machaut and Jean Froissart, see *Chaucer's Dream Poetry: Sources and Analogues*, ed. and trans. by B. A. Windeatt (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), pp. 145-6, 149-51.

In this patriarchal structure, feminine propriety demands a male-facing mercy. Although *De consolacione philsophiae* perhaps intended this contrast to signify merely the abstract notions of its allegorical women, subsequent Boethian deployments carry these themes alongside a rich tradition of highly gendered love. Men's suffering impinges on their ladies to intervene through a feminine performance of mercy. By acquiescing, Philosophy retains a proper femininity; by refusing, Fortune's fickleness divests her of feminine propriety.

Love pacifies men, rendering them helpless, thereby impinging upon women to cure them with a specified love response. Chaucer himself dabbles in this trope in *The Book of the Duchess*, where he laments

I holde hit be a sicknesse
 That I have suffred this eight yeer;
 And yet my boote is never the ner,
 For there is phisicien but oon
 That may me hele; but that is don.²⁵

Chaucer wryly hints this sickness is a love sickness: his authorial narrator stays up late reading the tragic love story of Seys and Alcyone, then falls asleep in the book, dreaming of a bower with a painted wall depicting the *Roman de la Rose* in which the Black Knight laments his own love tragedy. Every line of the poem exudes the thick mixture of tragic love, and so a sickness for which there is only a single possible physician invites speculation. This physician could be God, but then a remedy would not be so readily dismissed.

The gendering behind feminine mercy results in a ruthless male domination which impugns the characters of women who refuse to acknowledge their formulaic, play-acted suffering. This hidden design is ridiculed by an anonymous woman responding to Richard de Fournival's thirteenth-century

²⁵ Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess*, ll. 36-40, p. 331.

work, *Le bestiaire d'amour*, in which Fournival complains to his lover with an extended series of animal analogies. One of Fournival's analogies is that of the cricket, which neglects its own health in order to focus on the beauty of its song. The anonymous reader replies,

Wherefore, lord and master, I shall disregard the cricket of which I heard you speak. For although it enjoys its song so much that it neglects to search for food and dies of starvation, I am not served by attending to your words, which appear to put me at your disposal.²⁶

The rhetorical weakness of the suffering male lover serves to erect a facade which morally demands a certain response from the woman forced to bear the role of the beloved, thereby subjugating her beneath his desires. The thirteenth-century Italian poet Giacomo da Lentini rebukes his lady for 'failing to reward his endeavors to please her', indicating that the supposed power of the courtly lady is an illusory conceit.²⁷ Women are constrained to respond as these men desire, or they become subject to abuse. Male violence is embedded within love poetry, from Giacomo to Fournival to Chaucer to Chartier. The expectation of response constrains women within a preordained field of masculine desire. Fortune's fickleness liberates her from this trope, but this liberation marks Fortune as improperly gendered and therefore immoral. The rhetorical pose of servitude serves as a way of creating a morally neutralized stance from which to issue one's desires with impunity, but that impunity imputes a punitive possibility on the respondent. One's response becomes coded along the terms of the engagement dictated by the faux plea.

The Constrained Mediatrix and Competitive Femininity

²⁶ See Quotation XVI. Richard de Fournival, *Master Richard's Bestiary of Love and Response*, trans. by Jeanette Beer (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 44. Italicization reproduced from the text.

²⁷ Dana E. Stewart, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender, and Subjectivity in Medieval Love Poetry* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003), p. 76.

Competitive femininity incorporates male-facing moral demands as expectations of the performance of womanhood. Philosophy participates in these critiques of Fortune's femininity and abjures her for failing to uphold her elevated gendered role by rhetorically demanding from Boethius,

And is present Fortune dereworth to the, whiche that nys nat feithful for to duelle, and whan sche goth away that sche bryngeth a wyght in sorwe? For syn she may na ben withholden at a mannys wille, [and] sche maketh hym a wrecche whan sche departeth fro hym, what other thyng is flyttyng Fortune but a maner schewyng of wrecchidnesse that is to comen? (II.p1)

Fortune conspicuously resists the implicitly domestic, feminine coded duty 'to duelle' and 'ben withholden at a mannys wille', instead choosing to 'goth away' and 'departeth fro hym'. Philosophy decries Fortune's flightiness as if she were a runaway bride. This rhetorical, pseudoromantic mode complicates the ensuing comments with a teasing, ambiguous undertone of courtly love. Boethius' assumption of 'the yok of hir', which recalls 2 Corinthians 6:14's admonishment 'Nolite jugum ducere cum infidelibus', earns Philosophy's sardonic affirmation that 'Thow hast bytaken thiself to the governaunce of Fortune and forthi it byhoveth the to ben obeisaunt to the maneris of thi lady' (II.p1). This language is sociopolitical, but it may also have resonances with discourses of courtly love. For instance, Philosophy continues to belittle Fortune as hopelessly fickle by saying 'For yif thow wilt writen a lawe of wendynge and of duellynge to Fortune, whiche that thow hast chosen frely to ben thi lady, artow nat wrongful in that, and makest Fortune wroth and aspre by thyn impacience?' Is Philosophy teasing Boethius with a sly suggestion that he might write his cruel lady a love complaint?

Fortune as the subject of a love complaint is precisely the subject matter of the *Remede de Fortune* by Guillaume de Machaut (c. 1340), of which Chaucer was aware.²⁸ The *Remede de Fortune*, which itself draws partially upon the Boethian tradition, offers a *fins'amour* parallel of Boethius. This

²⁸ Guillaume de Machaut, *Le Jugement du roy de Behaigne and Remede de Fortune*, ed. and trans. by James I. Wimsatt and William W. Kibler (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), pp. 33, 52.

poem preserves a Boethian example from the period immediately prior to Chaucer's translation, and therefore illustrates the prevailing understandings represented in the tradition out of which Chaucer's translation arose. Because of this connection, *Remede de Fortune* provides important cultural context for an analysis of the contemporary knowledge of *De consolacione philosophiae* that served as the backdrop for the drafting of the *Boece*. In Machaut's poem, the lover, exiled from his love in a similar way to how Boethius is exiled from his country, follows Boethius in complaining about Fortune.

for the lover's heart is happy or sad depending on whether Love wishes to console it and on the mood of Fortune, who brings good fortune to one lover and bad to another, and to others according to her whim ... And while I was in this mood, I decided to compose about Fortune and my sorrows, my thoughts and my griefs, a piece called a complainte, in which there would be many rhymes and a sad subject.²⁹

Like Boethius, the lover perceives his dejection as an indication of Fortune's betrayal. The lover reads his status as subject to the whims of Fortune, and thereby ascertains that his current predicament derives from a certain malicious capriciousness in Fortune's character. This vice, coupled with the lover's grief, leads him to address Fortune with a formal love complaint, in spite of the fact that Love had earlier instructed him that 'if pain or suffering were to come to me from loving, or melancholy or sadness, I should welcome it submissively and not consider myself aggrieved'.³⁰ Much like Philosophy, recognizing Boethius as someone she has taught, diagnoses him as having 'fallen into a litargye' that has caused him to 'a litil foryeten hymselfe, but certes he schal lightly remembren hymself yif so be that he hath knowen me or now', so too does the lover brashly forget the instructions he has received from Love (I.p2). Both men allow Fortune to assume responsibility for their misery as a negation of their internally justified, blissful destinies: Boethius, his civic prominence; the lover, his lady. Boethius and the lover render Fortune as an excuse, a contrived figure to explain how they, loyal servants, have

²⁹ See Quotation XVII. Machaut, *Remede de Fortune*, ll. 880-7, 897-903, pp. 216-19

³⁰ See Quotation XVIII. Machaut, *Remede de Fortune*, ll. 141-54, pp. 176-7.

not been properly rewarded. The underlying presumption, that honorable service deserves its rightful reward, is subverted, and these men explain that subversion by conjuring up a woman to berate. An allegorical woman produces the inexplicable gap between male agency and reality.

The womanhood of these allegorical women concretizes through antifeminist moralization. The lover suggests that Fortune

en mauvais malice habunde,
Parquoy sa norriçon confounde;

[abounds in wickedness,
whereby she destroys her nursling;]³¹

which criticizes her as a malicious mother who might kill her own child. Fortune's ill character manifests itself in a sign of her womanhood, the nursing of children. Fortune is not incidentally a woman but rather becomes a woman as part of her role in the lover's worldview. Fortune manifests the lover's ill fortune as a bad woman.

Nurturing provides allegorical femininity its moral face within male supplication. *Boece* offers a similar theme when Philosophy, assuming the rhetorical guise of Fortune, wonders 'Whan that nature brought the fourth out of thi modir wombe, I resceyved the nakid and nedy of alle thynges, and I norissched the with my riches, and was redy and ententyf thurwe my favour to sustene the – and that maketh the now inpacient ayens me' (II,p2). Philosophy, imitating Fortune, rebukes Boethius as a spoiled child, implicitly condemning Fortune as having raised Boethius in a way that 'maketh the now inpacient ayens me'. Philosophy, who earlier also metaphorically breastfed Boethius, slights Fortune's parenting. Philosophy consoles Boethius where Fortune abandons Boethius; uncoincidentally, Philosophy is the better mother to Boethius than Fortune is. A competitive motherhood ranks these allegorical women in a hierarchy constructed by moral gendering: Boethius should value the wisdom of

31 Machaut, *Remede de Fortune*, ll. 946-7, pp. 220-1.

the better mother. A woman's wisdom is linked to her status as a mother. Even when allegorically presented, women are still valued in specific gendered terms.

Philosophy incorporates Fortune within a certain sphere of meaning in which she lacks actual agency. Of course, in Book II, Prose 2 Philosophy intends to indemnify Fortune of Boethius' charges. Although Philosophy does undermine Fortune as untrustworthy and unworthy of service, her larger argument, that Fortune's changefulness fundamentally accords to her conceptual nature, and that ill fortune is as morally valuable as good fortune, forms the core of Book II and is also reiterated in Book III, Prose 5; Book IV, Prose 1; and Book IV, Prose 4. Philosophy acquiesces to Boethius' characterization of Fortune as mercurial but refuses to let this charge invalidate the conceptual necessity of Fortune as an evil interloper in the proper order of things. She prefers a more circumspect view which interprets Fortune as a form of tough moral guidance, saying

I deme that contrarious Fortune profiteth more to men than Fortune debonayre ... The amyable Fortune desceyveth folk; the contrarie Fortune techeth. The amyable Fortune byndeth with the beaute of false goodes the hertes of folk that usen hem: the contrarye Fortune unbyndeth hem by the knowynge of freel welefelnesse ... At the laste, amyable Fortune with hir flaterynges draweth myswandrynge men fro the sovereyne good; the contrarious Fortune ledeth ofte folk ayen to sothfast goodes, and haleth hem ayen as with an hook. (II.p8)

Philosophy echoes Boethius in declaring that 'Fortune desceyveth folk', but reverses Boethius' argument by insisting that good Fortune is deceitful, whereas ill Fortune is an honest teacher. Boethius decrying good Fortune as deceitful demonstrates his own deception. Rather than despair of his situation, Philosophy suggests that he should be thankful for the moral instruction. All the cherished trappings of his previous life led him so far from proper Philosophy that he fails to recognize her amidst his misery until she sufficiently sobers him.

Remede de Fortune supports this reading, with Hope appearing to the lover in a manner similar to Philosophy (as well as Nature in Alain de Lille's *De planctu Naturae*), then defending Fortune by

profoundly centering her in her allegorical essence.³²

S'elle estoit tousdis en un point
 Et de raison usoit a point,
 Si qu'envers tous fust juste et une,
 Elle ne seroit pas Fortune.

[If she were constant and behaved reasonably, so that she was just and true to everyone, she would not be Fortune.]³³

Hope locates Fortune's duplicity within her allegorical representation. Fortune cannot be stable, because Fortune does not represent a stable thing. This argument is strangely circular: the instability of fortune nullifies the complaint about the instability of fortune. Hope funnels the allegorically signified into its allegorical signifier. Fortune cannot be more than fortune, because then Fortune would not be Fortune, and so complaints against fortune are as meaningless as decrying the reality of rocks: they simply exist, regardless of what one thinks of them.

To recognize Fortune as an ineluctable dynamic of a higher unity, Boethius must cease his self-identification with a specific moment of Fortune's transit through his life. Philosophy admonishes that 'al were it so that the yiftes of Fortune ne were nocht brutel ne transitorie, what is thar in hem that mai be thyn in any tyme, or elles that it nys fowl, yif that it be considered and lookyd parfityly? Richesses ben they precieuse by the nature of hemself, or elles by the nature of the?' (II.p5) What Boethius cherishes determines what Boethius cherishes: identification of meaning and value in the movements of Fortune requires one to excise that item out of Fortune as a gift. His nature instills value in a thing of neutral nature, and this attachment creates an external expectation inevitably unfulfilled by the larger motion of the system.

Natural materiality produces anguish only to the extent that superfluous attachments are made

32 For Hope appearing to the lover, see Machaut, *Remede de Fortune*, ll. 1481-1532, pp. 250-23.

33 Machaut, *Remede de Fortune*, ll. 2531-4, pp. 308-9.

to its contingent availabilities. Philosophy elucidates this principle through a monetary analogy: 'For, syn that swiche thyng as is transferred fro o man to an othir ne may nat duelled with no man, certes thanne is thilke moneye precyous whan it is translated into other folk and stynteth to ben had by usage of large yyvyng of hym that hath yeven it' (II.p5). Chaucer's 'translated' returns to the Latin 'translata' where Jean de Meun uses 'transportee'.³⁴ Chaucer's choice for translation over transportation indicates a preference for viewing money, not as the conveyance of value, but as the interpretation of value. Money does not simply change hands, but rather changes desire into goods. Money is the form of the act of valuing and therefore is inert when possessed: if one already possesses what they value, then they do not need an item to manifest that value. Money translates desire into possession but represents nothing in itself.³⁵ Philosophy highlights this innate emptiness in order to oppose desire and possession: money vacillates between these poles as a meaningless energy, changing direction immediately upon arrival. In this sense, the value of money belongs to the extent to which one participates in its value. Money is inherently worthless until desire compels one to manifest it in a neutral form. As this valuing occurs along the shifting axis of Fortune, it breeds an endless envy and a cruel system of subjugation, which causes Philosophy to declare, 'O streyte and nedy clepe I this richesse, syn that many folk ne mai nat han it al, ne al mai it nat comen to o man withoute povert of alle othere folk' (II.p5). Desire takes away from a harmonious unity and accumulates in a way that denies the common need. Boethius mistakenly assumes his right to the valuable goods gifted him by Fortune, but Philosophy tries to demonstrate how the valuing of those inherently transient goods is morally degrading. Desiring the gifts of Fortune is to repurpose nature outside of the proper sphere of human existence, as Philosophy expresses in a meditation about the value of jewels (II.p5).

³⁴ For Boethius, see II.p5

<<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0121%3Abook%3D2%3Asectio%3DP5>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. For Jean de Meun, see II.p5, p. 69.

³⁵ The anti-mediatrix's identification with money is a theme that reappears with added significance in *Piers Plowman*, which will be investigated in Chapter IV.

Boethius' suffering derives, in Philosophy's view, from his superfluous attachments to the meaningless things controlled by Fortune. Boethius desires the fruits of nature outside of its God-given bounds into the desire of excess, and in that transgression enters the realm of Fortune, wherein bereavement exists as an illusion. Philosophy judges Fortune's realm to be superfluous, and in so doing judges Fortune as superfluous:

Why enbracest thou straunge goodes as they weren thyne? Fortune ne schal nevere maken that swiche thynges ben thyne that nature of thynges hath maked foreyene fro the. Soth is that, withouten doute, the frutes of the erthe owen to be to the norysynge of beestis; and yif thou wilt fuffille thyn nede after that it suffiseth to nature, thanne is it no nede that thou seke afir the superfluyte of fortune. (II.p5)

Philosophy enjoins Boethius to transcend the whims of Fortune by recognizing that the desire to hold onto Fortune's goods derives purely from participation in her domain of excessive desire. This desire perverts the true nature of things into 'straunge goods'. What God 'maked foreyene fro the' one can accumulate through desire, which subjects one to Fortune. In Philosophy's worldview, one is situated in sufficiency beneath God's inscrutable but omniscient will, and much of human misery results from attachments made to goods that exceed that sufficiency which Fortune relentlessly whirls in her ceaseless shifting.

Boethius counters this position with an interrogation of the meaning of material attachments. Philosophy stresses this point to Boethius through an extended discourse, because the key mistake behind Boethius' misery is his distress at the inability for Fortune to be an internally destined, morally reciprocal force. Although he assures Philosophy, 'that art plaunted in me, chacedest out of the sege of my corage alle covetise of mortel thynges', still he struggles with what those mortal things mean (I.p4). Although Boethius clearly suffers more from the loss of his worldly position and goods than he admits to Philosophy, his chief frustration with his fortune lies more in how it exemplifies the morally

meaningless state of worldly affairs:

But certes, to the harmes that I have, ther bytideth yit this encrees of harm, that the gessynge and the jugement of moche folk ne loken nothyng to the desertes of thynges, but oonly to the aventure of fortune; and jugen that oonly swiche thynges ben purveied of God, whiche that temporal welefulnesse commendeth. (*Glose. As thus: that yif a wyght have prosperite, he is a good man and worthy to han that prosperite; and whoso hath adversite, he is a wikkid man, and God hath forsake hym, and he is worthy to han that adversite. This is the opinyoun of some folk.*) (I.p4)

Popular judgment draws more upon worldly reward than it does on abstract moral purity in forming ethical appraisals of people. Chaucer's gloss draws out the negative moral censure embedded in the perception of failure more than in Jean de Meun's version, which reads: 'c'est a dire que tant seulement sont faites bien et pourveablement les chosez que li riche home loent et font'.³⁶ This breezier gloss focuses on the ignorant perception of merit in worldly goods, but the *Boece* stresses the more terrifying negative corollary, the perception of the lack of merit in the lack of worldly goods.

The increased paranoia of the *Boece* influenced John Walton's 1410 translation *Liber Boecij de Consolacione Philosophie*, which drew on Chaucer as a major source.³⁷ Walton's poetically loose translation reads,

What rumours thise folk will of me fynde,
How dyuerse sentence *and* how varient,
It lothes me to thenkyn in my mynde,
For euery man on me seith his entent[.]³⁸

The nervous concern for reputation from the *Boece* grants Walton the license to add a flourish to his

36 Jean de Meun, I.p4, p.43.

37 Philip Edward Philips, "The English Tradition of Boethius's *De consolacione philosophiae* with a Checklist of Translations," p. 226.

38 John Walton, *Liber Boecij de Consolacione Philosophie*, ed. by Mark Science (London: Oxford University Pres, 1927), EETS 170, I.p4, ll. 39.1-4, p. 43.

translation with some lines about an outright despair of condemnatory gossip. This same passage from the *Boece* also shows up in Thomas Usk's *The Testament of Love*, now as a bitter rebuke against 'th'estymacion of the envyous people' that 'ne loketh nothyng to desertes of men ne to the merytes of their doynge, but only to the aventure of fortune'.³⁹ Part of what resonated with readers in the Boethian tradition by the time of *Boece* was this moralized despair. English interpretations of *De consolatione philosophiae* carry this fear about fame as a distinguishing element within the wider Boethian tradition. Chaucer himself continues this theme in his own *The House of Fame*, where the eponymous personification airily dispatches a group of gloryseekers:

Good werkes shal yow noght availle
 To have of me good fame as now.
 But wite ye what? Y graunte yow
 That ye shal have a shrewed fame,
 And wikkyd loos, and worse name,
 Though ye good loos have wel deserved.⁴⁰

This passage is indicative of the poem's skepticism about the meaning of praise. Good works earn both good and bad fame, bad works earn both good and bad fame, all at the inscrutable whims of another unfaithful allegorical figure. Nothing receives the reward it should, just like Boethius' civic service.

For Boethius, the problem with Fortune uncovers a more painful truth about the earthly inefficiency of justice and morality. Boethius' refutation of the relationship between fortune and morality quickly devolves into a distressed outcry that this relationship is not true. Boethius is troubled by the fact that 'the felonous covynes of wykkid men habounden in joye and in gladnesse ... and I se that goode men [lien] overthrowen for drede of my peril, and every luxurious turmentour dar doon alle felonye unpunysschyd, and ben excited therto by yiftes' (I.p4). The fundamental unfairness of the world

39 Thomas Usk, *The Testament of Love*, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/publication/shoaf-usk-the-testament-of-love>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], I.6, ll. 519-21.

40 Chaucer, *The House of Fame*, ll. 1616-21, p. 367.

ignites his one truly unforgivable misery: the seeming amorality of the cosmos. This anguish drives Boethius, in Book I, Meter 5, to invoke the enduring cultural symbol of Fortune's wheel.

Fortune threatens the omnipotent unity of a benevolent God by creating an excessive domain of meaningless suffering. Although Boethius correctly assesses that morality and Fortune are separate, for him this is a thorny conundrum that confuses the just, organized world of an omnipotent, benevolent God. Philosophy solves this quandary by correcting Boethius' understanding of Fortune's power. She does not subvert God's authority so much as she is ancillary to it, ultimately irrelevant, something to be transcended. Fortune dwells in the world's imperfect reflection of the spiritual realm, her power arises as a temporary intermediate between the timeless majesty of God and the eternal life of his creation. Fortune represents sinful power as a gap, the nullity between God's infinite existence and the experience of mortal beings cleft by original sin. Instead of getting lost in this nullity by affirming its content as positive through desire, Philosophy urges Boethius to pass through this disjunction and unite his experience with God's infinite existence. The way Fortune's realm separates earthly experience from spiritual unity causes the uncanny misery Boethius laments in his exile.

As Philosophy explicates through the example of Nero, regardless of how favored by Fortune one may momentarily be, all evil is eventually called to account, and all good so rewarded. The *Boece* emphasizes Fortune's role in power through a gloss, noting that 'whan the grete weyghte (*that is to seyn, of lordes power or of fortune*) draweth hem that schullen falle, neither of hem ne myghte don that he wolde. What thyng is thanne thilke powere, that though men han it, yit thei ben agast' (III.p6). The power of the wicked disperses before the weight of moral judgment. The lords of fortune are not protected from mortal destiny. Philosophy readjusts Boethius' view on the success of the wicked by showing that such power is power over nothing, 'thilke powere' over '[w]hat thyng'. Power which arises out of Fortune's null gap quickly collapses back into that null gap when the intermediate moment is crushed beneath the impending eternity of heaven.

Fortune's amorality reveals her underlying spiritual elision. Boethius mistakenly despairs about the lack of justice in fortune, so Philosophy clarifies that fortune is external to justice, something superfluous that occurs in between action and consequence, unaffected by action, not affecting consequence. One's moral destiny persists without regard to one's changing material circumstances; the obvious Biblical analogue here is the Book of Job, and some medieval readers did make that very connection. Thomas Aquinas' commentary on Job mentions Boethius as a parallel example.⁴¹ Material goods do not necessarily register the level of God's moral approval of spiritual people, and the various contradictory fluctuations in one's material situation occur as incidental music to the dramatic action of the divine will. Reciprocity differentiates justice and fortune, rather than connecting them. One's actions demand ultimate moral consequences, but one's fortune appears out of itself and disappears into itself on its own whims. Boethius wants fortune to obey morality as reciprocity, but this misconception fundamentally exposes the earthly bounds of Boethius' thinking: his distress derives from the fact that bad earthly things happen to good people, thus he does not properly consider the divine level at which eternal salvation rewards godly people. Earthly fortune occurs beneath the level of moral reciprocity, and to focus on how one's earthly fortune treats one causes one to spiritually plummet back into the meaningless temporal gap of sin intervening between mortal experience and divine eternity.

Fortune's gap remained central to the themes of divine providence within material chaos throughout iterations of the work's content. The fact that this nuanced concept survived translation underscores the interpretive importance the idea held in the medieval understanding of these works. English loses some of the linguistic markers of this collapse of fortune, but Chaucer clearly reinserts those lost markers. As Stephen Blackwood remarks on Book V, Meter 1,

⁴¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Book of Job*, ed. by Joseph Kenny, trans. by Brian Mulladay, *Priory of the Immaculate Conception at the Dominican House of Studies* <<https://dhspriority.org/thomas/SSJob.htm>>. [Accessed 18 April 2018], III.1.

While the word *fortuna* is not used in this poem, English translations obscure the obvious visual, phonetic, and etymological relation between *fors* (chance) and *fortuna* (fortune). Philosophy's final stanza concludes that, despite appearances, chance – and thus *Fortuna* – is subject to law. The power of fortune, therefore, disappears in the same metre once used by Fortune's muses to display her power. The elegiac couplets are again used for lament, but this time they lament playfully, ironically, the nonexistence of Fortune's domain.⁴²

Blackwood specifically refers to the meter's closing lines, which in the Latin original appears as

sic quae permissis fluitare uidetur habenis
fors patitur frenos ipsaque lege meat.⁴³

Chaucer renders these lines as 'Right so fortune, that semeth as it fletith with slakid of ungoverned bridles, it suffreth bridelis (that is to seyn, to ben governed), and passeth by thilke lawe (that is to seyn, by the devyne ordenaunce)' (V.m1). Because Middle English lacks the inherent play of *fors/fortuna* in *chaunce/fortune*, the fact that Chaucer chooses 'fortune' in this passage characterizes fortune as a kind of natural force subject to the cosmic order of the divine ordinance. The question, in *Boece*, is whether Fortune is guaranteed by the divine masculine authority which should bridle her identity. Fortune's apparent 'ungoverned' state demands an answer for how she could fit into a cohesive divine order.

Mediatrixity represents a gauge for competitive allegorical femininity. Fortune affects mortals as a disappearing anti-mediatrix, one who exists between the earthly and the immortal but who, rather than connecting them as a mediatrix, disconnects them. The contrast between Philosophy and Fortune mirrors the im/mediatrix roles. Boethius, an earthly seeker of the good, encounters both allegorical women. Philosophy, a mediatrix, properly consoles Boethius' mortal misunderstandings and conveys his mind towards divine transcendence. Fortune, an anti-mediatrix, confounds Boethius' transcendent wisdomseeking in the earthly. Boethius' lament about the lack of justice in fortune demonstrates the

42 Stephen Blackwood, *The Consolation of Boethius as Poetic Liturgy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 94.

43 Boethius, V.m1, ll. 11-12.

way that Fortune spirals his theology back to earth: justice, an aspect of the divine, enmeshes in fortune, an earthly happenstance. Philosophy is then forced to untangle this enmeshing, demonstrating how fortune exists beneath justice as an irrelevant temporal gap. Fortune is the marginalia of the law, the imperfect human imprints left by those passing through authority. By emphasizing fortune in this passage at the expense of a less literal translation, Chaucer evokes this notion of Fortune as something that comes from nothing and returns to nothing.

Fortune, as nothing, represents the world as such. Philosophy attempts to teach Boethius the way to transcend Fortune as a way of spiritually securing him in the search for the divine. Fortune's nothingness lies central in how the Boethian tradition represents Fortune, indicative of the same grammatical creativity that leads to the allegorization of women. As Jerold C. Frakes remarks,

The distinction between the earthly and the spiritual is basic to the entire philosophical system of the *Consolatio* and permeates all aspects of the argument concerning the goods of Fortuna, as they are opposed to the *summum bonum*. The counterpart to Fortuna's gifts actually exists in two senses: 1) the natural possession of men which is also necessarily internal, as opposed to the possessions granted by an external agent (“*proprium ... atque insitum bonum*” II, pr. V, 24); 2) on a higher level, the *summum bonum*. Ultimately, these two *bona* are identical: when man holds to his true essence and lives according to nature, rejecting Fortuna and her goods, he necessarily seeks his own proper good and simultaneously the *summum bonum*, because the concepts of the good in the world and the *summum bonum* are combined in this way. The contrast between the true and false goods is even reflected in the grammar. As noted above, the goods of Fortuna are plural, *bona*; the proper good of man and the *summum bonum* are, as Philosophia takes great pains to point out, necessarily singular: “*Respice, inquit, an hic quoque idem firmiter approbetur, quod duo summa bona quae a se diuersa sint esse non possunt*” (III, pr. X, 18).⁴⁴

The unified totality of God's universe remains inviolate beneath the superfluous multiplicities that scramble over it. The sum of all good exists uncomplicated in the perfection of God's will, and thus any good that serves the *summum bonum* does so as an instance of that singularity, whereas Fortune's goods, which are external to God's perfect unity, are a meaningless multitude. Fortune plays with

44 Jerold C. Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune in the Early Middle Ages: The Boethian Tradition* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), p. 53.

shadows and creates faded nothings that swiftly resume their void state.

This view represented a widespread understanding of the nature of fortune. Christine de Pizan, in her 1403 poem *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune*, presents a strikingly similar account of Fortune's purview:

If one deserves to be hanged or put to some other torture, and he is, that is not Fortune. The case of whoever says the opposite is therefore outrageous. Similarly, if someone deserves to have good, and good comes to him, one should know that Fortune does not give it to him; rather his good work makes it happen. But when something comes out of the blue, a sudden incident that leads to death by a very strange event, or something good happens unexpectedly, or one easily comes into wealth, I say that such cases come from Fortune, in an extraordinary way. Thus Fortune does not give peace and tranquility at all (she is not such a good friend to people!). Those come from divinity. But it is certainly true that God allows Fortune to be so powerful that she can divide up and distribute worldly goods as she wishes, because such goods are of no account to him.⁴⁵

Pizan demarcates Fortune's domain as limited to the 'sudden' and 'very strange' distribution of 'worldly goods' that are 'of no account' to God. As Philosophy highlighted through the example of Nero, there is a dichotomy between fortune and one's deserved fate. Fortune only represents the unnecessary, superfluous shifts of goods or events. This superfluity dismisses the relevance of Fortune's domain: God lets Fortune control worldly goods simply because those things do not matter to him and are not relevant to his supreme will. Fortune controls only the sinful excess which skirts around the edges of God's moral justice: those who partake in Fortune's domain will be called to account regardless of whatever meaningless power they have accumulated through Fortune's favor. Truly meaningful events that directly respond to one's moral state exist irrespective of the current worldly state of fortune.

Fortune fails as an allegorical woman on account of her allegorical incomplete dominance. Machaut evinces this trope prior to Pizan in *Le jugement dou roy de navarre*, in which the allegorical

⁴⁵ See Quotation XIX. Christine de Pizan, *The Book of the Mutability of Fortune*, ed. and trans. by Geri Smith (Toronto: Iter Press, 2017), ll. 6769-96, pp. 104-5.

figure of Sufficiency has 'nothing that she needed' [*Elle n'avoit besong de riens*] and so is 'beyond the grasp of Fortune' [*estoit des mains de Fortune*].⁴⁶ Fortune reigns over the excessive domain beyond the core necessity of Sufficiency, but Machaut stresses that Sufficiency is the one 'beyond the grasp of Fortune'. Machaut casts Fortune out into irrelevant outlands, forcing her to vainly attempt to reach into the radiating core, but her power fails to extend into this virtue-justified realm. Moreover, Sufficiency is one of the twelve allegorical damsels that attend the Lady in *Le jugement dou roy de navarre*, creating an idealized unity of femininity which Fortune cannot reach. Fortune's inability to properly participate in a complete femininity condemns her as an allegorical woman as an abstract notion external to womanhood: the enclosed feminine space into which Machaut's twelve damsels conduit their allegorical notions excludes Fortune. Fortune's incomplete, wrongful womanhood counterbalances her excessive, irrelevant domain. She wears her feminine failure in her allegorical content.

Pizan picks up on this theme in *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune*, in which Fortune remains recessed in abstraction, never quite materializing to a body, even though her brothers and sister maintain corporeal forms.⁴⁷ Instead, she remains formless, more akin to an astrological force than a woman:⁴⁸

She comes to many places according to people's birth, via the far reaches of the ill-fortuned planets or the fine, pure good ones ascending at the time a person is born of his mother. According to the configuration of the constellation, I believe that one's fortune will either have less goodness in it or be more fulfilled and replete with joy and good health.⁴⁹

46 Guillaume de Machaut, *Le jugement dou roy de navarre*, *Guillaume de Machaut: The Complete Poetry and Music, Volume 1: The Debate Series*, trans. by R. Barton Palmer, ed. by R. Barton Palmer and Yolanda Plumley, *TEAMS Middle English Texts* <<http://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/palmer-machaut-the-debateseries-navarre>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], ll. 1292, 4.

47 Pizan, *The Book of the Mutability of Fortune*, ll. 1566-750, pp. 51-2.

48 For the comment about Fortune's formlessness, see Pizan, *The Book of the Mutability of Fortune*, ll. 6697-702, p. 104. See Quotation XX.

49 See Quotation XX. *Ibid.*, ll. 6705-14, p. 104.

Again, Pizan picks up here on received tropes about Fortune which derive from the Boethian tradition. A late fourteenth-century manuscript of Nicholas Trevet's commentary on *De consolacione philosophiae* appends a number of astrological schematics.⁵⁰ Philosophy's discourse on how the universe operates in a cosmic harmony ordained by God contains within it a cosmological justification for Fortune that explains how her content interacts with God's will at universal scales. Philosophy articulates this spiritual transcendence in physical metaphors of ascending to witness a higher material scope.

Only the lynage of man heveth heyest his heie heved, and stonidith light with his upryght body, and byholdeth the erthes undir hym. And, but yif thou, erthly man, waxest yvel out of thi wit, this figure amonesteth the, that axest the hevене with thi ryghte visage and has areised thi forheved, to beren up an hye thi corage, so that thi thought ne be nat ihevyeved ne put lowe undir fote, syn that thi body is so heyghe areysed. (V.m5)

Philosophy invites Boethius to rise beyond the shackles of his mind. By seeking celestial perfection, Boethius pursues a state beyond Fortune's whims. Fortune manipulates a designated space within a cosmological harmony. Fortune interrupts earthly experience but never escapes the limitations of that experience, and so any experience that broadens beyond those borders feels Fortune peel away into her self-sustaining gap irrelevant to the whole.

Vanishing Negativity Versus the Divine Guarantee

Fortune is a vanishing mediator of a devolved position outside salvation, but this precise position gives her the capacity to become a counterfeit order. The counterfeit order femininely irrups the male chain of authority with a chain of doppelgangers; Fortune twists divine male authority into

⁵⁰ Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Rawl G. 187, f. 54v, 54r <https://medieval.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/catalog/manuscript_8547>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

worldly (fe)male (in)justice. This order appears male but remains subject to Fortune's whims.

Boethius' lament derives from his immersion in this alternate chain of authority. Fortune gifts Boethius a link in what appears to be a socially proper male chain of authority. Philosophy recalls how, when Boethius was still in Fortune's favor,

the sovereyn men of the cite token the in cure and in keynge, whan thow were orphelyn of fadir and of modir, and were chose in affynite of prynces of the citel and thow bygonne rather to ben leef and deere than for to been a neyghbour, the whiche thyng is the moste precyous kende of any propinquyte or alliaunce that mai ben. (II.p3)

Boethius goes from an extreme paucity of sociopolitical power to being favored by the most important men of the city. He transitions from orphan to powerful politician through, from an earthly perspective, the chance affinity of princes. Boethius' relevance to the city shifts upon the assumption of a male guarantor: as an orphan, he is marginal; as a politician allied with princes, he is powerful. Philosophy directly notes how Boethius was 'with so gret a nobleye of thi fadres-in-lawe', emphasizing this filling in of a father gap (II.p3). Boethius, in turn, translates this power through 'the chastete of thy wyf' to 'the opportunyte and noblesse of thyne masculyn children (*that is to seyn, thy sones*)?' (II.p3) The doubling of this gloss, original to the *Boece*, reflects the deliberate way the Boethian tradition stresses masculinity in this passage. The Latin original uses 'masculae', which foregrounds the masculinity of the sons over the more general 'filii'.⁵¹ Jean de Meun respects this male awareness with 'enfants males', returning to 'filz' in a subsequent mention of the sons.⁵² These are not just sons, they are specifically masculine sons, their opportunity depends on their masculine capacity to fall along the patriarchal chain of authority. These sons' civic roles depend on a masculinity which secures them in Boethius' civic masculinity, which is in turn secured by the civic masculinity of his fathers-in-law. Now that

⁵¹ Boethius, II.p3.

⁵² Jean de Meun, II.p3, p. 61.

Boethius has noble fathers, he is capable of creating sons who hold masculine opportunity and nobility.

The consequence of Boethius' patrilineal grounding is that his wife acts as a vanishing link between Boethius and his sons, noted only for holding the feminine attribute of chastity, which ensures that the link between Boethius and his sons is genuine within patriarchal mores. In the same way that an elevated woman, Philosophy, will later connect Boethius with hierarchical power, so too does Boethius' wife connect him with those who exercise his hierarchical power. She successfully translates Boethius' power to his sons by virtue of the lack of other men to dilute her transitive mode. As such, Boethius's sons carry on the patriarchal power that Boethius carried on to them from his father-in-laws, and Philosophy recalls the day when 'thow seye thi two sones maked conseileris and iladde togidre fro thyn hous under so greet asemble of senatours and under the blithnesse of peple, and whan thow seye hem set in the court in hir chayeres of dignytes' (II.p3). The chain of male power proliferates two new members of the court before all the city and its senators. The male chain justifies its extension through reference to the city itself, as if the patriarchal system rose naturally out of the city as an idea. Women disappear inside the patriarchal chain.

Boethius, in his participation with this structure, glimpses the historical elevation of the entire patriarchal system, 'syttynge bytwixen thi two sones conseylers, in the place that highte Circo, fulfildest the abydyngge of the multitude of peple that was sprad abouten the with so large preysynge and laude as men syngen in victories' (II.p3). The male ego of this patriarchal system justifies its image through the elevation of its grounding in civic historical nationalism. Boethius sits between his two sons in the place where Cicero once brought the city the glory it continues to exude through them. Boethius' fathers-in-law receive, through their connection to a lionized past, their own majestic certainty, which passes down the chain to uphold the positions of Boethius and his sons.

An allegorical woman destroys this chain of paternal being through her appearance: she becomes the authority, and yet her authority illegitimizes the structure of power. Fortune gifts Boethius

his participation in this male chain. Boethius' personal history represents 'a yifte (*that is to seye, swich guerdoun*) that [Fortune] nevere yaf to prive man' (II.p3). Boethius' adoption by the princes of the city bestows upon him great power within the patriarchal political chain, but that adoption is itself bestowed upon Boethius by Fortune. His fathers-in-law have their association prescribed for them by the allegorical content of Fortune: Boethius' elevation from orphan to councilor of princes enacts Fortune. His personal history reproduces her content. In a sense, any gift of Fortune is a gift of fortune, she is her own reward. The gift Boethius received is one he 'bare away of Fortune' (II.p3). To 'bare away of Fortune a yifte' oozes the allegorical doppelganger: because Fortune is the beneficiary, the gift is participation in her conceptual domain. The patriarchal political system exists of itself and seeks to ground itself in itself, but the hermetic seal is circumscribed by the feminine abstract. As such, movement along the male chain is imputed to Fortune's will: Fortune 'accoyede the and norryside the as hir owne delices', so Boethius is now a councilor of princes; Fortune 'now twynkled first upon the with a wikkid eye', so Boethius is now exiled unjustly (II.p3). The creation of the figure of Fortune serves to manifest into a will the diverse conflicts of an inherently fractious political system. Fortune represents within her circumscription of the political system the immense disparities and inscrutable injustices perpetrated by those in power.

Fortune's connection to power was understood by many medieval readers; Heloise, in the twelfth century, refers to this concept in a letter to Abelard when she assures him 'Non enim quo quisque ditior siue potentior, ideo et melior' fortune illud est, hoc uirtutis' [a person's worth does not rest on wealth or power; these depend on fortune, but worth on his merits.].⁵³ This was not merely a passive reiteration of the consolation tradition but an active reflection on contemporary political themes related to *De consolacione philosophiae*. As Charles A. Radding writes, many interpretations of Fortune

⁵³ Heloise, "Letter 2," *The Letter Collection of Peter Abelard and Heloise*, ed. by David Luscombe, trans. by Betty Radice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 134-5.

prior to the late eleventh century lacked this overtly political dimension.

As to Fortune herself, the commentators have trouble consistently seeing her as the embodiment of chance. Remi of Auxerre, for example, can cite a classical definition of chance (“*Fortuna est concursus causarum simul venientium*”) and then proceed to conclude that, nonetheless, “she punishes the evil and rewards the good.” Similar transformations are worked in Alfred's and Notker's translations of the *Consolatio*. Alfred conflates the figures of *fortuna* and *fatum* into *wyrd*, who however is conceived of as an agent of God; thus “all fortuna is good, since it corrects and punishes.” Notker's reorganization of Boethius is still more drastic: he mainly portrays Fortune as the dispenser of worldly goods that are contrasted to the Christian *summum bonum*, although at times he also “intimates that those worldly goods are themselves the *summum bonum*.” Indeed, scholars are uncertain either that Notker realized he was altering the entire system of the *Consolatio* or that changes that result are internally consistent.⁵⁴

Fortune's attitude to moral merit refracts readers' beliefs about society's wider (dis)harmonies. Like many of the troubles in earthly life, Fortune's fickleness invites speculation about the ways in which this misery is incorporated in a just theological system over which presides an omnipotent and benevolent god. Decrying Fortune does not necessitate that one decry the existence of fortune.

Although Boethius argues that Fortune has wronged him, Philosophy argues against him:

Whiltow therefore leye a reknynge with Fortune? ... If thow considere the nowmbre and the maner of thy blisses and of thy sorwes, thow mayst nought forsaken that thow nart yit blisful, For yif thou therefore wenest thiself nat weleful, for thynges that tho semeden joyeful ben passed, ther nys nat why thow sholdest wene thiself a wrecche[.] (II.p3)

Boethius is repeatedly presented in the texts as wrong, and part of Philosophy's work is to correct his mistakes. Philosophy's argument against Boethius' complaint about Fortune's injustice creates space for the reader to interpret the ultimate status of Fortune's allegorical content. Scenes like this in these texts lend themselves both to wider moral justifications and to diffident social skepticism.

By embodying skepticism about the social dysfunction of a patriarchal order, Fortune in the

54 Charles A. Radding, “Fortune and Her Wheel: The Meaning of a Medieval Symbol,” *Mediaevistik* 5 (1992), p. 130.

Boece bears the responsibility for the failure of the patriarchal order in a disruptive femininity. Fortune causes Boethius to fall short of his intellectual and emotional masculinity. As Philosophy notes, Fortune 'hath perverted the cleernesse and the estat of thi corage (II.p1)', whereas Philosophy recognizes Boethius as the man whom she 'norissched with my melk and fostred with myne metes' until he had 'escaped and comyn to corage of a parfit man' (I.p2). Philosophy envisions herself feeding Boethius breastmilk to metaphoricize her role in developing Boethius intellectually into a perfect man whose courage is properly mature, but Fortune's intervention in Boethius' life perverts that courage. The word 'perverted' is new in English; Chaucer's other use of the word is in *The Tale of Melibee*, which is also a prose translation from a French source.⁵⁵ The other contemporary use of the word occurs in the Wycliffite translation of the Bible in instances relatively similar to those presented in the Chaucerian contexts. Chaucer earlier uses the word in I.p3, probably due to the influence of Trevet.⁵⁶

Perhaps part of the appeal of this new word for translators is that the word itself enacts a translation. Chaucer relentlessly coins new words to ease the pressure of translation. As Morton Donner notes, 'Out of about 2,700 different words that appear in *Boece*, some 200 are new adoptions from French or Latin and more than 150 are new derivations formed on contemporary English patterns'.⁵⁷ Perverted belongs to the first group of new words, deriving in part from the Middle French 'pervertir', which, particularly in legal Anglo-Norman usage, had come to mean the distortion of the meaning of a text.⁵⁸ These connotations may have been in Chaucer's mind when he chose to import the word, given that he suggests that Fortune has perverted the 'estat' of Boethius' courage. Estate can have a bodily denotation in Middle English, but the difference between one's bodily state and one's social standing is

55 'pervert, v.', OED <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/141685>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. For a note on the source of *The Tale of Melibee*, see Kathleen Kennedy, "Maintaining Love Through Accord In the *Tale of Melibee*," *The Chaucer Review* 39.2 (2004), pp. 165-76.

56 A.J. Minnis, "Chaucer's Commentator, Nicholas Trevet and the *Boece*," pp. 83-166.

57 Morton Donner, "Derived Words in Chaucer's "*Boece*": The Translator as Wordsmith," *The Chaucer Review* 18.3 (Winter, 1984), p. 187.

58 'pervert, v.', OED.

not always clearly delineated in medieval texts.⁵⁹ For example, in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*,

Dido dynamically inhabits both possibilities of the word:

This fresshe lady, of the cite queene,
 Stod in the temple in hire estat real,
 So rychely and ek so fayr withal,
 So yong, so lusty, with hire eyen glade[.]⁶⁰

Dido stands in her royal estate, both in the temple of the city she rules and in her beauty and youth. Her estate is both rich, signifying her royal power, and fair, signifying her bodily condition as perceived through the heteronormative male erotic gaze. This gaze complicates these dimensions of estate even further: in this instance, God himself might consider her as the lover that he would take should he wish for one.⁶¹ Dido's physical appearance mingles with the startling possibility of her ascension to the woman most worthy of God's *eros*. Her estate becomes quasi-divine through its bodily representation of social degree.

By perverting Boethius' estate, Fortune may be rewriting his autonomy and unmanning him socially. She changes his original, proper form, the one nurtured by Philosophy, into a perverted form bereft of the virtues of a 'parfit man'. Fortune's perversion vanquishes Philosophy's influence through mistranslation. The word used in the Latin original is 'peruertit', a broader term, but one that can mean 'to overthrow'.⁶² Boethius is a battlefield between the influence of quasi-divine femininities, perhaps partially recalling the influence of earlier works like the *Psychomachia*. Indeed, Boethius once performed a confrontational masculinity against Fortune when he was properly nurtured by Philosophy: 'For thow were wont to hurtlen and despysen hir with manly woordes whan sche was blaundyssching

⁵⁹ 'estate, n', OED <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/64556>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

⁶⁰ Chaucer, *The Legend of Good Women*, ll. 1035-8, p. 610.

⁶¹ Ibid, ll. 1039-42, p. 610.

⁶² Boethius, II.p1.

and present, and pursuydest hir with sentences that weren drawn out of myn entre (*that is to seyn, of myn enformacioun*)' (II.p1). His 'manly woordes' against Fortune 'weren drawn out of myn entre', implying Philosophy's quasi-divine essence is a sanctuary of knowledge from which Boethius' masculine discerning marches out to 'hurtlen' Philosophy's foes, such as Fortune. Boethius did this despite the fact that Fortune, at the time, was 'blaundyssching and present', which suggests that Philosophy's hold on Boethius' 'manly woordes' was stronger than Fortune's wooing entreaties.

Philosophy stresses her strength over Fortune to indicate her transcendence over Fortune's realm. She shackles Fortune's content to her changefulness in order to prevent that change from implying any layer of meaning beyond her allegorical faults:

Thou wenest that Fortune be chaunged ayens the; but thow wenest wrong (*yif thou that wene*): always tho ben hir maneres. Sche hath rather kept, as to the-ward, hir propre stablenesse in the chaungynge of hirself. Ryght swiche was sche whan sche flateryd the and desseyved the with unfeul lykynges of false welefulnesse. Thou has now knowen and ateynt the doutous or double visage of thilke blynde goddesse Fortune. Sche, that yit covereth and wympleth hir to other folk, hath schewyd hir every del to the. (II.p1)

Boethius' complaint that Fortune has wronged him creates the underlying notion that Fortune has the capacity to do right by him, but Philosophy shears this possibility away from Fortune. Fortune is the 'double visage' as such, she is a negative gap whose negation is integral to her very nature, a 'blynde goddesse' that is 'knowen' only in her irresolute ungroundedness. There is no actual, quantifiable unit of her system; her whims are arbitrary impositions generated entirely by her ungrounded control over an irrelevant, self-generated, self-sustained realm. All that Fortune actually affects are her own effects.

Compare this unnatural power of office with the sovereign good that Philosophy believes 'is eveneliche purposed to the good folk and to badde, the gode folk seken it by naturel office of vertus, and the schrewes enforcen hem to getin it by diverse covetyse of erthly thinges, whiche that nys noon naturel office to gete thilk same sovereign good' (IV.p2). Whereas Fortune's dignities fail to carry from

one place to the next, because they are not generated by nature, but rather emanate from her own mediating gap in which one must invest meaning, the 'naturel office of vertus' unfailingly brings one closer to the sovereign good. Movement towards the sovereign good occurs in relation to one's inner nature; earthly movement towards fortune and success diverts one from this proper path towards the vanishing nothingness of Fortune's whims.

The sovereign good responds to one's self as a reward:

And I have schewed that blisfulnesse is thilke same good for whiche that alle thinges ben doon; thanne is thilke same good purposed to the werkes of mankynde right as a comune mede, which mede ne may nat ben disseveryd fro good folk For no wight as by right, fro thenneseforth that hym lakketh goodnesse, ne schal ben cleped good. For whiche thing folk of gode manneres, hir medes ne forsaken hem neveremo. (IV.p3)

The good responds to the 'thinges ben doon' as 'mede'. This use of 'mede' lacks the rhetorical division later expressed by Conscience in the C text of *Piers Plowman*, even as Philosophy makes the same type of distinction Conscience does.⁶³ Here 'mede' stands on the properly responsive side of a reward perfectly meted out in proportion to one's moral status. Fortune opposes this proper response between moral stature and reward from the sovereign good as the vanishing mediator who pollutes one's moral stature with an improperly responsive reward from a gap of earthly desire. Although Fortune appears in the human perception of chance, Philosophy argues that Fortune is the void between response and act, something which alienates act and reward through the illusory appearance of chance.⁶⁴ Although Fortune does not actually interact with act and reward, the perception of her presence between them has a tangible outcome.

63 See Chapter IV's discussion on 'mede' and 'mercede'. For the relevant passage in *Piers Plowman*, see William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), EETS 17 ll. C.III.290-406, pp. 121-131.

64 Eleanor Bayne Johnson, *Sensible Prose and the Sense of Meter: Boethian Prosimetrics in Fourteenth-century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 53.

Fortune's gap does not negate the masculine unity of providential ordinance, but rather erupts out of it and then vanishes back into it without disjoining the course of ordinance. Fortune only appears as a unique force counteracting providence when one remains too ensnarled in earthly objects to understand the divine transits that occur through those objects, and as such is prized when 'men loke not the ordre of thinges, but hir lustes and talentz, they wene that either the leve or the mowynge to don wikkidnesse, or elles the scapyng withouten peyne be weleful' (IV.p4). Those who recognize in the movements of Fortune a reward in itself fail to recognize the larger rewards those movements obscure and so come to incorrectly value the chance perturbations of fleeting Fortune. There is no unity of Fortune; she is a part of the 'engendryng of alle thinges ... and alle the progressiouns of muable nature' that 'taketh hise causes, his ordre, and his formes, of the stablenesse of the devyne thought' (IV.p6). Fortune folds back into God's perfect form and order as a cause of the engendering of things towards the progressions of their nature. The scope of the divine will submerges Fortune's changes, which from an earthly perspective may seem unnecessary, into the destined outcome. Fortune's gap does not prevent God's unity from exercising itself through any space, as

whethir that destyne be exercised outhir by some devyne spiritz, servantz to the devyne purveaunce, or elles by some soule, or elles by alle nature servynge to God, or elles by the celestial moevynges of sterres, or ellis by vertu of aungelis, or elles by divers subtilite of develis, or elles by any of hem, or elles by hem alle the destinal ordenaunce is ywoven and acomplissid[.] (IV.p6)

Fortune vanishes at the moment of consequence, because Fortune is of no consequence, she effects nothing, the final outcome always originates in proper divine unity and cyclically returns any occurrence into that unity. She is constrained to be her allegorical limitation within the movement of her wheel as a gear by the unity which, while not generating her whims, nevertheless weaves them into the unity through higher orders of movement. Philosophy comments: 'Enforcestow the to aresten or

withholden the swyftnesse and the sweighe of hir turnynge wheel? O thow fool of alle mortel foolis! Yif Fortune bygan to duelle stable, she cessede thanne to ben Fortune' (II.p1). Fortune is the immortal moment, the verse, of a prose progression, and thus what seems, in her elevated allegoricity, to defy proper progression, reconstitutes within that progression as a gear of the event's actualization. Chaucer clearly understood the import of this statement, as Philosophy presages Pandarus' remark in *Troilus and Criseyde*,

For if hire whiel stynte any thng to torne,
Than cessed she Fortune anon to be.⁶⁵

In the same way that Philosophy's feminine subversion unites Boethius to masculine unity, so too does Fortune's troublesome feminine subversion nevertheless unite the unity of earth with the divine unity.

Fortune's negation of the proper outcome of Boethius' duty to his lord is overruled by the spiritual harmony in which Boethius' duty is properly rewarded. Although the material world does not properly reward Boethius' social masculinity, the spiritual realm does. Philosophy's role in this transition places her in a mediatrix role that appears to material masculinity as the sign of spiritual masculinity.

For wit ne mai no thing comprehende out of matere ne the ymaginacioun ne loketh not the universal spesces, ne resoun ne taketh nat the symple forme so as intelligence takith it; but intelligence, that lookith [as] aboven, whanne it hath comprehended the forme, it knowith and demyth alle the thinges that ben undir that foorme; but sche knoweth hem in thilke manere in the whiche it comprehendith thilke same symple forme that ne may nevere ben knowen to noon of that othere (that is to seyn, to none of tho thre forseide strengthis of the soule). (V.p4)

The feminine soul of the 'sche' escapes the material divide into comprehension of the divine through the adoption of the higher form through the terms of the lower forms. Intellectual comprehension

⁶⁵ Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ll. 848-9, p. 485.

understands the 'universal species' out of the material in a greater capacity than wit or imagination can afford. Intellectual comprehension investigates 'the thinges that ben undir that foorme' to comprehend the material as signs of a truth that affects the material but cannot be represented within its limited scope. Philosophy helps to bridge the impossible gap in which wit and imagination fall short of the truth by providing a mode of intellectual comprehension for Boethius to adopt that translates material events into spiritual dynamics.

This translation does not actually augment the material but rather refers the mind away from the material to the spiritual underpinnings which affect the material. By the time of Boethius, Platonic theory and Augustine had articulated a triad of sensory perception (material into material), imagination (material into spiritual), and intellect (spiritual into spiritual), and by the time of the *Boece*, mystic theologians like Meister Eckhart had argued for an intellect that abandoned material images entirely.⁶⁶ Philosophy's translation, then, seeks to convey the mind to the spiritual, not to return the mind back to an augmented material, but rather to get the narrator to abandon the material entirely for an intellectual refuge in the spiritual. In this, Philosophy plays her role as a mediatrix: Eckhart argues that Mary carried the Incarnation only insofar as she intellectually understood it.⁶⁷ Likewise, Philosophy achieves Boethius' consolation only insofar as she is intellectually bound by the determinative masculine authority she bears as her allegorical content. Just as Mary bore God into the material world through an intellectual comprehension of Christ's manifestation, so too does Philosophy bear God into the material world as the manifested personification of an intellectual comprehension of God.

Philosophy disappears into this translation. She is the translation but not the content. To again recall V.m5, once 'earthly man' has 'waxest yvel out of thi wit' can he achieve what 'this figure

66 Amy Hollywood, *The Soul As Virgin Wife: Mechthild of Magdeburg, Marguerite Porete, and Meister Eckhart* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p. 17.

67 Meister Eckhart, *Sermons & Treatises, Vol. II*, trans. and ed. by M. O.C. Walshe (Shaftesbury: Element Books, 1979), pp. 70-1.

amongst the', the heights of 'hevene'. Philosophy as a figure performs this function, forcing Boethius to look heavenward. Philosophy's consolation is to provide reason's answer to all the confusions of the wit and the imagination excited by earthly troubles as a feminine conduit between different orders of maleness:

And yif that resoun wolde answeere ayein to these two (*that is to seyn, to wit and to ymaginacioun*), and seyn that sothly sche hirselve (*that is to seyn, resoun*) lokith and comprehendith, by resoun of universalite, bothe that that is sensible and that that is ymaginable; and that thilke two (that is to seyn, wit and ymaginacioun) ne mowen nat strecchen ne enhaunsen hemself to knowynge of universalite, for that the knowynge of hem ne mai exceden ne surmouten the bodily figures: certes of the knoweynge of thinges, men oughten rather yeven credence to the more stidfast and to the mor parfit judgement; in this manere stryvynge, thanne, we that han strengthe of resonyng and of ymagynyng and of wit (that is to seyn, by resoun and by ymaginacioun and by wit), we sholde rathir preise the cause of resoun (*as who seith, than the cause of wit and of ymaginacioun*). (V.p5)

Reason, imagination, and wit all strive towards the universal, but only reason truly reaches the universal. This universality allows reason to reinterpret the apparitions of both wit and imagination in view of the totality of understanding provided by divine providence. Both imagination and wit are limited to bodily figures: at this final breaking point of the allegory, is it not poignant that Philosophy finally reaches the point where Boethius must strive beyond the limits of cosmic understanding couched within bodily terms? Personification finds its limit at the brink of universality. At the moment when knowledge of lower terms can find the understanding of universal terms, the bodily referents are no longer necessary, and both terms enact, through reason, a unity. For Boethius, this unity undoes the specificities of matter to reveal the nature of the structure in which all bodies participate.⁶⁸ Allegorical individuation in conceptual embodiments are no longer necessary, because that for which they stand consumes their signifiatory power.

⁶⁸ Ebbesen, Sten, "Boethius on the Metaphysics of Words," *Greek-Latin Philosophical Interaction: Collected Essays of Sten Ebbesen, Volume 1* (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2008), p. 128.

In the final passage of the *Boece*, Philosophy reiterates this point by noting that 'as alle thingis that apiereth or scheweth to the wittes, yif thou referre it to resoun, it is universel; and yif thou referre it to itself, than is it singuler' (V.p6). Personified appearances, like Fortune, who appear to the wit and seem to intervene in the abyss of worldly disorder, only refer to their embodied allegorical existence insofar as one does not sublimate their existence into a universal understanding. Universal reason is the ultimate reference point, whereas singularity presents a negative closed loop of reference that prevents the unifying synthesis. The purpose of an allegorical figure only appears in universal reason to the extent that the figure is synthesized. The embodied symbol becomes a symbol of a self until it can be sublimated in an alienating ideology that supersedes the limits of a singular identity.

This is the mission of the entire work, philosophy's consolation: by ascending through symbolic referents into a unity, one can understand how those symbols are constrained within the divine ordinance. Philosophy does not truly exist: she is the allegorical embodiment of Boethius' arrival at this insight. When Boethius arrives at that insight, Philosophy disappears, and the work ends. The allegory has finished its operation of transporting the reader from a system of embodied referents to the divine unity they signify. The mediatrix disappears the moment Boethius' deferred masculinity is regrounded in a higher power. When the precarity of gender disappears, so too does the mediatrix.

Chapter III: *The Romaunt of the Rose* and the Gendered Symbology of Identity

In *The Romaunt of the Rose*, an object of desire entangles the dreamer's pleasure with his master's pleasure. The Lover's ability to fulfill his allegorical identity (a lover) relies on his successful performance of the commandments of the God of Love. The Lover is the Lover only to the extent that he is a servant of the God of Love. The focal point of this master-subject relationship is a woman-object, a feminine Rose which allegorically stands in for a beloved woman but never transforms into a human being. The identity of a man is guaranteed by a higher masculine authority through a desire for an objectified woman. The woman-object, emptied of innate content, is filled by a masculine projection as a symbol of male becoming.

This framework occurs across five stages. The first stage is the construction of an internal, altered space in which gender unfolds relative to the male consciousness which guarantees the meaning of its allegory. The social space happens inside of a male dreamer, thus the social presents itself to a male agency. The subject to whom the world unfolds itself is in a position of ontic centrality: the anterior space of the dream happens around the dream-gazer, whose perception orders the allegorical action around himself. In this way, the Lover becomes the subject of the discourse of *The Romaunt of the Rose*: it is his quest to attain the rose that orders the plot. Allegorical identities unfold to him: he receives Fair Welcome, the advice of Friend, he is the subject of Rebuff, etc.

The second stage is the concentration of the allegorical space in a woman-object. The Rose's universality helps to make it a locus of allegorical signification. Social identities unfold in their relationship to the Lover's quest for the Rose. To achieve this universality, the Rose plays out feminine ideals which are worshiped by men; the attainment of the Rose is the attainment of the identities those ideals construct. The Rose becomes the maximally referential sign, the sign that represents the system.

The third stage is the elision of the Narcissus paradox. Locked inside an inescapable bind of

desire, Narcissus cannot become the self he desires. He sees himself but cannot attain that self. This double bind of allegorical identity makes Narcissus the nadir of the Love discourse: a desire which genders the self into the object. Narcissus occupies the paradoxical position of being on both sides of the male gaze. To escape this bind, the woman-object sustains the Lover's self in a gendered alterity, such that he attains himself through the Rose without being the Rose.

The fourth stage is the God of Love's intervention. A gendered relationship of heteronormative desire unites the Lover and the God of Love. The God of Love conquers the Lover, asserting his greater masculinity, and so the Lover's self-becoming operates within the gendered emulation of a superior masculinity. Desire for a woman-object, regulates these two masculinities: the God of Love, who guarantees the Lover's pleasure in the Rose, is the hegemonic gendered possibility which constrains the Lover to fulfill an identity that happens within the God of Love's domain. The Lover, in attaining the woman-object, successfully assumes a masculinity.

The fifth stage is the transition of hierarchical masculinity to a spiritual discourse that interrogates the nature of divinity. Although *The Romaunt of the Rose* is a secular poem more interested in the masculine becoming of its dreamer, it's clear that for many late medieval readers *The Romaunt*, and the *Roman de la rose* generally, followed this allegorical framework to a further step and reflected on how gendering according to an authorial guarantee clarified the mortal relationship to the divine. Bodies are sets of possibilities in which the ego substantiates its idealized gendered destiny.

Each of these stages will be investigated in the five sections that make up this chapter.

Dream Discourse and Gendered Alterity

An I-self contextualized by allegorical meaning defines the *Roman de la rose* tradition. *The Romaunt of the Rose* uses genre tropes to orient an experiential poetics of a developing narrative

persona. This experiential poetics, as the purpose of the genre tropes, centers the narrative persona as the agent for whom the allegory unfolds. As such, all allegorical figures exist insofar as they relate to the experience of the narrative persona's identity.

The Romaunt of the Rose refers to literary authority to justify its intellectual value. A major conceit of English dream allegories is the intellectual validity of the alterior space of the dream, because the validity of the dream authorizes the allegorical value of the narrator's internal experience. If the dream is a valid intellectual space, then the allegory is a valid intellectual enterprise. *The Romaunt of the Rose* asserts the intellectual depth of its poetic pursuit by appealing to the literary authority of the Neoplatonic dreamspace authored by Macrobius (see Chapter I). The world of the dream is not only 'fables and lesynges' but also an internal space more in tune with the resonance of the powers which govern human events, where a dreamer has access to

Ful many thynges covertly
That fallen after al openly.¹

Allegories trace the parallel between the spiritual 'thynges [that appear] covertly' and the physical things that appear 'al openly': at first ideas occur in an abstract, spiritual sense, which obscures it from mortal comprehension, but subsequently ideas manifest tangible forms, in which mortals can perceive the influence of the spiritual. This middle stage of perception, halfway between material recognition and transcendent signification, is the common setting for the allegories studied in this thesis. By grounding his dream vision in this perceptive state, the Lover creates an alterior space which is both within him and beyond him. He experiences his authentic truth contextualized by the cosmic structures in which his being occurs. The Lover assures the reader that this space is a truthful, prophetic space

¹ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Romaunt of the Rose*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), ll. A.2, A.19-20, pp. 686-7. All citations from this work will hereafter be in the form of a parenthetical line number.

which has purpose beyond himself:

But in that sweven is never a del
That it nys afterward befallē,
Ryght as this drem wol I ryme aright[.] (A.28-30)

The Lover asserts that the interpretive faculty applied to the dream symbols produce valid renderings of cosmic truths in forms that make sense to mortals. Skeptics who might approach this dream as idle, pagan chatter are enjoined to reconsider the text as a serious intellectual pursuit.

The appeal to Macrobius to justify an allegory is part of the dream allegory tradition. Boethius' *In Isagogen* defends the intellectual seriousness of allegory by recalling Macrobius' 'famous defense of fable and ultimately of the medieval term *involucrum*: the text wrapped in an allegorical cover'.² Boethius' allegory stages a theological difficulty: Philosophy slowly convinces Boethius of the divine providence of justice in a fallen world. Subsequent allegories in the Macrobean tradition like Bernardus Silvestris' *Cosmographia* or Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae* follow suit with scholarly combinations of theology, grammar, cosmology, mysticism, moral instruction, and religious speculation.

By contrast, the more worldly subject matter of *The Romaunt of the Rose* wryly subverts genre expectations in the manner of Andreas Capellanus' *De amore libre tres*.³ The appeal to authority is a preemptive excuse for the content of the work through an adopted surface of scholarly solemnity. The text cloaks its frivolousness in the form of its seriousness. However, the subversive nature of the text does not mean that the content is insincere, rather the opposite: the aesthetic gambit of *The Romaunt of the Rose*, like the *Roman de la rose* it translates, is the desire to consider a secular subject in the same

2 Seth Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue: Literary Method in The Consolation of Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 88.

3 Peter L. Allen, *The Art of Love: Amatory Fiction from Ovid to the Romance of the Rose* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992), pp. 59-63.

seriousness that dream allegories provide for cosmological subjects. Some medieval readers did pick up on this innovative reconsideration of the intellectual depth of the love discourse: Jean de Montreuil defends the poetic ethos of Jean de Meun against his critics by appealing to the profundity of the *Roman de la rose*.

The more and more I examine, O most discerning man, the treasures of the mysteries and the mysteries of the treasures of this profound work, celebrated in memory, and composed by Jean de Meun, the more accurately the genius of its makers becomes apparent ... you have reproached him, preferring all the while Master Guillaume de Lorris in matters of creativity, clarity, propriety, and elegance, about whom, at the time, moved by a certain consideration, I failed to comment and from which I will now desist.⁴

Although it appears Jean de Montreuil prefers Jean de Meun to Guillaume de Lorris, it is clear that he is arguing for the intellectual validity of the *Roman de la rose* as a complete aesthetic project. Like other dream allegories, the *Roman de la rose* allows the reader to ponder mysteries in their full profundity. Discernment provides access to the inner nature of conceptual figments through the providence of genius. Although the field of inquiry of the dream allegory has shifted, the essential ontological purpose remains the same. The *Roman de la rose* seeks to articulate love in its social structure through the same cosmological ontology that previously manifested the truth of divine order in allegorical materiality.

Guillaume de Lorris follows the *Song of Songs* commentary tradition that reads the text as an allegorical drama where the soul loves the messiah like a bridegroom.⁵ The relationship between the *Song of Songs* and the Lorris section of the *Roman de la rose* was resonant enough that Jean de Meun felt the need to refer to Origen's commentary on the *Song of Songs*.⁶ Origen's allegorical exegesis of

4 See Quotation XXI. Jean de Montreuil, *Epistle 118, Debating the Roman de la rose: A Critical Anthology*, trans. by Earl Jeffrey Richards, ed. by Christine McWebb (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 202-3.

5 Origen, *The Song of Songs Commentary and Homilies* (New York: Pauline Press, 1957), pp. 21-3.

6 Jean de Meun, *Roman de la rose, Tome IV*, ed. by Pierre Marteau, Gutenberg <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/44713/44713-h/44713-h.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], ln. 17739, p. 76.

erotic poetics establishes a similar intellectual validity for a nominally secular love poetry.⁷ By insisting on the intellectual validity of its aesthetically subversive poetics, the *Roman de la rose* repurposes the dream allegory genre to evoke a subjective experience of desire. The success of Guillaume de Lorris' repurposing of dream allegory tropes is perhaps best represented in the fact that Jean de Meun would later himself repurpose the *Roman de la rose* for his own distinct aesthetic attempt to describe a subjective experience of desire.

Because of its subjective recasting of genre tropes, Jean de Meun's continuation is in some ways a translation of Guillaume de Lorris' poem: it brings the content of a text into a new literary frame of possibility. Prior to this continuation, Jean de Meun was known only for translations. An introductory letter addressed to Philip IV prefaces Jean de Meun's translation of *De consolacione philosophiae* in London, British Library MS Additional 10341, fol. 8 in which Jean lists a number of other translations he has performed.⁸ The credentials Jean de Meun presents to the King are not that of a great poet but rather that of a master translator. Jean's poetic experience consisted of responses to a preexisting tradition that translates literary authorities into new linguistic life.

The Romaunt of the Rose, which translates Jean de Meun's repurposing of Guillaume de Lorris' repurposing of dream allegory tropes, interacts with the text in a similar fashion to Jean de Meun's continuation. As a Chaucerian translation, *The Romaunt of the Rose* directly mimics Jean de Meun's literary development: an earlier translation of *De consolacione philosophiae* leads into a translation of the *Roman de la rose*. The former provides the genre context of the dream allegory, whereas the latter provides an opportunity to intercede in that genre context to explore new ideas of subjective experience. Because gender is so essential to the terms that express that authority, this literary interjection of subjective experience reconstitutes the genre tropes as existing for the dreamer's I-self.

⁷ Hannah W. Matis, *The Song of Songs in the Early Medieval Ages* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), p. 23.

⁸ Michelle P. Brown, *A Guide to Western Historical Scripts: From Antiquity to 1600* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), p. 108.

The dreamer is the experiential agent whose internal conflict of self the allegory authorizes.

The I-self is not determined by its contextual genre terms, but rather determines itself through the use of genre terms. By constructing the I-self in this way, the *Roman de la rose* lineage makes clever use of theological concepts of mortal free will within a cosmic order: the mortal freely wills its expression of the terms of that cosmic order. As Kellie Robertson writes,

In the hands of a philosophically minded fiction writer such as Jean de Meun, this teleological insight invited him to question an ecclesiastical orthodoxy that allowed for some natural determinism in the human realm (in our humoral makeup and in medical treatment, for instance) but not in others (sexual regulation or the spiritual will).⁹

This is an important point, but perhaps it is more accurate to say that Jean de Meun complicates natural determinism entirely. Nature confesses her frustration that humans subvert bodily determinism with their own actions, culminating in the argument that people can, through reason, escape their natural destiny.¹⁰ Nature directly speculates on the problem of predetermination: how can one reconcile divine providence in a world where people can escape their natural destinies through the intervention of their own autonomous reason? The answer is that proclivities influence the outcome except for those who conform directly to God's will: that is, natural determinism is escaped through adherence to the intention of a higher male authority.¹¹

Patriarchal love plays a huge part in a conforming autonomy that eludes natural determinism. In Boethius, love serves as a metaphor for an intellectual ascent into the divine but without losing its sexual nature.¹² Loving desire, ostensibly for an earthbound materiality, nevertheless in itself produces the suspension of circumstance that allows for the invocation of the divine. This suspension creates an

⁹ Kellie Robertson, *Nature Speaks: Medieval Literature and Aristotelian Philosophy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2017), p. 346.

¹⁰ Jean de Meun, *Roman de la rose*, Gutenberg, pp. 57-110.

¹¹ Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 264.

¹² J. Allen Mitchell, *Ethics and Eventfulness in Middle English Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 51-2.

alterior space in which materiality encounters its spiritual essence.

The garden of Idleness is the alterior space to which the Lover goes in his dream. Birds serenade the Lover's entrance into the garden of Idleness. Bullfinches, woodpeckers, and other songbirds 'that in her swete song deliten' fill the garden: these birds are recognized through the lens of enjoyment (A.659). Sensory enjoyment typifies this initial experience of Idleness, where 'myghte men see many flokkes' of these singing birds (A.662). These birds are betokened by their being-for-others, an overflowing of sensations that suggests something about the allegorical place in which they exist. All the various songbirds try to sing over each other to the point of exhaustion, causing the Lover to conclude that they have 'made fair servyse' (A.669). Their songs become a service of sweetness to a subjectivity interpreting the birds as elements of a scene constructed for them, and the sweetness of these songs contributes to the alterity of the Lover's vision:

They songe her song as faire and wel
As angels don espirituel.
And trusteth wel, whan I hem herde,
Ful lustily and wel I ferde,
For never yitt sich melodye
Was herd of man that myghte dye. (A.671-6)

The Lover enters a rapturous state of a heightened unity of forms which emanate supernatural sensations. The songs, although ostensibly uttered by mundane birds, exceed the earthly limits of those birds, becoming symbolic objects of a spiritual state: the birds become angels singing with melodies that have been lost to 'man that myghte dye', a fact which emphasizes the postlapsarian loss of this Edenesque scene. This angelic comparison supplements the elevated field of experience into which the Lover enters: the angel reference plays upon the medieval depiction of angels possessing feathers, as confirmed by the later line 'angels that ben fethered brighte' (A.742). Additionally, the 'archaungell' is one of the birds that help the God of Love to seem

as he were an aungell
That doun were comen fro hevене cler. (A.915-7)

The 'archaungell' is an idiosyncratic translation of the French 'mesanges', or titmouse.¹³ It acknowledges the French pun of 'mes anges', or superlative angels. The pun is lost in Middle English, so Chaucer's text preserves the spiritual undertone rather than the material overtone.

The postlapsarian encounter with these angels helps to explain the birds' transmutation into sirens. Guillaume de Lorris writes:

Tant estoit cil chans dous et biaux,
Qu'il ne sembloit pas chans d'oisiaus,
Ains le péust l'en aesmer
A chant de seraines de mer,
Qui par lor vois qu'eles ont saines
Et series, ont non seraines.¹⁴

[So sweet and lovely was that song that it seemed not to be birdsong, but rather comparable with the song of sea-sirens, who are called sirens because of their pure, sweet voices.]¹⁵

Sirens are summoned into a scene which should emphasize purity and sweetness. The duplicitous, seemingly sweet nature of the sirens patterns has increased significance in an Eden scene, given that Eve falls to the serpent's temptation first, then convinces Adam to follow her fall. The gendered, heteronormative interpretation of this passage, via Augustine, is one of seduction.¹⁶

The trope of sexuality resulting from original sin was a devotional commonplace by the time of Guillaume de Lorris, and some poems, like the ninth-century *Phoenix*, explored ideas of spiritual

13 Guillaume de Lorris, *Roman de la rose*, p. 60.

14 Ibid, p. 44.

15 Guillaume de Lorris, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 12.

16 John Flood, *Representations of Eve in Antiquity and the English Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 52-3.

gender ambiguity through a symbolic bird: 'the monastic ideals of transcending gender and sexuality' allows one to 'renounce the desires of the flesh' and escape the sexual desire that led to the fall.¹⁷ In this patriarchal system, gender relies heavily on sexual desire, which is problematic given its relationship to original sin, and so renouncing sexual desire for devotional contemplation is akin to transcending sex. Although, for Boethius, love can sustain divine contemplation alongside its sexual actuality, this love is contested and dangerous. For instance, Jean Gerson demands that confession occur across a specified distance, otherwise there is the risk that the spiritual love of the priest for his petitioner might devolve into a carnal love for them.¹⁸ This complexity arises through this perception of melodic sweetness through male desire: the subjective experience funnels into a demand for a reified object of that subjective state in a manner consistent with heteronormative male sexual desire. In *The Owl and the Nightingale*, the nightingale's song both expresses sexual desire for women and inducts them into a certain type of love discourse.¹⁹ The song of the nightingale, and the songs of all the birds in the garden of Idleness, use sweet sensations to nod towards sex as a kind of sweet sensation *par excellence*. In this way, birds and women combine because of the way the perceptions of their sweetness invoke desire in a privileged ontic subjectivity.

Subjective immersion in hidden sweetness had a tangible effect on Chaucerian poetics. In *The Knight's Tale*, Chaucer, perhaps influenced by the *Roman de la rose*, puts Emelye in a garden 'as an aungel hevenysshly she soong' when Palamoun first sees her.²⁰ Although not specifically in a garden, the Black Knight in *The Book of the Duchess* first encounters his love when youth 'Governed me in ydelnesse' and led him to a place where he

17 David Clark, *Between Medieval Men: Male Friendship and Desire in Early Medieval English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 170-1.

18 Dyan Elliott, *Proving Woman: Female Spirituality and Inquisitional Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 216.

19 *The Owl and the Nightingale* <https://www.hs-augsburg.de/~harsch/anglica/Chronology/13thC/Owl/owl_text.html>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], ll. 1417-1510.

20 Chaucer, *The Knight's Tale*, ln. 1055, p. 39.

saugh hyr daunce so comlily,
 Carole and synge so swetely,
 Laughe and pleye so womanly[.]²¹

Blanche's singing helps create the image of her being 'so womanly'. The Black Knight, led like the Lover by Idleness, encounters a singer who charms him with a sweet femininity. This gendering effects femininity in a male subject: femininity is an experience of sweetness encountered by a male agent. The sweetness is a sensation, and the woman is the object which produces this sensation. Women, as symbols of sweetness, become objects of desire. The trope of women singing evinces the perception of them in the male gaze as symbolic objects within the emerging Middle English traditions. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, many lullabies symbolically framed the mother as Mary and the child as the Christ child.²² Singing creates a beautified experiential perception which allows for allegorical thinking to be overlaid. The pleasure of the music possesses within it questions of desire which explore an increasingly gendered space of perceptive desire.

The Chaucerian version underscores the role of desire in the classical reference with a gloss.

Sich swete song was hem among
 That me thought it no briddis song,
 But it was wondir lyk to be
 Song of mermaydens of the see,
 That, for her syngyng is so clere,
 Though we mermaydens clepe hem here
 In English, as is oure usaunce,
 Men clepe hem sereyns in Fraunce. (A.677-84)

Chaucer chooses to translate sea-sirens as mermaids, which calls to mind the nude or suggestive

21 Chaucer, *The Book of the Duchess*, ll. 848-50, p. 340.

22 Kathleen Palti, "Lullabies and Carols in Medieval England," *The Journal of English and German Philology* 110.3 (Jul., 2011), pp. 361, 366.

depictions of mermaids common in fourteenth-century England, many with combs and mirrors to symbolize feminine vanity.²³ Mermaids, at this time, were as likely to be depicted as half-bird as they were half-fish, sometimes even as a combination of the two, so these mermaids still fit the birdsong trope developed in the *Roman de la rose*. Mermaids, as problematic feminine bodies, recall Eve's objectified feminine sinfulness. Just as Eve's punishment for seducing Adam to sin is the pain of childbirth, so too do the mermaids suffer the consequences of their temptress role in their bestial bodies.²⁴ These bodies correspond between the *Roman de la rose* and Chaucerian poetics: sentient birds demarcate the uncanny position between 'an alien other' and 'an assimilated self ... *unless*, and this distinction is the crucial point of this study, Chaucer amplifies its subjectivity.²⁵ Similarly, in the *House of Fame* a difference emerges between the eagle guide and the half-bird Fame: they conjunct interiority and alterity in an allegorical presentation of recognition. The eagle recognizes Chaucer's potential, whereas Fame recognizes no one's potential and enacts her role in the imputed arbitrariness of her conceptual domain. Birdsong aestheticizes this gulf into pleasurable instruction. The *Roman de la rose*, as a poem that uses the solemnity of genre to countenance the frivolity of content, is a natural place for such an effect to occur. The poetics solder together pleasure and purpose. Sweetness and the role of the seductress are dual sides of the same sensory experience of desire which can facilitate divine contemplation so long as bodies are understood to be physical referents of allegorical intention. The seductress nature of these women appear in their bodies to glimmer that spiritual ambiguity.

The Romaunt of the Rose transitions birdsong, already allegorically elevated and gendered female, into the carols of allegorical women. One of these women is Gladness:

23 Paul Hardwick, *English Medieval Misericords: The Margins of Meaning* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), pp. 92-3.

24 Elizabeth Robertson, *Early English Devotional Prose and the Female Audience* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990), p. 38.

25 Lesley Kordecki, *Ecofeminist Subjectivities: Chaucer's Talking Birds* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), p. 10.

A lady karolede hem that hyghte
 Gladnesse, [the] blissful and the lighte;
 Wel coude she synge and lustyly,
 Noon half so wel and semely,
 And make in song sich refreynyng:
 It sat hir wondir wel to synge.
 Hir vois ful clere was and ful swete. (A.745-51)

The passage goes on to note the ubiquity of Gladness' caroling, which is her foremost art.²⁶ Gladness' song impassions her allegorical content through seemingly sensations. Her singing manifests the tension already present in birdsong like the songs of sea-sirens. Her singing instills pleasure in the Lover; she becomes Gladness by causing gladness in the Lover. Her identity exists insofar as it produces itself in his experience.

In Guillaume de Lorris, this correspondence occurs through the variety of synonyms for 'play' used in this section, all of which signify the playful activities of 'walking about, singing, dancing, making love'; Chaucer responds to this repetition by using 'play' sixteen times in his fragment (A.752-8).²⁷ The interplay of singing, sexuality, and frivolity create a loaded pleasure which, in an allegorical context, can be filled with all sorts of conceptual condensations.

Although the lexicon of play characterizes this passage, the pleasure instructs the Lover to an aesthetics of recognition. This is another case in which *The Romaunt of the Rose* repurposes the Boethian tradition:

Philosophy's diction suggests that she sees her song as a penetrative agent (“illabuntur”) that Boethius can feel or sense (“sentisne”). This characterization first reveals that Philosophy's healing song acts by penetration; song is useful when prose cannot – quite literally – get through to Boethius. Its piercing action breaks through the affective wall of his sorrows. Second, by evoking “sense,” Philosophy's characterization suggests that meter penetrates by

26 ll. A.752-8, p. 695.

²⁷ Bleeth, Kenneth, “Chaucerian Gardens and the Spirit of Play,” *Place, Space, and Landscape in Medieval Narrative*, ed. by Laura L. Howes (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2007), pp. 107-17.

producing aesthetic experience – that which can be felt sensually, or perceived by the senses.²⁸

These songs affix meaning into the self through the way they make truth perceptible: first physically, then allegorically through the intelligence. Instruction through song presupposes the elements of spiritual activity that takes place in the sensory realm. Songs supplant the distance between intelligences through the perceptive continuity between them. Singing manifests the femininity of the female personification in such a way that that femininity constitutes a relation to the allegorical content. The femininity of Gladness can be internalized in the consolation of male agency, as in Boethius. The Lover understands Gladness through the sensory pleasure she provides him. Her allegorical content creates her femininity as an aesthetic intensity which communicates her personified role to the masculine interpreter.

The Woman-Object as the Feminine Locus of Allegory

Although this feminine singing consoles authority through perception, this form of intersubjective transmission is not limited to female figures, and also occurs in encounters with the masculine figures, particularly with the God of Love, on whom the Lover relies for the attainment of the Rose. The prayer for intercession interprets the desired object within the domain of the male authority which acts upon it. Deified authority allegorically covers the Rose as an aspect of that godhood. This godhood imbues the Rose with the latent form of its presence, rendering the woman-object a token of male signification. The Rose as the beloved testifies to the male content of Love. The Lover interprets the Rose as an object under the yoke of male authority; whether that authority is read within the allegorical fiction as the God of Love or within the religious backdrop of that fiction as the

²⁸ Eleanor Johnson, *Practicing Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: Ethics and the Mixed Form in Chaucer, Gower, Usk, and Hoccleve* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 20-1.

Christian God is in somewhat beside the point, because they both stand for a similar effect upon the Rose. His appeal for a woman's love supplicates a male authority. This appeal elides the woman's autonomy by reading her love as an effect of the proper deified male authority.

By reducing the Rose to a signifying object, the woman-object no longer stands for itself, but instead becomes a node of allegorical potential. Indeed, the Lover emphasizes the universal nature of the Rose in order to prevent a more literal reading, where the Lover is actually pursuing a real woman.

And that is she that hath, ywis,
 So mochel pris, and therto she
 So worthy is biloved to be,
 That she wel ought, of pris and ryght,
 Be cleped Rose of every wight. (A.44-8)

The Rose belongs to every person. The Lover's journey stands in for the experiences of the readers, such that they are invited to identify with the Lover and his quest. In pursuing the Rose, the Lover enacts the content latent in the pursuit of desire itself. The universality 'of every wight' supersedes the conceptual limits present in Guillaume's text, who grounds the Rose title less in popular appraisal and more in the inherent nature of the woman-object to produce the proper appraisal.

C'est cele qui tant a de pris,
 Et tant est digne d'estre amée,
 Qu'el doit estre Rose clamée.²⁹

[She it is who is so precious and so worthy of being loved that she ought to be called Rose.]³⁰

Guillaume focuses on the innate nature of the woman-object to earn the title rose, but Chaucer draws

29 Guillaume de de Lorris, *Roman de la Rose*, ed. by Pierre Marteau, Gutenberg

<<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16816/16816-pdf.pdf>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], p. 4.

30 Guillaume de de Lorris, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1994), p. 3.

out the universality of the appraisal, thereby decentering the Rose. She becomes everybody's rose, a sign of love rather than a specific beloved. The vagueness of the Lover's praise also asserts this universality by allowing any individual reader to fill in the blanks. The 'pris' that makes her 'worthy' is a signifiatory lacuna which allows the reader to inject their own meaning. She is worthy of being beloved for all the various reasons someone might find their own rose worthy of being beloved.

The universality of the Rose nullifies the particulars of its subjectivity. The Rose is objectified as a remainder of desire: she signifies everything one might want signified through her. Feminine allegorical content diverges from the perfectly nullified Rose in personifications which intervene in or antagonize the Lover's desire. She remains the universalized emptiness of form; any deviations of content from that form produce the stations of the Lover's inability to access this universal.

The Rose becomes feminine and anonymous in equal measures. The more eternal and symbolic an expression of femininity, the less womanhood that femininity affords. The Rose, as the eternal woman-object, exemplifies this extreme point of the suppressed symbol. As Jane Gilbert argues,

Insofar as they are validated by their virtues, women appear to be all the same, avatars of the Eternal Feminine. Any particularities which might distance them from the ideal must be forgotten ... Hence the symbolic authority granted to the Eternal Feminine is limited to activities and uses which demonstrably accord with that ideal. Furthermore, the woman who wishes to exercise this authority must recognize that she is merely a conduit for power.³¹

Exemplifying this deviation from universality through allegorical particulars is the Lover's first encounter with allegorical women. These women combine earthly difficulties with a particular strain of spiritual encumbrance. They bear out their allegorical content against the backdrop of the perfect Rose, whose perfection is embedded in the dream as a causation, thereby rendering their content as imperfections against an unnamed universality which these particulars inhibit.

³¹ Jane Gilbert, *Living Death in Medieval French and English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 198.

For instance, the Lover first notices Hate, who 'Semede to ben a mynoresse' (A.149). This anti-mendicant jibe does not exist in the original French 'moverresse', a term more grounded in Hate's quarrelsome nature.³² Of course, Chaucer's works have a noticeable anti-fraternal strain, most graphically in *The Summoner's Prologue*, in which friars are shown to inhabit a rather central place in hell.³³ The dialogic humor of *The Canterbury Tales* makes this example difficult to extricate from the argument between the Friar and the Summoner, but it is clear that Chaucer picks up on the anti-fraternal themes already present in the *Roman de la Rose*, particularly the moment in Jean de Meun's section when False Semblance makes a reasoned argument against the mendicant lifestyle of poverty. In turn, both writers borrow from Guillaume de St Amour's notorious anti-fraternal treatise, *De periculis novissimorum temporum*.³⁴ Jean cites Guillaume de St Amour by name.³⁵ Fragment C of the Middle English translation follows suit (C.6774-85). The position of *De periculis* had been widely condemned, even burned by Pope Alexander IV, a history acknowledged by both the *Roman* and the *Romaunt* citations, so an adherence to *De periculis* clearly marked an ecclesiastical counterculture in which both Jean de Meun and Geoffrey Chaucer chose to participate.³⁶

False Semblance's gibes undercut female monasticism at a deeper level than a mere critique of mendicants. Although the Order of Saint Clare, the minoresses to which the Lover refers, are Franciscans, they are also contemplative monastics. Papal bulls addressed to their order, for instance Innocent IV's 1263 *Solet annuere* reconfirming the Rule of St Clare's authority over their practice, emphasized 'Deinceps extra monasterium, sine utili, rationabili, manifesta et probabili causa, eidem exire non liceat' [Next, nuns should not leave the monastery, except for a useful, reasonable, evident,

32 Lorris, p. 12.

33 *The Summoner's Prologue*, ll. 1683-99, p. 128.

34 Penn R. Szitty, "The Antifraternal Tradition in Middle English Literature," *Speculum* 52.2 (Apr. 1977), p. 288.

35 Meun, pp. 110-2.

36 Arnold Williams, 'Chaucer and the Friars', *Speculum* 28 (1953), 499-513.

and plausible purpose].³⁷ Although some lay women chose to follow the male friars' examples of living in poverty and preaching, the gendered expectation of vocational service continued to emphasize the properly feminine monastic mode.³⁸ Thus, both the Chaucerian addition on Hate and Fragment C's translation of False Semblance's arguments entwine anti-fraternal concerns with considerations on female monastic practice. Take the way that False Semblance's disapprobation of female monastics is bookended with comments on male worship:

Men may in seculer clothes see
 Florishen holy religioun.
 Full many a seynt in feeld and toun,
 With many a virgine glorious,
 Devout, and full religious,
 Han deied, that comun cloth ay beeren,
 Yit seyntes nevere the lesse they weren.
 I crowde reken you many a ten
 Ye, wel nygh [al] these hooly wymmen
 That men in chirchis herie and seke,
 Bothe maydens and these wyves eke
 That baren full many a fair childe heere,
 Wered alwey clothis seculere,
 And in the same dieden they
 That seyntes weren, and ben alwey.
 The eleven thousand maydens deere
 That beren in heven hir ciergis cleere,
 Of whiche men rede in chirche and synge,
 Were take in seculer clothinge
 Whanne they resseyved martirdom,
 And wonnen hevene unto her hom. (C.6232-52)

False Semblance, as a result of his allegorical content, understands the deceptive nature of appearances.

During False Semblance's appearance in the *Roman de la rose*, forty-eight different clothing terms are

37 Innocent IV, *Solet annuere*, Directorio Francisco <<http://www.franciscanos.org/esscl/regcla-a.html>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], ln. 13. The translation is my own.

38 Darleen Pryds, 'Franciscan Lay Women and the Charism to Preach', *Franciscans and Preaching: Every Miracle from the Beginning of the World Came about through Words*, ed. by Timothy J. Johnson (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 53-5.

used.³⁹ False Semblance disguises himself by adhering to his allegorical identity: he creates an subversive appearance that does not fulfill the role it signifies. By altering his referents, he can change his signification. This deception of appearances complicates a gaze that False Semblance, perhaps somewhat inadvertently, grounds in the male gaze. 'Men may' see religion flourish in 'many a virgine glorious', a phrase that could refer to the gender neutral expectation of ecclesiastical celibacy, until False Semblance once again genders his terms with reference to 'hooly wymmen' who are beheld and desired by 'men in chirchis'. The holiness of female saints emerges out of an internal state dubiously represented by appearance. There were a number of 'reformed' female saints, and the fourteenth century saw the popularization in England of a kind of female saint that had thus far only flourished on the continent, women with children.⁴⁰ Saintliness, which nominally 'should' include virginity, actually represents a diverse set of sexual histories. Male desire as expressed by the worship of saints wryly replays heteronormative male sexual desire as befuddled by the manipulation of appearances. False Semblance chooses to underline the spiritual nature of virginity by including both maidens and mothers who have 'baren full many a faire childe'. The charge here is for men to note the deceptive appearance of virginity: a maiden is as likely as a wife to possess the virtue of spiritualized virginity, a somewhat coy nod at the uncertainty of maiden virginity. Even the *Golden Legend*, which for the most part fastidiously reiterates the virginity of its female saints, includes a passage on Saint Savina, who remarks that the Lord 'hast always kept me in chastity', even as the passage concludes with the admission, 'S. Savina that was wife of S. Valentine'.⁴¹ Although this attribution is spurious, it speaks to the kinds of chastity that hagiography allowed: appropriate sexual duty within marriage, renewed

39 Susan Stakel, *False Roses: Structures of Duality and Deceit in Jean de Meun's Roman de la rose* (Saratoga: Anma Libri, 1991), p. 52.

40 Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "Clerc u lai, muine u dame': Women and Anglo-Norman Hagiography in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150-1500*, ed. by Carol M. Meale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 63-4.

41 Jacob de Voraigne, *The Golden Legend*, Volume V, trans. by William Caxton, Fordham University Sourcebooks <<https://sourcebooks.fordham.edu/basis/goldenlegend/GoldenLegend-Volume5.asp#Savina>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

celibacy after a sexual relationship has ended, *et cetera*. Married saints provide alternate visions of chastity: Saint Monica stands in opposition to an adulterous husband, Saint Cecilia (whose influence extends to Chaucerian poetics in *The Second Nuns' Tale*) who maintains virginity despite a forced marriage, and Saint Margaret of Scotland whose piety exudes a positive influence onto her husband and son. Although these saints provide nuanced positive representations for women to spiritually follow, False Semblance uses them cynically to denote the possibility of chastity outside the normative mode of an unmarried maiden.

False Semblance's account accomplishes a gendered reversal of controversial ecclesiastical trends by demonstrating the way in which a specifically female contemplative practice requires legitimacy from the male gaze. False Semblance attacks the institutions of female spirituality through remarks on their appearance. False Semblance problematizes the male gaze but does not decenter it. His point is not that it is the inherent religious autonomy of a complete spiritual subject that generates a proper spiritual attitude outside of the inherited duties of an ecclesiastical tradition, but rather that men cannot always accurately ascertain which women are holy virgins simply through appearance. Women remain objects of the male gaze whose worth can be interpreted, but they are mercurial and difficult objects that remain duplicitous even when visually signified as members of a holy order. These women are still those which 'men in chirchis herie and seke' and 'Of whiche men rede in chirche and synge', but 'The clothing yeveth ne reveth nought' (C.6254). Hate wears the habit of a minoresse, so one can see through appearance how the flawed feminine diverges from universal feminine perfection.

False Semblance performs the inability for appearance to guarantee gendered expectations. This inability arises at the moment of crossdressing, of an appearance that is phobically rejected as false, as not belying imputed beliefs of gender into sex. He appears as a woman in such a way that tropes of femininity begin to falter, as Carolyn Dinshaw argues:

The principles of fraud and hermeneutic breakdown that Faus Semblant personifies are significantly multi-gendered, significantly sexually indeterminate. If one medieval idea of language – the sense of the signifier's oneness with its signified – associates it with prelapsarian times, a time of mythically perfect (hetero)sexual relations, gendered and uncorrupted, the other idea – referring to its arbitrariness, fragmentariness, and consequent potential for disruption – cuts it off from such perfect sexuality or even clearly defined gender.⁴²

Gender, occurring once more as a grammatical derivation from a prelapsarian source, improperly emanates from a constraining sex-into-gender. If personification is the trope of bodies portraying abstract concepts here the body actively defies its reading, then the semblance is misread in irreducibly ambiguous language that is arbitrary and fragmentary. The patriarchal projection of ontic centrality is disrupted by the instability of the being-for-others that phantasmally masquerades questions of identity for the narrativizing agency.

These allegorical negatives occur within the male gaze. Hate is 'hidous', 'full foul and rusty', with a 'nose snorted up for tene' (A.157-9). Villainy seems 'a wikked creature', 'full fouyle and cherlyssh', 'dispitous', and 'ful proud and outragious' (A.171-7). Avarice is also 'foul in peyntyng', but also more pointedly 'grene as ony leek', thereby rendering her visage nonnormative to the extent that she exhibits her particular allegorical content (a.211-2). Resisting the outline of False Semblance's views,

Avarice to clothe hir well
 Ne hastith hir never a dell.
 For certeynly it were hir loth
 To weren ofte that ilke cloth[.] (A.231-4)

Avarice does wear her allegorical content in her clothing. She presents herself in accord with the underlying theme which she embodies, thus extending her embodiment to her clothing.

⁴² Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), p. 175.

Other examples of this trend abound in the complexions of the other women of the mural: Sorrow appears to have jaundice (A.303-5); Age is sallow and 'faded' of 'al her beaute' (A.354-5), a note which renders Age's role in determining a woman's place in a patriarchal system that routinely emphasizes marriages between older men and younger women; and Hypocrisy has a 'pale visage' that 'maketh hir outward precious' (A.419-20), but this desired paleness is of both color and deeds (A.441). Desire's relationship to the particularities these allegories inhabit operates through the terms of the objectification of women. The evils these women allegorically embody besmirch the contours of that body within patriarchal desire in order to render them imperfect replicas of the pure feminine object, the Rose. In this sense, the nature of these women on the mural is to be seen for what they are: the context of their appearance invites the viewer to consider these women as objects interpretable through viewing.

The Lover is supposed to look at these allegorical women as negative examples of identity, so that he will sustain his own allegorical identity without resorting to the emotions those women personify. Their emotions restrict his becoming; their relationship to male ontic centrality is a suppressive one, and so they are portrayed as undesirable. The purpose of their images is to show how, as Mary C. Flannery contends, 'one is either in the appropriate emotional state to become a lover or one is not, and likely never will be.'⁴³ In the depictions of these women, the Lover witnesses the emotional states that could prevent him from achieving his allegorical content by waylaying his quest for the Rose.

The images of women immediately fade inside the condition of the Lover. They do not remain objects, but rather become object lessons for the Lover's own internal progression. His quest for the Rose is initially guarded by these emotions depicted on a wall that surrounds the garden of the Rose

43 Mary C. Flannery, 'Personification and Embodied Emotional Practice in Middle English Literature,' *Literature Compass* 13.6 (Jun., 2016), p. 355.

(A.475-82). The Rose lies hidden within the depictions of these women; they form the outer bounds of its universal notion. The contrast these depictions make with the bodiless objectivity of the Rose renders a judgment about feminine particularity within an embodied allegorical field subject to the gaze. This gaze remains allegorical, however, in part because of the markedly unschematic form of the mural, which contrasts with medieval devotional treatments of the theme of the Seven Deadly Sins, the closest topical analogue meaningfully represented in surviving examples of actual medieval wall paintings, most of which date to after the initial *Rose*.⁴⁴ The wall remains largely a literary device which does not necessarily invite actual speculation into its illusory materiality.

This formula of internalized contrast with the Rose through allegorical embodiment arises in the allegorical figures that populate the Lover's contest for the Rose in a manner prepared for the reader by this initial encounter with the garden wall's mural. The Rose remains the purpose of the dream; all the other allegorical personifications are characterized by their relationship to that purpose.

Narcissus and the Identification of Desire

The Rose materializes a relation between the Lover and the God of Love. The Lover's desire for the Rose leads him to manifest his identity according to the terms prescribed to him by the God of Love's identity. The Rose's role as a mediatrix, a disappearing gap between two masculine identities within a hierarchy, guarantees his identity with the power of a higher identity. This mediatrix role helps the Lover avoid the fate of Narcissus, at whose pool the Lover discovers the Rose. Narcissus represents a desire for self that becomes hopelessly looped into a phantasmal projection. Without a woman-object mediatrix, Narcissus is stuck forever inside his desire. Luce Irigaray expounds how this desire loop of difference subordinates woman as 'the foundation for this specular duplication, giving man back "his"

⁴⁴ Roger Rosewell, *Medieval Wall Paintings* (Oxford: Shire Publications, 2014), pp. 48-9.

image and repeating it as the “same.” If an *other* image, an *other* mirror were to intervene, this inevitably would entail the risk of mortal crisis.⁴⁵ Narcissus enters a mortal crisis because he encounters himself as an alterity that he cannot reach. He is not given his image in the mirror desire, but rather is forever eluded by this image, becoming negated into a loop of desire as such. His desire is too literal: it does not have the moebius strip disintegration into the woman qua being-other-for-self that this love discourse requires.

Encountering the Rose at Narcissus' pool continues the paradisaical themes of the birdsong, as the pool of Narcissus was sometimes considered to be fed by the rivers of Paradise.⁴⁶ Certainly, this pool was sometimes exaggerated to be a major body of water in fifteenth-century illustrations, likely because of these hints of grandeur in its source.⁴⁷ Although the secular tone of the poem makes these paradisaical trappings subversive, the value in the references to Paradise lay in the ways they helped facilitate the internalized elevation of the dreamstate. The Neoplatonic transcendence of the mundane unites the mind with higher spheres of the divine intellect, much like finding oneself reflected in the waters of paradise. Actions at this higher level reveal agency as the preordained content of an embodied predicament, such that the dreamstate problematizes the I of the narrative. The Lover both is a lover and is condemned to his essence as the Lover. His embodiment condemns him to his destiny. The universality of his search for the Rose coincides with his ineluctable alienation into allegorical content.

Alienation allows for the latent signification of the material to appear in a parallel space. Allegory secures the subject in a universal truth immune from the hazards of contingent experience. The *Roman de la rose* was part of a diverse trend of medieval French literature that displaced the social ethos from its mundane form in order to perceive the cosmological order from which that ethos is

⁴⁵ Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), p. 54.

⁴⁶ Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 58.

⁴⁷ Deirdre Larkin, “*Hortus Redivivus*: The Medieval Garden Recreated,” *Health and Healing from the Medieval Garden*, ed. by Peter Dendle and Alain Touwaide (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2008), p. 232.

derived. Dream visions supersede the contingencies of existence by investigating the essential qualities of the 'everyday human world'.⁴⁸ Dream allegories recontextualize the experience of reality by looking beyond the 'immediate' towards the 'ethical, social, and psychological' elements that are bound up with those objects. The battle for self that dream allegories dramatize illustrates the way in which the mundane entangles the self. By giving proper credence to the importance of the mundane, the dream allegory places inside the person the problem of becoming themselves. The process reveals how this person is socially situated among other subjects struggling to become themselves. In this sort of systemification, the body, as the site in which one is perceived, reduces the subject to being-for-others. In the dreamspace, gender is the prism through which the subject participates in an allegorical role.

Questions of one's right to one's essence dispute the I of the narrator: the Lover's battle for the Rose shadows the Lover's attempts to actualize the self against the various social forces that would prevent his actualization. It is important to remember that the *Roman de la rose* is 'the earliest example in French of a first-person narrative romance'.⁴⁹ Innovation of ideas of the I are a fundamental element of what defines the *Roman* against its predecessors. A narrator whose I contains the allegorical domain struggles to achieve an identity in an internalized social field. The Lover searches for the Rose within himself: the Rose as the decentered self replicates this desire for the self by being the site of becoming. The Lover, by achieving the Rose, finally becomes himself.

The struggle for the self, in a spiritual interpretation, aligns with the struggle to emulate the perfect intention of man before God. The I is divorced from the guarantor of the I, allowing this kind of decentered ego substantiation to take place. The Lover's attempt to embody his spiritual essence conveys the difficulty of mortality in sin. Since God created perfect beings in absolute harmony with a

48 Andrew Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman, Vol. 1: C Prologue-Passus 4; B Prologue-Passus 4; A Prologue-Passus 4* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 8.

49 Lynette R. Muir, *Literature and Society in Medieval France: The Mirror and the Image 1100-1500* (Basingstoke: MacMilan, 1985), p. 80.

natural intention, any failure to be oneself is a failure of the ego. The I becomes the obstacle to the intended I, as Isabel Davis explains.

The *I* voice is used for the first time at the Fall [Genesis 3:10]; the subject case is a grammatical possibility only in the post-lapsarian world. And Adam uses it to express three new tragic separations. First, he articulates his fear of God; Adam now distinguishes, and isolates, himself from God. Second, as his shame shows, Adam is now alienated from his sexual body to which he is, nonetheless, irrevocably bound. And third, the *I* augurs in new concealing strategies, by which the body is hidden from plain view, strategies which separate the reality of things from their appearance.⁵⁰

Language situates the subject in a conflicted state where potential lies beyond the temporal state of the active becoming of agency. One's inclusion in self is a suspended state isolated from the united absolute of creation. Self is, in this sense, always already decentered. One's self occurs in time as it either strives to achieve or ultimately fails the essence to which it is condemned. *Cleanness*, as a work explicitly influenced by the *Roman de la rose*, helps elucidate this fascination with the self as the unsubstantiated void of the unified creation, as Elizabeth B. Keiser writes:

The various *formez* he finds *fayre* – the images befitting their commendation of cleanness – all appeal to the human aspiration to be part of a perfectly ordered whole; imaginatively participating in aesthetically arranged patterns of experience, the poet and his fictive audience transcend the transitory and utilitarian quality of life lived in the everyday mode. The chivalric aspiration to such formal perfection, and the closely related notion of the honorable as identical with the virtuous, remained alive, it would seem, in the aristocratic, artistic, and social milieu to which this late fourteenth-century poet belonged. While identification of the aesthetic and the ethical need not be attributed to the poet's familiarity with the *Summa Theologiae*, Thomas on temperance can help to illuminate the vision in *Cleanness* of a continuity between the beauty of the created and social orders and the nature of God himself.⁵¹

A form's fairness displays its integration in a comprehensive godly system. One appears fair insofar as

50 Isabel Davis, "Expressing the Middle English *I*," *Literature Compass* 6.4 (Jul., 2009), p. 846.

51 Elizabeth B. Keiser, *Courtly Desire and Medieval Homophobia: The Legitimation of Sexual Pleasure in Cleanness and Its Contexts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 29.

they achieve 'the human aspiration to be part of a perfectly ordered whole'. This, of course, implies the opposite: the failure to be oneself is a failure to be one's role in society. Living up to a self supports a society of notional selves brought together in a spiritual unity. One's becoming requires the fulfillment of one's being-for-others. Identities in such a system constrain the individual to a performative being-for-others. The self is decentered: the proper self exists only in its relation to the other.

Narcissus provides the archetype of a decentered self, which demonstrates, through a negative example, the hierarchal importance of the Lover's subordination to the God of Love. To accomplish this effect, Narcissus is framed as a subject of the God of Love analogous to the Lover. Like the Lover, he is a bachelor '[t]hat Love had caught in his danger', and so is subordinate to a higher male authority within the expression of his desire (A.1470). Although subjected to (and thereby subjective within) the symbolic field generated by Love, Narcissus remains improperly unmediated by the symbolic feminine. Echo fails to attract Narcissus, because his pride in his own desire-generating objectivity causes him to reject Echo as unworthy of his objectivity. God, here a religiously neutralized substitute for Nemesis, and therefore somewhat discursively continuous with the God of Love, solves this misprision of the love dialectic by reconstituting Narcissus' desire-generating objectivity within a specular, feminized, objective, decentered double.

Narcissus' fundamental error within the domain of love is his self-possession of his desire-object. His self is for himself but not for others. Unlike the Lover, who decenters his self into a specular recursion (the Rose) that embodies the symbolic attachment of his egoistic desire, Narcissus' desire closes him off from the social framework. The Lover's decentered self allows him to participate in a higher patriarchal ideal, but Narcissus is stuck in himself. Echo's prayer, adjudged 'but reasonable' by a narrator slightly distanced from the usual poetic self-identification with the Lover and 'ferme and stable' by God, suggests a social rectification of an improper orientation rather than a response to a specific deed: Narcissus's guilt lies in his improper engagement with the symbolic field of love, rather

than specifically in his spurning of Echo (A.1499-500).

Narcissus' impropriety feminizes him. This helps to explain the rather strange way the text addresses women in an aside:

Ladyes, I preye ensample takith,
 Ye that ageyns youre love mistakith,
 For if her deth be yow to wite,
 God kan ful well youre while quyte. (A.1539-42)

This gender reversal magnifies the queer gender destabilization already present in Narcissus' symbolic complexity. Echo misunderstands herself to be the object of Narcissus' affections, so she takes on an active role in pursuing Narcissus, who turns out to be in love with his own image. In a poem where a Lover pursues a woman-object, Echo's pursuit of the objectified Narcissus reverses gender roles. The poem adds to this reversal by enjoining women perturbed by Echo's fate to direct their attentions to God. This reference to God plays with the fact that Narcissus is accused of not properly serving the God of Love. The aside invites women to take on the role of the Lover before the God of Love. The gendered framework dominant throughout the rest of the poem is here completely reversed. Narcissus' self-desire destabilizes the patriarchal system of identity.

Narcissus' failure to uphold the gendered system of the *Roman de la rose* tradition serves as a warning to the Lover, who must take on the opposite role. Miranda Griffin argues that

Within the frame of Guillaume's moral, Narcissus is a figure not for the desperate, spurned male courtly lover, but for the cold haughty lady the male courtly persona tries to woo. If Narcissus stands for the unresponsive lady, then Guillaume's Lover is likened to Echo. The moral seems to pre-empt much of the action of the *Rose*, in the sections authored by Guillaume and Jean, which follows the Lover's encounter with Narcissus's fountain, in that it is an entreaty to ladies, including, presumably, 'cele qui [...] doit estre Rose clamee' [she who should be called Rose] (*Rose*, 42-4), the ostensible addressee of the poem, not to be standoffish, but to yield to their suitors. If they do so, the *exemplum* implies, they will save those suitors from the sad fate with

which Echo met.⁵²

The Lover solves the Narcissus problem by reversing the gender reversal: the Lover becomes a masculine Echo who achieves a feminized, objectified Narcissus (the Rose). By masculinizing Echo, the Lover escapes 'the sad fate with which Echo met', which occurs as a consequence of Echo's problematic femininity.

The Lover rescues the heteronormative love paradigm from the Narcissus problem by recapturing the gaze: the love paradigm is so disastrous for Narcissus because he is an object at which Echo gazes. As Noah D. Guynn discusses in relation to the problematic female perspective in lines 15165-84 of the *Roman de la rose*, during the scene in which the Old Woman lectures to Fair Welcome,

The narrator emphasizes that if the poem discusses women at all, it is so that both men and women can come to understand women better. Clearly, though, the narrator hopes to preclude the possibility of women understanding men or taking men as epistemological objects: the "tout" of "tout savoir" exempts men, placing them in a position of subjectivity without objectivity, whereas women must play both roles. Men may wish to understand women, and women (with men's guidance) may seek to understand themselves. But women cannot be allowed to reverse the gaze, to learn about men, or to call into question men's teaching about women.⁵³

The discursive capacity of the Old Woman serves as a reminder of her phantasmal subjectivity within her objective relation to male agencies. Even as she manipulates her localized subjectivity as a node of desire to a subversive stance towards the social field within which she remains chained as a signifier, she secures the primacy of that social field through her inability to irrupt its terms. Her action, and implicitly feminine action, remains a response to an initiating male actualization.

Old Woman's lecture to Fair Welcome provides another facet of his feminization. This

52 Miranda Griffin, *Transforming Tales: Rewriting Metamorphosis in Medieval French Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 92.

53 Noah D. Guynn, "Authorship and Sexual/Allegorical Violence in Jean de Meun's *Roman de la rose*," *Speculum* 79.3 (Jul., 2004), p. 651.

phantasmal subjectivity of women continually appears at the moment the Lover perceives the relationship between women and feminized men: the point in which men verge onto the dangerous precipice of social objectivity serves as the zero level of a gendered love discourse, in which the horizon point in which the gendered oppositions converge. For Fair Welcome, this is a relatively sincere mark: he is the one who initially welcomes the Lover to the Rose (B.2967-3129). He is identified with the attainment of the Rose, the male figure in whom the Rose's attainment lies. Thus, his relationship to the Lover is what causes him to be feminized within patriarchal heteronormativity: he receives the Lover's advances.

The rhetorical position of allegorical identities towards male ontic centrality can feminize male figures. The Chaucerian corpus offers a wry example of this kind of rhetorical feminization in the Pardoner, as Rita Copeland argues:

Thus while the Pardoner's discourse is yielding up the 'truth' about rhetoric's persuasive appeal to mere appearances, his bodily appearance and attributes – his high voice, his beardlessness, his playing at male fashion ('hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jet,' *GP*.682), as well as his excessive 'stylistic' display of both hetero- and homosexual roles – are yielding up or pointing to the 'truth about his body, that is, his alienation from the masculine, heterosexual norm of patriarchal cultural power.⁵⁴

The Pardoner's discourse disappears into the cultural signification of his body. His alienation from the patriarchal norm deprivileges his ability to escape mere appearance through discourse. He becomes fixed in the male gaze and thereby loses some patriarchal power, resulting in the appearance of his feminized masculinity. Hence why the Host's kiss to the Pardoner correlates with the Pardoner's negative reception: the gendered uncertainty in the heteronormative matrix produces an anxiety of

⁵⁴ Rita Copeland, "The Pardoner's body and the disciplining of rhetoric," *Framing Medieval Bodies*, ed. by Sarah Kay and Miri Rubin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), p. 151.

ambiguity, thereby requiring the need to be suppressed or determined.⁵⁵ The Pardoner's feminized masculinity is not an isolated ambiguity but one which actively destabilizes the matrix around him. Convergences of rhetorical position and feminization indicate the contours by which the lines of appearance approach male ontic centrality. In his translations, Chaucer often plays with the role of desire in the fragile boundaries of heteronormativity: in *Boece*, Chaucer makes a pointed break with Nicholas Trevet's commentary on the chaste love in II.m8, which refers both to homosocial desire and heterosexual desire, to emphasize only heterosexual desire.⁵⁶ Where men converge, Chaucer can bend unpredictably across gender lines.

This point of convergence marks a patriarchal internalization of an objectified feminine. This fundamental conceit not only underwrites the structure of the allegory but also provides the platform for the poetic worldview which produces this structure. Jean de Meun's rendition of the Pygmalion story draws out Pygmalion's obsession with dressing Galatea to provide 'an illusive and enticing barrier that serves ... as an aesthetic process and an erotic procedure is powerful enough to invert the relation of inside and outside things, kernel and covering instrument.'⁵⁷ Eroticized aesthetic symbology obsesses the male gaze with the feminine symbol open to transcription. The creation of the woman-object inflects its meaning through how the sculptor dresses its objectivity: his perception creates internalized possibilities for Galatea through the direct intervention of his agency's ontic centrality into her form. Galatea's form means her content only to the extent that Pygmalion gives that content to her form. She retains meaning to be read in her body.

Galatea, as woman-object, manifests Pygmalion's desire. Importantly, Jean de Meun changes Pygmalion's motive: whereas, in Ovid, he is trying to escape the corruption of women, Jean de Meun's

⁵⁵ Carolyn Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre- and Postmodern* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999), p. 135.

⁵⁶ A.J. Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1982), p. 101.

⁵⁷ Robert R. Edwards, "Galatea's Pulse: Objects, Ethics, and Jean de Meun's Conclusion," *Medieval Women and Their Objects*, ed. by Jenny Adams and Nancy Mason Bradbury (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), p. 236.

Pygmalion merely seeks to express his artistic skill through the creation of pure beauty.⁵⁸ Ovid's Pygmalion creates a woman-object to protect himself from women's failures to fulfill a pure and nurturing femininity, but Jean's Pygmalion creates a woman-object to manifest his artistic identity through his agency. The woman-object becomes a statement of identity through the way it manifests desire. Galatea's form presents what Pygmalion desires to manifest.

This shift present in Jean de Meun's poetics towards women representing nodes of male desire did not go unnoticed by his readers. John Lydgate's translation of Guillaume de Deguileville's *Le pèlerinage de la vie humaine* comments on this excess through Venus:

Thys Romaunce (in cónclusioun),
 I may calle yt off Resoun
 Myn ownë book, (whan al ys do.)
 And I my sylff made yt also ;
 And yiff that thow consydre wel,
 Gynnynge, ende, *and* euerydel,
 He speketh ther (yiff thow kanste se)
 Off nat ellys but off me,
 Except only (yt ys no doute)
 My clerk, my skryveyn, racede oute
 Off strangë ffeldys as I be-held,
 And sewh yt in A-nother ffeld,
 ffolkys wenyng (yt ys no dred)
 That he hadde sowhe the samë sed
 Vp-on hys ownë lond certeyn.
 But to declare the trouthë pleyn,
 He dyde nat so, no thyng at al,
 In straungë feldys, for he yt sal,
 (Al be yt so by fful gret lak,)
 He put al in hys ownë sak
 Be-causë only (who kan ffele)
 He caste the trouthë to concele ;⁵⁹

58 Jessica Rosenfeld, *Ethics and Enjoyment in Late Medieval Poetry: Love After Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 70.

59 John Lydgate, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, ed. by F. J. Furnivall (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1904), ll. 13217-77, pp. 359-60

Venus considers the poem as the work of her notary but remarks bitterly on the extent to which Jean de Meun takes her law and plants it into his own ideological domain. The love discourse of Jean's *Roman de la rose* reflects his own systemification to the exclusion of the standardized law guaranteed by Venus: socialized allegory extends into new structural spaces. Venus' critique is not really Deguileville's (or Lydgate's) critique so much as it is a recognition of the extent to which Venus does not delimit the formulation of the allegory in the *Roman de la rose*. The poem's love discourse subverts courtly love tropes by shifting the focus from masculine striving to an idealized feminine to a masculine striving to masculine ideals through idealized feminine nodes.

Subversion of the love discourse wends towards the *fabliaux* through its denial of attainment. Courtly love ennobles itself from carnal love precisely through its suspension in a series of reflexive self-identifications with love as a striving rather than as a relationship. Courtly love energetically strives for a success that would annihilate its egoistic projections.⁶⁰ Masculine striving uses the idealized woman as an impossible beyond of desire which justifies the ego substantiation through romanticized suffering. *Fabliaux* subvert this impossible beyond by actually granting the lover what they seek, but in the process destroys ego substantiation. The *Roman de la rose*, however, escapes this bind by rendering the idealized woman as a decentered, fetishized object of ego substantiation: the Lover's masculine striving romanticizes its ego substantiation as the impossible beyond of suffering. The woman-object is not the justification for the ego but the substantiated ego. The Rose, like the Lady of courtly love, 'functions as the catalyst for the text's auto-referentiality'.⁶¹ The self becomes a thing that can be referenced in the referential thingness of the woman-object.

Narcissus' role in the poem demonstrates how this subversion functions. The Lover perceives

60 Sidney E. Berger, "Sex in the Literature of the Middle Ages: The Fabliaux," *Sexual Practices & The Medieval Church*, ed. by Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage (New York: Prometheus, 1982), p. 163.

61 Roberta L. Krueger, *Women Readers and the Ideology of Gender in Old French Verse Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 192.

the specular woman-object in the same pool in which Narcissus encounters Shadow Narcissus. He initially fears the well, recognizing the danger of a fate similar to Narcissus, but ultimately chooses to look into it, and his gaze is greeted by the decentered gaze, the objectifying gaze in which all subjectivities exist in their mode of being-for-others:

Ryght as a myrroure openly
 Shewith all thing that stonidith therby,
 As well the colour as the figure,
 Withouten ony coverture,
 Right so the cristall stoon shynyng
 Withouten ony disseyvyng
 The estrees of the yerd accusith
 To hym that in the water musith. (A.1585-92)

The one who in the water muses is the decentered image of the Lover gazing into the pool. The Lover encounters his agency in the Narcissian pool as if he were an object of that agency. The circumscription of essence expressed through the gaze hegemonizes the gazer as the transcriber of essence: the perception of the gaze, although internally derived, imputes in the object the echo of that internality. The voices of the objects that are without 'coverture' are lost in the mirror: they have no noumenal horizon to delimit a separate interiority.

Ontic centrality radiates the essence of the gazer into objects constrained by the being-for-others of the gaze. Perception becomes agency: the allegory appears for the developing identity who perceives the dreamspace. This active/passive binary mimics the poem's gender binary: both the Lover and Narcissus can be seen in the pool without 'coverture' or 'disseyvyng'. The word 'coverture' can connote the legal practice in which women (*femmes couvertes*) were legally subsumed under a male familial authority, usually their fathers or their husbands.⁶² Chaucer imports this word directly from the

62 Marie A. Kelleher, "Later Medieval Law in Community Context," *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 135.

French.⁶³ Given the ongoing use in England of Legal French during the fourteenth century, Chaucer's use of 'coverture' appears partially legalistic. The Lover and Narcissus appear without coverture, or rather, as feminine appearances outside of a properly patriarchal love relationship. This appearance recenters the self around the perceiving absolute of 'hym that in the water musith'. The Lover discovers the Rose at the point in which a feminine appearance decenters the Lover's identity as a being-for-others within a male gaze.

This recentering prescribes desire as a conduit to the objectified self on which a newly elevated ego identity can revolve through agency in a torus internality:

For whoso loketh in that mirrou,
 Ther may nothyng ben his socour
 That he ne shall there sen somthyng
 That shal hym lede into lovyng. (A.1605-8)

Love emerges through the mirror gaze: that which is seen as if it were seeing itself. The objectification works to create a platform on which projection can return one to oneself. The object of desire in this love discourse is that which returns the gaze to its own content as if it were already internalized. The object of desire is an ego projection: Narcissus upon Shadow Narcissus sees himself at last and desires what he envisions himself to be within the higher order gaze. The Lover swiftly follows Narcissus' example:

In thilke mirrou saw I tho,
 Among a thousand thinges mo,
 A roser chargid full of rosis,
 That with an hegge aboute enclos is.
 Tho had I sich lust and envie,
 That for Parys ne for Pavie
 Nolde I have left to goon and see

63 Lorris, p. 104.

There grettist hep of roses be. (A.1649-56)

The Rose is the rose which contains within itself roseness; it's not necessarily that the Lover chooses a specific rose, such that in choosing the Rose that represents all roses, he elects a relationship towards roseness which fulfills his allegorical destiny as the Lover. The Lover's allegorical content is incomplete in itself: the Lover of the Rose requires the Rose in order to be himself. The eponymous Rose is the obsessive love-object that creates the Lover's participation in the allegory. To the extent that the poem uses allegory as an ontological discourse on the nature of desire, the Lover's interacts with that discourse only insofar as he seeks the Rose. His words are generated in the gap the Rose (notionally, despite its impossibility) fulfills. The Rose's roseness is the objective feminine *par excellence*: the one object that signifies the feminine totality. Desire for the feminine is contained entirely in the pure feminine possibility of the Rose.

Signification requires alienation into a referential identity: the identity must stand for something else, rather than simply itself. The symbol stands for meaning that it does not contain. The Rose is constrained by its roseness, since its roseness is what the Lover requires from the Rose which orients his striving:

Among the knoppes I ches oon
 So fair that of the remenaunt noon
 Ne preise I half so well as it,
 Whanne I advise it in my wit.
 For it so well was enlumyned
 With colour reed, [and] as well fyned
 As nature couthe it make faire.
 And it hath leves wel foure paire,
 That Kynde hath sett, thorough his knowyng,
 Aboute the rede roses spryngyng. (A.1691-700)

The chosen Rose is a neutral vessel, empty of its own content, serving only to typify a physical desire

to a platonic ideal. The Rose, therefore, is not in itself properly allegorical, because its form does not specify its content: rather, the Rose serves purely as form, so that it can be filled with content in its elevation to allegorical status through desire. The allegorical transcendence of the love object relies on the desire for an ego substantiation predicated on a decentered self open to transcription. The vividness of its red color and its properly shaped leaves both substantiate the Rose as an object of perfect dimensions and yet alienates it from tangibility by eliminating idiosyncratic deviations from an absolute norm. The description of the Rose is almost tedious in its literalness. The Rose is exactly like a Rose; as such, it is no longer a rose which can be differentiated from any other rose. The physical object disappears into its referential meaning.

The Rose appears at the Fountain of Narcissus, because they discharge similar allegorical functions. Just as the Rose disappears into its absolute objectivity, so too does the subjectivity of Narcissus become lost in his pure projection into objectivity. As Sylvia Huot argues,

It is at the Fountain of Narcissus that everything changes. There he looks into the crystals and sees, once again, the garden – not of course the actual garden, but an artificial image, a representation of the allegorical construct that he has been exploring. The medium in which this vision appears associates it with the practice of crystal-gazing, a form of prognostication that would have been known, at least in legendary form, to Guillaume and his contemporaries. The image at which the Lover gazes is thus a miniaturized version of the prophetic dream itself. The text is ambiguous as to whether he sees himself or not, describing his action at the fountain with the verbs *[re]mirer* and *se mirer*, both of which designate the action of gazing intently, while the latter can additionally have the reflexive sense of gazing at oneself.⁶⁴

Reflexive gazing transitions the Lover into an allegorical figure: the Lover's quest to become the Lover generates his allegorical purpose. Agency occurs within a vanishing mediation between one's internality and one's idealized decentered self, as the perspective shift which returns one to oneself in a higher actualization of self. Narcissus exists inside the Lover's lack: the Lover needs the Rose to fulfill

⁶⁴ Sylvia Huot, *Dreams of Lovers and Lies of Poets: Poetry, Knowledge, and Desire in the Roman de la Rose* (London: Legenda, 2010), p. 16.

himself, and Narcissus needed an objectivity to fulfill himself. However, Narcissus is a closed loop: he became his own objectivity. He is stuck inside his own ego projection without any alterity to interrupt the cycling. The Lover, however, uses the Rose to create the feminine alterity necessary to sustain his ego projection in an objectivity which does not subsume his gazing subjectivity. Since the Rose generates the poem, the Lover's participation in the poem's discursive possibility reflects the extent that the Lover's self-projection moves through alterity without losing the self in alienated objectivity, a state of being-for-others which the Rose and the objectified Narcissus inhabit.

The Lover and His God

Actualization through decentered idealization projects through the pool of Narcissus an assumptive objectivity which can be pursued as if it were a subjective attainment. The male gaze recreates through displaced desire the masculine agency which obtains possibilities through the transcription of desire upon feminine nodes of allegorical meaning. This transcription performs the essential construction of the God of Love's gendered presupposition, the patriarchal love discourse which allegorizes its essentiality through the representation of Love. For instance, Sweet Looking personifies the male gaze as an agent of the God of Love. Sweet Looking possesses the material signs of agency with which the God of Love asserts his transcendent subjectivity, the arrows which enumerate the attractions and attendant affectations of Love's domain. Sweet Looking symbolizes the God of Love's arsenal of allegorical subjection through his carrying of the arrows. The God of Love's domain functions through Sweet Looking, or a harmony of experiences interpreted by a male agent through a patriarchal love gaze. The object of the gaze generates a sweet experience in the subject

through the appeasement of a form to the notions of the interpreting agency about the symbolic purpose of the object within the internal field of masculine meaning. Beauty, '[t]he swiftest of these arowis fyve', is elsewhere given an extensive blason as an allegorical woman, in which her form is meticulously scrutinized as a model of patriarchal love poetry's notion of femininity (A.949). Beauty's body is described in a typically rapturous tone, although notably her complexion is 'As whyt as lylve or rose in rys', drawing an innate comparison to the eponymous love-object (A.1015). Roses are all over this passage: Gladness seems 'lyk a rose newe / Of colour' and both the God of Love and Sir Mirth wear rose chaplets.⁶⁵ These parallel pairings of roses illustrate a dichotomous sexuation of these allegorical figures: the men wear roses, whereas the women have rose complexions. Women's bodies become a currency of display which serve to signify the allegorical content of the men who love them. In these couples, the men wear the content of the rose as a livery, whereas the women are rosy. Women's bodies are forms which are worn by men to indicate their agential orientation to the domain of Love. Men engage with these women's bodies as allegorical sites of their agential individuation: Mirth loves Gladness as an element of his identity as Mirth, and Love loves Beauty to the extent that Beauty is the first arrow which initiates the Sweet Looking that proscribes Love's domain. Men inhabit these women as symbols of their own becoming.

This male inhabitation of women electrifies the poem's queer undercurrent. The Lover is repeatedly enticed by the sight of Mirth in ways that supersede his more cursory evaluations of some of the allegorical women present in the garden of Idleness. Allegorical birdsong, which has been previously noted for the way it provokes male desire through a feminized sweetness of sensation, evokes a desire for Mirth:

And whan that I hadde herd, I trowe,

65 For Gladness, see ll. A.856-7, p. 696. For the God of Love, see ll. A.906-8, p. 696. For Sir Mirth, see ll. A.845-6, p. 696.

These briddis syngyng on a rowe,
 Than myght I not withholde me
 That I ne wente inne for to see
 Sir Myrthe, for my desiryng
 Was hym to seen, over alle thyng,
 His countenance and his manere –
 That sighte was to me ful dere. (A.721-8)

The birdsong propels the Lover to a desire for Mirth in a way that directly involves the sensation of form within the male gaze. Mirth's 'countenance', as well as his 'manere', ignites in the Lover a 'desiryng' which is 'over alle thyng' for 'hym to seen'. Mirth's body institutes the sensual intoxication of the scene into a specific body-concept: the Lover's attraction to Mirth reproduces at an allegorical level his physical attraction to the mirthful scene inaugurated by the sweet birdsong, and the juncture between this allegorical attraction and physical attraction occurs in Mirth's body, who appears as the prototypical mirthful man in an idealized, beautiful capacity. Mirth's attractiveness earns a blason:

Ful fair was Myrthe, ful long and high;
 A fairer man I nevere sigh.
 As round as appil was his face,
 Ful rody and whit in every place.
 Fetys he was and wel beseye,
 With metely mouth and yen greye;
 His nose by mesure wrought ful right;
 Crisp was his heer, and eek ful brightl
 His shuldris of a large brede,
 And smalish in the girdlistede.
 He semed lyk a portreiture,
 So noble he was of his stature,
 So fair, so joly, and so fetys,
 With lymes wrought at poynt devys,
 Delyver, smert, and of gret myght;
 Of berd unnethe hadde he nothyng,
 For it was in the firste spryng.
 Ful yong he was, and mery of thought[.] (A.817-35)

The depiction then veers into a description of his attire (A.836-46). Mirth's attractive features signal to

the Lover through sensory perception his essential nature. Mirth looks '[s]o fair, so joly, and so fetys', because his allegorical field contains those concepts as core conceits. The desire produced in the Lover by these qualities incites a desire for mirth as Mirth. Mirth embodies the Lover's desire. This desire carries a homosocial tone in which the desire for the superior masculine agency of one's lord is expressed through an attraction to the body of that lord.

Subsequent dancing scenes dally around the point by deemphasizing the queerness of the scene and then reemphasizing it. The queerness vanishes and reappears in such a way that it underscores the extent to which the phantom of queerness inhabits the entire scene as a hidden core generating outer layers. The Lover credits Mirth for the dancing women.

Ful fetys damyseles two,
 Ryght yonge and full of semelyhede,
 In kirtles and noon other wede,
 And faire tressed every tresse,
 Hadde Myrthe doon, for his noblesse,
 Amydde the karole for to daunce (A.776-81)

These women are objects of Mirth's festive essence. Precisely in their feminine beauty the Lover sees Mirth's allegorical content: they represent through a heteronormativized desire the desire of the Lover for Mirth. Because Mirth's content becomes borne by the bodies of the women his patriarchal authority subsumes, the physicality of the desire plays out in a decentered and regendered space. Mirth, as represented in a feminine object, can be desired as if the Lover desired the allegorical content of a woman. The women are marionettes of the agency after which the Lover thirsts. This physicality does not erase the queer tension of this scene, however, but merely decenters it. The women themselves enact, in their decentered physicality, the queer desire underlying the scene:

That oon wolde come all pryvyly

Agayn that other, and whan they were
 Togidre almost, they threwe yfere
 Her mouthis so that thorough her play
 It semed as they kiste alway –
 To dauncen well koude they the gise. (A.784-9)

The teasing almost kiss of these dancers represents the teased almost physicality between the Lover's gaze and Mirth's observed content. The consummation is forthcoming in the Lover's adoption of Mirth's allegorical content, as he dances '[a]s man that was to daunce right blithe', thereby aligning himself inside Mirth's signification: the Lover in this scene is the Lover of Mirth, an identity signified by the higher male register which retains the symbolic field through desire (A.811). Again, it is a woman, Courtesy, who bids the Lover to enter this dance, once more underplaying the queer tension by decentering it through a heteronormativized distance (A.795-808).

Illustrations also underplay this queer tension. A miniature in the fifteenth-century MS Douce 364 shows Mirth, Gladness, the Lover, and Courtesy dancing together as they all hold hands.⁶⁶ The men and women alternate in position, their hands linking only to the opposing binary gender. Women intervene as interceding modes which permit the connection between Mirth and the Lover, as well as the converse, in which men intervene between women as modes which permit their connection. Bodleian Library MS Add. A. 22, an early fourteenth-century manuscript, predicts this pairing.⁶⁷ The Lover's dance with Courtesy both includes Mirth, because of his tangible presence in the scene, but also separates him from the Lover through women. Interestingly, these illustrations replace the God of Love with the Lover, as the God of Love is the one who dances on the other side of Gladness (A.877-9). The God of Love also has 'beaute gretly ... to pryse' (A.887). The God of Love's beauty is also displaced into a female allegorical figure, in this case in the aptly-named Beauty, his consort (A.1003-

66 MS Douce 364, f. 8r <<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/0e0fb3e7-bc9f-4d9e-aad5-7a1896a3252a>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

67 Bodleian Library MS Add. A. 22, f. 15r, <<https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/b65eb956-df4b-491e-8b6b-80030a21ad3c>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

7).

These two socially superior men parallel each other in the allegorical content they display before the Lover. Mirth, as the 'lord of this gardyn', serves as the male authority of the realm in which the Lover finds himself (A.601). The garden is his domain, and so the desire for Sir Mirth is also the desire for Mirth's content. All the allegorical bodies therein lay nestled in Mirth's authority: the crowd which celebrates in his garden, the women painted Mirth himself painted on his mural, and even the birds:

these ymages, al withoute,
 He dide hem bothe entaile and peynte,
 That neithir ben jolyf ne queynte,
 But they ben ful of sorowe and woo,
 As thou hast seen a while agoo.
 And ofte tyme, hym to solace,
 Sir Myrthe cometh into this place,
 And eke with hym cometh his meynee
 That lyven in lust and jolite.
 And now is Myrthe thereynne to here
 That briddis how they syngen clere[.] (A.608-18)

All that occurs within the garden of Idleness depicts the objects manipulated by agency within the essential domain of its allegorical master, Mirth. Desire for the objects of Mirth signifies the desire for an agency augmented by the possibilities Mirth grants only to those who subject themselves to his essential nature.

The God of Love also incurs this same kind of allegorical authority, but on a larger level. Whereas Mirth's allegorical field contains the agency of actions which can occur with the bodies inhabiting his garden, the God of Love's allegorical field is the entire poem. The dreamstate which provides the elevated reality in which the Lover's actions become interpretable in an allegorical way occurs by right of the God of Love's authority. The narrative domain of *The Romaunt of the Rose* lies

embedded within Love's purview. After arriving at 'my twenty yer of age', the narrator becomes susceptible to the powers of Love's dominion, as his age is

Whan that Love taketh his cariage
Of yonge folk[.] (A.21-3)

A 'cariage' [*paage*] holds two textual possibilities. The first possibility is a close adherence to the de Lorris text. The French 'paage' refers to a toll for the use of the land that a traveler crosses.⁶⁸ The legal trope around this word emphasized debt, a liability for the use of the land which belongs to a landholder, both secular and religious. A traveler is in debt for using land that does not belong to them. Pleas against such debts often emphasized the humility of the traveler, such as in a twelfth-century charter from a 'humilis' [humble] Cluny monk asking for concessions from the 'pedagium' [poll tax levied to provide protection for travelers] and other such excises so that he may afford to travel.⁶⁹ The implicit nod to the authorities is that this pious monk is so bereft of material goods that imposing such a toll would be a waste of time. This monk insists on the nature of his unearthly existence so that his imposition on earthly dominion is as minute as possible. Paying a 'paage', then, places one firmly in a secular ordinance of power, framing one's use of land as an imposition on its earthly owner. To pay Love such a fine recognizes Love's dominion over youth. Passing through these ages requires one to recompense the lord of such areas for one's use of the land in such a way that one admits their participation in the level of rule. The Cluny monk minimized the material nature of his passage to annul the material duties such a passage would incur; the inverse understanding is that those who pass through a lord's land in a material way incur those debts precisely because of their material interaction

68 'Péage, subst. masc', Centre National de Ressources Textuelles et Lexicales <<http://www.cnrtl.fr/definition/péage>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

69 'Charter Document – 02330116', Documents of Early England Data Set <<https://deeds.library.utoronto.ca/charters/02330116>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

with a lord's possessions.

The second possibility, although still denoting a legal requirement, changes the subtleties of the usage. In *The Parson's Tale*, Chaucer uses the word 'cariage' to refer to a feudal expectation of service.⁷⁰ The carriage service entails a tenant providing his lord with either a certain amount of labor for the conveyance of goods at a landholder's necessity or a fine to a sum adjudged equal to the unperformed labor.⁷¹ Whereas a carriage fine forces a traveler to pay dues to the master of a realm and thereby recognize their subjection to that lord within the designated area, a carriage service demands labor from those who live within the area to reinforce the feudal structure by enumerating the services tenancy necessitates to a landholder.

Although both of these duties derive from landholding authority, the relationships they sustain between payer and payee differ. The first entangles the payer into the authority of the payee by asserting the inherence of mastery of the lord over their land. The carriage fine interprets travel as a use of the land, so those who use a material possession must recognize the true owner of that possession by submitting to the customs imposed as a debt for that use. Feudal power occurs in the form of a liability.

By articulating love as a domain in which those who pass through it must pay recognition to the proper authority, the Lover creates a system wherein love for the Rose is ultimately a toll paid to the lord of the land in which the Rose resides. The woman-object becomes the node of expression of the feudal relationship between men. As such, the Lover requests Love's intercession with the Rose:

God graunt me in gree that she it take
For whom that it begonnen is! (A.42-3)

The Lover directs his plea, not to the eponymous Rose, but rather to God. Here, of course, God is an

⁷⁰ Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, Third Edition, ed. by Larry D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 313.

⁷¹ 'carriage, n'. OED <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/28223>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

ambiguous term, referring both to the Christian God but also the poem's secular God of Love.

The God in this particular line most likely refers to the Christian God, as it matches other religious asides in Fragment A, such as 'for the love of God' (A.428), 'God wot' (A.470), 'God kepe it fro care!' (A.505), *et cetera*. However, the ambiguity bears witness to the nature of the allegorical godhood of Love, in that Love's godhood mimics the authority over outcomes to which these religious asides attest a belief. The God of Love can devise the ways in which love unfolds in the same way God can devise all the ways in which the world unfolds.

The God of Love, as the masculine authority that guarantees the decentered self within the allegorical field in which the subject is situated as essence, asserts desire through the complications which arise out of this striving to become. Personifications serve as units of manipulation for the attainment of a goal, a figuration which, unsurprisingly, led some texts to consider love-objects through the lens of chess. For instance, the *Eschez amoureux* by Evrart de Conty pitted the Lover and the Lady in a chess game where the Lover remains tantalized by the possibility of success but cannot quite overcome the endless maneuvering of the Lady's defenses.⁷² Love becomes a competition with a loser; the Lady can be won only through her defeat. The innate violence of courtly love manifests here in an oppositional relationship where desire requires submission, and yet the endless suspension of that submission allows for the egoistic courtly identification with the striving lover. Chess plays out the antagonistic but interconnected relationships between abstract embodiments and the attainment of the decentered self.

Contrast the suspension of desire through an oppositional love discourse with texts where such opposition results in crude fantasies of rape, such as in Peter of Blois' *The Conquest of Coronis*, in which he describes himself as a 'surdior' [soldier] who overcomes his beloved's 'lite dimicat' [battles for

⁷² Adrian Armstrong and Sarah Kay, *Knowing Poetry: Verse in Medieval France from the Rose to the Rhétoriqueurs* (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), pp. 74-5.

release] as she scratches him and grabs his hair in a desperate attempt to defend herself.⁷³ Although the implicitly violent opposition exists in both structures, the former suspends the struggle infinitely into allegorical desire, where the subject uses the ghostly object within a symbolic matrix of self, whereas the latter collapses love discourse into a ruthless physicality which loses any higher meaning. The Lover is the Lover only insofar as his identity remains wrapped up in in the signifiatory possibilities possessed by the God of Love. The God of Love's allegorical field supplies the Lover a set of rules with which he must play to gain his identity, almost like a chess game, like in the poetic gambit of Evrart de Conty.

Another facet of chess that helped to illustrate allegorical embodiment is pawn promotion as a metaphor for transitory capacity of allegorical elevation: the more one can be, the more one can embody. In the *Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer demonstrates the allegorical deployment of this metaphor. The narrator takes on the Alcyone's lament for her missing husband Seys, as Jenny Adams writes,

Like Alcyone, he prays to Juno; falls asleep in bed; has a dream; and somewhere along the way finds himself “al naked” and vulnerable to the images he receives while sleeping. This adoption of Alcyone's behavior not only marks the narrator's rejection of his own masculinity but also marks his transition from conscious to unconscious; by becoming another version of Alcyone, he is able to fall asleep.⁷⁴

Nakedness radically reduces the shifting deceptions of the potential to become in a system of ineluctably embodied gender, as in the case of the mirror of Narcissus in which all things appear as they are without cover or deception. The woman-object contains a re-embodiment of the self through the decentered substantiation of the ego: the Lover both desires and identifies with the Rose in the

⁷³ Peter of Blois, *The Conquest of Coronis, The Virgin and the Nightingale: Medieval Latin Poems*, trans. by Fleur Adcock (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1983), pp. 47-52.

⁷⁴ Jenny Adams, “Transgender and the Chess Queen in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*,” *Medieval Women and Their Objects*, ed. by Jenny Adams and Nancy Mason Bradbury (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), pp. 257-8.

manner of Narcissus and Shadow Narcissus. Latent within this kind of gender decentering lies the potential for trans experiences through the desire for the self within the binary-opposed gender. The constant bodily metamorphoses, pulled from Ovid into the traditions to which both the *Roman de la rose* and Chaucer respond, include the liminality of embodiment in gendered spaces: what does it mean to be a self, if the self is other than me? Can this include subversion of the otherwise rigidly patriarchally enforced gender binary? Is manipulation of gender part of how the self becomes its essence in this spiritual system of embodiment? These questions call to the forefront both the limitations of gender in the *Roman de la rose* (and its translation) as well as the ways those limitations are transgressed through phantasmal possibilities emergent from the oscillation of a decentered identity located within a problematized embodiment.

The fact that Chaucer pulls these themes out of the *Roman de la rose*, and the traditions in which the *Roman de la rose* moved, indicates the extent that these themes are still fundamental in his own recognition of the work and therefore his translation. When the God of Love constricts the Lover into his symbolic field by virtue of patriarchal command, he is also perpetuating the embodied necessity of signifiatory gender. The Lover's relationship to the God of Love is one which subsumes the gendered love-object into the embodied gender of the striving self. The Lover is a lesser man inside a greater man attempting to achieve a feminized, displaced self-actualization. Love for the Rose coincides with the strictly ordained discourse generated by the Lover's masculine duty to a greater man, Love. The Lover pledges

“A sire, for Goddis love,” seide I,
 “Er ye passe hens, ententyfly
 Youre comaundementis to me ye say,
 And I shall kepe hem, if I may;
 For hem to kepen is all my thought. (A.2135-9)

All thoughts for the Rose fold into the Lover's thoughts for keeping the commands of Love. The woman-object reifies the homosocial contact with patriarchal duty. The love-wounds which the Lover retains from his infatuation with the Rose are equivalent with his arrow wounds which result in his allegiance to the God of Love. In both cases, a figure is desired to fill a wound, or a hole, in the self. The Rose provides a feminine love object which serves to substantiate the Lover's identity. The God of Love delimits a patriarchal authority which governs the Lover's identity through a series of commandments that the Lover must ceaselessly obey. (B.2133-4) These commandments link together different levels of masculine agency into a unified chain of masculine power; in this case, a unified chain of masculine lovemaking. The Lover's love feels its truth in the content of Love. Experience of the domain of the God of Love imbues the Lover with his own content through the subjection of subjectivity to the allegorical subject of Love. The feminine woman-object serves as the site that unifies two levels of conformed masculine expressions of agency.

The Power Structure of Divinity in the *Romaunt* Legacy

Gender within a patriarchal hierarchy intersects with the religious devotional modes explored in Chapter I. Many fourteenth- and fifteenth-century English readers of the *Roman de la Rose* sought out devotional interpretations of the text that were not always there in the more secular French perceptions of the work. Contrast, for instance, Jean Gerson and Christine de Pizan's attack on the book and its dissemination for its crude, objectifying sexuality, with the more metaphorical, spiritual understanding of the Pearl Poet.⁷⁵ More pointedly, Christine snubs the *Roman de la Rose*, and in particular Jean de Meun, for the work's narrowminded triteness, arguing that the book is a colossal waste of effort.

⁷⁵ Brian Patrick McGuire, "Jean Gerson and Traumas of Masculine Affectivity and Sexuality," *Conflicted Identities and Multiple Masculinities: Men in the Medieval West*, ed. by Jacqueline Murray (New York: Garland Publishing, 1999), p. 64.

And Jean de Meun's *Roman de la rose*,
 Oh what a long affair! How difficult!
 The erudition clear and murky both
 That he put there, with those great escapades!
 So many people called upon, implored,
 So many efforts made and ruses found
 To trick a virgin – that, and nothing more!
 And that is the aim of it, through fraud and schemes!⁷⁶

The secular context of the poem's romance disgusts Christine as a grievous and degrading misuse of Jean's extensive learning. All of his efforts are employed merely 'to trick a virgin', and she refuses to accept any further interpretation. For her, the poem is fundamentally secular. It is clear that she perceives the context of its aims as the frivolous poeticization of misogynistic, patriarchal love.

The Pearl Poet offers a different reading of the *Roman* tradition. In *Cleanness*, 'the passage applies the quotation from the *Rose*, a part of the mythic god of Love's advice about service to one's Lady, to the mission of teaching Christian devotion to the divine'.⁷⁷ The God of Love's domain shifts from romantic, secular love, to the ministry of ecclesiastical, divine love. The romantic love for the Rose transmutes into a spiritual love for God. Romantic feeling towards a woman-object serves as a metaphor for one's dedication to God, in part because the woman-object exists to signify a higher masculine identity. The quotation from the *Rose* becomes repurposed devotionally in *Cleanness*, especially the stunning theological turn to the virgin birth which follows the quotation.

Penne vch wyȝe may wel wyt þat He þe wlonk louies;
 & if He louyes clene layk þat is oure Lorde ryche,
 & to be coupe in His courte þou coueytes þenne,
 To se þat Semly in sete & His swete face,
 Clerrer counseyl, counseyl con I non, bot þat þou clene worþe.⁷⁸

76 Christine de Pizan, "L'epistle au dieu d'amours," *Debating the Roman de la rose: A Critical Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Christine McWebb (New York: Routledge, 2007), ll. 389-96, p. 71.

77 Stephanie A. Viereck Gibbs Kamath, "The *Roman de la rose* and Middle English Poetry," *Literature Compass* 6.6 (Nov., 2009), p. 1114.

78 Pearl Poet, *Cleanness*, *University of Toronto: Representative Poetry Online*,

Cleanness demands that one become that which can be loved by God: because 'He louyes clene layk', so must one be 'clene worþe'. The ability to serve God as a Christian requires a feminized cleanness. Feminized cleanness in this context, of course, revolves around the idea of virginity: the Virgin Mary exemplifies the way that one should relate to God.

Cleanness is not entirely feminized, but rather it actively entwines gendered experiences. The poet designates cleanness as a marker of the worthiness of a metaphorical, and therefore nominally male, courtier of God. Love demands gentlemanliness as a prerequisite of his own bondage:

I nyl resseyve unto my servise
 Hem that ben vilayns of emprise.
 ...
 But whoso is vertuous,
 And in his port nought outrageous,
 Whanne sich oon thou seest thee biforn,
 Though he be not gentill born,
 Thou maist well seyn, this is in soth,
 That he is gentil by cause he doth
 As longeth to a gentilman;
 Of hem noon other deme I can. (B.2185-98).

Gentlemanly worthiness measures the extent to which one can be molded into God's love content. The exhortation in this passage revolves around a 'vertuous' supplicant becoming 'a gentilman' even though they may not be 'gentill born': a feudal service to God creates a status of masculine identity. The power of the gentleman rests entirely in the extent to which a masculine identity adopts the masculine identity of a patriarchal power.

Ideas of cleanness in the Pearl Poet's work matter, because they show just how integral patriarchal systems of power were to a specific kind of allegorical poetry. The Pearl Poet's systems

elucidate the initial purpose of the patriarchal system in *Roman de la rose* and subsequently in *The Romaunt of the Rose*. The God of Love punctuates his command to the Lover by contrasting the figures of Kay and Gawain (B.2206-12). The Pearl Poet is, of course, most widely known as the presumed author of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. In a richly medieval atemporality, the Pearl Poet is quoting Jean de Meun as the amalgamated author-construct of a work featuring a passage by Guillaume de Lorris quoting the tradition in which the Pearl Poet's own work is embedded. The works melt into each other in a freewheeling perceptivity of temporally symmetric authorial continuity, which achieves its dizzying zenith in how the Pearl Poet turns the *Roman de la rose* into his own poem.

For Clopyngnel in þe compas of his clene Rose,
 Þer he expounez a speche to hym þat spede wolde
 Of a lady to be loued:⁷⁹

The Pearl Poet takes the *Roman de la rose* as the archetype of his own study of cleanness, despite the infamous reputation of the *Roman*. Possibly, the Pearl Poet could have been familiar with a moralized derivative of the work.⁸⁰ There could also be an element of blithe alliteration that blunts the intention. However, the association of the *Roman de la rose* with *Cleanness* does suggest there is a profound undercurrent of spiritual allegoricization in the medieval reception of the *Roman*.

What is it about the God of Love's command over the Lover that models a structure of power compatible with holy cleanliness? The God of Love's advice does adhere to the argument of *Cleanness*:

Loke to hir sone
 Of wich beryng þat ho be, & wych ho best louyes,
 & be ryzt such in vch a borze of body & of dedes,
 & folþe fet of þat fere þat þou fre haldes;
 & if þou wyrkkes on þis wyse, þazho wyk were,

⁷⁹ Pearl Poet, *Cleanness*, ll. 1057-9.

⁸⁰ A.C. Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 16.

Hir schal lyke þat layk þat lyknes hir tulle'.
 If þou wyl dele drwrye wyth Dryȝtyn þenne,
 & lelly louy þy Lorde & His leef worþe,
 Þenne confourme þe to Kryst, & þe clene make,
 Pat euer is polyced als playn as þe perle seluen.⁸¹

The pearl symbol serves as a talisman of natural beauty which materializes the abstract beauty of thought, just as the Rose does in its titular poem. Christ stands in the same place as the Rose, a perfect love-object which allegorically guarantees the transcendence of desire. The Rose is the object of binding which secures the Lover in the God of Love's domain by characterizing the kind of love that the Lover will allegorically express. The God of Love commands the Lover to orient himself to the woman-object, so that his pursuit of the woman-object can facilitate the Lover becoming a lover, therefore fulfilling his allegorical identity. Desire regulates allegorical masculinity's self-realization. The pearl, in its pearlness, achieves a cleanness that conforms a Christian to Christ; likewise, the roseness of the Rose entices the Lover to become a realized masculine subject within the chain of patriarchal authority generated by the God of Love.

Marian elements of the rose and the pearl explain how these objects can perform similar functions. The Pearl Poet addends his metaphor of the Christ-pearl with a thematically intricate discussion of Mary:

For, loke, fro fyrst þat He lyȝt withinne þe lel mayden,
 By how comly a kest He watz clos þere,
 When venkkyst watz no vergynyte, ne vyolence maked,
 Bot much clener watz hir corse, God kynned þerinne.
 & efte when He borne watz in Beþelen þe ryche,
 In wych puryte þay departed; þaȝþay pouer were,
 Watz neuer so blysfyl a bour as watz a bos þenne,
 Ne no schroude hous so schene as a schepon þare,
 Ne non so glad vnder God as ho þat grone schulde.
 For þer watz seknesse al sounde þat sarrest is halden,

81 Pearl Poet, *Cleanliness*, ll. 1059-68, pp. 155-6.

& þer watz rose reþlayrwhere rote hatz ben euer,
 & þer watz solace & songe wher sorþhatz ay cryed;⁸²

A woman's virginal body manifests the allegorical content of the Christ-pearl: spiritual cleanliness that imbues its physical vessel with the divine majesty of perfect virtue. The Christ-pearl, in danger of signifying Christ in the feminine (which, though possible in the medieval period, appears undesired here), instead reappropriates Mary's body as the feminine materiality of the Christ-pearl's transcendent allegorality. Mary becomes, not accidentally given this passage immediately succeeds a quotation from the *Roman de la Rose*, the 'rose reþlayrwhere rote hatz ben euer'. The rose had been an element of Marian vocabulary since the twelfth century but had been increasingly instrumental in the fourteenth century.⁸³ Mary becomes the objectified remainder of the objectified Christ-pearl, the allegorical site of desire which sustains the masculine hierarchies which gender it. By emphasizing the mediation of Mary, the Pearl Poet teases out the spiritual themes of this allegorical hierarchy.

The point is not to consider the Pearl Poet's reading as more valid than Christine de Pizan's, but merely to demonstrate that the same system at play in the secular love oath of the Lover to Love also exists in the devotion of a Christian to their God. What is important about the Marian nature of the woman-object is the way this allegorical gender forms the nexus of a spiritual patriarchy through a woman as the vanishing mediatrix between different orders of masculine magnitude. The objectification of women creates the converse possibility of masculine subjectivity even at the point of masculine objectivity: when spiritual transcendence threatens to undermine masculine agency, the patriarchal hierarchy instead shifts this objectification burden onto a woman, who forms an interceding link in the now unconflicted masculine chain of agency. Mary's power is a referent to the guarantor of

82 Ibid, ll. 1069-80, p. 156.

83 Nigel Morgan, "Texts and Images of Marian Devotion in Fourteenth-Century England," *England in the Fourteenth Century: Proceedings of the 1991 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Nicholas Rogers (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1993), pp. 41-2.

her power, her son Jesus Christ. Referentiality of this type does not diminish her power, however. Rather, the capacity for Mary to successfully appeal on behalf of petitioners to Christ creates a sovereignty which acts as power.⁸⁴ The power is not hers, but she does not fail to attain it through appeal to the divine masculine because of her feminine relationship to that power.

The Virgin serves as a fluid form of femininity that fills whatever gendered role is necessary to sustain the intercession between God and people (notably, of either side of the patriarchal binary, not just men). At no point does the mediatrix actually grant divine power; rather, she stands in as the sign of divine favor which produces the divine power. This divine favor flows easily into notions of desire, demonstrated by the ease with which Mary assumes the role of a bride. Love objectivity loosens the differentiation between feminine roles by reframing the formation around the masculine intersection with that femininity. The mediatrix is an intercessor, someone who is foremostly contextualized, who is understood primarily by what between which they stand. The Blessed Virgin as a mediatrix is a woman in between men, and her role between them is to preserve the gendered negation necessary for the allegorical femininity which sustains the homosocial bond.

Spirituality as an intensely personal and tonally elevated desire creates the need for femininity to resolve this homosocial tension within these frameworks of patriarchal power (but not necessarily, it should be noted, in other medieval frameworks of spiritual desire, which rely less on allegorical gendering). Adgar's late twelfth-century *Le Gracial*, the earliest known vernacular work of Marian devotion, structures his spiritual plea in gendered layers:

El nun del Pere faz l'ecrit
 Del Fiz e del Saint Esperit,
 De la dame sainte Marie,
 Ki desuz Deu est nostre aïe.

84 Jane E. Lecklider, *Cleanness: Structure and Meaning* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), p. 165.

[I compose this piece of writing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and in the name of holy Lady Mary, who under God is our help.]⁸⁵

The poem flows down a patriarchal hierarchy in each line: at the top is God the Father, an implicitly foremost aspect of a unified trinity, the divine patriarch; below this is the Son and the Holy Spirit, which are trinitarian aspects of God's absolute nature which represent mortal encounters with the divine, with the Son being God made flesh and the Holy Spirit being God entering flesh and filling it with his presence; beneath the unity of God lies Mary, the elevated feminine mortal moment of God's immortal incidence, mediating the meeting of divinity with mortality by being 'desuz Deu' as 'nostre aïe'. She bridges the elevation by dwelling in the infinite distance and vanishing into a connection.

Marian devotion demonstrates how allegorical spirituality encounters gender in a substantiated way. This substantiation sometimes converts to a spiritual sexuation that manifests in physical sexuality, especially forms of sexual impropriety and violence. Peter Damian, in the *Book of Gomorrah*, argues for greater punishments for clerical sexuality than for incest, since spiritual generation is of a greater degree than carnal generation.⁸⁶ However, he considers sex with a man (as the sexual agent is presumed male) to be even worse, because it is an unnatural generation. The capacity for sex to manifest spiritual relationships demonstrates how sex carries within it the allegorical spiritual connections of the church family. This spiritual inscription in sex carries an anxiety about queer potential: Damian simultaneously stresses the filial relationship of spirituality in sex but also the role of the spiritual in the sex binary. Movement outside that binary transgresses against a divinely guaranteed nature. Sex as a mode of sacrilege elevates sexual concern to an allegorical relationship with one's presence inside one's body. Who one is within an embodied state implies a propriety of spiritual

85 Adgar, *Le Gracial*, trans. by Donna Bussell, *Vernacular Literary Theory from the French of Medieval England: Texts and Translations, c. 1120-c. 1450*, ed. and trans. by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Thelma Fenster, and Delbert W. Russell (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2016), p. 105

86 Peter Damian, *Book of Gomorrah: An Eleventh-Century Treatise against Clerical Homosexual Practices*, trans. by Pierre J. Payer (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982), pp. 41-2.

potential. One's body delimits the proper horizon of one's conduct through a sexed matrix. Part of the matrix's function is to involve women within a male guarantor, whose spiritual content covers a wife's bodily essence in patriarchal hegemony presupposed by a religious system of gender. Saint Boniface, for instance, considered sexual sin with a nun, as a bride of Christ, as the ultimate form of adultery with the wife of one's lord.⁸⁷ Women's sexuality entangles the desires of the men who seek to control that sexuality. Patriarchal hegemony stores in the place of the othered woman the sign of a specific place within the patriarchy. In some medieval cases, social rights were determined from the mother.⁸⁸ Regardless of the father's intervention, the mother's class serves as the children's entry point into society. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* contains a tale about two sons who, after reversals of fortune, are restored to splendor when their true relationships to their mother, and her true station, is finally revealed.⁸⁹ This tale rectifies a notional wrong: these two men should be treated as members of a higher class, regardless of their actual wealth or power, because they belong to that class by birth. Hereditary class orders society in a patriarchal hierarchy from the very beginning, using women to grade that hierarchy. A person's innate, proper place within a patriarchy begins with their mother, because she is interpreted as the site at which a patriarchal agent reproduces.

The patriarchy's presumed natural origin helps to contextualize Nature's complaints about sex and agency. Philip de Mézières reads the sexual ethics of Nature in the *Roman de la rose* directly into a recognition of the sexed preclusion of the heteronormative gender binary:

How the duenna, Lechery, complains to Queen Truth about those who, by corrupting her natural forge, are forging vile and horrible coins against Nature. “Moreover,” said old Lechery, “Lady Truth, it is not without tears that I complain to you in the sky and on earth about my false alchemists, who have betrayed my forge. May all those about whom Saint Paul publicly complains in his epistles and about whom Nature, my mistress, cries bitterly in the *Romance of*

⁸⁷ *The Letters of Saint Boniface*, trans. by Ephraim Emerton (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 126.

⁸⁸ Susan Mosher Stuard, *Considering Medieval Women and Gender* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. VIII.657-8.

⁸⁹ Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, trans. by G.H. McWilliam (London: Penguin, 1995), pp. 111-24.

the Rose be delivered and hanged by their throats. Alas!” said the old regular Lechery, “in the past I was quite confident and assured about this very vile rubbish in the kingdoms of the West, continuing to forge my fine gold coins. But nowadays I cry about it. Alas! I say: my forge has been turned upside down. The very unfortunate criminals, the Gomorrians, worse than Jews and forbidden in Paradise, left my beautiful tools and the precious vessels of my holy, orderly forge and forged gold coins, rotten and stinking and without alloy, which will not last. Now it is filled with them, said the duenna, like the emperor Neron [sic], who dressed as a woman and married a man and kept him as his baron and vilely betrayed my forge.⁹⁰

Gomorroh, like in *Damian*, stands in for unnatural sexuality: Nature's complaint is about the extent to which sexuality falls outside of her domain. Unnatural sexuality is sexuality that does not have recourse to the order of Nature: Nature, as the mother of creation, is the patriarchal site which should govern the innate properties of her children. Superseding Nature's authority upsets the patriarchal system and challenges God, whom Nature emissaries.

The misprinting of bodily intention in the natural forge leading into queer encounters bespeaks a binary system which restricts desire through a sexuuated matrix of gendered essentiality which is embodied through the gaze. It is Lechery in this passage that screeds against the queer subversion of a heteronormative Nature, a subversion that comes through, as in the Nero example, a manipulation of gendered perception, in this case through the signifying of embodied essences with gendered clothing. The sexuuated binary which gives rise to this gendered essentiality occurs through Nature's role as the printer of certain standards initiated by God. Alain de Lille's *De planctu naturae* probably provides the model for both Philip de Mézières and Jean de Meun in this regard, where Nature successively reproduces the models established by God.⁹¹ Nature's wielding of tools was a controversial deployment of gendered relations because of its complex subversion of grammatical gender.⁹² In a *prosimetrum* so concerned with grammatical gender, the dual figure of Nature, a passive evocation of activity, becomes

90 See Quotation XXVII. Philip de Mézières, *Le songe du vieil pèleri, Debating the Roman de la rose: A Critical Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Christine McWebb (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 48-9.

91 Jeffrey Bardzell, *Speculative Grammar and Stoic Language Theory in Medieval Allegorical Narrative: From Prudentius to Alan of Lille* (New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 88.

92 Susan Schibanoff, “Sodomy's Mark: Alan of Lille, Jean de Meun, and the Medieval Theory of Authorship,” *Queering the Middle Ages*, ed. by Glenn Burger and Steven F. Kruger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001), p. 51.

doubly important as a model for the elevated feminine: the elevation allows for an interaction with agency, so long as that agency is already prescribed by masculine activity. Her allegorical content serves as an echo response to the initiating creativity of the masculine agency which contains her within an allegorical field.

Coins, as an archetypal reproduction, were useful to medieval writers as a way of imagining Nature's role in creation, especially to the extent that Nature was a devolved feminine reproduction of a divine masculine intent. Alain de Lille's *Nature* provides an important source for this imagery, as Mark D. Jordan writes:

What is more peculiar, Nature herself seems to be a hermaphrodite. She is called and calls herself a mother, and the descriptions of her often include images of maternal care. But the reader knows that she is a virgin. Moreover, Nature describes her own begetting in terms that she elsewhere specifically reserves for male copulation. God's original delegation to Nature gives her the task of hammering out the coinage of creatures on the appropriate anvils. Nature is also handed a stylus with which to write the exemplar in its images. When Nature in turn delegates her work to Venus, she passes along both hammer and stylus. Hammers and stylus are among the very first images used by the narrator to describe the approved male role in copulation. A misuse of the hammer or the stylus is the original image for the deviation of human sex.⁹³

Nature's femininity incurs masculine marks of her reproductive capacity. Coins enact this diffusion of identities as designs which are reproduced by others. Although Nature remains feminine in Alain de Lille, she carries the divine masculine intention upon her embodied state in a ghostly, vanishing form. Her role supersedes the reproductive limit of her sex by hinting at the productive nature of creation, and so the masculine intention appears alongside her to guarantee the masculine intention embodied by Nature in feminine reproduction.

Nature's gendering, therefore, reproduces, through bodily nature, the gendered essentiality of spiritually signficatory sex. This embodied gender typifies a certain medieval French understanding of

⁹³ Mark D. Jordan, *The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), p. 71.

sex, since Nature can exhibit the functionality of sex directly in Old French, as the words are sometimes interchangeable, as, for example, with the puns of sex/nature in the *Roman de Silence*, in which wearing the clothing of the so-called 'wrong' gender results in Grisandole being a 'creature desnaturee'.⁹⁴ Signifying a different gender than one's given sex denaturalizes the character, as if the contingent expression of culture through clothing was an essential outcome of biology. In the *Roman de Silence*, the hidden factuality of sex-generated gender underlies the social concealments of gender presentation. Bodies possess gender as the truth of their sex. Sex seals social essence inside an embodied delimitation. Venturing beyond this embodied delimitation into different gender presentations occurs as a mislayered disconnect, an error in the outcomes internal to one's body. They are fleeting escapes from one's gendered destiny. This figuration presents gender not as a social expectation but as a biological expectation of sex: Silence's attendants have to be kept away in case Silence's supposedly true, sexed nature slips through the gendered guise. Sexuation is both fragile and resolute, in that it can be easily subverted, and yet remains primal, an underlying figment of spiritual construction that outlasts any resistance. Gender is positioned as a site from which one can attempt to flee but to which one remains ineluctably tethered by sex.

In the *Roman de la rose*, this relegation to gender emphasizes the role of the objectified, decentered self: in the gaze one becomes perceived for the assumed truth of sex. The hegemonic gaze genders one into one's objectivity. Bodies are sets of possibilities in which the ego substantiates its idealized gendered destiny. Embodiment imprisons one in a perception which unveils the innate reality which overcomes agency as a physical capacity by which one is imprisoned by the hegemonic gaze. Narcissus and the Lover realize themselves only to the extent they are forced to reckon with their physicalities. The image insets the imagination. Jonathan Morton argues that Jean de Meun's use of the

⁹⁴ Miranda Griffin, *Transforming Tales: Rewriting Metamorphosis in Medieval French Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 204-5.

word *fantasie* exemplifies the debt he owes to Avicennian perceptive ontology: the *phantasia* of sense-impressions are always already mediated by the *imaginatio*'s conceptualized frame.⁹⁵ Narcissus' failure to delineate the *phantasia* out of the *imaginatio* indicates the *Roman de la rose*'s complex interplay between sight and concept. A self-identity that becomes too reflexive gets stuck in an endless loop of interiority and exteriority. The essence of bodies are written into the sense impressions they convey, such that the gaze reads the interiority through the exteriority: more accurately, perhaps, there is little difference between the interior agency and exterior physicality of a body. A thirteenth-century commentary on Ovid by John of Garland similarly argues that Narcissus fails to interpolate the meaning of physical appearance in a conceptual framework: Narcissus represents absolute visual naivety.⁹⁶ Narcissus entangles his ego in objective association. Perception in the *Roman de la rose* flows inwardly from outward referents. Matrices of meaning correlate a value within a contiguous set with an external sign: perception records the way that a gazer with ontic centrality projects upon the figures around them.

Mortal masculine identity needs to be guaranteed by a divine masculine identity that generates the conceptual framework. Narcissus, because he does not have recourse to the God of Love, becomes objectified, unable to escape the layer of physical forms. The Lover, because he does serve the God of Love, contextualizes the physical forms around him within a patriarchal conceptual network. Different layers of masculinity support this abstracted identity manifestation by relying on the scholastic dialectic method of the *respondens* and *opponens*.⁹⁷ The master appears in the null hypothesis of the argument in order to induce the student to identify the reasoning behind the argument themselves. The master's resistance disappears at the moment the student fully conforms to the master's reasoning. The null

95 Jonathan Morton, *The Roman de la rose in its Philosophical Context: Art, Nature, Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 38-45.

96 Kenneth J. Knoespel, *Narcissus and the Invention of Personal History* (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 127-9.

97 Helen Solterer, *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), pp. 61-2.

hypothesis in the Lover's quest for the Rose is the impossible striving for conformant to the higher identity which the God of Love possesses, as in Fragment B's description of the Lover's devotion to the God of Love despite difficulties:

Thurgh my demenyng outerly
 Than he had knowledge certainly
 That Love me ladde in sich a wise
 That in me ther was no feyntise,
 Falsheed, ne no trecherie.⁹⁸

The difficult striving of the Lover, over which the God of Love looms, does not dissuade him from his goal of the Rose. As in the *opponens* position of the disputation, the God of Love knowingly places the Lover in dire straits, and yet the Lover understands that the fulfilling of his identity lies in his assumption of the God of Love's intent in overcoming this difficulty. As long as the Lover fulfills the commandments of the God of Love, the God of Love will provide him with sufficient help to persist in the trial (B.2125-34). Pledging his 'trouthe' to the God of Love assures that the Lover will find his truth in this persistence. He will fulfill his truth in assuming the identity against which the trials through which the God of Love guides him appear as the null hypothesis. In that fulfillment, the Lover has to authentically own the truth that he has pledged to the God of Love. The higher masculine authority guarantees the development of the lower masculine identity.

98 ll. B.3489-93, p. 723.

Part III:

Allegorical Interpolations

Chapter IV: *Piers Plowman* and Feminine Reward

The notoriously fluid poetics of *Piers Plowman* create a precarity of identity which problematizes the allegorical mode of the mediatrix. If there is uncertainty of representation in allegorical figures, then that uncertainty is redoubled in the one who mediates between those figures. When challenged, the being-for-others of an allegorical identity reopens the question of the gendered space in referential alterity. The character of Meed embodies this difficulty. Meed does not represent any stable male figure; rather, the male figures attached to Meed are all either ghostly, problematic, or in danger of being undermined. She becomes an anti-mediatrix who ruptures the patriarchal chain of authority to substantiate her own being-for-herself. The social struggle to contain Meed, or to exile her from the social space entirely, highlights the inner workings of the gender structure of the dream allegory. In particular, there are four elements of gendered allegory that Meed's problematic anti-mediatrix mode explores.

The first element is the way identity alienates the allegorical figure from any discursive continuity. In representing a concept in a social field of concepts represented by others, identity becomes a fragment of the subjective total. Self-becoming is not, as in *The Romaunt of the Rose*, the attainment of completion. Rather, self-becoming alienates the individual into a fixed, ineluctable signification. Identity is insufficiency: the allegorical figures rely on the social interplay with other allegorical figures to fulfill their signified content. Meed is a negative collation of identities that fulfills identities only at the expense of the social order: personified figures achieve their identities through Meed rather than through the fulfillment of a social role.

The second element is the combinations of identity available through the conceit of marriage. If Meed negatively mediates male identities, then she can assert her own self-becoming through those men. Meed's marriage to False, with the assistance of Fauel, demonstrates the way that Meed acquires a

male antecedent which contains her, but the gendered control is reversed: the male containment serves her own self-becoming. By marrying False, Meed embodies her falseness.

The third element is the fragility of the patriarchal reward structure when it cannot provide adequate space for self-becoming. The contentious political backdrop to *Piers Plowman* adds weight to Meed's pronouncements about the relationship between duty and reward. In a sense, the high stakes in the struggle to control Meed derives from the fact that the monarchical system needs reward to sustain itself. Without a proper flow of reward, hierarchical identities cannot assume a gendered codependency. Mediation proves necessary to the maintenance of an emerging economics, so Meed's anti-mediatrix function offers an existential threat to the allegorical collective.

The fourth element is the phobic response to a female subject that cannot be subsumed in the proper relationship of the patriarchal structure. Meed, as an anti-mediatrix whose intervention regulates relationships between male allegorical personifications, presents a female subjectivity which threatens to dismantle hierarchical masculinity. The patriarchal response to her agency is to suggest that her role is fundamentally improper: Conscience creates a rhetorical division in the concept of the rewarding of service in order to divest Meed of her own meaning. She must be exorcised entirely out of the sequence. Absolute annihilation of Meed's identity protects the relational aspect of hierarchical masculinity. If she cannot adequately propagate male meaning, then she must be inadequate for meaning.

Each of these elements will be investigated in the four sections of this chapter.

Identity Precarity and the Problem of Meed

The struggle to find and fulfill one's identity is a major theme of William Langland's complex dream allegory *Piers Plowman*. What does it mean to have an incomplete identity that needs to be

fulfilled? In Langland's poetics, the allegorical content of the personified figures are precarious. Identity precarity provides one of the major focal points of self-expression in gendered relationships. For example, Gluttony's identity in Passus V is a social transgression.¹ As Elizabeth Robertson puts it, 'Gluttony's inability to contain what is inside results in a regression of his identity as he becomes increasingly passive and controlled by women. His masculine identity has disappeared, and from a Kristevan point of view his identity as either subject or object has vanished – he has become abject'.² Gluttony embodies a paradox of signification: the more gluttonous he becomes, the more passively mediated he is by women. The assumption of his allegorical identity isolates him from masculine agency. By fulfilling his allegorical content, Gluttony, in some sense, achieves a kind of death, an abjection from his subjective choice. Gluttony presents his identity in a shrift of the seven deadly sins, so his identity is innately connected with death. Of course, the presentation of Gluttony is wryly moralizing, so Gluttony embodies a personality the reader should not emulate. The perverse predicament of Gluttony, like his sinful comrades, is to embody the fulfillment of an identity that should never be assumed. The more he becomes himself, the less becoming he is. In Langland, identities provide moral instruction in the ways they contribute to or partially ameliorate a pervasive social chaos. Gluttony is redeemed only when Redemption makes him cast aside his identity:

And thanne gan Gloton greete, and gret doel to make
 For his luther lif that he lyved hadde,
 And avowed to faste--"For hunger or for thurste,
 Shal never fyssh on Fryday defyen in my wombe
 Til Abstinence myn aunte have yyve me leeve-
 And yet have I hated hire al my lif tyme! (C.V.380-5).

1 William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), EETS 17, ll. C.V.296-384. All subsequent citations from *Piers Plowman* are in the form of a parenthetical line number.

2 Elizabeth Robertson, "Measurement and the "Feminine" in *Piers Plowman: A Response to Recent Studies of Langland and Gender*," *Piers Plowman: A Book of Essays*, ed. by Kathleen M. Hewett-Smith (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 176.

Gluttony, by fasting, will no longer perform his identity: he instead submits his identity to his aunt, Abstinence. He becomes effaced and mediated by women as a way of redeeming his innately problematic identity.

Identities also ebb and flow depending on circumstance, rather than conforming linearly to progressive narratives. Rebecca Davis, following Jill Mann, writes,

Personifications serve to anchor the meaning of particular words so that their personified forms remain present to the reader's mind even as the term slides, as Mann describes it, back into ordinary usage. Every instance of “truþe” or “love” in the poem recalls the divine, in part as a result of the traditional association of these concepts with divine power (associations that warrant Langland's personifications in the first place), but more urgently because God has in fact appeared in the poem under these very guises.³

Each personification is a partial reflection of an unrepresentable spiritual totality. Partiality of this kind influences the precarity of allegorical identity in the poem. Each partiality, insofar as it is isolated from the full expressive unity, represents an alienated excess of association. To delve too deeply in one identity limits one's ability to experience unity. Particularity is the constituent unit of the disunity of the social sphere. The push and pull of particular identities dissolves the social unity into a chaotic disunity of allegorical personifications. Identity is both a moral aperture by which one can understand the conceptual unity of the divine and a particular excess that alienates those who assume it. Even the concept of moral action is divided into a triad of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest. It is not enough to achieve the allegorical content of Dowel; rather, one must overcome the name and spill out into Dobet, and eventually achieve an elusive Dobest, which never appears, but which is always sought in other allegorical figures. These dual functions of identity serve the inherent tension of Langland's poetics.

The juncture of alienation and identity is a natural site for discursively gendered relations to emerge. In the *visio* of *Piers Plowman*, a variety of male allegorical figures contest the female

³ Rebecca Davis, *Piers Plowman and the Books of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 20.

personification of Meed. These men relate to each other through the contest for or against Meed. This female intercessor mediates a power struggle by virtue of her allegorical content. *Piers Plowman* offers an example of a mediatrix which problematizes the homosocial system of male agency. Femininity emerges as a site of uncertainty that both regulates and destabilizes masculine projection through desire. Meed's allegorical functions create a subversive gap that regulates the symbolic field of the male allegorical personifications that interact with her.

Meed is a false power paradigm in which one is rewarded through the assumption of a negative identity. In the B text, Will's request to Holy Church to 'knowe the false' is greeted with the vision of a wedding in progress (B.II.4). He sees the male allegories False and Flattery and notes 'hire feeres manye' (B.II.6). These negative allegorical characters are presented with a retinue waiting on them. This is a dangerous social situation: they present an alternate hierarchical paradigm based on not allegorical kingness but falseness and flattery. Their allegorical signification presents the latent danger of their embodied influence. Will then is

war of a womman wonderliche ycloped –
 Purfiled wiþ pelure, þe pureste on erþe,
 Ycorouned wiþ a coroune, þe Kyng haþ noon bettre. (B.II.8-10)

What follows is another seven lines containing an elaborate description of Meed's clothes. Like other prominent female allegories, her identity is revealed through a description of her appearance: her allegorical content is embodied.⁴ Meed's lavish decorations are physical marks of her identity as a social concept of wealth. The rich display of wealth in Meed's attire demonstrates the desire innate to her identity: she is 'Icorouned wiþ a coroune, þe King haþ non betere' and has rings 'Of þe pureste perreize þat prince werde euere' (A.II.10-2). Meed is social reward, so her clothes represent her ability

⁴ This trope follows from the initial appearances of Lady Philosophy in *De consolatione philosophiae* and Nature in *De planctu naturae*. Langland is adopting the allegoricity of feminine presentation from the dream allegory tradition.

to reward to even the highest social degree, with princes and kings failing to outmatch her gems: the 'rede rubies' and 'dimaundes of derrest pris' are analogues to the 'Cristall' and 'Adamant' that John Gower imagines adorn the Sun's crown, the Sun being 'The chief Planete imperial'.⁵ Meed's jewels fit in with the late fourteenth-century English imagination for the radiant nature of imperial primacy. Her gems exude her nature. Meed produces the intrinsic social competition of reward through her magnificent appearance. She is a visual surface of allegory, a body that is meant to be interpreted by the male gaze: Will reacts to Meed by saying 'Hire array me ravysshed[.]' (B.II.17). The richness of Meed's attire is a being-for-others. Will probes her layered signification in a way that involves both power and desire: he asks 'whos wif she were' (B.II.18). Will immediately connects a woman 'so worthili atired' with a display of wealth and status by a husband of political importance (B.II.19). Her appearance is supposed as a statement made by one man, a powerful lord, to other men, who become awed by that lord's power. The truth of the woman is inscribed onto her by the truth between men. She is barred from agency by being made the mode which manifests agency.

Of course, the reader knows Meed is not married. Who does Meed represent? Whose truth does she embody? This is Meed's subversive mode: nobody. As an anti-mediatrix, she represents herself and subverts the patriarchal forces that try to control her. Every man that is notionally behind her expression is obscured behind her expression, because she misconstrues her assumptive male antecedents.

The first possible male antecedent for Meed is her father, her legal guardian, but Meed's father is a subject of great ambiguity.⁶ In the A text, Holy Church not only declares that 'Wrong was hire sire', but also goes further to suggest that 'Out of Wrong heo wex to wroperhele manye' (A.II.19-20). Holy

⁵ John Gower, *Confessio amantis*, *The English Works of John Gower, Volume II* ed. by George Campbell Macaulay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), EETS 82, ll. VII.831, 833, 866; pp. 255-6.

⁶ For the principle of coverture by which a father has legal guardianship over his daughter, see Marie A. Kelleher, "Later Medieval Law in Community Context," *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 135.

Church is delimiting the evil that Meed does to other people through her father's moral domain. By virtue of growing 'out of Wrong', Meed causes the destruction of many. Meed's father is, somewhat literally due to the word 'wex', Meed's moral grounding.⁷ Meed's free expression is limited to a certain avenue of possibility that she inherits from her father. In Holy Church's view, Meed is doomed to her sinful ways from birth. Although Meed's father is different in the A, B, and C texts, Holy Church always condemns Meed because of her patrilineal inferiority. As the C text puts it:

And Mede is manered aftur [Fauel], as men of kynde carpeth:
Talis pater, talis filia.
 For shal neuer breere bere berye as a vine,
 Ne on a croked kene thorn kynde fyge wexe:
Bona arbor bonum fructum facit. (C.II.27-9)

Holy Church explicitly links the moral character of the father with the moral potential of the child: good trees bear good fruit. She does this by quoting two authoritative spiritual sources: the fourth-century Athanasian Creed and a passage from Matthew.⁸ This rhetorical quotation spiritually underpins Holy Church's view: Meed is delimited by her father in the same way that Jesus is delimited by God the Father. Patrilineal moral grounding is made an essential part of individuated existence. One's spiritual capacity is always relative to one's lord, the patriarch under whose sign the child is recognized. Meed is *prius esse* condemned to her father's moral horizon. In Holy Church's view, Meed's moral choice is limited to her actions in relation to the men who govern her potential.

⁷ 'Wex' being a form of 'wax', a word which carries a connotation of plant growth. See "Wax, v.1," *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/226431#eid15101050>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. This connotation is made more explicit in the C-text citation listed in FN13.

⁸ "Quicumque – Athanasian Creed," trans. and ed. by Michael Martin, *Thesaurus Precum Latinarum* <<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Symbola/Quicumque.html>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. This quote, "Qualis pater, talis filius," is more accurately rendered in the B text (ln. B.II.27, p. 56). The appended Latin phrase "Bona arbor bonum fructum facit" is likely a quotation of "Sic omnis arbor bona fructus bonos facit: mala autem arbor malos fructus facit" found in Matthew: 7:17, Bible, Vulgate, Sacred Texts <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/mat007.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]. Matthew 7:19 offers a rhetorical echo of verse seventeen, so it is possible that Langland is quoting this line instead.

Holy Church attempts to manipulate this argument in her favor by asserting her own superior patrilineage. Compared to Meed,

Y ouhte ben herrore then heo – Y com of a bettere;
 The fader þat me forth brouhte *Filius Dei* he hoteth,
 That neuere lyede ne lauhede in al his lyf-tyme,
 And Y am his dere doughter, ducchesse of heuene[.] (C.II.30-3)

Holy Church is morally superior to Meed because her father is the Son of God. The fact that Holy Church cites *Filius Dei* completes her argument from the Athanasian Creed. In the Creed, Holy Church's quotation '*Qualis pater, talis filius*' finishes '*talis Spiritus Sanctus*'. The *Spiritus Sanctus* enters the early church during Pentecost to bring Christians into a supernatural unity.⁹ The formative moment of the Holy Church as a union of people who speak all languages is the infusion of this *Spiritus Sanctus*. Jesus' commission to his apostles begins with the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy in Acts 1:5, that as 'Joannes quidem baptizavit aqua, vos autem baptizabimini Spiritu Sancto non post multos hos dies'.¹⁰ Thus, by citing her father as the Son of God, Holy Church recalls her foundation through the Holy Spirit. Although the Athanasian Creed demonstrates the complex unity of the Trinity, it does nevertheless admit a subtle hierarchy:

Pater a nullo est factus: nec creatus, nec genitus.
 Filius a Patre solo est: non factus, nec creatus, sed genitus.
 Spiritus Sanctus a Patre et Filio: non factus, nec creatus, nec genitus, sed procedens.

[The Father was not made, nor created, nor generated by anyone.
 The Son is not made, nor created, but begotten by the Father alone.
 The Holy Spirit is not made, nor created, nor generated, but proceeds from the Father and the Son.]¹¹

⁹ Acts 2, Bible, Vulgate, Sacred Texts <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/act002.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]

¹⁰ Ibid, Acts 1:5.

¹¹ "Quicumque – Athanasian Creed," <<http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Symbola/Quicumque.html>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

The Father begets the Son, and from both of them the Holy Spirit proceeds. Holy Church, in her position as an allegorical surrogate of the Holy Spirit, is a representation of unity with God. This connection reproduces patrilineage as a mode of spiritual circumscription. This hierarchy is spiritual to the extent that it is male: 'Filius a patre est' and 'Spiritus Sanctus a Patre et Filio'. Issuance is descent from a unitary male source. The highest male authority generates the field in which the lower male has authority, even within the unity of those male beings. Patrilineal moral grounding is the result of patrilineal agential circumscription.

Where do women fit into this system? More specifically, if Meed is spiritually grounded by her father's essence, then what role does her mother play in this male chain? Theology provides an answer:

Mede is muliere, of Amendes engendred;
And God graunted to gyue Mede to truþe (B.II.119-20).

Meed is connected to her mother through the 'muliere' and 'engendred' parallel: what Meed represents as possibility, her mother represents as actuality. Both of them, however, are possessed by men: God gives Meed as possibility to truth in the same way Amends was once given to Meed's unstable father figure. Women reproduce the male chain as sites of claimed possibility by which the hierarchical circumscription is ordered. Theology explains further in the C text:

withouten here moder Amendes Mede may not be wedded.
For Treuthe plyhte here treuthe to wedde on of here douhteres,
And God graunte hit were so, so no gyle were. (C.II.123-5)

Amends is the authority who allows access to Meed, but only nominally: ultimately it is God that grants Truth's desire to marry Meed and thereby acquire her content. Meed, of course, problematizes

this entire process by attempting to marry False. Although Meed is pledged to Truth, she expresses an illicit agency in choosing for herself a husband. In doing so, she counteracts Truth and forsakes Amends. Meed marries False to become false. Meed does not want her content constrained by the dominion of Truth but prefers to be able to make her own choices, which are moralized as false.

Marriage gives personified figures a chance to express which aspects of their characters they wish to become. Meed, a form of Amends, is technically neutral, but the marriage choice between Truth and False gives Meed a way to become a certain kind of amends: a false, illicit meed. In this way, Meed becomes problematically feminine, because she expresses herself through other personifications' content. In a secure patriarchal system, the opposite should be true: male personifications should be able to express themselves through marriage. Holy Church presents this opposite, proper form of patriarchal marriage, as Barbara Newman argues:

Holy Church's lord and husband is not Christ but Mercy, that is, any and every man who will live by love without Meed. But clerics of the empirical church – Sire Siymonie, Piers the Pardoner, and others – are lavishly represented in Meed's retinue, so God's daughter confronts the not-so-holy church of this world as its judge and rival, rather than a legitimizing projection of its authority. Her position resembles that of Lady Poverty in the *Sacrum commercium*, standing for the Church as it ought to be, while Meed prevails in the Church as it is.¹²

The allegorical purpose of the competition between the desires for Meed and Holy Church is to dramatize a problem in the church. Men who use the Church for their own selfish ends choose Meed, whereas men who find refuge in the Church choose Holy Church. This framework opens out of the specific context of Meed and Holy Church's narrative binds. Meed is pledged to be married to either False or Truth, whereas Holy Church is married to Mercy, and yet these men allegorically represent specific types of social behavior in which readers can recognize themselves. The ability for

¹² Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 18.

personifications to overlap contradictory narrative peculiarities with symbolic universalities is an important element of Langland's poetics.

One's relationship to God becomes a question of which allegorical woman's marriage one supports. Heteronormative desire for the mediatrix contextualizes one's relationship to God. *Piers Plowman* does not invent Holy Church as a contextualizing mediatrix that reconciles the earthly church with God: already in the early middle ages, one of Mary's aspects was the personification of the church.¹³ Holy Church is, in some ways, synonymous with Mary, and therefore she carries much of the same content as a mediatrix who functions through pure femininity. The contrast between the marriages of Holy Church and Meed is partially a battle of pure femininity against problematic femininity within the mediatrix mode.

Heteronormative desire frames allegorical women as a meaning that can be consumed through devotion. This can be seen in Holy Church's dichotomy between the fates of the men who pursue either Meed or her:

That what man me louyeth and my wille foleweth
 Shal haue grace to good ynow and a good ende;
 And what man Mede loueth, my lyf Y dar wedde,
 He shal lese for here loue a lippe of trewe charite. (C.II.34-7)

Who is doing the loving in this passage? The phrases 'me louyeth' and 'Mede loueth' provide some uncertainty. This ambiguity provokes the question: what does it mean for an allegorical character to love? Holy Church stipulates her love alongside the demand for a lover to 'my wille foleweth'. This is a transactional love: Holy Church or Meed love those who pursue them. Their love is a representation of the consumption of allegorical content. Those who follow Holy Church consume Holy Church's

¹³ Marina Warner, *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), pp. 124-5.

content and likewise with respect to Meed. Male consumption of content possesses female allegory through desire. Meed makes this transactional nature of her love transparent:

Hendiliche heo þanne bihiȝte hem þe same –
 'To louen yow lelly and lordes to make,
 And in þe consistorie at þe court do callen youre names.
 Shal no lewednesse lette þe clerke þat I louye,
 That he ne worþ first auauanced for I am biknowen
 Ther konnynges clerkes shul clokke bihynde'. (B.III.29-34)

The loyalty of her love makes the clerks lords: she is reproducing, in her love, the allegorical content of feudal exchange. Those who serve Meed are rewarded with the status that that service allows Meed to bestow upon them. The contrast between Holy Church and Meed is the contrast between heavenly and earthly reward: these women are spiritual modes that vie for the desire of male agency. Although Holy Church demands that her will be followed, this is a paradoxically passive role: she is the rule which binds the acts of men who choose to be subordinate to her law.

This figuration relies on the concept of allegorical women as impossible Others that reference abyssal nodes in a socially male framework. David Aers notes that '[o]nce one introduces the category of gender it becomes clear that the poet has composed the figure of Meed by organizing the standard components of the 'feminine' in the male-authored gender system of his culture'. Citing Howard Bloch's study of medieval misogyny, Aers concludes 'the "feminine" in this discourse represents "the other" which threatens the deconstructionist vocabulary, it is the "supplemental," the "Secondary," the "illusory" and all that threatens the "proper" meaning of texts'.¹⁴ This feminine objectal relation is one in which the liminality of the masculine ego is occluded through the recentralization of masculine signification in a correlate mirror other; Holy Church and Meed retain meaning which can be obtained

¹⁴ David Aers, "Class, Gender, Medieval Criticism, and *Piers Plowman*," *Class & Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections*, ed. Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), p. 68.

by a man through his marriage. The man owns the woman to regain what is lost in alterity.

The need to marry women to acquire this content suggests that marriage rectifies a loss. Truth's inability to marry Meed demonstrates the inherent inability for meed to be justly controlled in a feudal society. An emerging economic relation not strictly controlled by hierarchal land appropriation threatens the entire structure of patriarchal service. Likewise, Conscience repudiates the men of Holy Church for failing to actually contain her content:

And for þei were prestis and [folk] of Holy Chirche,
 God was wel þe wrother [with their wickedness] and took þe rapere vengeance.
 Forthy Y sey, 3e prestes and [folk] of Holy Churche,
 That soffreth men do sacrefyce and worschipe maumettes –
 And 3e shulde be here fadres and [betre hem techen] –
 God shal take vengeance on all suche prestis[.] (C.II.116-21)

The priests of Holy Church who allow the worship of false idols are failing to properly contain the content of Holy Church. They do not manifest Holy Church's content, and so, in that gap, there flourishes a number of false religious communities that negate the Church's authority. Even with a properly feminine personification like Holy Church, there is still a great deal of anxiety about the need to attain her through marriage. Women are not so easy to control as patriarchy might fantasize. In Langland's chaotic social sphere, these women appear in places where the ability of just and pious men to control society has failed. As Collette Murphy puts it, “Male desire and its object (material and sexual) are embodied in a female personification who may, at the same time, actively 'seduce' the men around her.”¹⁵ The bride's consent becomes a vehicle for her self defense. Although the will of Holy Church is limited to the moral ground from which she is an offshoot, and thus serving the will of Holy Church is implicitly serving the will of her father, there is an extent to which a potential husband must

15 Colette Murphy, “Lady Holy Church and Meed the Maid: re-envisioning female personifications in *Piers Plowman*,” *Feminist Readings in Middle English Literature: The Wife of Bath and All Her Sect*, ed. by Ruth Evans and Lesley Johnson (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 153.

obey his wife in order to receive the fortune she bestows. Holy Church offers her fortune to 'what man be merciful and leely me loue' (B.II.32). This becomes a relationship of patronage rather than subservience: the B text goes on to say that the man who is merciful and protectively loves Holy Church "Shal be my lord and I his leef in þe heiȝe heune[.]" (B.II.33). In this version, the earthly lord of Holy Church will gain her divine remit to heaven. The earthly patriarchal authority over Holy Church gains access to the divine masculine through a woman. It is possible that Langland revises this passage, first introduced in the B text, in the C text in order to emphasize the importance of Holy Church's authority over men in light of the historical chaos which occurred between the presumed dates of the B and C texts, for example the Peasants' Revolt in 1381.¹⁶ If this were the case, then Holy Church's increased autonomy in the C text would be more of a political statement than a recasting of gender roles in marriage. Regardless of the reason for the revision of this passage, however, readers of the C text would have been met with a notion of marriage in which the bride, though representative of a reward for a male choice, nevertheless makes a demand on the groom.

Meed's False Marriage: Allegorical (Dis)Unity

In this allegorical setting, women are only empty to the extent that they represent externalized destinies to which one can subscribe through erasure. Elizabeth Fowler writes:

the dreamer (the reader's proxy) is presented with a necessary choice of sexual relationships; in offering that choice, the allegory insists that these personifications require of us not merely understanding or even particular behavior, but commitment to an actual relationship, in fact to an entire structure of social relations,' even where those structures are problematic.¹⁷

16 Ralph Hanna, "The versions and revisions of *Piers Plowman*," *The Cambridge Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. Andrew Cole and Andrew Galloway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 33-49.

17 Elizabeth Fowler, "Civil Death and the Maiden: Agency and the Conditions of Contract in *Piers Plowman*," *Speculum* 70.4 (Oct. 1995), p. 776.

The marriage choice gives readers, through the dreamer, a lifestyle choice. These women are lives that men can lead. Both Meed and Holy Church symbolize values to which one can dedicate their life: either one can spend their lives chasing earthly rewards, or one can choose to be a part of the Christian community that seeks a spiritual reward. As personifications, Meed and Holy Church femininely present heteronormative desire: what does a man want?

Meed problematizes this gendered framework by having her own desires. She achieves her own lifestyle by transacting male personifications. For instance, Guile is supposed to

feffe Fals-Witness wiþ floryns ynowe,
For he may Mede amaistrye and maken at my wille. (B.II.147-8)

Guile gives False Witness florins to allow him to 'amaistrye' Meed. Meed creates false witnesses to protect her subversive plans (guile). The identities of these men become tools for Meed, and they use Meed to achieve their ends. False Witness, like the notaries Guile is supposed to bribe, helps to construct False's legal case against the threat of annulment by acquiring a number of witnesses who will testify to the validity of the contraction of the marriage. A prevalent legal opinion at the time was that, as a last recourse, the number of witnesses produced could determine a claim's probable truth.¹⁸ False Witness' name function is the production of his allegorical effect: through his 'amaistrye' of Meed, False Witness can 'maken at [Fauel]'s will' (Fauel is False's assistant in the marriage plot). False Witness makes false witnesses to the extent that his identity enacts Meed, since he has been supplied 'wiþ floryns ynowe'. False Witness' symbolic economy operates on the possession of Meed: she is the unit of his enacted self. Meed empowers False Witness' ability to enact his allegorical signification, but

¹⁸ Charles Donahue, *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages: Arguments About Marriage in Five Courts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 48-9.

this empowerment occurs through a subordination. She is possibility as such, a neutral form with which to formulate, sheer permission. The character of the formulation resides in False Witness' identity. The form, Meed, allows the formulation, False Witness; monetary reward allows an individual to contract a number of people willing to lie on False's account. The ultimate act, false witnessing, has no substantive dimension of its efficient cause, which simply sustains the act's development and then disappears in its enactment.

Meed is the economy which allows men to enact their identities within the context of a social, hierarchical relation. Fael, through Guile, contracts another man to enact his identity for Fael's (and ultimately False's) legal sake, by giving a woman to this subordinate to master so that he may in turn produce subordinates. These men are themselves to the extent they can sustain their identities through other men. Self-symbolization occurs through feminine possibility.

This extension of the hierarchical exchange is successful, since a large number of people swear their allegiance to False and Fael's cause '[t]il Mede be [False's] wedded wif þoru3 wittes of vs alle' (B.II.153). They will use their 'wittes', enacting their various labor, social, and legal identities, to help False acquire Meed. This is the reverse of the previous relationship through Meed. These identities are the efficient cause of the acquisition of Meed: they disappear when False attains Meed as his wife, the 'til' of their pledge. False and Fael maintain a retinue to the extent to which Meed makes that retinue certify False's and Fael's identities. For the retinue, the hierarchical relationship through Meed occurs in the opposite direction: False and Fael interact with their retinue through Meed. She is the anti-mediatrix: rather than bringing men together across a hierarchical divide, she inserts herself between men across a hierarchical divide.

The important element of Meed is that people using her allows her to use them. The retinue assists the marriage plot by mastering Meed:

For we haue Mede amaistried þoruȝ oure murie speche,
 That she graunteþ to goon wiþ a good wille
 To London, to loken if þat þe lawe wolde
 Iuggen yow ioyntly in ioie for euere. (B.II.154-7)

They help False marry Meed through their mastery of Meed. The confident and familiar way in which they frame Meed's acceptance of the marriage suggests a firm control over Meed. Using their 'murie speche', echoing the initial terms under which False Witness was to be contracted, they 'amaistried' Meed to travel to London for the marriage 'wiþ a good wille'. The word 'amaistried' can also mean 'to teach', from the Latin *ad magistrare*.¹⁹ This didactic relationship, in which the retinue are teaching Meed why she should go to London to marry, infantilizes Meed before the retinue. Their instruction replaces whatever will Meed may have expressed that would prevent her from traveling 'wiþ a good wille'. Mastery over Meed elides her elective capacity in the choice imputed on her by the men who control and desire her. She becomes the empty-in-itself expression of the retinue's will in the same way on which the original use of meed to hire the retinue relied. Although Meed's anti-mediatrix role gives her a problematic femininity capable of expressing agency, her role is still that of an intervening space between patriarchal agents. The misogynistic application of patriarchy frames her problematic femininity in the terms of control, even if Meed consistently demonstrates her inability to be controlled. Although she is an anti-mediatrix, she is treated by those she mediates as a mediatrix.

In both hierarchical directions, Meed is mastered: she becomes the terms of the masculine connection. False, through Guile, contracts a retinue through mastery of Meed, and the retinue serve False through the mastery of Meed. Meed becomes the referential lacuna of a symbolic, hierarchical order.

Meed's agency becomes a central problem of the marriage plot. An addition in the C text

¹⁹ 'Amaistrien, v', *A Concise Dictionary of Middle English*, ed. by A.L. Mayhew and Walter W. Skeat, Project Gutenberg <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/10625/10625-h/main.html>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

nuances the terms of this referential system. In this recension, the retinue's exhortation continues for one more line: 'To be married for moné Mede hath assented' (C.II.170). This makes Meed's consent to the marriage clear. In previous recensions, the retinue does suggest that Meed 'graunteþ to goon wip a good wille' (A.II.125) to see if the marriage will be legally valid, but this is not necessarily legally binding consent, merely an indication that Meed is willing to engage in marriage negotiations with False. There are cases where the act of participating in marriage negotiations fails to provide a legally binding present consent.²⁰ The C text clarifies that consent. If Meed mobilizes her mediating gap to produce a regulating activity, then the way that she exercises consent illustrates how that activity occurs.

Is this consent already present in previous recensions? In the B text, a charter read by Civil Law and Canon Law/Simony declares

That Mede is ymarried moore for hire goodes
 Than for any vertue or fairnesse or any free kynde.
 Falsnesse is fayn of hire for he woot hire riche[.] (B.II.77-9)

This passage anticipates the C.II.170 addition by indicating that False wishes to marry Meed for money, lending support to the initial reading 'To be married for moné, Mede hath assented'. However, this cannot in itself refute the possibility of the other reading: False is not the only person whose consent is necessary.²¹ Guile's charter, written, at least notionally, in formulaic Latin, provides written evidence of only False's present consent.²² Guile's charter is also recorded by Liar as one that 'Gile wip hise grete oþes gaf hem togidere', but the pronoun 'hise' is only plural when given as an accusative: the

²⁰ Frederik Pedersen, "Counsel and Consent: Preparing for Marriage Litigation According to the Fourteenth-Century York Cause Papers," *The Medieval Marriage Scene: Prudence, Passion, Policy*, ed. by Sherry Roush and Cristelle L. Baskins (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), pp. 149-153.

²¹ The consent of the bride is legally necessary. See Masha Raskolnikov, *Body Against Soul: Gender and Sowlehele in Middle English Allegory* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), p. 175.

²² The formulaic Latin of '*Sciant presentes et futuri, &c*'. (B.II.74b) indicates False's consent to marry Meed, which the charter describes, is already formally given.

singular possessive indicates that Guile is the one who solemnly swears oaths before giving the charter to them.²³ When the sentence does reach the accusative mode, Langland uses 'hem', suggesting a difference in grouping, unless they are giving Guile's charter to themselves. Furthermore, the B text describes the charter as one 'þat Fals hath ymaked', once again certifying only False's consent (B.II.73). The C-text version of this line makes Guile's role in the sentence even clearer: 'Gyle hath gyue to Flasnesse and grauntid also Mede' the charter (C.II.70). This is only evidence of a unilateral delegation of the charter that fails to certify that Meed has ratified it. Generally, a woman ought to issue either words of present consent or words of future consent coupled with an act which consummates that promise.²⁴ Not only this, but Meed's consent needs to be freely given, and so even if Guile's charter could stand in for Meed's consent, there would still be a legal case to annul the marriage on the grounds that Meed's consent would have been delegated to her.²⁵ One should also be slightly hesitant about believing the account of a character called Liar. Meed's potential lack of consent in this passage underscores the sham nature of her marriage to False. Not only is the marriage spiritually inadmissible, but also it is legally invalid, or at least legally ambiguous. That ambiguity again hints at Meed's obfuscatory agency: she is a participant in a process in which her participation is hidden inside the acts of the men who perpetuate the process.

One could choose to assume that Meed's accompanying False in a procession to Westminster indicates her consent. There are instances where the public acceptance of symbolic acts were held to be legally valid indicators of future consent.²⁶ However, this future consent would not have been legally

23 "hise, pron. 1," OED.

24 Present consent was regarded by Gratian as *matrimonium initiatum* that would only become *matrimonium ratum* after consummation. See Ruth Mazo Karras, *Unmarriages: Women, Men, and Sexual Unions in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 54-5.

25 For a discussion of the need for freely given consent, see Sara McDougall, "Women and Gender in Canon Law," *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, p. 167.

26 Pedersen, "Counsel and Consent: Preparing for Marriage Litigation According to the Fourteenth-Century York Cause Papers," pp. 147-68.

valid basis for Canon Law to pronounce in marriage banns.²⁷ Have Meed and False consummated their marriage? It is possible. Meed is presented in sexually suggestive terms.²⁸ After Meed's downfall in Passus IV, 'þe comune calde here queynte-comune hore', so the social perception of Meed does ultimately descend to the status of a woman sexually available to all (C.IV.161). However, the line only says that 'þe comune calde' her a whore, not that she necessarily is one. Moreover, this line occurs after Meed's trial, and fails to reflect the way in which Meed is initially presented. Meed takes great pains to defend herself in Passus III against similar attacks on her character and makes a display of offense at them (C.III.215-82). In Meed's shrift after her failed marriage with False, she neither specifies a sexual indiscretion nor intimates a state of mortal sin (C.III.45-9). Although this shrift is corrupted by Meed's influence, nevertheless Meed attempts to uphold and profess her virginal character.

Another C-text addition adds emphasis to the C.II.170 line about Meed's consent. Theology's objection to the marriage is enlarged. In the A and B texts, Theology's complaint about God granting Meed to Truth rebukes Canon Law for allowing the marriage to continue but nevertheless recognizes his power, if not spiritual right, to do so: Theology frames his critique around the fact that 'þou hast gyuen hire to a gilour' against God's will, since the scriptures record that '*Dignus est operarius* his hire to haue' (A.II.85-7). In this context, this verse is interpreted as a direct injunction about who God wants Meed to marry. This objection is problematic, though. The full quote is '*Dignus est operarius mercede sua*' [Worthy is the worker of their reward], a potential textual paradox Theology dodges by translating the second half of the quote.²⁹ Although the A and B texts do not contain Conscience's extended

27 "27 January 1238. Mandate against neglect of marriage-banns in the diocese of York," *Councils & Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, Volume II, Part I: 1205-1265*, ed. by F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 260.

28 For a discussion of Meed's sexual status, both in relation to her female status and her allegorical meaning, see Clare A. Lees, "Gender and Exchange in *Piers Plowman*," *Class & Gender in Early English Literature: Intersections*, ed. Britton J. Harwood and Gillian R. Overing (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 112-130.

29 The quoted Bible verse is 1 Timothy 5:18. This quote also occurs in Luke 10:7, although there is an additional *enim* in this version that is not included by Langland. See Bible, Vulgate, Sacred Texts <<http://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/index.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

contrast between meed and mercede, the fact that the verse does not mention Meed by her proper name gives ground for an objection to Theology's interpretation. Theology's objection to the marriage in the A and B texts is more of a moral invective than an airtight legal argument. He is left to decry 'fy on þi lawe' while failing to prevent the marriage from proceeding (A.II.88). Theology leaves it to Conscience to 'fynde 3ow in defaute' (A.II.104).

The C.II.170 line bolsters the case that Meed does not merely assent to the marriage but is actively using it to advance her own ends. Civil Law and Canon Law, who read Guile's charter, are initially presented as the 'most pryué with Mede of eny men', at least in Will's estimation, indicating that this marriage is preceding directly through some of Meed's closest allies (C.II.64). Canon Law addresses the charter to '[a] þat loueth and byleueth vp lykyng of Mede', as well as to 'suche men þat aftur mede wayten' (C.II.75). Meed's marriage is to be witnessed by those who love Meed, remain in her pleasure, and to those who wait on her. This is her retinue, those who are signified through their desire for Meed's allegorical content, a group which contains a vast and powerful cross-section of society, including knights and sheriffs (C.II.57-64). Meed's marriage thus involves, in the wake of her influence, 'many manere men'. It is possible that Langland is using the word 'men' generically here to stand in for all humans, but the occupations he lists are all male ones, and there are other instances in the poem where, when Langland means to include women in a generic reference to humans, he specifies them (C.IX.226). Meed's marriage is of great political interest to a wide and influential swathe of society. These men and their desires are regulated through this woman's legal fate.

In the charter's articulation of why False wants to marry Meed, it is because of how her money, with its attendant earldoms and counties, will allow them

To ben pruynses in Pruyde and pouert to dispice,
 To bacbite and to boste and bere fals witesse,
 To skorne and to skolde and sklaundre to make,

Vnbuxum and bold to breke þe ten hestes. (C.II.84-7)

These vices are not inherently alien to the signified content of False or Fauel, nor inherently exclusive to the signified content of Meed. False and Fauel are, through Meed, pursuing what they might have done anyway. Meed is merely facilitating the extent of their ambitions to fulfill their own names. Meed is a useful economy through which male identities are enacted, enlarged, and regulated. This bond between two men is echoed in the paired couplet of C.II.82-3, in which False and Fauel conspire together to better realize their identities, as expressed in a male-male relationship, through the use of a female intercessor.³⁰ The purpose of this marriage is to use a woman in order to realize the desires of a male bond.

The use False and Fauel intend to make of Meed relies on Meed's content being both economically transmutable and implicitly contemptible, and therefore reducible, in her status as monetary reward. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick puts it, '[I]n the presence of a woman who can be seen as pitiable or contemptible, men are able to exchange power and to confirm each other's value even in the context of the remaining inequalities in their power'.³¹ Sedgwick develops this idea in relation to femininity in capitalism, and it is easy to see why that line of thought could echo of the role of Meed. Meed herself is a kind of exchange, a fluid moment of equivocation which connects separate entities in the same value, and her role with respect to both her potential bridegroom and her retinue is based on the reward she represents. The prejudice with which Will encounters Meed, initially through Holy Church's dismissive introduction of her, then later through the various trials and rebukes of Meed before the king, embeds Meed in a negative context in which her presence can be both pitiable and

30 For a related discussion of the ways in which gender emerges from Langland's economic and matrimonial imagery in a later scene in the poem, the sermon of Wit, see Isabel Davis, *Writing Masculinity in Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 24-6.

31 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 160.

contemptible.³² False and Fauel's use of Meed relies on her negative characterization: the female mediatrix is maligned. She is also a vanishing moment of intercession, as the second half of the charter ceases to mention Meed and goes on to enumerate all the things False and Fauel want to be and do using Meed's money.

Such a crass use of marriage, as shamelessly proclaimed by Guile's charter, played on long-standing anxieties about wealthy widows that had intensified in the wake of the Black Death, due to the higher survival rate of women during the plague resulting in women retaining a higher concentration of the wealth compared to historical precedent.³³ This increase in female landowners also increased the social anxieties that already surrounded financially independent women. Although False marrying Meed for her money would certainly have held the possibility of this association for contemporary readers, given the significant, though possibly outsize, consternation that this practice generated. Fear that the backlash against this practice could lead to some men, who had married wealthy widows, to lose their rights to that wealth on an exception of bigamy due to the perception of the illegitimacy of the marriage contract was significant enough to result in a parliamentary appeal during the Good Parliament.³⁴ While this perception may have been present in contemporary receptions of this line, it is important to note that this interpretation is not wholly accurate to the situation. Meed is a maid, not a widow (C.II.19).

However, as a woman who represents money, she would have had thematic resonances with the figure of the widow. False and Fauel's crass admittance of the purpose of this marriage may have elicited those resonances. This discordant effect of this resonance is enhanced when one wonders from

32 For Holy Church's dismissive introduction to Meed, see Langland, *Piers Plowman*, C.II.19-52, pp. 57-9. For the trials of Meed before the king, see C.III.155-C.IV.175, pp. 105-65.

33 Barbara A. Hanawalt, "The Dilemma of the Widow of Property for Late Medieval London," *The Medieval Marriage Scene: Prudence, Passion, Policy*, ed. by Sherry Roush and Cristelle L. Baskins (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), p. 141.

34 *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275-1504, vol 5: Edward III, 1351-1377*, ed. by Mark Ormrod (London: Boydell Press, 2005), p. 320.

where exactly this money is supposed to be coming. Who is going to supply Meed's dowry? Who is her father? In the C text, in which this addition appears, Fauel is Meed's father (C.II.25). It is difficult to know if this Fauel is the same Fauel involved in securing the marriage contract. In the B text, False is her father, and it would be extraordinary to consider that False is trying to marry his own daughter, especially since a provision against a charge of consanguinity is not part of False and Fauel's intended legal defense (B.II.25). Indeed, there would be no need to 'loken if þat þe lawe wolde' allow the marriage in the first place, since the answer would be obvious, so why travel all the way to Westminster? Moreover, Langland reuses and reinterprets allegorical characters elsewhere in the poem.³⁵ As such, it is possible that Fauel, Meed's father, is merely significatory of the same content that Fauel, False's compatriot, is. If this is the case, then is Meed's father rich enough to justify all the trouble and money False and Fauel go through to have False marry her? Theology claims that Meed 'myhte kusse the Kyng as for his kynneswomman', but when Meed meets the king, no such thing happens (C.II.146). The king expresses no familial warmth to Meed, takes no offense to Conscience's berating of her, and is impartial about whether Meed should be banished. Is this indicative of how a king would publicly treat his own kin? One cannot take Theology's word here.

Again, where there should be a proper male antecedent for Meed's allegorical content, there is only ambiguity. There are no men: Meed is Meed, and her allegorical content generates her poetic content without irruption. The men whose presence her appearance appears to demand fail to materialize (C.II.8-19). Meed is legally unguardianed: her father is nowhere to be seen. She is not ensconsed in coverture. This gap emphasizes the importance of Meed's marriage: to the men around her, her lack of coverture is a gap that needs to be filled. Will's inquiry about Meed's attire does not assume that this wealth comes from her father, since he is rather more interested in 'whos wyf a were'

35 For example, the character of Anima/Animus appears twice, in B.IX as a woman and in B.XV as a man. See ll. B.IX.16-59, B.XV.16-292; pp. 370-6, pp. 568-86.

(C.II.18). This is, in part, because a virginal maiden should be dressed with some degree of modesty; Meed's lavish display would more properly indicate a rich husband than a rich father.³⁶ False anticipates land and titles from his marriage with Meed, but these would have been granted not by Meed but by her lord.³⁷ Who is Meed's lord? Is she a bastard or rightly derived (C.II.24, C.II.122-24)? Is she a ward of God and therefore subject to his marriage deliberations (C.II.134-6)? Part of what makes Meed so dangerous is that the money she represents derives from such unclear sources. Meed's money's clandestine nature contributes to its pernicious capacity in the same way that Animus later declares that

Ac þing þat wikkedly is wonne, and wiþ false sleightes,
 Wolde neure wit of witty God but wikkede men it hadde –
 The whiche arn preestes inparfite and prechours after siluer,
 Secutours and sodenes, somonours and hir lemmannes.
 This þat wiþ gile was geten, vngraciousliche is spened. (B.XV.129-33)

The source of money delimits its use. Antecedence is a vital element of the moral framework espoused by several characters in *Piers Plowman*, and Meed's confusing antecedence is at issue in the determination of the moral validity of her signified content. When Conscience enjoins the king to forsake Meed, he contrasts meed and mercede through a discussion of their antecedence (C.III.290-406). Meed's lack of antecedence condemns her output.

Meed's mercurial origins grant her an autonomous space in which she possesses, without the provision of a male predecessor, an allegorically infinite ability for monetary reward. Although monetary reward is in itself a regulatory function, an act which occurs in relation to something else, when it is not governed by a constraining and directing antecedent authority, then an agency emerges

36 Gerald Morgan, "The Status and Meaning of Meed in the First Vision of 'Piers Plowman,'" *Neophilologus* 72.3 (Jul. 1988), p. 452.

37 Kathleen E. Kennedy, *Maintenance, Meed, and Marriage in Medieval English Literature* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p. 69.

from the gap. If the monetary reward has no sufficient cause, then it can become a sufficient cause.

Meed can choose what, why, and how she performs her function of reward.

Meed subverts the law through her allegorical function, creating a parallel social order. For example, when Civil Law and Canon Law are cowed by Theology's rebuke, all it takes is some silver for the notaries before they rejoin the marriage cause (C.II.155-6). Her influence is burgeoning through the money which flows freely as a result of her impending marriage. Although Meed has money and is the money regulating the retinue, it is the power of that money which proceeds from how Fauel and others use it to her advantage that makes Meed so important to the retinue and, ultimately, the realm. Especially when one considers Meed's later objections to the king and Conscience about how her role had been undermined in France in Passus III, Meed has the right to be concerned about the money being regulated through her (C.III.220-83). To be married, for the sake of money, would be a power move for Meed. The money also does not explicitly come from Meed but is rather used for Meed. The money explicitly comes from Fauel (C.II.157). In this way, Meed is also gaining money, since money not from her is being given to Meed, as it were. She is being enriched.

Meed upsets the gendered structure of the patriarchy by assuming a male agency that expresses desire through other personifications. She uses the gender reversal to disrupt the flow of identity down the authority of male antecedence. By becoming false Meed, she threatens the stability of the allegorical scene.

Patriarchal and Anti-Patriarchal Reward

Because false Meed represents an existential threat to the patriarchal order, one should consider what Meed stands to gain from False's allegorical content should the marriage succeed. To understand

what Meed wants through the subversion of marriage, it is best to look at how she defends herself before the king, who wants to marry her to one of his knights. When Conscience rebukes Meed, Meed rebukes Conscience for his failure to support the continuation of Edward III's war in France.

Cowardly þou, Consience, conceiledst him þennes –
 To leuen his lordsshippe for a litel siluer,
 Þat is þe riccheste reaume þat reyn ouerhouiþ. (A.III.193-5)

This complaint against the Treaty of Brétigny (1360) was a common one and was echoed in several contemporary works and chronicles, including the *Anonimale Chronicle* and *The Prophecy of John of Bridlington*.³⁸ Meed's critique situates her in a contentious political crisis that strikes at the heart of feudal duty and the responsibility the king has to the prosperity of his realm.

The Treaty of Brétigny, having been negotiated after a period of great successes for the English armies, was unpopular among many of Edward III's knights, who 'used the profits they made from booty and ransom, as well as the networks of patronage and clientship they developed, to improve their standing'.³⁹ Meed argues on behalf of these jilted knights:

'It becomiþ to a king þat kepiþ a reaume
 To 3iuen hise men mede þat mekly hym seruen –
 To alienes [and] to alle men, to honoure hem with 3eftis;
 Mede makip hym be loud and for a man holde.
 Emperours and erlis and alle maner lordis
 Þoru3 3eftis han 3onge men to [3erne] and to ride. (B.196-201)

Her complaint over the king having 'leuen his lordsshippe' over 'þe riccheste reaume' reveals itself to stem from the need for more meed with which to garner '3onge men to 3erne and to ride', namely,

38 Denise N. Baker, "Meed and the Economics of Chivalry in *Piers Plowman*," *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War in French and English Cultures*, ed. by Denise N. Baker (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000), pp. 55-9.

39 Ruth Mazo Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 24.

knights.⁴⁰ Meed constructs for herself a mediating position between the king and his knights, in which she ensures the king is supplied with loyal men willing to go to war with him. The war is a theater in which this kind of military relationship can flourish, and so by accepting a peace treaty in exchange for a substantial ransom of three million écus as well as recognition of the king's sovereignty over his conquered territories, the king chooses a policy which benefits himself at the expense of the profits of his knights.⁴¹ That she refers to the three million écus as 'a litel siluer' emphasizes the relentlessness of desire that Meed manifests. She suggests that

Hadde I be marchal of his men, be Marie of heuene!
 I durste han leid my lif and no lesse wedde,
 He schulde haue be lord of þat lond in lengþe and in brede,
 And ek king of þat kiþ his kyn for to helpe –
 3a, þe leste brot of his blood a barouns pere! (B.188-92)

By refusing to let Meed guide his armies, the king also forsakes the potential of the even greater wealth that Meed's leadership could have garnered him and his kin. Meed insists on connecting this forsaken wealth with the way in which peace has abridged the hopes of the king's kin, the least of whom might have been a 'barouns pere' had the war continued. By signing the Treaty of Brétigny, Edward III refuses to continue mediating his authority through Meed by letting her guide his army, which in turn disadvantages the king's kin and knights, who rely on the principle of meed for their wealth and ambitions. The king's relationship with his male relatives and subordinates is therefore constructed in a woman who serves as the space in which these men rely on each other. The king neglects his men by neglecting Meed. The king's kin and knights rely on the King, through Meed, for their ambitions. Meed's role is therefore a transitory one. These relationships are sustained in her but are not fulfilled in

⁴⁰ This would have involved a process of indentures, in which the king gives lords money to retain knights. See Anna Baldwin, *The Theme of Government in Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1981), p. 25. However, the passage as written emphasizes the direct relation of the king to his knights through meed.

⁴¹ Baker, "Meed and the Economics of Chivalry in Piers Plowman," p. 56.

her, having to pass out of her into the men who engage in these relationships to be fulfilled.

This transitory mode was a trope for cultural depictions of women. Ruth Mazo Karras argues that

In the later Middle Ages the primary way by which a boy established his adult masculinity was by testing himself and proving himself against other men. Women were often tools used in that demonstration. Women not only measured men's competition with each other; they also mediated men's love for each other.⁴²

The relationship men have with each other uses women as a site in which their masculinity can be developed and demonstrated. Feminine approval justifies the display of masculinity. Karras notes how several medieval exemplars of masculinity are described as attracting the female gaze:

In the story of Huon of Bordeaux, the Emperor and Huon ride through the streets, “the windows garnished with ladies and damsels, bourgeoises and maidens, melodiously singing.” Jacques de Lalaing's biographer describes the women leaning out of the windows to watch him go by on the way to the joust.⁴³

These ideally masculine knights become objects of feminine adoration and public ceremony. Their triumphant processions through the streets are invariably attended by maidens leaning out of their windows to admire the knights. These women signal to other men the successful masculinity of the knights before them. The display of femininity, especially of the feminine virtue of singing, is inlaid in the larger display of masculinity that these knights constitute.⁴⁴ Femininity helped to underscore the

⁴² Karras, *From Boys to Men: Formations of Masculinity in Late Medieval Europe*, p. 11.

⁴³ Ibid, pp. 47-8. Huon of Bordeaux is the eponymous subject of a thirteenth-century French *chanson de geste* (and several continuations), and Jacques de Lalaing was a fifteenth-century knight from Burgundy whose fame spurred the creation of the *Livre des Faits de Jacques Lalaing*.

⁴⁴ For examples of the medieval trope of the singing, beautiful maiden, see Guillaume de Machaut, *Jugement du roy de Behaingne*, *Guillaume de Machaut: The Complete Poetry and Music, Volume I: The Debate Poems*, ed. and trans. by R. Barton Palmer with Domenic Leo and Uri Smilansky (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2016), ll. 297-303, and Jean Froissart, *La paradis d'amours*, *Jean Froissart: An Anthology of Narrative and Lyric Poetry*, ed. and trans. by

masculinity through a patriarchal binary of complementarity.

Masculinity is constructed by the specular appearance of an approving femininity. Depictions of the female gaze were common to accounts of public masculinity. P.J.P. Goldberg says that wrestling 'may also have been an opportunity to show off before young women', giving the example of an illustration of female spectators of a wrestling match in the Queen Mary Psalter. This image accords with a mid-fourteenth-century didactic text addressed to women that warned adolescent girls not to watch wrestling matches lest she be taken for a loose woman.⁴⁵

Maidens' attendance at wrestling matches became an opportunity for them to be seen publicly by young men, and the presence of maidens also served to justify the masculine struggle that wrestling embodied. The adoration of the female gaze was a prize to be earned through the act of overcoming the physical expression of agency and capacity exhibited by another young man. This, in turn, served to solidify the reputation of the victor's masculinity. Appealing to young women allowed for masculine displays to be grounded in heteronormative male value: the more masculine the knight, the more sexually successful he was implied to be. This grounding, however, was not necessarily important for the adoring maidens, who likely did not need to be told to whom they may or may not have been attracted; instead, this grounding is important only for other men by justifying the masculine display as proper to manhood: masculine games like wrestling become ways to determine who is better at being a man through the adoration of maidens which accompanies victory.

Because of the cultural resonances this notion of gauging the relationships between men through a woman would have had, Meed's transitory role between the king and his kin and knights would have held hints of a bond of masculinity precisely because she is a woman. What is signified in the assumption of the potential service over the king's army that Meed envisions is the value that the

Kristen M. Figg with R. Barton Palmer (New York: Routledge, 2001), ll. 422-8.

45 P.J.P. Goldberg, "Masters and Men in Later Medieval England," *Masculinity in Medieval Europe*, ed. by D.M. Hadley (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1999), p. 66.

wealth and political capacity of the king's subordinates would have held in the king's mind. By accepting the terms of the Treaty of Brétigny, the king demonstrates that he does not value the success of his kin and knights nearly as much as his own personal well-being, by refusing to embody the possession of Meed publicly. The rejection of the female mediator is the rejection of the way in which the king relates to his male subordinates. This is not an arbitrary, invisible step, because it is precisely Meed that makes the king 'be loud and for a man holde': his masculinity is at stake in Meed. In rejecting the authority of Meed over his military campaigns, the king is not just disappointing his male subordinates, but he is also becoming less of a man to them as well. The masculine bond of riding into battle together, and the knightly duty of military service to the king, is bound up in Meed, who dispenses the right to manhood through this bond. Meed also applies this logic to Conscience in her appeal to his initial rebuke:

Ȝet I may, as I miȝte, menske þe wiþ Ȝeftis
And maynteyne þi manhod more þan þou knowist. (A.III.171-2)

The phrase 'more þan þou knowist' hints at her power to affect his social status. She regulates the extent to which his masculinity is maintained in the patriarchal system. His place within the feudal structure can be altered through Meed's power as an anti-mediatrix. Her identity of 'Ȝeftis' that reward duty threatens the patriarchal system by giving Meed the authority to determine the status of men.

Meed's ambitions exceed the appeasement of either the king or Conscience.⁴⁶ She envisions her mediating role as a social axiom by which all of society is structured through reciprocal class structures of service and payment. Meed cites the relationships of popes to their prelates; masters to their servants; the public to beggars, minstrels, and preachers; clerks to their employers; and craftsmen to

⁴⁶ Meed's eventual downfall is partially expressed by the line 'For þe mooste commune of þat court called hire an hore' (B.IV.166, see also C.IV.161), suggesting that one of the most pernicious parts of Meed is precisely her universal availability.

their apprentices as examples of the overarching nature of Meed's mediating role (A.III.202-13). Her role is so necessary that she even claims that 'no wīȝt, as I wene, wīȝoute Mede miȝte libbe!' (A.III.214) Without her structuring the relationship between subordinates and their masters, no one would even be able to manage subsistence.

Meed makes sure to cite the king himself in this structure, saying 'Ȝe King haȝ mede of his men to make pes in londe', thereby equivocating a kingdom's lawfulness with its exercise of meed (A.III.208). Notably, this line is the only line in the A-text sequence from A.III.188-216 which is not reproduced in the C-text equivalent (C.III.257-84), although it is reproduced in the B-text equivalent (B.III.201-29). A possible cause for its omission might have been the proliferation of retainers aligned with local lords through hire. A chain of patronage, starting at the king and going down the feudal strata, became a definitive aspect of political allegiance during the reigns of Edward III and Richard II.⁴⁷ This made retinues difficult to control, because they were essentially mercenaries, so only a constant stream of economic reward could keep intact some semblance of the rule of law. The precarity of peace in a land dominated by retinues whose loyalty lay mostly to profit was so vast and pervasive that Anna Baldwin records a story in which a knight successfully schemes to get a sheriff dismissed in disgrace after the sheriff refuses to release the knight from prison for 'gold and grotes'.⁴⁸ The sheriff's attempt to uphold the law with integrity proves futile and self-destructive. Conscience's awareness and consternation over the prevalence of bribery is clear in one of the charges he levies against Meed:

She letiȝ passe prisoners and paieȝ for hem ofte,
And giueȝ ȝe gaileris gold and grotis togidere
To vnfetere ȝe Fals – fle where hym likiȝ[.] (A.III.173-5)

⁴⁷ Baldwin, *The Theme of Government in Piers Plowman*, p. 26.

⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 28-9.

This last reference to False connects this political objection to Meed with Meed's initial attempt to marry False. Not only does she attempt to marry him, but she also lets him free from jail to go murder Truth (A.III.176-7). One of Theology's objections to the marriage between False and Meed is that 'God grauntide to gyue Mede to treuþe' (A.II.84). False murdering Truth manifests the violence implicit in False stealing Truth's bride. They are fighting for ownership over the same woman, and this fight is viewed not with respect to Meed, but with respect to a power struggle between False and Truth. Whoever controls the woman is the more powerful man. In the B text, False's surname is given as Fickle-Tongue (B.II.41), and a justice by the name of True-Tongue is appointed to preside over Meed's trial (B.III.322). Meed's legal fate is contested between False, who attempts to control Meed through marriage, which would grant False the benefit of the legal principle of coverture, and Truth, the justice presiding over Meed's trial. The power struggle between False and Truth for control over Meed grows in the B text.

Meed is especially antithetical to peace because, as Baldwin notes, "Sisors" (members of an 'assize', or jury in a civil action) are in fact the most frequently mentioned members of Meed's secular retinue, and even remain with her after her disgrace (C.IV.162).⁴⁹ For example, Conscience cites Meed's association with sisors as one of the many disreputable parts of her character (A.III.123). Assizes were an often violent way in which kings abused the law to raise additional funds. So frightening were assizes in this time that Walsingham gives the account of an assize shortly after the Peasants' Revolt in which a knight from St Albans desperately tries to calm the town's nervous residents by negotiating with the king for the town to handle the assize itself, only for the king to later show up anyway, accompanied by thousands of soldiers, to carry out the 'bloody assize'.⁵⁰ Such a description is discordant with the idea that sisors assisted with preserving peace in the land, and their

⁴⁹ Baldwin, *The Theme of Government in Piers Plowman*, p. 29.

⁵⁰ Nigel Saul, "Conflict and Consensus in English Local Society," *Politics and Crisis in Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. by John Taylor and Wendy Childs (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1990), p. 51.

frequent association with Meed undermines her claim about doing the same. When Meed later bribes Peace to forgive Wrong for giving him a bloody head during the trial in Passus IV, the king's reacts angrily under the counsel of Reason, who refuses to allow 'that Mede myhte be maynpernour' for Wrong (C.74-145). Although Peace, true to his personified nature, attempts to make amends despite the grievous harm that Wrong, who is trialed alongside Meed and is given as Meed's father in the A text, has done to him, the king wisely listens to Reason and understands that Wrong cannot be allowed to escape justice for the damage he has done to Peace, and that Meed should not be allowed to stand surety for him.⁵¹ Meed's relationship to peace is therefore one over which Langland appears to cast aspersions.

Another of the main demands of the leaders of the Peasants' Revolt was the reduction of restrictions on the villeinry, which had become subject to a number of harsh ordinances in the social upheaval that occurred in the wake of the Black Death.⁵² Lords brought forth the full brunt of new laws in order to undo a degree of economic power that the population decline caused by the Black Death had allowed for peasants, including the villeinry. Thus, a line about the king's men using meed to keep peace in the country could have seemed both ludicrous and dangerous, especially when espoused by a character who is represented in an ultimately unflattering light. The king allowing his men to use the peasants to create wealth through the introduction of ordinances favorable to landlords was part of the problem rather than some major proponent of peace.

Langland would have had cause to be concerned about how ideas such as these might be interpreted by those in power. John Ball, one of the leaders of the revolt, wrote in a letter that he hoped

51 Wrong is given as Meed's father by Holy Church in A.II.19. Equivalent passages in alternate texts, B.II.26 and C.II.25, give Meed's father as False and Flattery, respectively.

52 Judy Ann Ford, *John Mirk's Festival: Orthodoxy, Lollardy, and the Common People in Fourteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2006), pp. 70-4.

to draft 'Peres Plouzman' to his cause.⁵³ The letter also makes a reference to Robert the robber, a character from the Seven Deadly Sins sequence (A.V.235-52).⁵⁴ Should these references indeed cite *Piers Plowman*, then it would be clear that the poem was being adopted in an incredibly politically charged way by some of the most important figures in a major rebellion. The omission of this line may have been one of political sensitivity at a time when Langland would have had the right to feel some anxiety about the reception of his work.

The Phobic Patriarchal Response to the Female Self

This omission highlights the intensely political dimension that Meed's mediating role held. Her speech would have come precariously close to a number of the primary political controversies of Langland's time. Moreover, it would have involved Meed more directly with certain public figures who were embroiled in those controversies. One of those figures, Alice Perrers,

is generally seen as the prototype of the poem's Maid Meed, ensconced at Westminster, the centre of royal government, where she and her retinue threaten social harmony and justice ... Alice's notoriety was certainly at its height about the time of the B version: the Good Parliament of 1376 passed an Ordinance against women pursuing business in the king's courts by way of maintenance, singling her out by name ... Whether Perrers by intention, or only by subsequent identification, Meed was escorted to London by sheriffs and law officers whose portrayal pillories also the corruption of local administration.⁵⁵

53 Anne Hudson, "Piers Plowman and the Peasants' Revolt: A Problem Revisited," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, vol. 8 (Jun. 1994), pp. 85-8, 90.

54 Robert the robber would not have been exclusive to *Piers Plowman*, and so Ball's reference in that instance could have been to a number of other sources. See Andrew Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on Piers Plowman, Volume 1: C Prologue-Passus 4; B Prologue-Passus 4; A Prologue-Passus 4* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 76. The C text changes Robert the robber to Robert the rifler (C.VI.315), but it is highly unlikely that it would have been the C text that Ball was citing.

55 Helen Jewell, "Piers Plowman – A Poem of Crisis: An Analysis of Political Instability in Langland's England," *Politics and Crisis in Fourteenth-Century England*, ed. by John Taylor and Wendy Childs (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1990), pp. 67-8.

The attempts by the law to secure Meed's sexuality into marriage reflect the troubling sexuality of Alice Perrers as she subverted the masculine authority of the law through adultery. Perrers runs a royal backchannel which complicates the proper flow of reward by allowing access to Edward III's favor through her desire; Edward III rewards service to Perrers in his own name. Both Meed and Perrers undermine the notional justice of patriarchal duty by providing a parallel structure in which the masculine authority is subverted by their mediatrix. A duty to a mediating femininity escapes the patriarchal notion of social justice. The economics of service and reward, the social glue which keeps a monarchy running smoothly, becomes corrupted by the notionally illegitimate source of the reward, threatening the kingdom's social stability.

Meed and Perrers display their power through their expensive jewelry. Endemic to the B text is an additional line adding 'orientals', a more expensive variant of pearls, to Meed's jewelry (B.II.13). Perrers, for her part, was in possession of 'over 218,000 pearls and 30 ounces of (seed) pearls' at the time of the Good Parliament.⁵⁶ Although many late medieval queens and mistresses used pearls, the sheer extent of Perrers' pearl collection means that it was one of the most notable ways she chose to visually express her proximity to royalty. The common thread in these jewels is that their extravagance suggests a radiant imperiality, though neither Meed nor Perrers are royalty.

It is worth considering, then, precisely what the Perrers case can illustrate about the potential political context in which a deeply political character like Meed would be written and read. Even if Langland did not know or did not care about Perrers, the contemporary political discourse shaped by the circumstances around Perrers and ultimately the parliamentary acts against her may have affected in some fashion the way in which Langland considered the gendered politics of his time. As such, it is worth considering the ways in which both Perrers and Meed serve as problematic mediating spaces

⁵⁶ R.A. Donkin, *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-Fishing – Origins to the Age of Discoveries* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998), p. 268.

which irrupt a male bond. Meed's representation as a misconstrutive subversion of hierarchal powers is made more relevant to a late fourteenth-century English reader by virtue of its political relevance.

Piers Plowman's vision of a feminine, disruptive power may reflect in part the way in which this complex gendering was already unfolding in the culture in which the poem was written.

Alice Perrers, the mistress of Edward III in his later, weakened years, held considerable influence with the king, often acting as a vital conduit between the king and his petitioners. Pope Gregory IX relied on Perrers' intercession to secure the release of his brother Roger Beaufort, a captive from the war in France.⁵⁷ Thomas Brinton, in a sermon during the Good Parliament that may have been the source for Langland's parable of the rat parliament, decried the fact that 'all the keys [to power] should hang at the girdle of a woman'.⁵⁸ The idea that a woman held a mediating role between the king and his petitioners, including a pope, was clearly the subject of much political consternation. Alice Perrers' relationship with the king was reaping dividends by 1367, when Perrers receives by name a quantity of wine from the king.⁵⁹ This would have been either around or shortly before the date of the A text, as noted above. As such, political anxieties surrounding Perrers' emerging role in Edward III's administration could have been involved in the formulation of Meed's speech, especially since the king in this passage is identified with Edward III through its reference to his military campaigns. If Perrers was indeed a model for the character of Meed, then it would be precisely that mediating role of meed between men that would have been so problematic for Langland. Perrers' political influence became the site of a very public political struggle during an attempt to oust her role in the court of Edward III

57 Mary Aquinas Devlin, *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373-1389)*, vol. I, ed. by Mary Aquinas Devlin (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, 1954), p. xxv.

58 Thomas Brinton, *The Sermons of Thomas Brinton, Bishop of Rochester (1373-1389)*, p. xxv. The possibility of Langland using Brinton as a source for the parable of the rat parliament is increased by the fact that it is introduced in the B text, which would have been the version most impacted by the events surrounding the Good Parliament. However, Brinton himself may have sourced this parable from John Bromyard's *Summa Praedicatorum* (1348-52), and so it is possible that Langland may have taken the parable directly from Bromyard instead. See Leonard E. Boyle, "The Date of the *Summa Praedicatorum* of John Bromyard," *Speculum* 48.3 (Jul., 1973), pp. 533-7.

59 Helen Jewell, "*Piers Plowman* – A Poem of Crisis: an Analysis of Political Instability in Langland's England," p. 67.

during what has subsequently become known as the Good Parliament in 1376.⁶⁰ Perrers was not the only target during the Good Parliament. However, the petition against her is notable for the differences it evinces when compared to the petitions against some of her contemporaries. For instance, other accusatory petitions during the Good Parliament stress an improper service to the king on behalf of the accused. A London merchant, Richard Lyons, is sentenced to prison when he cannot produce a warrant to prove the king had officiated his role.⁶¹ The king's marshal in Brittany, William Latimer, is accused of undermining the king's dominion in France through unjust seizures that he does not share with the king, as well as of making a bad loan to the king.⁶² Latimer is portrayed in direct financial competition with the king, ransoming his lands, skewing the proper flow of bounty, and even preying directly on the king himself. In both of these impeachment prosecutions, special attention is paid to invalidating the feudal descent from the king of these men. Lyons is suggested as having usurped his role, having not had proper authorization from the king. Lord Latimer is suggested as perverting his role by failing to uphold the feudal chain which would notionally justify him. A man's role in the realm is governed by his antecedence: each man in the feudal chain is justified by the provision of a higher man, all the way to the king, who is himself justified by the provision of the male Christian God.

The complaint against Alice Perrers is different, because the chief objection to her role is that she has one. There is no proper role for a woman in this male feudal chain. The petition against Alice complains

that some women have pursued various business and disputes in the king's courts by way of maintenance, bribing and influencing the parties, which thing displeases the king; the king should forbid any woman to do it, and especially Alice Perrers, on penalty of whatever the said

60 "Edward III: April 1376," *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275-1504, vol 5: Edward III, 1351-1377*, ed. by Mark Ormrod, British History Online <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/april-1376>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]

61 Ibid, item 17.

62 Ibid, item 24.

Alice can forfeit and of being banished from the realm'.⁶³

Whereas the petitions against the men made a case for the illegitimacy of the contract between the men and the king, the petition against Alice simply descends from her sexed role: their argument proceeds directly from an injunction against women in the abstract to a punishment for Alice as a particular woman.

This focus on proper male antecedence is one of the strongest connections between Alice Perrers and the character of Meed. Conscience's contrast between meed and mercede highlights this problematic lack of antecedence by virtue of the way in which these modes of reward relate to labor. Reward needs to be temporally justified in Conscience's view: it must be an effect of an action and not the cause of an action. If the reward is given before the action that merits the reward is complete, then the reward can influence the action which is supposed to be generating it. A reward can preempt its own action and thereby characterize it. The reward is no longer a response to an act but an act in itself. This atemporal reward is dangerous to the degree that reward itself is dangerous: if reward is not always already constrained by its production, then a mediating space is introduced in which the giver of reward can use the power of reward to influence the actions of others. Whereas in mercede, the direct relation, one simply does one's rightful duty and is therefore rewarded, in meed, the indirect relation, one can do any number of things depending on what someone else wants from that person.

Reward should, in Conscience's view, be the glue that keeps together the feudal bonds of duty. Reward is the response of a superior to the action due them by an inferior. Reward is the hierarchical incentive. This direct relation of reward is safe, because it essentializes one's duty in itself: if one is only doing one's duty, then they implicitly admit that that duty is theirs and is right and proper to their role. Mercede is a moralized reward for doing what one ought to be doing.

⁶³ See Quotation XXIII. Ibid, item 45.

This emphasis on one's duty to be oneself in a hierarchical relation is obviously a gendered one, which should factor into an understanding of the subtexts at play in Conscience's rebuke of Meed the maid. Indeed, Conscience assigns the indirect relation of meed to 'Harlotes and hoores' who 'asken here huyre ar thei hit haue deserued' (C.III.300) Although Conscience also assigns some male occupations to meed as well, such as 'fals leches', or physicians, his view of the role of women in meed is clear (C.III.300). Meed is so troubling to Conscience because of the way in which she elides a proper hierarchical male antecedent. Who does she proceed from? Does she proceed from Wrong, with whom she is a codefendent and who is listed as her father in the A text? Does she proceed from False, to whom she intends to marry and who is listed as her father in the B text? Does she proceed from Fauel, who takes great pains to facilitate the marriage between Meed and False and who is listed as her father in the C text (A.II.23-171)? Does she proceed from her mother Amends (C.II.122-24)? Should she proceed from Truth, who, according to Theology, God intends her to marry, and who is justice over her trial? Should she proceed from Conscience, who the king wishes Meed to marry (A.III.99-100)? Interestingly, one can also ask the same questions of Alice Perrers: does she proceed from her first husband, Janyn Perrers? Does she proceed from her second husband, William Windsor? If so, when does she do so? As W. Mark Ormrod notes,

[A]t the parliament of October 1378, Sir William Windsor, Edward III's former lieutenant of Ireland, declared that he and Alice had been married at the time of her trial in 1377 and that she ought not to have been put to judgment as an independent woman. Thus began a long process of rehabilitation that involved, in 1379, a pardon for her having failed to leave the kingdom and, in 1380, the restoration to her husband of most of the former Perrers estates.⁶⁴

However, Ormrod also notes that Perrers was confirmed as a *femme sole* in 1375, and suggests that Perrers actually married William Windsor after the Good Parliament, perhaps as a kind of crafty legal

64 W. Mark Ormrod, "The Trials of Alice Perrers," *Speculum* 83.2 (Apr. 2008), p. 366.

defense against her banishment.⁶⁵ Is she covered by Windsor, and if so, at what time? Is she covered by the king, whose mistress she is? Perrers shares Meed's problematic mediating space in which their roles are not guaranteed by a clear male antecedent.

This feminine disruption is also one of the chief complaints that the commons have about Alice Perrers. Alice counteracts the will of the parliament. When a trial against Alice occurs during the first parliament of Richard II in October 1377, the commons take umbrage at the fact that she undid much of the punishment leveled at Richard Lyons during the Good Parliament of 1376. They complain that 'Alice so importuned the said grandfather [Edward III], in his court at Sheen, that by her singular pursuit and procurement the said grandfather granted the said Richard all his aforesaid lands, tenements, goods, and chattels'.⁶⁶ What's so pernicious about Alice's actions in this view is that she replaces the proper male authority. Edward III's grant to Richard Lyons is said to be the result of the singular pursuit and procurement of Perrers, as if she is directly displacing his will and acting through him. This same notion of Perrers not just persuading but replacing the authority of the king occurs later in the same parliament at a much bolder scale and at a more explicitly sexual level. As John of Gaunt testifies,

[T]he said Lady Alice appeared before the duke [John of Gaunt], and earnestly besought him that he would not allow the said Sir Nicholas to go there in any way [referencing the plan for Sir Nicholas Dagworth to go to Ireland on some royal business]. He replied that he would do nothing other than that which had been previously ordained before the king. And when she realised that she would gain no other grace from him, she left. The next morning, when the said duke took leave of the king in his bed, the king himself ordered him, upon his blessing that he should by no means allow the said Sir Nicholas to go to Ireland, notwithstanding the ordinance to the contrary made the day before; and so the said Sir Nicholas was countermanded.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 372.

⁶⁶ "Richard II: October 1377," *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England*, British History Online <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/october-1377>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], item 41.

⁶⁷ See Quotation XXIV. Ibid, item 41.

In this instance, Perrers is perceived as having a dangerous sexuality. The rightful accords of men are subverted by an unregulated female intervention which drains the king from his proper resolve. The imagery of the king stuck in bed is both indicative of Perrers' influence and of the king's ill health. Edward III had less than a year to live at this point, and John of Gaunt is recalling this event during the first parliament of Richard II, adding a sense of mortal foreboding to the story. These two aspects of the image of Edward III in bed blur together: Perrers' sexuality is perceived as incapacitating the king and replacing his will with her will. Indeed, Thomas Walsingham offers in his *Historia Anglicana* one of the more striking anecdotes about the way in which Perrers was perceived to have stolen the authority from an ailing, defenseless king. He records that, when Edward III was on his deathbed, 'inverecunda pellex detraxit annulos a suis digitis' [shamelessly his mistress removes the rings from his fingers].⁶⁸ Perrers' symbolic theft of Edward III's authority is made quite literal here. This deceptive reversal of power is implicit in *Piers Plowman*: the king insists that 'Mede is worþi þe maistrie to haue!' whereas Conscience comes to declare his desire that 'Shal no more Mede be maister on erþe' (A.III.266). Conscience reverses the king's expectation: the king believes one can gain mastery over Meed, but Conscience suggests that the opposite is true, that Meed is the master on earth. The medieval gendering of power becomes problematized: does a potential husband have mastery over Meed, or is she the master of whoever engages with her? The same question seems quite pertinent with regards to the relationship between Edward III and Alice Perrers. In both cases, the supposedly proper male hierarchy is irrupted and subverted by the incidence of an unconstrained feminine mediation. The gendering of power falls apart until it is violently reinforced.

Whether or not Perrers was the prototype for Meed, she nevertheless reflects a contemporary destabilization of power through feminine mediation of male hierarchies, and thus illustrates the way in

68 Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglicana*, Archive.org <<https://archive.org/details/thomaewalsingha00rilegoog>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], p. 327. The translation is my own.

which Meed represents an existential threat to the notionally proper function of a kingdom. Both women enact a feminine dissimulation upon the homosocial bonds that uphold a rightful chain of matroyshka agencies.

This complex Meed-Perrers destabilization may have been the cause for a subsequent addition in C that reads

'Nay', quod Consience to þe Kyng, 'clerkes witeth þe sothe –
 That Mede is euermore a mayntenour of gyle,
 As þe Sauter sayth by such þat 3eueþ mede:
 That vnlauffulliche lyuen hauen large handes
 To 3eue men mede, more oþer lasse. (C.II.285-9)

The giving of meed is equated to unlawfulness, lying, and guile. The first, unlawfulness, directly contradicts Meed's assertion in the preceding line that only the C text omits. The latter two render the act of giving meed as one which deserves suspicion, particularly political scrutiny. Meed's mediating space is perverted into a place of deception from which disorder flows. The reference to the psalter further antagonizes this mediating space by forcing those who relate through it to physically embody the sinfulness that meed engenders with their large hands. Conscience is deeply unsettled by Meed in ways that parallel the concerns which arose around Alice Perrers' relationship with Edward III, even if the two women were not intentionally paralleled. This female intercession between men in both cases becomes problematized as a mediation which disrupts the honest bonds of men with a suspicious and unlawful space in which those bonds become altered and redirected. Men who allow themselves to be mediated by these women, the 'such þat 3eueþ mede' that Conscience assails, physically retain the consequences of the collapsed space, suggesting that the vanishing women are morally borne by the men who initially allowed the female space to open up through the use of meed.

This condemnation of Meed's mediation produces the problem of continuing to sustain the

masculine bonds that the female intervention sustained for males. How should, for example, the king earn and maintain the loyalty of his knights if he is not allowed recourse to meed? Conscience attempts to resolve this problem by introducing a distinction between meed and mercede.⁶⁹ As D. Vance Smith writes,

Conscience's lengthy attempt to clarify the nature of meed in the C text is merely an elaboration of the principle contained in the genealogical analogy: that meed's meaning is determined by what precedes it. Conscience's new distinction between an illegitimate meed and a legitimate meed (which he now calls "mercede") rests, fundamentally on chronological distinctions – on the beginning that each has.⁷⁰

The difference between meed and mercede is, for Conscience, a question of what grounds the act: whether it is allowed to stand for itself, and thereby introduce a mediating space, as in the case of meed, or whether it flows naturally out of a preceding action and immediately dissipates in the subsequent action of reception, as in the case of mercede. If 'Mede many tymes men 3eueth bifore þe doynge', then a contingency is introduced in which the succeeding action floats in an atemporality which potentially impacts and helps to develop the enaction of the preceding action, thereby potentially corrupting it, whereas if it were the case 'That eny man mede tok but he hit myhte deserue', then the action of giving meed follows naturally out of the action which deserved the reward, and therefore no contingency is introduced, and there is no way in which meed can affect the action it rewards, since it is already performed (C.III.292-4). The result must be justified by its antecedent and not by a mediation.

This atemporality of exchange critiques the social difficulties surrounding the increasingly

⁶⁹ The word 'mercede' does not have a modern correlate and means much the same thing as meed. This distinction is purely rhetorical on Conscience's part. See 'Mercede, n'. *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/116628>> and 'Meed, n'. *Oxford English Dictionary* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/115823>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

⁷⁰ D. Vance Smith, "The Labors of Reward: Meed, Mercede, and the Beginning of Salvation," *The Yearbook of Langland Studies*, vol. 8 (Jun. 1994), p. 133.

systematic prosecution of credit debts. Legal structures for the provision of credit predates the Norman invasion: an early eleventh century legal tract about marriage, *Be Wifmannes bewedding*, contains a provision wherein 'Æfter ðam is to witanne hwam ðæt fosterlean gebyrige; weddige se brydguma eft þæs; 7 hit aborgian his frynd.' (After this should be known who deserves the fostering payment [for having raised the bride]; contract the bridegroom for this; and this [payment] will be advanced by his friends).⁷¹ Presumably there must have been some recourse for those providing this surety should the groom default on his repayment, but this recourse could have been *ad hoc* and private, or at least only partially public. Standardized legal courts in which written bonds could be submitted as evidence of a debt, and which held the power to seize the movable chattel of the debtor in the case of such a default, appears to have become widespread enough by the twelfth century that a legal treatise by Henry II's Chief Justicar Ranulf de Glanvill took pains to assure that the adjudication of lay debts would be undertaken only by lay courts and not by clerical ones, thereby insisting that debt suits were a legal matter and not an ecclesiastical one.⁷² The ubiquity of debt even extended to the villeins, who were obliged to seek recourse for debts, usually those made out for exigency and not for investment, through manorial courts.⁷³

This prevalence of debt litigation proved to be a major corrupting factor for the church. Bishops wrote into contracts higher debts than they loaned.⁷⁴ Canonists made a plethora of exceptions for

71 "Early 11th Century. A tract on the terms of betrothal (*BE WIFMANNES BEWEDDUNGE*)," *Councils & Synods with Other Documents Relating to the English Church, Volume I, Part I: 871-1066*, ed. by D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C.N.L. Brooke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 429. The translation is my own.

72 Paul Brand, "Aspects of the Law of Debt 1189-1307," *Credit and Debt in Medieval England c.1180-c.1350*, ed. by P.R. Schofield and N.J. Mayhew (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2002), p. 20.

73 Chris Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 39-44. An exception to the obligation of recourse to manorial courts were debts over forty shillings, which exceeded the jurisdiction of manorial courts and became subject to royal courts. This situation would have been incredibly unlikely for most villeins, however. See Paul Brand, 'Aspects of the Law of Debt 1189-1307', p. 23-4.

74 Robin R. Mundill, "Christian and Jewish lending patterns and financial dealings during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries," *Credit and Debt in Medieval England c.1180-c.1350*, ed. by P.R. Schofield and N.J. Mayhew (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2002), p. 49.

usury.⁷⁵ Parochial clergy became involved in as much as five percent of all debts.⁷⁶ Many of these parochial clergy became involved in debt litigation to hound their parishoners for repayment.⁷⁷

These issues surrounding debts and the church's involvement in them seem to have bothered not only Langland but also some of his literary predecessors. Robert Mannyng, the author of *Handlyng Synne*, declared that

Aȝens mokerers wyl y þrepe
 Þat gadren pens vn-to an hepe;
 y warne hem allë yn þys wurde,
 whan mokerers gadren yn-to hurde
 Þe deuyl ys here tresorer,
 For auaryce ys hys spenser.
 Y speke to men of rychë lyfe
 Þat han no charge of chylde ne wyfe,
 persones, prestes, þat han here rente,
 And ouþer þat han grete extente,
 þat mow weyl, at allë ȝers,
 lyue as lordes, and be here pers
 Þese nede nat to haue tresourye.⁷⁸

Priests and parsons taking advantage of their childless status to pursue usury out of avarice outraged Mannyng. He was distraught that those nominally responsible for upholding a parish's spiritual health should have the devil as their treasurer. This corruption appears to extend out of the 'grete extent' these clergy enjoyed: usury is one of the ways in which a materialist bent withers a clergy's sense of spiritual duty to the lay people under his care. Mannyng's frustration is echoed by Langland, who imagines Civil Law ordering

75 Pamela Nightingale, "The English parochial clergy as investors and creditors in the first half of the fourteenth century," *Credit and Debt in Medieval England c.1180-c.1350*, ed. by P.R. Schofield and N.J. Mayhew (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2002), p. 89.

76 Ibid, p. 93.

77 Chris Briggs, *Credit and Village Society in Fourteenth-Century England*, p. 117.

78 Robert Mannyng, *Handlyng Synne*, University of Michigan Corpus of Middle English Prose and Verse <<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/c/cme/AHA2735.0001.001/1:4.5?rgn=div2;view=toc>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], ll. 6065-77.

Erchedekenes and officials and alle youre registrers,
 Let saddle hem wiþ siluer oure synne to suffre –
 As deuoutrye and diuourses and derne vsurie[.] (B.II.174-6)

This order occurs during Meed's pseudo-triumphant procession into Westminster. For Langland, then, this culture of atemporal exchange in which the church freely participates is part of a larger social cavalcade of wrongs predicated from Meed. This is why the antecedence of Meed is such a thorny issue in the poem. Her lack of antecedence is equivalent with her role as an unconstrained mediating space subject to the introduction of sin.

Conscience distinguishes meed and mercede by the way antecedence prescribes the reward. Mercede is a direct relation of action to reward, whereas meed is an indirect relation of action to reward.

'Relacioun rect', quod Consience, 'is a record of treuthe,
Quia antelate rei recordatiuum est
 ...
 Acordeth in all kyndes with his antecedent. (C.III.343-61)

A direct relation is a record of truth which preserves the just developments of the antecedent into the result. There is no gap between antecedent and result. The result is merely another stage of its antecedent. The result maintains the essence of the antecedent. Mercede is a principle of an action developing into its own reward, with the reward always being predicated directly from the action, then materializing out of it in a properly linear way. Conscience contrasts direct relation with indirect relation, which he describes in the following way.

"Indirect" thyng is as hoso coueytede
 Alle kyn kynde y knowe and to folowe
 And withoute cause to cache to and come to bothe nombres;
 In whiche ben gode and nat gode, and graunte here noyþer wille. (C.III.362-5)

The indirect relation introduces a gap in which a 'noyþer wille' may alter the action's outcome. This intervention corrupts the essence of the antecedent and renders it irrelevant to the result, if at least only partially. This mediation disturbs the mathematical linearity which Conscience wants to praise in the direct relation. As Schmidt recognizes, this could articulate a similar, though not necessarily harmonious, argument from John Wycliffe:

direct and indirect denote the same thing but equivocally, because of a difference of condition with respect to the manner of signifying cases, to which there corresponds a difference of condition in reality. For instance 'man' *directly* signifies humanity under the condition by which it is subject to a form, so that differing verbal expressions that are predicated of man correspond to his substantial or accidental essence. But the *oblique cases* of this direct form signify the same humanity under the category of relation, whereby forms of various kinds are present to it, and thus in an equivocal manner, because of a difference in the mode of signifying.⁷⁹

'Direct' is given to signify the substance and essence of the thing in such a way that it immediately gives rise to the thing arising out of its form as such, whereas 'indirect' relies on a relation in which the thing is a multiplicity of intervening forms sputtering out a contingent presence neither in itself nor of itself. This type of differentiation is one which genders meed and mercede. As Elizabeth Robertson remarks about the character Anima in Passus IX,

the feminine Anima is typically passive – placed within a castle by Kynde and passive in the face of the active assault by the devil. The text describes her only with passive verbs: she “is called” Anima; she “is loved by” Kynde; she “is envied by” the devil; she “is protected by” Kynde. We never see her performing an action. Langland utilizes prevailing assumptions of women (that begin with Aristotle and become refined in commentaries on Genesis) as passive objects under the rule of male guardians, not agents in their own right.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See Quotation XXV. John Wycliffe, *De compositione hominis*, qt. and trans. in A.V.C. Schmidt, *Earthly Honest Things: Collected Essays on Piers Plowman* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2012), p. 37. Certainly, Langland deriving an argument from Wycliffe would add a litany of fascinating political and religious implications to the passage, ones already hinted at by Ball's potential references to *Piers Plowman*.

⁸⁰ Elizabeth Robertson, “Souls that Matter: The Gendering of the Soul in *Piers Plowman*,” *Mindful Spirit in Late Medieval*

Agency is reserved for the direct, male mercede, and is excised from the indirect, female meed.

Conscience collapses the space in which Meed intervened by replacing her with a male substitute which deals directly with a thing's proper essence. The rebuke of Meed is, therefore, the rebuke of the active participation of a woman in the relationships of men, although it does not inherently prohibit the use of inactive, receptive women to bolster the claims of masculinity on which those male relationships are based.

The distinction that Conscience makes between meed and mercede hinges upon the antecedent of the reward. This is Conscience's argument, but what if it is also Meed's plan? Danila Sokolov writes,

Where Mede lumped together both measurable (marketplace exchange, fair wages) and measureless (alms, bribes) instances of reward, Conscience strives to keep these apart, using them to oppose meed and nonmeed, although there are potential pitfalls associated with this approach. But Conscience wants the same opposition of measure and *unmeasure* to account for the contrast of meed proper and meed measureless, which leads to certain confusion. For since measurable exchange (nonmeed) is excluded from the domain of meed, both remaining versions of meed – the “bad” meed of bribery and simony (underserved [sic] gift or payment) and the “good” meed of grace (salvation) – open themselves to being thought of as examples of “meed measureless.”⁸¹

The reason why Conscience feels compelled to contrast meed with mercede is precisely because, until that contrast is made, meed potentially stands for both measurable, responsive reward and immeasurable, initiative reward. The distinction is rhetorically generated and not denoted. This double-faced nature grants Meed significant agency, as she can perform the bad shadow under the guise of the good form, but the distinction also presents a restrictive possibility, because Meed can be forced to mean the meed that is generated by an antecedent. The gap which grants her authority can be annulled

Literature: Essays in Honor of Elizabeth D. Kirk, ed. by Bonnie Wheeler (Palgrave MacMillian: New York, 2006), p. 170.

81 Danila Sokolov, *Renaissance Texts, Medieval Subjectivities: Rethinking Petrarchan Desire from Wyatt to Shakespeare* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2017), p. 32.

through a different interpretation of her own name. Theology's attempt to stop Meed's marriage, and his further insistence that Meed should be married off to Truth, represent hurdles which would destroy Meed's agency. She would become covered by Truth and would therefore be respondent solely to his standing. By choosing to marry False, Meed would also be making the same distinction that Conscience makes. False/Meed is to Conscience's meed as Truth/Meed is to Conscience's mercede. Marrying False allows her to avoid the antecedent delimitation, whereas marrying Truth would seal her under the antecedent delimitation. It could be that Meed herself recognizes, prior to Conscience's elucidation, the ability for marriage to resolve the tension she embodies in her uncovered ambiguity and seeks to prevent it in order to permanently stand in for immeasurable, initiative reward, to remain Meed in the mode of meed.

This *mede* as such is the political problem this passage poses. Meed subverts the function of the king by reproducing the sign of the king from herself. This is the confrontation between Meed and the king: who controls who? The king takes this confrontation seriously. After the king disperses False's retinue at the end of Passus II, Meed is '[w]iþ bedeles and bailles brouȝt bifore þe Kyngē' (B.III.2). Certainly, it would have been just such minor officials on whom the king would rely during an intervention in a public event. The marriage procession of False and Meed to the consistory courts expresses a social will. In opposing that desire, the king is reasserting his royal prerogative over a separate economic chain performed outside of the king's will. Precisely because the king is forced to intervene in an expression of interconnected social will, social will itself becomes problematized: whose will is properly social? False and Fauel's use of meed creates an economic chain which extends the purpose of its meed-mastering men, but this chain never extends to the king. False and Fauel do not consult him. The emergent power relation is abridged, recentered, severing the king from his subjects. The king is less of a king insofar as Meed can enact his prerogative. The various titles False and Fauel grant themselves through Meed replaces the power of the king to delegate those titles (B.II.83-96).

They acquire political status from themselves rather than from the king. If Meed is indeed the 'cosyn' of the king, as Theology asserts, then by not consulting the king about the marriage, False and Fauel elide the king's rightful legal role in the marriage contract (C.II.146). As Anna Baldwin notes, 'The king was guardian of the heiresses of his tenants-in-chief, and his consent in the marriage of his 'cosyn' (cousin, 133) was necessary in feudal law (and of course a king directly benefited from this opportunity to directly reward loyalty by promoting a valuable match)'.⁸² Because the king has the civil law right to adjudicate potential marriage proposals to his female wards, then False and Fauel are resisting the king as the proper fountain of civil law in his realm by circumventing the king's will with regards to the marriage contract with Meed. This recalcitrance is not so severe as to constitute an absolute rebellion, because they still ultimately feel obliged to seek the opinion of the courts in order to legitimate the marriage contract. It is merely a convenient perversion of the feudal structure, artificially delimiting the extent to which the marriage contract requires royal justification in order to ensure the marriage is successfully legitimated. The marriage is a kind of informal, black market marriage which is gradually dragged into successively more appropriate channels through several interventions. They are not trying to overthrow the king but to assume some of his prerogative in a particular case. It is Meed herself, in her sly insistence on causing this insubordination, who presents the truest threat to the king. False and Fauel are merely useful scoundrels, which is why they so quickly fade into the background: as Conscience perceives, it is nothing less than a trial of Meed that can truly rectify the patriarchal wound this marriage procession has inflicted.

The king is irate upon learning of this marriage contract, and his order to 'doon hem hange by þe hals and alle þat hem maynteneþ' clearly demonstrates the extent to which he perceives the marriage contract to be an impermissible threat to his royal prerogative, especially since he orders the hanging of all those who maintain False and Fauel's will through their separate legal structure (B.II.196). In fact,

⁸² Anna Baldwin, *A Guidebook to Piers Plowman* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 49.

the king's view of False and Fauel's legal imposition becomes quite explicit when he instructs his sergeants to 'attachen þo tyraunt3[.]' (B.II.200). Moreover, the king warns his sergeants against taking 'any [tresor]' that False and Fauel might offer, indicating that he is at least partially worried about his subordinates responding to their use of meed (B.II.200). If they accept that meed and enact False and Fauel's will instead of the king's will, then he will have lost the political struggle, and, in the dream allegory, his very identity, as the king's kingness relies on his ability to control his retinue. Like False Witness, the king can only assume his allegorical name through his own 'amaystrye' of Meed (C.II.161).

The king expresses his authority over Meed through the 'bedeles and bailles' that bring her to him. Bedeles are linguistic vassal-vessels: they carry with them the words of the lord who controls their actions. They are the physical presence of the king's will. Bailiffs are both the military and metaphorical units of a king's authority, ensuring the specific actions of a king's order are carried out. These figures are the site of the struggle: the king's 'bedeles and bailles' directly counteract the '[b]edelles and bailifs' of False's 'riche retenaunce' (B.II.54-60). The struggle between the overlapping power structures occurs at the level of the individual units of a lord's will. Whichever will is more forcefully enacted by feudal units becomes the social will. Meed is separated from the retinue that represents her socialization of will by men who represent and enact the king's power. Not only is the king's authority demonstrated by the way in which he disperses the counterstructure arrayed in spite of him by False and Fauel, but his authority specifically over Meed is demonstrated by the fact that it is his retinue that succeeds in arraigining her. Because Meed the woman is a necessary component of overlapping male structures, the only way the king can properly lay claim to that woman is by asserting the power of his male retinue. This battle over a woman is the battle between men over other men.

The king's involvement in this male-(female)-male struggle is indicated by his assertion that

I shal assayen hire myself and soopliche appose
 What man of þis world þat hire were leuest. (B.III.5-6)

The king seeks for Meed to confirm to which man she is the most devoted. If Meed answers that she is the most devoted to False, then she demonstrates her loyalty to her previous fiancé and solidifies the allegorical threat of their marriage. If Meed answers that she is the most devoted to the king, which she later does, then she forsakes False and annuls the allegorical threat of the marriage. The king seeks to ascertain which man to whom Meed owes her ultimate loyalty in order to reaffirm his power status as the man who deserves her ultimate loyalty. Like many exercises of power, the king's question is really a demand. He makes this clear by continuing

And if she werche bi wit and my wil folwe
 I wol forgyuen hire þis[e] gilt, so me God helpe! (B.III.7-8)

If Meed follows the king's will, then he will pardon her of the hanging order he has issued to whomever maintains the mastery of False and Fael. Meed recognizes this implicit threat when she declares 'But I be holly at youre heste – lat hange me [ellis]!' (B.III.112-3) The king's desire to control Meed's loyalty is redoubled through her internal self in his hope that 'she werche bi wit' in order to follow his will. Not only must Meed submit to the king, but it must be her wit that leads her to submit to the king. She must come to recognize the content of the king's power over her within herself. The king needs to own Meed, but he also wants Meed to own her submission to him. In psychoanalytic terms, this is the moment the Master-Signifier illusorily possesses the *objet a* in the subject.⁸³ The Master-Signifier stands in for the subject over the void of the real. The symbolic field radiates out from that Master-Signifier, represented to the decentered subject as Other. As Jacques Lacan puts it, 'The Other is the locus in which is situated the chain of the signifier that governs whatever may be made present of the

83 Slavoj Žižek, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism* (London: Verso, 2012), pp. 598-9.

subject – it is the field of that living being in which the subject has to appear'.⁸⁴ The subject exists for others only insofar as the subject exists within the Other. Crucially, this is the moment Lacan highlights as the incidence of sexuality (though not sexuation): the Master-Signifier's illusory possession of the *objet a* is articulated in the subject as a sexual desire. The struggle over the control of Meed is a struggle for the subject's need to assert the symbolic ground of the Master-Signifier over the real lack: the king's kingness needs to be justified through symbolic recognition since the real of kingness is a lack filled in by a contingent desire. The redoubled lack of the *objet a* is represented in Meed through her femaleness as desired in the heteronormative male competition to marry her. This belies the fact that Meed is the method and not the audience. She is the desired object through which the struggle between male subjects for symbolic primacy occurs. By redoubling through herself the king's desire, Meed willfully assumes the function of the *objet a* and sustains the king's symbolic field. Meed allows her sex to be deployed into gender. Her femaleness gives way to an anti-patriarchal femininity. This femininity, in turn, allows the king's feudal struggle against False to be articulated as a power struggle for masculinity-as-power within new modes of economic relation. By having Meed renounce her fiance and submit to marry one of the king's knights, the king enacts the opposite and reciprocal motion to Meed: he deploys this struggle for masculinity through the ownership of Meed's femininity into a symbolic representation of the real of maleness. The king's gender role is sustained over his sex.

Meed's role as the feudal feminine is the enaction of gender in a delimiting system of hierarchy, but the incompleteness of this gendering reproduces a number of gaps that can be redoubled onto the men who exchange women in a symbolic economy. The ordering structure of gender places women as nodes of content for male agents to traverse, but it is precisely those nodes of content that have the capacity to characterize. Subversive use of this characterization produces a problematic mode of mediating authority that allows femininity to interrupt the supposedly proper chain of male

84 Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis* (London: Karnac, 2004), p. 203.

antecedence. Meed is, therefore, the negation of the idealization that sustains gendered power systems:
the anti-mediatrix.

Chapter V: *Pearl* and the Feminine Soul of Devotional Transcendence

In *Pearl*, the Jeweler's loss of the pearl happens at two levels. In the material level of the story, the Jeweler loses a matchless pearl, which is an allegorical object of desire. In the spiritual level of the story, the Jeweler loses the feminine mode of devotional mysticism that reconciles mortals with their God. Therefore, the Jeweler loses the link between his desire for the allegorical object and the divine masculinity that the allegorical object translates. The Jeweler's material masculinity, through his failure to adopt a feminine mode of allegorical transcendence, fails to unify with divine masculinity.

In order to understand how *Pearl* functions, one must understand how the material loss and the spiritual loss of the pearl connect to contextualize the encounter with the Pearl Maiden. To accomplish this task, the chapter is constructed in an Eiffel formation of two legs supporting a central chassis.

The first leg of the chapter is the materiality of the Jeweler's pearl. The pearl is a rare object of superlative desire. Just as the Rose represented absolute roseness, so too is the Jeweler's pearl an archetypal object. The superlative nature of the pearl entangles it in ideas about royal presentations of status. The pearl presents the material sign of an elevated mode of being. The Jeweler's loss of the material pearl manifests an inability to fulfill his allegorical identity as the Jeweler.

The second leg of the chapter is the spirituality of the Jeweler's pearl. The dreamworld is an elevated state where objects should be read for what they signify about the spiritual generation of existence. In *Pearl*, the Jeweler's failure to read the objects of the New Jerusalem for the spiritual truths that underpin them manifests his incapacity to experience the spiritual mode.

The central tower of the chapter is the allegorical encounter with the Pearl Maiden. The Pearl Maiden appears to the Jeweler on the other side of a river and exhorts him to emulate her transcendence. The Jeweler needs to emulate the Pearl Maiden to overcome the material-spiritual divide. He needs to internalize the Pearl Maiden's relationship to the divine masculine by configuring

his soul as the Bride of Christ trope of devotional mysticism. When he fails to adopt this internalized feminine pose towards the divine masculine, he reasserts his flawed material masculinity, and thus he is washed away by the river that separates the material and the spiritual.

Roughly the first half of the chapter will explore the two legs of the allegorical structure: the material and the spiritual senses of the Jeweler's loss of the pearl. The second half of the chapter will discuss the central tower of the allegorical structure: the gendered opposition between the Jeweler and the Pearl Maiden.

Peering Beyond the Pearl

The Jeweler's pearl is 'Oute of oryent'.¹ This indicates that the pearl is an *orientales*, a marine pearl usually fished in the Persian Gulf or Red Sea.² *Orientales* pearls made their way to Europe as an exotic luxury through trade, usually through Byzantium, then sold at pearl markets to northern European locations. *Orientales* fashions were affected by their Byzantine passage: the practice of inseting pearls into gold originated with Byzantine craftsmen.³ The Jeweler is keenly aware of the decorative context of his pearl: his very first comment about his pearl, other than appending to it the alliterative adjective 'pleasaunte', is to note that it is worthy 'To clanly clos in golde so clere' (1-2). The Jeweler's pearl is an exotic luxury steeped in a rich, foreign decorative tradition.

The pearl's status as an *orientales* distinguishes it from the *margaritas* pearls native to British rivers.⁴ *Orientales* and *margaritas* pearls were visually distinct and culturally demarcated. As R.A.

1 Pearl Poet, *Pearl, The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, 5th edition, ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), ln. 3, p. 53. All subsequent citations of this work will be in the form of parenthetical line numbers.

2 R.A. Donkin, *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-Fishing – Origins to the Age of Discoveries* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1998), p. 254.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 252.

4 Fred Woodward, *The Scottish Pearl in its World Context* (Edinburgh: Diehard, 1994), p. 38.

Donkin notes, 'In 1355, the Parisian goldsmiths ruled that Scottish and oriental pearls should not be combined, except in large ornaments and "jewels for churches."' ⁵ This distinction between pearls allowed for each type to be valued differently. Pearls vary widely in their shape, luster, and size. ⁶ Thus, local *margaritas* pearls were subject to wide differences in price, whereas an *orientales* owned by an English jeweler had to be of sufficient quality to have incentivized the various merchants who traded it across such a distance. As such, an *orientales* in England would not only be distinct from the more common *margaritas*, but also of a more consistently high quality.

This relative valuation of pearl types would have been relevant to a society with anxieties about the use and display of jewels, and particularly pearls. Donkin writes, 'Pearls were the most numerous of truly precious stones. The very best were second to none in value, but the great range in size and quality brought them within reach of all but the laboring classes'. ⁷ Due to the prevalence and relative cost of these pearls, wearing pearls became a useful way for the emerging middle class to distinguish themselves from the lower class by emulating the upper class. This practice so perturbed the upper class' sense of difference that it was briefly banned through sumptuary law in 1363-4. ⁸ One's sense of class identity could be expressed through the quality of one's jewels. The Jeweler's immediate inclination to alert the reader that his pearl is an *orientales* may be part of an attempt to emphasize the rarity and value of his pearl. Although *margaritas* pearls did rank among some of the most valuable pearls available, and high quality *margaritas* were featured in the fourteenth-century English crown jewels, the Jeweler's pearl being an *orientales* helps it to stand out against other high quality pearls. ⁹ The pearl has no 'precios pere' in part because it is an *orientales* (4). In a climate in which wearing pearls was a social competition for identity, a pearl's claim of value is always contextualized by

⁵ Donkin, *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-Fishing*, p. 256.

⁶ Woodward, *The Scottish Pearl in its World Context*, p. 25.

⁷ Donkin, *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-Fishing*, p. 264.

⁸ Felicity Riddy, "Jewels in Pearl," *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), p. 144.

⁹ Donkin, *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-Fishing*, p. 258.

contemporary jewelry and the pearl market.

The Jeweler's description of his pearl is a challenge to other pearl owners expressed through a rhetorical richness. Donkin continues,

The preference was for white and perfectly spherical specimens ... pearls, besides being worn as personal jewelry or as part of regalia, were bought as investments, sold to raise capital, given as presents at betrothals and marriages, and used to endow some favorite foundation – church, monastery, or college. In such ways and in the normal course of trade, pearls, like other jewels, were kept in circulation.¹⁰

Pearls were a capital-retaining commodity. Their variation in quality allowed pearls to operate in value denominations. This made them flexible but stable objects of trade. As movable chattel, pearls were also useful as a form of inheritance, as they provided a condensed form of value that could be passed through dowries.¹¹ While the primary vector for inheritance of movable chattel was women, men were more usually the vector for inheritance of immovable chattel, even after their deaths. For example, dowers granted to widows in the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Hustings Court wills primarily took the form of land.¹² Sometimes these dowers were increased through movable chattels, occasionally to the exclusion of land, but the majority of wills represented male legacy through land. A major influence on the fact that movable chattel followed women was that women's economic activity in the fourteenth century tended to remain local rather than regional, filling in the gaps of employment in the community as men became increasingly economically active over larger areas.¹³ The increase in female public activity correlated with an increase in the public capacity for male economic activity, such that women

¹⁰ Donkin, *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-Fishing*, p. 264.

¹¹ Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 1998), p. 12.

¹² Barbara A. Hanawalt, "The Dilemma of the Widow of Property for Late Medieval London," *The Medieval Marriage Scene: Prudence, Passion, Policy*, ed. by Sherry Roush and Cristelle L. Baskins (Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2005), p. 138.

¹³ Judith M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock Before the Plague* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 193-8.

owned more things to be willed, even though the larger guarantees of economic status remained with men.

This use of pearls in dowries may have feminized pearls in the medieval context, making *Pearl's* transition of its eponymous jewel from object to woman more contextually resonant. This resonance would have interwoven the patriarchal heteronormative desire for women as objects with the desire for wealth transferable between men. A man's marriage to a woman acquires the dowry assigned to her by her father. This wealth was alternately discreet and displayed. During the financially strenuous reign of Edward III, movables could be preferable to immovables, particularly land, for storing high values, as they were much harder to tax accurately.¹⁴ The tax a man renders his king can be hidden in the gap of feminine wealth. This feminine wealth could, however, be rendered visible at strategic moments to reflect their relationship to masculine power. During the Good Parliament of 1376, one of the chief complaints against Alice Perrers, the mistress of Edward III, was that she had taken the majority of the jewels owned by the late Queen Philippa of Hainault.¹⁵ Notably, 'When, in 1379, the goods of Edward III's mistress Anne [sic] Perrers were seized, they were found to include over 21,800 pearls and 30 ounces of (seed) pearls'.¹⁶ Part of the way that Perrers usurped the role of the queen was to steal her jewels, including her vast collection of pearls. By wearing the queen's pearls, Perrers wore the queen's role. By wearing the queen's role, Perrers displayed Edward III's wealth. A woman's appearance signified a man's estate.

Feminine appearance displaying a relationship to masculine power is already well represented in dream allegory literature prior to *Pearl*. In *Roman de la Rose*, the Jealous Husband sees his

14 James Willard, "The Taxes upon Movables of the Reign of Edward III," *English Historical Review* 30.117 (Jan., 1915), p. 70.

15 John L. Selzer, "Topical Allegory in *Piers Plowman*: Lady Meed's B-Text Debate with Conscience," *Philological Quarterly* 59.3 (Jul., 1980), p. 258.

16 Donkin, *Beyond Price: Pearls and Pearl-Fishing*, p. 268.

cuckoldry as an affront to the property he displays through his wife.¹⁷ In *Piers Plowman*, Meed's luxurious attire causes Will to ponder whose wife she is.¹⁸ The clothes a woman wears is the property, and therefore the worldly signification, of her husband. Pearls, therefore, mediated the relationships between men through feminine appearance. In the 1395 *Un Epistre au Roi Richart* by Philippe de Mézières, a work which has many parallels with *Pearl* and could have been a source for it, 'the royal child-bride, Isabelle, was represented specifically as a pearl'.¹⁹ Child-bride pearls were one fourteenth-century method of recognizing the alliance of two kings. These men secure the balance between their power through the feminine appearance of a pearl. Just as a woman's legal personhood was subsumed under her male guardian, so too was the meaning of the display of her wealth.²⁰

Heteronormative sexual desire augments its objectification of the female body by inscribing in this value feminine presentations in which a latent masculinity coextends with the patriarchal possession of sexuality: the desire for the feminine presentation also extends to the desire to possess the masculine identity which that woman presents. In accounts of Olympias, wife of Philip II of Macedon and mother of Alexander the Great, written by John Gower, Thomas Walsingham, and Thomas of Kent, the seductive beauty of Olympias represents political fragmentation through the desire multiple men have for both her body and the jewels she wears.²¹

In this sense, the Jeweler's pearl's role as both object and maiden are layered interpretations of the same expressive value. His pearl represents his masculine authority through its status as an object of desire. When the Jeweler loses his pearl, he loses the signification of the authority granted him by

17 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 142.

18 William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C, and Z Versions, Volume I: Text*, ed. by A.V.C Schmidt (London: Longman, 1995), EETS 17, ln. C.II.18, p. 57.

19 John M. Bowers, *The Politics of Pearl: Court Poetry in the Age of Richard II* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), p. 90.

20 For a discussion of the principle of coverture, see Marie A. Kelleher, "Later Medieval Law in Community Context," *The Oxford Handbook of Women and Gender in Medieval Europe*, ed. by Judith M. Bennett and Ruth Mazo Karras (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 135-8.

21 Sylvia Federico, *The Classicist Writings of Thomas Walsingham: 'Worldly Cares' at St Albans Abbey in the Fourteenth Century* (York: York Medieval Press, 2016), pp. 73-5.

his role as a Jeweler. This authority is usurped by the Pearl Maiden's appearance as the child-bride of a greater masculine authority. Who represents themselves to the Jeweler through the pearl of the dream?

Neoplatonic Dreamworlds and the New Jerusalem

Macrobius typifies the *somnium*, or the interpretive dream, as one that 'tegit figuris et velat ambagibus non nisi interpretatione intellegendam significationem rei quae demonstratur' [conceals with strange shapes and veils with ambiguity the true meaning of the information being offered, and requires an interpretation for its understanding].²² Allegory and *somnia* enact the same revelatory principle in which the interplay of objects illustrates an intangible concept or narrative. Truth in the allegorical dream is transcendental: one understands what is being displayed only by learning how to look beyond what is displayed. The allegorical dream is the 'hidden presented', or a transmission of knowledge recognized only in the context of the knowledge of the transmission. This is the Neoplatonist connection between allegory and dream. As Peter T. Struck puts it, '[Plotinus'] view of the One as an entirely transcendent entity that also still (somehow) manifests itself in visible, tangible, concrete reality, sets out a paradox that is a natural incubator for allegorical thinking'.²³ The value of the allegory as a Neoplatonist artform is its ability to reconstruct at a lower level the unity of a higher level.

These ideas are developed by Pseudo-Dionysius, a primary vector of Neoplatonism in both high and late medieval thought.²⁴ The synthesizing movement of allegory is akin to Pseudo-Dionysius' view of the enlightening of a soul: a soul is locked in a concentric unity, but, when ascending to a higher

22 For the Latin, see Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiani, *Commentarii in somnium Scipionis*, ed. by Jacobus Willis (Berlin: Teubner, 1963), p. 10. For the English, see Macrobius, *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio by Macrobius*, trans. and ed. by William Harris Stahl (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 90.

23 Peter T. Struck, "Allegory and Ascent in Neoplatonism," *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory*, ed. by Rita Copeland and Peter T. Struck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 59.

24 Jean Leclercq, "Influence and Noninfluence of Dionysius in the Western Middle Ages," *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, ed. by Paul Rorem (London: SPCK, 1987), pp. 25-32.

view of the One, the soul moves into a spiral pattern that allows it a wider unity.²⁵ The soul resonates within a limited representation of the metaphysical composition. Enlightenment widens the representative field of the soul so that it can contain a broader recognition of the metaphysical composition. Allegory, with its capacity to use limited representations to move a dreamer towards a wider understanding of the metaphysical composition, performs the function of enlightenment. Allegory can be a form of divine revelation.

Pearl's allegorical structure parallels Pseudo-Dionysius' understanding of divine revelation. In *Pearl*, the Jeweler moves from the erber to the dreamworld when 'Fro spot my spyryt þer sprang in space' (61). His soul is perceived as moving spatially from an earthly place to a place beyond knowledge where 'I ne wyste in þis worlde quere þat hit wace' (65). His soul's location is an unworldly state beyond his knowledge. Pseudo-Dionysius describes divine inspiration as an act where 'By itself [the Good] generously reveals a firm, transcendent beam, granting enlightenments proportionate to each being, and thereby draws sacred minds upward to its permitted contemplation, to participation and to the state of becoming like it'.²⁶ Through inimitable light, one sees through the earthly facade. One recognizes earthly shapes to be the shadows of higher forms. The Jeweler, upon arriving in the dreamworld, encounters a similarly bright scene of immaculate forms:

Towarde a foreste I bere þe face,
Where rych rokkez wer to dyscreuen.
þe lyzt of hem myzt no mon leuen,
þe glemande glory þat of hem glent,
Fer wern neuer webbez þat wyzez weuen
Of half so dere adubbenente. (67-72)

The realm the Jeweler sees is fantastic, far beyond the capacity of mankind to emulate. The forms

²⁵ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, ed. by Paul Rorem (London: SPCK, 1987), p. 78.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

present in this world are incredibly resplendent, echoing Pseudo-Dionysius' 'transcendent beam' of divine revelation. The landscape features that the Jeweler recognizes are comprised of precious material. The granite that might make a mountain glitters newly crystal (74). Trees are described as having boughs 'as blwe as ble of Ynde' and leaves 'As borynst syluer' (75-7). The Jeweler also takes the time to notice one key element of this dreamworld:

De grauayl þat on grounde con grynde
Wern precious perlez of oryente[.] (81-2)

Having lost his *orientales*, the Jeweler enters a dreamworld where the very ground he walks on is made of *orientales*. This detail is an important marker of how much closer to the divine light the Jeweler has traveled. In the erber, his pearl 'Oute of oryent' has no 'precios pere', but in the dreamworld he is confronted with a land overabundant with 'precious perlez of oryente'. What was once the epitome of perfection in the waking world becomes a mundane form in the dreamworld.

The Jeweler's pearl does not lose its value in the dreamworld, however, because the relative value of the pearl is maintained. In a dreamworld overflowing with *orientales*, the Jeweler's pearl becomes a queen of heaven (421-55). This queenly role is only allegorical, however. Firstly, imagery of Mary being crowned the queen of heaven flourished in wall paintings in fourteenth-century England.²⁷ The coronation of the Pearl Maiden as a queen of heaven clearly indicates her role as a Marian mediatrix. The Pearl Maiden's appearance signifies the role she will play for the Jeweler. Secondly, in occultist lapidaries popular in the fourteenth century, like the *Secreta secretorum* or Petrus Bonus' *Pretiosa margarita novella*, the pearl represents the divine perfection of the influence of Mercury, an earthly incarnation of 'the seamless eternity of nature, of purity and perfection, without end, or

²⁷ Miriam Gill, "Female Piety and impiety: selected images of women in wall paintings in England after 1300," *Gender and Holiness: Men, women, saints in late medieval Europe*, ed. by Samantha J.E. Riches and Sarah Salih (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 108.

beginning, the *uroboros* or the philosopher's stone.²⁸ The mystical pearl that manifests heavenly purity in earthly terms performs the mediatrix role in exactly the same way as does Mary in her role as the queen of heaven. Connective tissue between the pearl-mediatrix and the queen of heaven made the Pearl Maiden's status normative for the dual symbology of her allegorical identity: a pearl and a maiden put together into a Pearl Maiden as the queen of heaven. Thirdly, the Pearl Maiden's status is nonexclusive due to the nature of its attainment. As she explains to the Jeweler,

Pe Lambes vyuez in blysse we bene,
 A hondred and forty þowsande flot,
 As in þe Apocalyppez hit is sene:
 Sant John hem sy3 al in a knot. (785-8)

The Pearl Maiden refers to Revelation 7, in which John witnesses 144,000 servants of God sealed unto his grace, but the language here of 'vyuez' of the 'Lambes' reflects the mid-fourteenth-century Middle English translation of the Apocalypse of St John, in which a soul is dressed as the wife of Jesus in 'cloþ clere & white'.²⁹ This line echoes the repeated ascription of the Pearl as 'withouten spot' (12). The Pearl Maiden is a queen of heaven insofar as she represents the soul.

The Pearl Poet's interpretation of this passage in Revelation shares a certain mode of allegorizing the soul in marriage to Christ which contemporaneously enjoyed popularity in certain exegetical traditions. The marriage to Christ imagery blends with the Revelation 7 imagery in these lines:

In Hys blod He wesch my wede on dese,
 And coronde clene in vergynté[.] (766-7)

28 Jonathan Hughes, *The Rise of Alchemy in Fourteenth-century England: Plantagenet Kings and the Search for the Philosopher's Stone* (New York: Continuum, 2012), p. 43.

29 *An English Fourteenth Century Apocalypse Version With a Prose Commentary*, ed. by C.W.K. Gleerup (Copenhagen: Lund, 1961), p. 161.

The first line recapitulates Revelation 7:14's description of the blood-washed whiteness of the clothes, then the account shifts to the Pearl Maiden being crowned as virgin beside Jesus on the feudal dais. The Pearl Maiden's marriage to Christ is the union with God achieved by the purified soul. This crowning resubstantiates the Pearl Maiden's destiny of 'Me ches to Hys make' (759). The Pearl Maiden sits near Jesus, enthroned as if a queen consort, echoing the injunction in *Cleanness* not to sit exalted upon the feudal dais of heaven in unclean clothes, which also makes a spiritual point through the imagery of earthly power relations.³⁰ The interweaving of the Pearl Maiden's virgin marriage with exegetical ideas of the marriage of the soul to Christ hints at the true purpose of the imagery: to invite the Jeweler to emulate this relationship to Christ through the purification of his soul.

As with all of the Pearl Maiden's rhetoric, the earthly frame should be read for its spiritual import. Although 'make' can be a generic word for spouse, there is certain sense of the word that specifically symbolizes a spiritual marriage over a physical marriage, especially within the Marian tradition. In the fourteenth-century Marian lyric 'Maiden and moder, cum and se', Jesus clearly delineates the kind of marriage he wants to signify. First, he says 'Alone I am withoten make', but then later says 'Mannis soule, thou art my make'.³¹ This antanaclasis of 'make' emphasizes that spiritual marriage to Jesus is different from earthly marriage.

The Bride of Christ imagery of a feminine soul also exists within wider devotional traditions. An illustrative scheme from a twelfth-century manuscript of Honorius Augustudonensis's *Expositio in Canica Canticorum* that continued to be copied into the fifteenth century 'invited readers to visualize themselves in [the Bride of Christ] role and wed Christ by partaking of the sacramental liquid of his

30 *Cleanness*, ll. 33-8, p. 104.

31 'Maiden and moder, cum and se', *Middle English Marian Lyrics*, ed. by Karen Saupe, *TEAMS* <<https://d.lib.rochester.edu/teams/text/saupe-middle-english-marian-lyrics-mary-at-the-foot-of-the-cross#eighteen>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], ll. 17, 31.

blood', often effeminizing the visual signifiers of men in order to accord the scene to an allegorical schemata of the feminine soul presented to the masculine savior.³² The relationship between soul and savior was understood in clearly gendered terms, which made marriage imagery a natural metaphorical framing.

The Pearl Maiden's spiritual marriage serves as an archetype for the spiritual search for union with Christ. She embodies the allegorical transcendence of the dream vision. This embodiment capitalizes on the dream allegory form's discursive purpose. Noah D. Guynn notes how writers like Bernard Sylvester and Alain of Lille are drawn to the dream allegory as a way of providing 'readers with experiential and intuitional knowledge about the divine ordering of the universe and in so doing allow the mind to ascend from divine immanence toward divine transcendence, from the natural toward the supernatural'.³³ The Pearl Maiden adheres to this tradition: her speeches to the Jeweler consistently encourage him to read into the spiritual reality that underwrites the corporeal frame. For instance, when the Jeweler expresses astonishment at his inability to physically see Jerusalem, the Pearl Maiden explains that the spiritual Jerusalem 'nozt bot pes to glene' (913-60). She contrasts the physical Jerusalem as the old Jerusalem and the spiritual Jerusalem as the new Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem remains as the physical frame whose innate truth lies in the spiritual transcendence of its heavenly counterpart, and the attainment of the new Jerusalem at last supersedes its earthly shadow in the divine vision of the Pearl Maiden. The 'experiential and intuitional knowledge' Guynn describes lies in the way one uses the physical matter as the template for inductive meditation about the spiritual truth of the object in the divine order. Physical objects are limited constructs of mortal ontology, objects whose phenomenal essence adhere to the noematic contours of the observer. The Pearl Maiden's focus on transcendence emphasizes the hierarchical position of the physical by denoting how the Jeweler's

32 Rabia Gregory, *Marrying Jesus in Medieval and Early Modern Northern Europe: Popular Culture and Religious Reform* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), pp. 36-7.

33 Noah Guynn, *Allegory and Sexual Ethics in the High Middle Ages* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 17.

judgments coincide with his inability to perceive higher truths. The Jeweler misreads the physical signs as standing for themselves.

The tension between sign and signification forms the core of the debate between the Jeweler and the Pearl Maiden: the content they discuss appears as a disagreement moralized against the Jeweler by demonstrating the higher order perception of the Pearl Maiden. Annika Lagerholm considers how contemplative works like *Pearl* translate the corporeal into the spiritual:

The epistemological consequence of this ontological condition is not that the human mind fully comprehends or can adequately convey that transcendent dimension, but it can reach a clearer understanding of the spiritual in relation to the physical world. Moreover, by translating the corporeal into the spiritual humans can, to some extent, be drawn towards a 'higher' spiritual dimension.³⁴

The divine order extends from the immaterial into the material. The ontological status of the human mind precludes the possibility of purely abstracted recognition of the divine order, so contemplative writing seeks to circumvent this divide by tracing the divine order in its latent form within a physical frame. The sign fills with meaning to the extent it stands in for what cannot be represented at that level; the sign points to what is not there. Through her speeches the Pearl Maiden tries to draw the Jeweler to that higher spiritual dimension by getting him to follow through the physical sign into the immaterial signification. The Pearl Maiden chastises the Jeweler for his inability to recognize the essential emptiness of the sign:

I halde þat jueler lyttel to prayse
 Þat leuez wel þat he sez wyth y3e (302-3)

The Jeweler's reliance on sight evinces his inability to think outside of an earthly context. The context

³⁴ Annika Lagerholm, *Pearl and Contemplative Writing* (Lund: Department of English, Lund University, 2005), p. 27.

dilutes its content: the Jeweler misunderstands the Pearl Maiden's message by expecting a physical consequence to her allegorical content. The Jeweler perceives the Pearl Maiden's allegorical embodiment as a physical manifestation which he can retain, but the Pearl Maiden stresses the spiritual nature of her allegorical embodiment by assuring the Jeweler that she does not lie where 'hou may with y3en me se' (296).

This rebuke echoes tropes present in other thirteenth- and fourteenth-century mystical literature. Bonaventure writes in *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* about how each being in the material plane serves as 'signum causae et exemplatum exemplaris' [the sign of its cause, the exemplification of its exemplar].³⁵ The Pearl Maiden's transcendent viewpoint operates according to this same concept, in which the material serves as the cause that contains the incarnated agency of the causer along a divine chain of authority. There are themes here similar to Aristotle's *ἐντελέχεια* (*entelechia*), especially as rendered through Averroes, but there are some key differences in the contemplative transcendence that differ from Aristotelianism.³⁶ Most notably, the dynamic flow of meaning rolls backwards in the contemplative view: in medieval Aristotelianism, the caused iterates through motion the causer's intent in a process of actualization; whereas, in contemplative allegorical thinking, the caused serves as a sign that actualizes at a lower cosmic layer the higher order divine signification. Bonaventure's object exemplifies, rather than actualizes, a causal intention. The *Pearl* similarly reverses the Aristotelian motion to emphasize the transient subservience of form to the invisible divine. An additional consequence of this difference is the elision of the *species* in the material within the contemplative allegorical schema. Objects progressively blur into united masses the further the mind traces the divine order through increasingly immaterial referents.

35 See Quotation XIII. Bonaventure, *The Soul's Journey into God, Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God; The Tree of Life; The Life of St Francis*, trans. by Ewert Cousins (London: SPCK, 1978), p. 76.

36 Averroes, *On Aristotle's "Metaphysics": An Annotated Translation of the So-Called Epitome*, ed. and trans. by Rudiger Arnzen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), p. 133.

In many devotional views of this time, the divine experience creates this divine order in lower level consciousnesses through the echoing of the ultimate reality down the chain of forms. As a late fourteenth- or early fifteenth-century Middle English translation of a popular excerpt from *Dicta Anselmi* puts it, 'If life that is ymade and ordeyned be gode on hym silf, than ful mucche is he that first made life'.³⁷ What is good at one level must be exponentially greater at the level at which that good was created. What God creates exists in its entirety in the divine experience, and only diminished echoes of that absolute reality filters into the fallen mortal state. The act of contemplation enacts the repair for this severance, even if as an impartial and fleeting repair. Through contemplation, one takes the echoes of the divine experience that persist into the mortal world and recasts them through the cosmic order so as to consider how they might fill up the greater spiritual capacity at that higher level.

The Pearl Maiden's transcendent viewpoint collaborates with ideas found in mystic works of this period. The late fourteenth-century *The Cloud of Unknowing* describes at length how the spiritual nature of the divine order requires a ghostly understanding of the physical frame, since humanity is limited to contemplation within that frame.³⁸ Properly reading the frame formulates a widening perception of what the frame's constriction elides. The ontological status of the material involves the understanding, through one's senses, in an allegorical approach to theological contemplation. Elevation of perception occurs through contextualization of perception: rather than taking perception as 'what is', the contemplative view perceives 'what is implied by what is'. A second order of awareness inserts its layer of truth in the material as the allegorical truth of the material. The Pearl Maiden's didactic purpose attempts to get the Jeweler to recognize not her contingent physical appearance, but how her spiritual presence belies that appearance in the form of allegory. Anke Bernau considers how

37 *De quatuordecim partibus beatitudinis (The Fourteen Parts of Blessedness)*, ed. by Avril Henry and D.A. Trotter (Exeter: Short Run Press, 1994), p. 107.

38 *The Cloud of Unknowing, The Cloud of Unknowing and Other Works*, trans. by Clifton Wolters (London: Penguin, 1978), pp. 135-46.

for the Dreamer, the Maiden in this setting does not make sense. It is not so much her ontological purity that is at issue here as the epistemological and effective challenge she poses *for him*. His knowledge of her depends on a particular, familiar situatedness, which is not just locational (she is not in the garden in which he lost her), but also relational (their relationship to each other is also dependent on, and conditioned by, place).³⁹

Contextualization of the Pearl Maiden's presence requires the induction of where, how, and to what extent the Pearl Maiden is actually present. As Bernau argues, the contextual repositioning of the Pearl Maiden obfuscates the Jeweler's interpretation of the Pearl Maiden's appearance. His frustration stems from the precept of his question,

What wyrde hatȝ hyder my iuel vayned,
& don me in þys del & gret daunger? (249-50)

He wonders how his pearl got to this place. What moved her to this location? This focus on location suggests that the Jeweler does not really understand how the Pearl Maiden is actually appearing. Her appearance is a ghostly interjection in an elevated spiritual domain which serves to provide an internalized spectrality which allows for the allegorical consolation of questioner and guide to unfold. Bernau considers this misinterpreted appearance as an epistemological conundrum of relational perception.

What underlies the figuration Bernau outlines is the extent to which the epistemological confusion of the pearl's recontextualization extends from a problem of ontology. The recontextualization of the pearl is not a shifting of place but a resurfacing of the spiritual undercurrents which manipulate the material world. The dream vision does not actually take place in a place: the

³⁹ Anke Bernau, "Feeling Thinking: *Pearl's* Ekphrastic Imagination," *The Art of Vision: Ekphrasis in Medieval Literature and Culture*, ed. by Andrew James Johnston, Ethan Knapp, and Margitta Rouse (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2015), p. 116.

extent to which the dream vision is even interpreted as a place is the ontological problem the Jeweler faces. The physical signs of the dream vision melt down matter into divine intention, and the Jeweler's naive clinging to that matter means he cannot make sense of the message the Pearl Maiden conveys for him. The Jeweler's failure to recognize what the Pearl Maiden's appearance means results in the Jeweler repeating his loss of the pearl. The pearl has not been lost and then found, but rather the pearl remains lost materially, and the Jeweler, through the dream vision, subsequently loses the pearl again, allegorically. The loss happens twice, the first as an apparently contingent physical occurrence, and the second as a moralized spiritual failure on the part of the Jeweler. By not recognizing what his pearl is, the Jeweler is, in the allegorical sense, losing his pearl.

When the Jeweler loses the pearl at the start of the poem, the place where the pearl is lost grows spices:

Pat spot of spyseȝ myȝt nedeȝ sprede,
Per such rycheȝ to rot is runnen; (25-6)

The pearl's loss allows for spices to flourish in that place. The 'rycheȝ' that run 'to rot' fertilize the soil for the spices. Spices represented an important bulk of the ingredients in medieval remedies.⁴⁰ The roles of spices for cooking and spices for healing were not clearly delineated and neither were the jobs of the spicers and apothecaries which sold them. Healing ingredients grow out of the place where the Jeweler loses the pearl. The loss of the pearl creates the possibility for the healing of this loss. The spices symbolize the chance for the wound to be healed, and this chance occurs through the dream, as the Jeweler falls asleep in this spice grove (49-60). The place where the pearl went missing becomes the place where that sense of what is missing can be cured. The dream vision is a cure: it is a consolation

40 Paul Freedman, *Out of the East: Spices and the Medieval Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 60-2.

that seeks to recenter the Jeweler in a transcendent awareness of his predicament. *Pearl* plays with this consolation trope consciously by remarking that 'fortwne forth me fereȝ' through the dream vision (98). In the same way that Boethius had to reconcile his personal loss with the divine order in which he became subject to the cruel whims of Fortune, so too must the Jeweler reconcile the loss of his pearl with the divine order which supplied him his pearl. This mention of Fortune is not accidental: line 129 echoes the trope of how 'fortune fares þer as ho frayneȝ'. The nod to the consolation tradition is a literary conceit of the poem.

Thus, the point of the consolation is to reconcile the Jeweler with what the pearl's appearance means. The Jeweler needs to learn how to read the pearl to realize what the Pearl Maiden is saying. As such, the Pearl Maiden shifts the Jeweler's vision from the earthly to the spiritual. Her invitation for him to see the true Jerusalem provides a new kind of sight.

As Iohan þe apostel hit syȝ with syȝt
I syȝe þat cyty of gret renoun (985-6)

The Jeweler sees the city in the same way that the apostle John saw it in Revelation. He escapes his earlier misconceptions of the earthly domain by accepting the prophetic perception of the divine which the Pearl Maiden offers. By finally looking through material form into the contemplative lens of the dream vision, the Jeweler achieves the divine perception necessary to truly recognize the spiritual layer in which the New Jerusalem exists. This new perception uses sight as a mode of conveying concepts rather than perceiving tangible objects: the Jeweler sees what John sees as an allegorical transposition of the act of reading John's apocalypse. The outlay of the city accords to a three-and-variation repetition of 'In apocalyppeȝ þe apostel Iohan' (996). The Jeweler's heightened sight consistently regrounds itself in the act of reading. He is tracing, through his vision of New Jerusalem, the text of Revelation 21. The Jeweler is learning to devotionally read physical forms for the spiritual truths they

signify. Allegorical Jerusalem presents physical referents to signify spiritual conditions.

Unfortunately for the Jeweler, each lesson finds him demonstrating incomplete mastery of the concepts. He follows John's account of the twelve foundation jewels of the New Jerusalem, but with each one he simply notes their quality and shininess, failing to reflect on the intended allegorical significance of these jewels. The Pearl Poet wrote in the midst of a flourishing tradition of vernacular lapidaries as ideas extant in Anglo-Norman lapidaries were translated into Middle English lapidaries. The literary context in which *Pearl* was written creates a surprising irony in *Pearl's* handling of the stones of New Jerusalem. In an allegorical dream vision about a jewel, this subversion of allegorical expectations of the spiritual nature of jewels is quite noticeable. MS Eng. Misc. e. 558 contains a fifteenth-century Middle English version of the thirteenth-century Second Anglo-Norman Prose Lapidary.⁴¹ This lapidary lists all twelve jewels that the Jeweler witnesses in the New Jerusalem: several, like the topaz and the jasper, serve generic spiritual functions like chastity, but others present important moral lessons that the Jeweler simply misses.⁴² For instance, 'Whenne men beholde sapheers, they shulde haue here mynde to the hevenly regyne'.⁴³ Sight of the sapphire is supposed to invoke divine contemplation, but the Jeweler completely ignores the sapphire with the perfunctory note that 'Saffer helde þe secounde stale' (1002). He sees the sapphire only as a physical object devoid of its spiritual power. Similarly, the emerald is supposedly so beautiful that anyone who possesses one will be kept morally clean by regular contemplation of the soul.⁴⁴ Meanwhile, the Jeweler merely sees that the emerald is 'so grene' (1005). The Jeweler fixates on the physical appearance of these gems and thereby misses their spiritual subtexts. More pointedly, the beryl was renowned for its healing qualities:

41 *Anglo-Norman Lapidaries*, ed. by Paul Studer and Joan Evans (Geneva: Slatkine, 1976), p. 9.

42 *A Middle English Lapidary*, ed. by Arne Zettersten (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1968), pp. 25-6.

43 *Ibid*, p. 24.

44 *Ibid*, p. 25.

'The water þat these stonys haue leyyn in is medesynabyl for the eyen'.⁴⁵ The beryl, glimmering from across the river which separates the Jeweler from New Jerusalem, offers to cure the eye that can bathe in the waters it has graced. Just as the Pearl Maiden is trying, through this vision, to cure the Jeweler's sight by offering him a glimpse of contemplative transcendence, so too does the beryl provide the Jeweler with the opportunity to initiate the process of allegorical recognition. The allegorical weight of these jewels reinforces the Pearl Maiden's lessons, but once more the Jeweler falls short of the allegorical recognition of the intent latent in the material form. He does not contemplate the divine, even when presented with the New Jerusalem.

Recognizing how jewels can be devotionally read should be fundamental to the Jeweler's job, and therefore his own allegorical content. Jewelry was often commissioned *in memorandum* to commemorate a spiritual legacy. For example, the Founder's Jewel of New College, Oxford (c. 1400) commemorates William of Wykeham's devotion to Mary through the use of pearls, rubies, and emeralds inset in an M-shaped gold shank that contains the Annunciation scene.⁴⁶ The Pearl Maiden, as a pearl that stands for a Queen of Heaven, presents a not altogether dissimilar devotional configuration. Late fourteenth-century England was also experiencing a rise in the construction of chantries for nobles outside the royal family, and these chantries were filled with all kinds of precious objects, including jewelry, which served to house the dead in commemorative grandeur as a precursor to their ascension to New Jerusalem.⁴⁷ These chantries functioned through the allegorical recognition of how material goods served to substantiate on earth the spiritual dimension of those goods. The jewels therein produce their spiritual essence through their physical presence to create a devotional commemoration in a way a jeweler might be expected to recognize.

The Jeweler fails to understand what jewels signify. Revelation 21:21 records that the gates of

45 Ibid, p. 26.

46 Marian Campbell, *Medieval Jewellery in Europe 1100-1500* (London: V&A Publishing, 2009), p. 43.

47 Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), p. 134.

New Jerusalem are made with pearls.⁴⁸ The Pearl Maiden, who was set in gold prior to her allegorical elevation, incarnates a gate to heaven; the Jeweler needs only to recognize what he is seeing (2). The crux of the poem lies in the Jeweler's opportunity to perceive the transcendence of the pearl into the Pearl Maiden. This perception requires an understanding of what the pearl always already was in the form of a sign. The nature of pearls should provide some clue: Marbode of Rennes asserts that pearls are formed by oysters drinking the sun's light.⁴⁹ The intangible essence of the life-giving radiance sinks into the oyster to form a material object. Isidore of Seville provides a similar account of oysters drinking celestial dew to produce pearls.⁵⁰ The pearl is one of the most straightforward examples in the medieval imagination of the substantiation of the intangible. Lives of St Margaret testify to its easy rhetorical deployment: Osbern Bokenham, the Scottish Legendary, and the metrical life of St Margaret in MS. Cotton Cleopatra B. xiii all append extended and obvious comparisons of St Margaret with the *margaritas* pearl, as part of a family of prologues deploying the trope.⁵¹ St Margaret's virtues form an easy continuum with the pearl, because the pearl functions as the imagery of virtue. The pearl's spiritual power reflects its immaterial origins so thoroughly that this quality supersedes its naturalistic explanation. The pearl becomes personal imagery of those who are virtuous, as if the pearl was grown by drinking in their spiritual light.

The Jeweler's Problematically Material Masculinity

Pearls as objective remainders of spiritual immateriality turns this naturalistic explanation of the growth of pearls into its ready deployment as a metaphor for the soul. Substantiation of pearls is

48 Revelation 21:21 <<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/rev021.htm#021>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

49 Marbode of Rennes, *Poèmes de Marbode*, ed. and trans. by Sigismond Ropartz (Rennes: Védier, 1873), pp. 196-8.

50 Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. by Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), XII.vi.49, p. 262.

51 Juliana Dresvina, *A Maid with a Dragon: The Cult of St Margaret of Antioch in Medieval England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 58, 226, 238-40

internal: a single pearl is created inside each oyster that drinks in heavenly light (as Marbode insists). In this, the pearl's allegorical elevation into the Pearl Maiden parallels the feminized soul. The usual circumstance for jewelrymaking involves a client providing a jeweler with the jewels they wish to have fashioned into jewelry.⁵² As an allegorical construct, the Jeweler stands for someone whose jewel is socially guaranteed through the expectation of a superior. His occupation characterizes his ownership of the pearl through the social signification of allegorical occupation: he is not someone who simply owns a jewel, but he is a Jeweler, one who turns jewels into jewelry. The object of the exchange provides the form of the expected reciprocity: between the client and the jeweler lies the jewel.

Reciprocity certifies a continuity of perspective into recognition which the dream vision dramatizes. The Jeweler's dream marks the transition of his grief into the settling of reason.

A denely dele in my hert denned,
 Þaʒ resoun sette my seluen saʒt[e] (51-2)

The *consolatio* comforts the Jeweler through the way it grants him a theological perspective. Reason setting his self at peace connotes the contextualization of wisdom: reason becomes the setting, and in this new setting lies peace. Reason restitutes a theological guarantee of order and morality to the mortal experience of suffering. Boethius' Lady Philosophy and the Pearl Maiden occupy similar constructive positions within their narrative by representing the theological gap in the experience of suffering. Suffering overwhelms mundane considerations by occluding the truth of the divine order which preserves an absolute morality within a fallen world of sin and suffering. The transition between the viewpoint of the ignorant sufferer and the enlightened peace occurs through an allegorical transcendence mediated by a consolatory personification. The Jeweler experiences this approach to

⁵² Marguerite Keane, *Material Culture and Queenship in 14th-century France: The Testament of Blanche of Navarre (1331-1398)* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), p. 152.

allegorical femininity as movement within the ordination of divine direction:

Fro spot my spyryt þer sprang in space,
 My body on balke þer bod in sweuen,
 My goste is gon in godeȝ grace,
 In auenture þer meruayleȝ meuen; (61-4)

God's grace carries his spirit into the dream vision. His earthly position becomes transcribed upon allegorical place through the elevation of the mundane to the spiritual. This transcription locates the Jeweler in the allegorical place of his loss of the Pearl Maiden. The Jeweler's loss of the pearl serves as the earthly initiative of the allegorical loss of the Pearl Maiden's content, which is the transcendent awareness of divine order that performs the *consolatio*. The Jeweler loses the pearl as an allegory of the way in which he has lost the transcendent awareness of his moral position within a divine order because of his suffering. He loses his pearl by virtue of not understanding what his pearl truly is, and in response to the ensuing suffering his pearl appears to him allegorically to explain herself.

The Pearl Maiden offers him the reason necessary to understand his pearl and thereby regain what she represented. When the Jeweler seeks to maneuver across the river to regain the position of his pearl, she rebukes him.

Deme now þy-self, if þou con, dayly
 As man to god wordeȝ schulde heue.
 Þou saytȝ þou schal won in þis bayly;
 Me þynk þe burde fyrst aske leue, (313-6)

The Jeweler supersedes the moral position he should occupy within the divine intention being revealed to him through the Pearl Maiden's reason. He oversteps his bounds and climbs too far up the hierarchical chain of the divine order. His ignorant possession of the pearl offends the divine authority which gives him the pearl as a mark of the accordance of the chain of being with the will of God. The

Pearl Maiden occupies a proprietary space between the Jeweler and his God: she is the encounter which contextualizes the Jeweler within the hierarchical chain. She is the 'resoun' that 'sette[s]' the Jeweler's 'goste' in 'godeȝ grace' which gives 'saȝt[e]'. She unites the mundane with its supernatural ordination.

That Reason performs femininity through the Pearl Maiden at this mediatory position between a male God and his male subject accords with other allegorical representations of Reason. In *Piers Plowman*, for instance, Reason is one of the names that Anima gives for himself.⁵³ This pairing of soul and wisdom occurs in an undetermined oscillation between the immortal and mortal modes: Anima is God's notary, who bears out the will of a higher authority to his earthly subjects, but he is also the sense that people speak, who bears out the perceptive understanding of Christians seeking out the will of their God. Anima moves in both directions along the hierarchical chain. It is worth noting that Anima gives both masculine and feminine names for himself, and that in Passus B.IX Anima appears as the female lover of Kynde.⁵⁴ Although Anima presents himself as male in this passage, it is an androgynous presentation which alternates through male and female gendered Latin terms, and one which, in the larger context of the entire poem, retains female connotations. Anima's many names demonstrates Anima's fluid identity within Langland's equivocal poetics.

The indeterminative multiplicity of Anima hearkens itself to a longer allegorical tradition in which sense and reason codetermine the source of awareness in a way that is gendered, such as in Remigius of Auxerre's tenth-century commentary on Boethius which investigates the relationship between Orpheus and Eurydice.⁵⁵ Anima functions in a mode which involves femininity in such a way as to invoke implicit commentary on the nature of the masculine. Reason occupies an androgynous zone in *Piers Plowman's* allegorical framework which unites a divine intention with a mortal

53 William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-Text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt (London: J.M. Dent, 1995), EETS 17, ln. B.XV.28, p. 568.

54 Ibid, ll. B.IX.5-16, p. 370.

55 Jane Beal, *The Signifying Power of Pearl: Medieval Literary and Cultural Contexts for the Transformation of Genre* (Routledge: New York, 2017), p. 52.

perception. With respect to Anima, this androgyny is not considered negatively, although the feminine Meed does receive some ire for her mediatory mode.

Gendering of reason turns towards moralized misogyny in a particularly strange passage of the *Ancrese Wisse*. The author exhorts the anchoresses to protect themselves against the devil through a reference to the 2 Samuel 4 story of Ish-bosheth. The author follows Gregory the Great's *Moralia in Job* in adding to the story a rhetorical contrivance of the gender of Ish-bosheth's spiritual alertness, despite the Biblical text mentioning nothing of the kind.⁵⁶

Ah, þe bimeasede Ysboſet, lo hu measeliche he dude: sette a wummon to ȝeteward, þet is, feble warde. Weila! As feole doð þus! Wummon is þe reisun, þet is, wittes skile, hwen hit unſtrenged þe schulde beo monlich, ſtealwurðe, ant kene in treowe bileaue.⁵⁷

This moral is capped by the statement that any unwatchfulness is womanly, regardless of whether it is a man or woman that is being unwatchful.⁵⁸ Woman is the Reason which falls short of what should be manly. The *Ancrene Wisse* regularly insists that bodily experiences are, by their very nature, womanly: women become othered as the space of corporeality.⁵⁹ Ish-bosheth succumbed to bodily temptation and weakness, which meant that he could not break out of a feminine space into a space of proper masculinity. The stabbing of Ish-bosheth's groin signifies the problematic femininity he had already internalized by sleeping in the presence of his enemies. His incomplete masculinity violently marks his body as less male in the author's perception through a genital wound.

Contrary to *Ancrese Wisse*, however, the *Pearl* does not seem to perceive the Pearl Maiden's femininity as negative. The *Pearl's* moral critique focuses on the Jeweler as opposed to the Pearl

⁵⁶ 2 Samuel 4:5-8, Bible, Vulgate, *Sacred Texts* <<https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/vul/sa2004.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020]

⁵⁷ *Ancrene Wisse: A Corrected Edition of the Text in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402, With Variants from Other Manuscripts, Volume I*, ed. by Bella Millet (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), EETS 325 p. 103.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

⁵⁹ Victoria Blud, *The Unspeakable, Gender and Sexuality in Medieval Literature: 1000-1400* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2017), p. 54.

Maiden: the Pearl Maiden appears as a good mediatory mode which offers a genuine opportunity for the Jeweler to recognize his proper moral position within the divine order. Part of why this proper mediatory femininity occurs perhaps lies in its adherence to commentary traditions of the Song of Songs.

The *Pearl* does quote the Song of Songs when the Jeweler refers to the Pearl Maiden as a 'special spyce'.⁶⁰ The Jeweler quoting the Song of Songs to refer to the Pearl Maiden creates resonances of the Pearl Maiden partially representing his soul, as this was the dominant interpretation of the book present in many medieval commentaries on it. In this view, the soul was spiritually feminine, but in an abstract gender that de-emphasized the bodily nature of mundane gender. Hugh of St Victor calls the soul the bride of God because by 'the in-breathing of the Holy Spirit she brings forth the offspring of the virtues'.⁶¹ The Holy Spirit instills in the soul virtues, the offspring of which she brings forth through faithful devotion in a figuration that relies on medieval traditions of sexed reproductive gender. The soul serves the purpose of the sexed feminine in the spiritual patriarchal gendering within the religious context. This abstract femininity occurs in a way that both eschews the bodily but also speaks to the perceived truth of gender as presented by the body.

In medieval commentary traditions, the Song of Songs was thoroughly desexualized. In a comment later compiled into the *Glossa ordinaria*, Bede remarks that Solomon 'speaks of the 'breasts' of the bridegroom, a female term, so that from the very beginning of this song he may reveal himself to be speaking figuratively'.⁶² Assurances of this kind were not atypical, in part because the *Glossa ordinaria* standardized older patristic exegesis to facilitate the more inventive scholastic exegesis of

60 Jane Beal, "The Pearl Maiden's Two Lovers," *Studies in Philology* 100.1 (Win., 2003), p. 6. The quote occurs on line 938.

61 Hugh of St Victor, *The Song of Songs Interpreted by Early Christian and Medieval Commentators*, trans. and ed. by Richard A. Norris Jr. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), p. 168.

62 *The Glossa Ordinaria on the Song of Songs*, trans. by Mary Dove (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), p. 8.

writers like Abelard and Hugh of St Victor.⁶³ Both Alain de Lille and Thomas of Perseigne take the beloved's desire for kisses in Song of Songs 1:2 to refer to a complicated devotional matrix of the various spiritual levels of kisses.⁶⁴ Alain, in particular, chooses to use this verse as an example of the way in which the beloved's portrayal praises Mary. Her acceptance of the divine kiss of God in the annunciation signifies the way in which she, much like the soul, bears the offspring of divine virtue. Alain goes further along this path by glossing Song of Songs 1:8 as an image of Mary breastfeeding the infant Christ with 'milk drawn not by the foulness of lust, but from the rich store of virginity'.⁶⁵ Christ feeds upon the virginal antidote of the milk of Mary to protect himself against the thirsts of the flesh. Mary breastfeeds Christ virtue, transmitting through her virginal purity divine virtue. Christ's dual role as God and man intersect in Mary's breastmilk. The Holy Spirit instills in Mary the virtues which Christ, as man, sucks through Mary's breastmilk. The incarnated divine receives divinity through the bodily in Mary's breastmilk: her virginal purity translates divinity into the mortal body. One of the major themes these commentaries keep stressing through their deeroticized rendition of Song of Songs is the continuity between a spiritual receptivity to divine virtue and a bride beloved by a bridegroom. The feminine supersedes the female but in such a way that the female is not truly lost. Gender contributes to the characterization of movement between the mundane and the spiritual by threading commonalities through the loci of their purpose within divine order. The soul is feminine by virtue of its role within the divine order as the responsive partner of a masculine divine.

The medieval view of theological gender creates these elevated femininities at a point not divorced from the sexed body but rather continuous with it. Gregory the Great emphasizes an 'interior meaning in these bodily, exterior words', in which the soul must come to the marriage-feast dressed in

63 M.T. Gibson, "The Place of the *Glossa ordinaria* in Medieval Exegesis," *Ad litteram: Authoritative Texts and Their Medieval Readers*, ed. by Mark D Jordan and Kent Emery, Jr. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), p. 21.

64 Denys Turner, *Eros and Allegory: Medieval Exegesis of the Song of Songs* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995), pp. 295-6, 312.

65 *Ibid.*, pp. 295-6.

the wedding gown of charity.⁶⁶ The outside gendered marks of spiritual sexuality allegorically indicate an internal condition. The body is marked by the self that determines its appearance. Gregory's imagery of wedding gowns recalls Origen's supposition that the soul seeks the body as a garment suitable to its nature.⁶⁷ The soul-bride dresses in the wedding gown in spiritual reciprocity with the nature of the mundane within the divine order. Gregory stresses that this paradigm requires both levels of recognition to properly function in the allegorical way he supposes the Song of Songs intends. The words are 'bodily, exterior' to the extent that they represent an outer representation of an innate and pervasive truth that permeates all representation. The womanhood of the beloved is both desexed and emphasized: she kisses, she embraces, she feeds from her breast, all as spiritual signifiers of the feminine soul's duty to its bridegroom savior. However, these elements of representation have to coexist in order to be valid. The words must be read for the meaning within them, and the meaning folds into words due to their need for intelligible expressions. Without their proper meaning, the words can be read only in the manner of an illustration seen for its color and not its shapes, pure sensations without a form. The soul's femininity rhetorically shifts through representations of womanhood in order to signify through the female body the feminine role of the bride of Christ. Theological contemplation assumes gender as a mechanism of allegorical unity within the divine order.

The Song of Songs becomes so involved in an allegorical dream vision loosely respondent to the consolation tradition precisely because it provides the Biblical basis for the kind of elevated gendering required by the consolation tradition. The Pearl Maiden's arguments to the Jeweler stress simultaneously the elevation of thought with the submission of the self to Christ. These dual modes trend the *Pearl* beyond the stricter Boethian tradition by stressing conformation to the submissive role of the soul as the method of contemplative transcendence.

66 Ibid, p. 218.

67 Dermot Moran, "Neoplatonism and Christianity in the West," *The Routledge Handbook of Neoplatonism*, ed. by Pauliina Remes and Svetla Slaveva-Griffin (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 511.

þe oʒte better þy seluen blesse,
 & loue ay god & wele & wo,
 For anger gayneʒ þe not a cresse.
 Who nedeʒ schal þole be not so þro;
 For þoʒ þou daunce as any do
 Braundysch & bray þy brapeʒ breme,
 When þou no fyrre may, to ne fro,
 Pou moste abyde þat he schal deme. (341-8)

The Pearl Maiden, as a soul-bride of Christ, offers the consoling possibility that the Jeweler could adopt her relationship to the divine order. The Pearl Maiden tries to get the Jeweler to offer his soul to Christ in the medieval glossing of Song of Songs framework of *sponsa* and *sponsus*. The Jeweler's failure to understand that the Pearl Maiden is inviting him to conform to her role rather than inviting him to possess her recapitulates the allegorical truth behind the love poetry of the glossed Song of Songs. His mundane perspective misinterprets the allegorical love poetry of Song of Songs as the secular love poetry of courtly love. The intersection of the allegorical and secular love poetry of Song of Songs, especially in its relation to Mary as a feminine mediatrix, resonated beyond the *Pearl* into fifteenth-century works like Walter Frye's *Ave regina caelorum* which 'praises the Queen of Heaven with the affect of courtly love'.⁶⁸ *Pearl* marks a confluence of theological tropes that were by no means alien to wider (and later) medieval uses of those tropes.

The Jeweler's secularization of the Pearl Maiden's message relies on his continual externalization of the Pearl Maiden as a woman without properly analyzing the spiritual femininity she exhibits as an internality he could adopt. An example of this occurs when the Pearl Maiden tells the Jeweler,

68 David J. Rothenberg, *The Flower of Paradise: Marian Devotion and Secular Song in Medieval and Renaissance Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 126-7.

For þat þou leste3 wat3 bot a rose,
 Þat flowred & fayled as kynde hyt gef;
 Now þur3 kynde of þe kyste þat hyt con close,
 To a perle of prys hit is put in pref; (269-72)

Here she quotes Matthew 13:45-6, which perhaps serves as the inspiration for the poem. The merchant of the parable sells everything to achieve the pearl of great price, by which Jesus presages his own crucifixion as the result of God's loving desire for the mortal soul. The Pearl Maiden contrasts the rose, the secular love object of the Jeweler, with the pearl of his soul which can attain God's love. The loss of the former is meaningless compared to the consequence of the latter. In this dreamstate, the Jeweler has an opportunity to recontextualize the loss of his meaningless pearl, typified here as a rose, for the chance to find sanctity in a more meaningful pearl, his soul as the bride of Christ.

Rather than recognizing his own role within the figuration that the Pearl Maiden offers him, the Jeweler instead misinterprets the Pearl Maiden as describing her own situation. He thinks that she is consoling his loss by pointing out that she is actually living in a state of immense bliss as the bride of Christ. The Jeweler misconstrues the Pearl Maiden's didactic message as a descriptive reference to her own spiritual destiny. This Jeweler exemplifies this misunderstanding when he later comments on her status as a bride of Christ through the language of a rose.

my perle þa3 I appose,
 I schulde not tempte þy wyt so wlonc,
 To kryste3 chambre þat art Ichose,
 I am bot mokke & mul among,
 & þou so ryche a reken rose,
 & byde3 here by þys blyful bonc
 Þer lyue3 lyste may neuer lose, (902-8)

Because the Pearl Maiden is the rose of one greater than him, the Jeweler consigns himself to his loss as one which gives him a kind of wistful happiness. Similar to how the Lover escapes the Narcissus

problem by subordinating his love object to the domain of a masculine lord, the Jeweler must recognize the appearance of his love object as an encounter with his lord. He zooms in on the external imagery of the love poetry in which the Pearl Maiden participates, and in so doing he fails to recognize the poetic framework's allegorical invitation for his own participation in this paradigm. This failure of recognition informs the constant tension in the conversation between the Jeweler and the Pearl Maiden and eventually results in its unsatisfactory conclusion. He is unwilling to submit his soul to the feminine role of the bride of Christ, instead asserting a masculine desire to possess, which offends the hierarchical masculine primacy of Christ and prematurely ends the dream vision's consolation in failure.⁶⁹

The Jeweler's failure to achieve this consolation supplies a wider intention of the poem in its attempt to comment on the nature of theological contemplation. The Jeweler himself is allegorical, and so his allegorical flaws invite speculation about the moral commentary he provides on the spiritual lives of those who might see themselves in the Jeweler. As Piotr Spyra argues,

Reality, for [the Pearl Poet], is structured by the existence of an epistemological rift, which renders all attempts to arrive at a holistic understanding of the world futile. Just like fourteenth-century theology, which alongside the promises of neo-Aristotelian logical inquiry stressed the complimentary need for revelation, the Pearl-Poet makes it clear that the way mortals perceive reality through their senses or their intellect is inherently flawed and lacking in depth.⁷⁰

An important element of what the allegorical content of the Jeweler signifies lies within a confrontation with the ontic liminality of devotional contemplation. The Jeweler's failure to perceive the Pearl Maiden's message comments on the ontic opacity of the materiality of spiritual experience. Even in the elevated dreamstate of the *Pearl*, the Jeweler's experience condemns the material viewpoint he

69 María Bullón-Fernández, "By3onde þe Water": Courtly and Religious Desire in "Pearl'", *Studies in Philology* 91.1 (Win., 1994), pp. 45-8.

70 Piotr Spyra, *The Epistemological Perspective of the Pearl-Poet* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 87.

represents as fundamentally incapable of an ontological reckoning with the true nature of mundane existence. His flaw lies not only in his consistent reinscription of the allegorical with the literal, but also with the way he needs the material to represent the spiritual, when the true acknowledgment of the nature of the material provides in itself an encounter with the spiritual signification it provides through the essence of its representation.

The significance of the essence of representation was an important theological debate all throughout the medieval period. One of the best ways to understand medieval conceptions of the nature of the embodied signifier is to examine views on the sacrament of marriage, which the Song of Songs commentaries and *Pearl* contemplate. Alexander of Hales differentiated marriage from other sacraments by suggesting that it did not confer grace *ex opere operato* as a spiritual form of dispensation prescribed by the New Law but rather signified the union of mankind and Christ in the symbolic intention of the Old Law.⁷¹ Marriage is not a necessary component of spiritual life, because it merely symbolizes the cause of grace, rather than directly causing the dispensation of grace. Alexander opposes this to other sacraments which directly compose the formulation of grace through their embodiment of the *mysterion*.

Thomas Aquinas somewhat disagrees. The objections to Question IIIs.42 use the language of Alexander of Hales to which Aquinas replies that marriage, though not necessary, does dispense grace through the remedy of sin.⁷² This notion of remedying sin is earlier used as the unifying theme of all sacraments.⁷³ Elsewhere, Aquinas affirms the importance of all sacraments as corporeal signs of salvation.⁷⁴ To call these points a refutation of Alexander is somewhat unfair, although they may

71 Kilian F. Lynch, "The Theory of Alexander of Hales on the Efficacy of the Sacrament of Marriage," *Franciscan Studies* 11.3 (Sep., 1951), p. 79.

72 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, New Advent <<http://www.newadvent.org/summa/5042.htm>>. [Accessed 22 December 2020], IIIs.42.1.

73 Ibid, III.65.1.

74 Ibid, III.61.1.

certainly have been considered such a refutation by some scholastics and their readers. It is perhaps more proper to consider Aquinas and Alexander to be highlighting opposite ends of a tension that Augustine best encapsulates in his *De bono coniugali*.

All these things which make a marriage good – offspring, fidelity, sacrament – are goods. But in our day it is certainly better and holier not to aspire to offspring in the flesh, and in forgoing them to become spiritually subject to Christ as sole husband – provided, however, that individuals exploit that freedom to ponder, in scripture's words, 'the things of the Lord, how to please God', which means pondering constantly that obedience should not take second place to continence.⁷⁵

The sacramental nature of marriage supposes a good that is in response to an implicit weakness. This weakness is not inherently a moral failing but rather a mortal consideration. Virginity surpasses marriage to the extent it emphasizes the spiritual nature of unions which consecrate the signification of marriage. Virginity allows one to subject themselves to Christ as sole husband, precisely the possibility that the Jeweler could not comprehend. The Jeweler's failure to perceive this latent possibility within the signification of marriage iterates on this marriage debate by demonstrating the fundamental epistemological limits between the mortal and immortal, providing a bridge between the viewpoints of Aquinas and Alexander.

Worldly components of marriage should convey the betrothed's mind towards the impending heavenly marriage of their soul to Christ. Clare of Assisi compares the contemplation of heavenly light as a mirror in which one prepares themselves for their marriage to Christ.⁷⁶ The terms she uses for this image align with physical preparation for a marriage: putting on beautiful robes, wearing a garland. Staring into a mirror for a beautification process, a typical misogynist trope for the vice of vanity, twists into a metaphor for the adoption of virtues in godly devotion. Clare repurposes a standard

⁷⁵ See Quotation XXVI. Augustine, *De bono coniugali, De Sancta virginitate*, ed. and trans. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 59.

⁷⁶ Clare of Assisi, "The Fourth Letter to Blessed Agnes," *Francis and Clare: The Complete Works*, trans. by Regis J. Armstrong and Ignatius C. Brady (London: SPCK, 1982), p. 204.

feminine trope as a deep, spiritual capacity. Heavenly marriage elevates feminine tropes of worldly vice to a new set of gendered terms that represent virtues.

The materiality of the Pearl Maiden's terms serve only to signify the spiritual truth they momentarily embody in the form of a fluid allegory. The terms are always considered as incomplete notions of their generative forms: the marriage to Christ articulates the proper affective relationship between a sinner and their God. The intention of the dreamworld is to draw the Jeweler out of his ignorance, so that he may authentically adopt that relationship to God. The dreamworld stages the spiritual synthesis the dream offers. Ann R. Meyer argues,

The soul's recognition of its likeness to the image is a recognition of form. The thing outside the soul, the image in nature, participates in the higher reality through form just like the soul does; as a result, the soul "knows" it. In other words, the soul recognizes as its own possession the thing that the image imitates. This recognition incites the soul to return to itself; it is a movement of remembrance, a re-identification of itself with Intellect and a recollection of its own beauty.⁷⁷

The beautiful nature of the dreamworld is an encounter with the soul's own beautiful nature. The opportunity that that encounter affords the ability to redress a grievance through an enlightened awareness of one's condition.⁷⁸ The Pearl Maiden's interlocution with the Jeweler serves to provide him with the ability to transcend his grief at the loss of his pearl to a higher spiritual peace. Peace is, of course, one of the divine names elucidated by Pseudo-Dionysius.⁷⁹

The Jeweler fails this opportunity, at least in the poetic narrative.⁸⁰ The Pearl Maiden's discourses are routinely misunderstood by the Jeweler. She characterizes the poem's introduction, reiterated by the Jeweler in his first address to the Pearl Maiden, as a 'tale mystente' (257). His

⁷⁷ Ann R. Meyer, *Medieval Allegory and the Building of the New Jerusalem* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), p. 39.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of this allegorical use in Boethius and Prudentius and the way in which it is gendered, see Masha Raskolnikov, *Body Against Soul: Gender and Sowlehele in Middle English Allegory* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2009), pp. 31-46.

⁷⁹ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, pp. 121-3.

⁸⁰ The poem's retrospective tone provides the possibility of an enlightened narrator discussing his earlier ignorance.

representation of his own narrative is flawed. The fate of his pearl which had 'þrych my hert þrange' and made his 'breste in bale bot bolne and bele' (17-8) is counteracted by the Pearl Maiden's assertion that her fate is one in which 'Per mys nee mornynge com neuer nere' (262). The Jeweler misinterprets the space to which he has lost his pearl. He loses her in an 'erbere' (9) and laments what 'moul' (23) will do to his pearl. His perspective is an earthly one: his pearl has gone 'into gresse' (245). The Pearl Maiden, who has a heavenly perspective, sees past this earthly location to recognize her true locality:

in þis garden gracios gaye,
Hereinne to lenge for euer and play. (260-1)

What the Jeweler mistakenly believes is the earth is really the shadow of the heaven sourcing it. The Jeweler refuses to perform the spiral movement of the inspired soul, to see through the forms which delude him and recognize their shining source. Even when confronted with the Pearl Maiden's transcendental locality, the Jeweler obstinately reifies it into earthly forms:

I trawed my pele don out of dawe;
Now haf I fonde hyt, I schal ma feste,
And wony with hyt in schyr wod-schawe[.] (282-4)

The Jeweler mistakes the heavenly garden for a forest where he wants to dwell for the remainder of his days. The Pearl Maiden frustratedly responds:

Þou says þou trawez me in þis dene
Bycawse þou may with y3en me se[.] (295-6)

The place the Jeweler sees with his eyes is not the place where the Pearl Maiden spiritually dwells. The Jeweler takes the dream literally, but the dream is an allegory. He does not transcend from the given

presentation to the presenting Nous. He cannot conceive that the garden is not the garden but rather what the garden means. By failing to realize the allegory of the dream, the Jeweler presents himself as fundamentally unready for divine revelation.

Pseudo-Dionysius explicates this process of divine revelation:

What happens to those that rightly and properly make this effort is this. They do not venture toward an impossibly daring sight of God, one beyond what is duly granted them. Nor do they go tumbling downward where their own natural inclinations would take them. No. Instead they are raised firmly and unswervingly upward in the direction of the ray which enlightens them, they take flight, reverently, wisely, in all holiness.⁸¹

As a result of his failure, the Jeweler experiences this process in reverse. He follows his own natural inclinations and tries to cross the impossible river, but instead he is 'outfleme' of 'pat fayre regioun' (1177-8). The Jeweler tries to supersede the vision by undermining its message. He seeks to attain a false, earthly remnant of the true, spiritual principle.

Most importantly, however, the Jeweler acts in a way that 'watz not at my Pryncez paye' (1164). His act is an imposition that transgresses against his place in the spiritual hierarchy. Pseudo-Dionysius writes,

Hierarchy causes its members to be images of God in all respects, to be clear and spotless mirrors reflecting the glow of primordial light and indeed of God himself. It ensures that when its members have received this full and divine splendor they can then pass on this light generously and in accordance with God's will to beings further down the scale.⁸²

The pearl, 'withouten spot', performs its place in the hierarchy correctly by trying to pass on God's light

81 Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, p. 50.

82 *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem, ed. by Paul Rorem (London: SPCK, 1987), p. 154.

to a lower being (12). The Pearl Maiden inculcates the material imagery sensible to the Jeweler with the spiritual sense from which her imagery derives. Her oracular specularity is a feminine transmission of maleness down a hierarchical chain. Proclus, of whom Psuedo-Dionysius was a student, argues in his commentary on the *Timaeus* that mundane souls participate in the supermundane within the intellectual capacities of bodies.⁸³ The body is a redundant derivation of the simplicity of the supermundane: the material is the multiply determinative movement away from the simplicity of the monad through the assumption of intellections in material.

One way of understanding how medieval theology incorporated this concept is to consider views on the transubstantiation of the eucharist. During the medieval period, mass developed into an abstract ceremony with rituals only the clergy understood.⁸⁴ This ceremony isolated the clergy from the audience at the exact moment of the transubstantiation. This isolation underwrote the way in which ecclesiastical intellect rendered the spiritual into the mundane by concomitant reference, as Miri Rubin writes:

One of the consequences of the enhancement of eucharistic significance was that it became more clearly the preserve of the clergy, which protected and officiated it, and that consequently some of its aspects were withdrawn. Throughout the twelfth century the chalice was removed from lay communion. This was facilitated by the currency of the notion of concomitance, an Aristotelian term introduced through the works of Avicenna: concomitance was a link between a reality and something which is outside its essence, but inseparable from it.⁸⁵

Isolation of the clergy in the eucharist ceremony develops in part from how the clergy saw themselves mediating the concomitant link between a material substance and the essential substantiation of the divine. Although concomitance in its Avicennan rendition diverges somewhat from Proclus' argument

83 Proclus, *Commentary on the Timaeus of Plato*, vol. 2, trans. by Thomas Taylor (Frome: Prometheus Trust, 1998), pp. 570-1.

84 Thomas M. Izbicki, *The Eucharist in Medieval Canon Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 103.

85 Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 71.

in this specific case, the Proclean view considers this eucharistic link as the moment the material assumes the absolute truth of its immateriality. The corporeal contains the spiritual as its cause and concatenates its content in intellectual moments of transubstantive absolution of motion. John Scottus Eriugena, though occasionally radical to the point of heterodoxy, serves as an example of this Neoplatonist tradition which parallels eucharistic symbology.⁸⁶

What this demonstrates is the assumptive immateriality latent in the material. The Jeweler's failure to conform to the spiritual femininity of the devotional soul modeled for him by the Pearl Maiden does not fundamentally derive from his inscription of the immaterial in the material but rather from his attempt to assume in his material a different essential immateriality. In an illustration of the Cotton Nero A.x manuscript accompanying *Pearl*, the Jeweler reaches out to the Pearl Maiden, who makes a more defensive gesture.⁸⁷ They are separated by the river. The river, in this case, divides the immaterial Pearl Maiden and the material Jeweler. His reaching gesture connotes his attempts in the poem to repossess the Pearl Maiden. He wants to fill his materiality with her immateriality. He wants to guarantee his form with her spiritual value, but her rebuffing of his desire emphasizes his need to seek his own immateriality. He should not reach across the river but rather realize his own form's essence beyond the river. The Jeweler can regain his pearl without a spot, not by reaching for it, but rather by realizing his own material determination by the spiritual pearl of great price. In so doing, the Jeweler needs to come to terms with his spiritual femininity.

86 Dermot Moran, *The Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena: A Study of Idealism in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 97-8.

87 London, British Library, Cotton Nero A.x, f. 42r.

<http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Cotton_MS_Nero_A_X/2>. [Accessed 22 December 2020].

Conclusion

At the end of the *Roman de la rose*, when the Lover is finally free to pluck the Rose, he first takes the opportunity to 'demonstrate my loyalty towards all my benefactors, as a good debtor should,' since he has 'been raised so high.'¹ When the Lover finally encounters his beloved, he first celebrates the successful projection of his ego into a masculine hierarchy, then he takes the time to consider his debts (or lack thereof) to all the personified figures in whose domains his quest had been entangled. Only after these recognitions does the Lover pluck the Rose, an act which instantly dissolves the dreamworld. After all this struggle for the Rose, the Rose hardly seems to matter. What does seem to matter are all the allegorical figures who stood between the Rose and the Lover. The Lover's success is rendered in the terms of a hierarchical instantiation of identity. The Lover's search for his beloved matters, not because of any innate quality of the archetypal woman-object, but because his possession of his beloved makes him a successful Lover.

This thesis has sought to understand the complex dynamics involved in the kind of feminine figure that mediates a masculine quest for identity. This figure, the mediatrix, is not a static trope, but an active operant determined by a work's poetic ethos. All four texts studied, as well as the many other allegorical works referenced in the course of this thesis, have all used the mediatrix (or the anti-mediatrix) in different ways. The purpose of this study was not to determine a specific function of the mediatrix, as that depends upon the work, but rather to understand the polyvalent, ever-shifting allegorical gender dynamics which made the mediatrix such a crucial poetic conceit in fourteenth-century English dream allegories. Why do women keep appearing in (and) between these men?

I have argued for a vision of the mediatrix as a femininity that bends the usual gender binary of a patriarchal system. The nature of the mediatrix is to appear at a point of intersection; thus, the

¹ Jean de Meun, *Roman de la rose*, trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 335.

mediatrix appears at the place where masculinity fails, falling into an interior space governed by a higher masculinity. This lower-order masculinity experiences femininity as the alterity of their condition within negation. This masculine experience of femininity, rather than nullifying the masculinity of the narrative agency, instead becomes a profound experience of masculinity, because it is precisely at this point that masculinity is felt, for these medieval writers, as gender. Through the mediatrix, masculinity is developed, rather than merely assigned and assumed. Femininity, because of its relegation in the patriarchal system to a position of otherness, becomes a useful method for articulating an identity within the experience of a self displaced by gender into otherness. When Simone de Beauvoir insisted 'On ne naît pas femme: on le devient', she described how an identity experiences its becoming into a gendered being. The mediatrix and the anti-mediatrix dwell in this displacement: the mediatrix subducts masculine identities into a hierarchical unity, whereas the anti-mediatrix rifts masculine identities and leaves an unreconciled abyss in which feminine agency disrupts the patriarchal chain of identity.

In a patriarchal system, femininity is a suppression into the phantasmal space that underpins a chain of masculine authority, wherein masculinity projects its own contingent, constructed content into an othered gender. The precarity of identity is elided through a reference to a constructed opposition which embodies the delicate projections of phenomenological experience involved in gender construction. Jacqueline Rose articulates how patriarchy uses this phantasmal space to create gender:

As negative to the man, woman becomes a total object of fantasy (or an object of total fantasy), elevated into the place of the Other and made to stand for its truth. Since the place of the Other is also the place of God, this is the ultimate form of mystification ... The *object a*, cause of desire and support of male fantasy, gets transposed onto the image of the woman as Other who then acts as its guarantee. The absolute 'Otherness' of the woman, therefore, serves to secure for

the man his own self-knowledge and truth.²

This study in medieval gender augments Rose's argument by demonstrating how patriarchal masculinity constructs identity through an internalized Other. Feminine Otherness is no longer absolute but conditional and incomplete according to contingencies of patriarchal failure. The position of the woman in this system is not necessarily truth: rather, the woman embodies the receding spectrality of truth. This is the function of allegorical gender: the embodiment of the position which refers to the layer of meaning which that position obscures. The lie of 'truth which a self can know' is already given in a dream allegory's anterior presentation of ghostly identities. The otherness of women is allegorical of the otherness of masculinity which patriarchy phobically projects into the mystic other. The mediatrix, as the mystic other, vanishes into a patriarchal identity which believes its self-knowledge. The patriarchal function of the otherness of women is already the allegorical function of gender. Medieval patriarchy manifests this tension in women precisely because, in this worldview, women are the appearance of gender. The mediatrix embodies the gendered otherness of self-knowledge to occlude the void which renders any truth of identity incomplete.

² Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* (London: Verso, 1986), p. 74.

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Appendix I: Original Language Quotations

Quotation I: Aristotle, *History of Animals, Books VII-X*, ed. and trans. by D.M. Balme (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 218.

διόπερ γυνή ἀνδρός ἐλεημονέστερον καὶ ἀρίδακρον μᾶλλον, ἔτι δέ φθονερώτερον καὶ μεμφιμοιρότερον καὶ φιλολοίδορον μᾶλλον καὶ πληκτικώτερον. ἔστι δέ καὶ δύσθυμον μᾶλλον τὸ θῆλυ τοῦ ἄρρενος καὶ δύσελπι, καὶ ἀναιδέστερον καὶ φευδέστερον, εὐαπατμώτερον δέ καὶ μνημονικώτερον, ἔτι δέ ἀγρυπνώτερον καὶ ὀκνηρότερον καὶ ὄλως ἀκινήτοτερον τὸ θῆλυ τοῦ ἄρρενος, καὶ τροφῆς ἐλάττονός ἐστιν.

Quotation II: Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problems*, trans. and ed. by Robert Mayhew (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 167-70.

οἱ δέ φύσει θηλυδρίαὶ οὕτω συνεστάσιν ὥστε ἐκεῖ μὲν μὴ ἐκκρίνεσθαι ἢ ὀλίγην, οὐπερ τοῖς ἔχουσι κατὰ φύσιν ἐκκρίνεται, εἰς δέ τὸν τόπον τούτον. αἴτιον δέ ὅτι παρά φύσιν συνεστάσιν ἄρσενες γὰρ ὄντες οὕτω διάκεινται ὥστε ἀνάγκη τὸν τόπον | τούτον πεπηρώσθαι αὐτῶν. ρπήσις δέ ἢ μὲν ὄλως ποιεῖ φθόρον, ἢ δέ διαστροφὴν. ἐκείνη μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν γυνή γὰρ ἂν ἐγένετο. ἀνάγκη ἄρα παρεστράφθαι καὶ ἄλλοθί που ὁρμᾶν τῆς γονικῆς ἐκκρίσεως.

Quotation III: Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. by W.M. Lindsay, LacusCurtius <<http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Isidore/home.html>> [Accessed 22 December 2020] XI.141.

Cuius cruoris contactu fruges non germinant, acescunt musta, moriuntur herbae, amittunt arbores fetus, ferrum rubigo corripit, nigrescunt aera. Si qui canes inde ederint, in rabiem efferuntur. Glutinum asphalti, quod nec ferro nec aquis dissolvitur, cruore ipso pollutum sponte dispergitur.

Quotation IV: Augustine, *De bono coniugali, De Sancta virginitate*, trans. and ed. by P.G. Walsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 38-39.

Ideoque non sicut uni uiro etiam plures habere licebat uxores, ita uni feminae plures uiros nec prolis ipsius causa ... Occulta enim lege naturae amant singularitatem quae principantur; suiecta uero non solum singula singulis sed, si ratio naturalis uel socialis admittit, etiam plura uni non sine decore subduntur. Neque enim sic habet unus seruus plures dominos, quomodo plures serui unum dominum ... Plures enim feminae ab uno uiro fetari possunt, una uero a pluribus non potest (haec est principorum uis)

Quotation V: Hildegard of Bingen, *Causae et curae*, ed. by Paul Kaiser (Leipzig: B.G. Teubneri, 1903), p. 33.

sed cum homo praeceptum dei transgressus est, mutatus est etiam tam corpore quam mente. Nam puritas sanguinis eius in alium modum versa est, ita quod pro puritate spumam seminis elicit.

Quotation VI: Hildegard of Bingen, *Causae et curae*, ed. by Paul Kaiser (Leipzig: B.G. Teubneri, 1903), p. 60.

Sed de recta natura mulieris sanguis eius, quia debilis et tenuis est, semen non habet, sed tantum tenuem et parvam spumam emittit, quoniam de duobus modis terrae et carnis non est, ut vir, sed tantum de carne viri sumpta est.

Quotation VII: Hildegard of Bingen, *Causae et curae*, ed. by Paul Kaiser (Leipzig: B.G. Teubneri, 1903), p. 47.

Sed et si Adam transgressus fuisset prius quam Eva, tunc transgressio illa tamfortis et tam incorrigibilis fuisset, quod homo etiam in tam magna obduratione incorrigibilitatis cecidisset, quod nec salvari vellet nec posset. Unde quod Eva prior transgrediebatur, facilius deleri potuit, quia etiam fragilior masculino fuit.

Quotation VIII: Bernard of Clairvaux, “Epistle I,” *Opera omni sancti Bernardi*, Vol. 1, (Paris: Gaume Fratres, 1839), p. 108.

Et haec dico, fili, non ut te confundam, sed ut tanquam filium charissimum moneam : quia etsi multos habeas in Christo paedagogos, and non multos patres. Nam si dignaris, et verbo, et exemplo meo in religionem ego te genui. Nutrivi deinde lacte, quod solum adhuc parvulus capere poteris ... Sed heu! quam praeporpere et intempestive ablactatus es! ... et lugeam miser, non tam casilaboris damnum, quam damnatae sobolis miserabilem casum ... Simile mihi contigit, quod et illi meretrici apud Salomonem: cui videlicet parvulus suus ab altera, quae suum a se oppressum exstinxerat, furtim sublatus est. Tu quoque desinu mhi, et utero abscissus es. Ablatum gemo, repeto violenter avulsum.

Quotation IX: Alanus de Insulis, *Liber parabolarum, Le proverbez d'Alain*, ed. by Tony Hunt (Paris: Honore Champion, 2007), p. 93.

Non est in speculo res quae speculatur in illo;
Eminet, et non est in muliere fides

**Quotation X: Alain de Lille, *De planctu naturae*, ed. by J.P. Migne, The Latin Library
<<https://www.thelatinlibrary.com/alanus/alanus1.html>> [Accessed 22 December 2020], Prose I.**

Caetera vero quae thalamus secretior absentabat, meliora fides esse loquebatur. In corpore etenim latebat vultus gratior, cujus facies ostentabat praeludium.

Quotation XI: Alain de Lille, *De planctu naturae*, Metre I, ll. 15-22.

Activi generis sexus, se turpiter horret
Sic in passivum degenerare genus.
Femina vir factus, sexus denigrat honorem,
Ars magicae Veneris hermaphroditat eum.
Praedicat et subjicit, fit duplex terminus idem,
Grammaticae leges ampliatur ille nimis.
Se negat esse virum, naturae factus in arte
Barbarus.

Quotation XII: Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Vol. 2, ed. by Ludovic Vives (Paris: Bibliopola, 1836), I.93.4, p. 369.

Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod tam in viro quam in muliere invenitur Dei imago, quantum ad id in quo principaliter ratio imaginis consistit ... Sed quantum ad aliquid secundarium, imago Dei invenitur in viro secundum quod non invenitur in muliere. Nam vir est principum mulieris et finis, sicut Deus est principium et finis tertius creaturae. Unde cum Apostolus dixisset quod <<vir imago et gloria est Dei, mulier autem est gloria viri,>> ostendit quare hoc dixerit, subdens: <<Non enim vir est ex muliere, sed mulier ex viro: et vir non est creatus propter mulierum, sed mulier propter virum.>>

Quotation XIII: Bonaventure, *Itinerarium mentis ad deum, Opuscula duo praestantissima breviliquium et Itinerarium mentis ad deum*, ed. by Carolus Josephus Hefele, 3rd edition (Tubing: In Bibliopolio Lauppiano, 1861), p. 317.

Significant autem hujusmodi creaturae hujus mundi sensibilis invisibilia Dei; partim quia Deus est omnis creaturae origo, exemplar et finis, et omnis effectus est signum causae et exemplatum exemplaris, et via finis ad quem ducit;

Quotation XIV: Plato, *Timaeus*, ed. by John Burnet, Perseus
 <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0179%3Atext%3DTim.%3Asection%3D42c>> [Accessed 22 December 2020], 42b-c.

τε ἐπόμενα αὐτοῖς καὶ ὅποσα ἐναντίως πέφυκε διεστηκότα: ὧν εἰ μὲν κρατήσοιεν, δίκη βιώσοιντο, κρατηθέντες δὲ ἀδικία. καὶ ὁ μὲν εὖ τὸν προσήκοντα χρόνον βιούσ, πάλιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ συννόμου πορευθεὶς οἴκησιν ἄστρου, βίον εὐδαίμονα καὶ συνήθη ἔξοι, σφαλεῖς δὲ τούτων εἰς γυναικὸς φύσιν ἐν τῆδευτέρᾳ γένεσει μεταβαλοῖ: μὴ παυόμενός τε ἐν τούτοις ἔτι κακίας, τρόπον ὃν κακύνοιτο, κατὰ τὴν ὁμοίότητα τῆς τοῦ τρόπου γενέσεως εἰς τινα τοιαύτην ἀεὶ μεταβαλοῖ θήρειον φύσιν, ἀλλάττων τε οὐ πρότερον πόνων λήξοι, πρὶν τῆ ταύτου καὶ ὁμοίου περιόδῳ τῆ ἐν αὐτῷ συνεπισπώμενος τὸν πολλὸν ὄχλον καὶ ὕστερον προσφύντα ἐκ πυρὸς καὶ ὕδατος καὶ ἀέρος

Quotation XV: Bernardus Silvestrius, *Cosmographia, Poetic Works*, ed. and trans. by Winthrop Wetherbee (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), Microcosmos 5.16, p. 110.

De contiguo proximoque Mercurius, solaris orbitae circumcursor, ab eadem quam praevenit praevenitur, et pro lege circuli reportantis, nunc supra Solem promovet, nunc inferior delitescit. Communis ambiguusque, Cyllenius in rebus quas sidereal qualitate convertit venientem de moribus malitiam non ostendit, sed sodalium eum societas vel iustificat vel corrumpit. Fervori Martio vel Iovis indulgentiae copulatus, de proprietate participis suam constituit actionem. Epicoenum, sexus promiscui in communi, signoque bicorpore hermaphraditos facere consuevit. Huic igitur deo virga levis in minibus, pes alatus, expeditus accinctus, quippe qui deorum interpretis legatique muneribus fungebatur.

Quotation XVI: *La response sour l'arriere-ban maistre Richard de Fournival, Le bestiaire d'amour*, ed. by B. de Laportre (Paris: Aubry, 1859), pp. 58-9.

Pour quel raisson, beaus sire mestre, je ne prenderai mie garde au crinçon, dont je vos ai oit parler. Car encore li plaise tant ses chanter qu'il s'en lest à porchacier, et muire, por ceste raison n'est-il pas mestiers à moi, qui feme sui, que je prengue garde à vos parolos qui ont semblance de moi metre à

vostre violenté, c'est à la mort qui bien porroit avenir.

Quotation XVII: Guillaume de Machaut, *Remede de Fortune, Le Jugement du roy de Behaigne and Remede de Fortune*, ed. and trans. by James I. Wimsatt and William W. Kibler (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), ll. 880-7, 897-903, pp. 216-19.

puis ne li chaut
 D'assaut qu'Amours li puisse faire;
 Or li plaist; or ne li puet plaire;
 Car selonc ce qu'Amours le veult
 Deduire, il'sesjoist ou duet,
 Et selonc l'estat de Fortune
 Qui les amans souvent fortune,
 L'un bien, l'un mal, l'autre a sa guise,

...
 Et en ce penser ou j'estoie
 Je m'avisai que je feroie
 De Fortune et de mes doulours,
 De mes pensers et de mes plours
 .I. Dit qu'on appelle complainte,
 Ou il averoit rime mainte,
 Qui seroit de triste matiere.

Quotation XVIII: Guillaume de Machaut, *Remede de Fortune, Le Jugement du roy de Behaigne and Remede de Fortune*, ed. and trans. by James I. Wimsatt and William W. Kibler (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1988), ll. 141-54, pp. 176-7.

se de l'amoureux fais
 Me venoit painne ne doulour,
 Ou merancolie, ou tristour,
 Que tout humblement recueillisse,
 Et qu'a grevés ne m'en tenisse

Quotation XIX: Christine de Pizan, *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune, Vol. I*, ed. by Suzanne Solente (Paris: A. & J. Picard, 1959), ll. 6769-96, pp. 85-6.

Ou s'un dessert estre pendu
 Out d'autre tourment estendu
 Et il est, ce n'est pas Fortune,
 Ce fait son cas plain de rancune;
 Ou s'aucun dessert bien avoir
 Et bien lui vient, on doit savoir
 Que Fortune pas ne lui donne,
 Ainçois le fait son ouevre bonne;
 Mais, quant une riens vient hors bort,
 Un cas soubdain, qui tire a mort,
 Par moult estrange escheance

Ou, sanz avoir quelque beance
 A aucun bien, et il survient,
 Ou de legier a bien on vient,
 Telz cas dis je que de Fortune
 Viennent, oultre guise commune;
 Aussi paix et tranquillité,
 Qui vient de la divinité,
 Fortune ne la donne mie
 (N'est pas a homs si bonne amie!)
 Mais bien est vray que Dieu consent
 Que Fortune soit si poissant
 Que les biens mondains puist partir
 A son vouloir et departir,
 Car d'iceulx biens ne fait il compte,
 Et de tel Fortune je compte,
 Car c'est de quoy le monde a dueil,
 Quant du tout n'en fait a son vueil.

Quotation XX: Christine de Pizan, *Le livre de la mutacion de Fortune, Vol. I*, ed. by Suzanne Solente (Paris: A. & J. Picard, 1959), ll. 6697-714 , pp. 83-4.

Qui ainsi change des gens l'estre,
 Car elle n'a forme, ne corps
 Et si a tant divrs accors
 Fortune, selon qu'il me semble,
 Une influence est, qui s'assemble
 Du cours du ciel, pars les regars
 Des planettes, en plusieurs pars,
 Vient, selon les nativitez
 Des gens, par les extremitez
 Des infortunees planettes
 Ou des bonnes fines et nettes,
 Ascendens a l'eure que l'omme
 Nias de mere; selon la fourme
 De la constellacion, cuide
 Que sa fortune soit plus vuide
 De bien, ou plus comble et plus plaine
 De joye, ou de vie plus saine;

Quotation XXI: Jean de Montreuil, *Epistle 118, Debating the Roman de la rose: A Critical Anthology*, trans. by Earl Jeffrey Richards, ed. by Christine McWebb (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 202-3.

Quo magis magisque perscrutor, vir acutissime, misteriorum pondera ponderumque misteria operis
 illius profundi ac memorie percelebris a magistro Johanne de Magduno editi, et ingenium accularatis
 revolvitur artificis ... debachando iurgabaris, in inventione nichilominus qtque claritate proprietateque

et elegantia magistrum Guillelmum de Lorris longius anteponens, – de quo tunc, certa motus consideratione, exclammare // pretermisi, et nunc linquam.

Quotation XXII: Christine de Pizan, “L'epistle au dieu d'amours,” *Debating the Roman de la rose: A Critical Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Christine McWebb (New York: Routledge, 2007), ll. 389-96, p. 70.

Et Jehan de Meun ou Rommant de la Rose:
 Quel lonc procès! Quel difficile chose!
 Et sciences et cleres et obscures
 Y mist il la, et de grans aventures!
 Et que de gent supploiez et rouvez,
 Et de peines et de baras trouvez
 Pour decevoir sans plus une pucelle –
 S'en est la fin, par fraude et par cautelle!

Quotation XXIII: “Edward III: April 1376,” *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, 1275-1504, vol 5: Edward III, 1351-1377*, ed. by Mark Ormrod, British History Online <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/april-1376>>.

Por ce qe plainte est faite au roy qe aucuns femmes ont pursuys en les courtz du roi diverses busoignes et queeles par voie de maintenance, et pur lower et part avoir, quele chose desplest au roi; et le roi defende qe desormes nulle femme le face, et par especial Alice Perers, sur peine de quanqe la dite Alice purra forfaire, et d'estre bannitz hors du roialme.

Quotation XXIV: “Richard II: October 1377,” *The Parliament Rolls of Medieval England, British History Online* <<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/parliament-rolls-medieval/october-1377>> [Accessed 22 December 2020], item 41.

la dite dame Alice vient au duc, et lui priast chèrement q'il ne suffrist par aucune manere le dit monsire Nicholas aler illoeqes. Qi respondist q'il ne ferroit rienz autrement qe desuz n'estoit ordeinez devant le roi. Et quant ele y veoit q'autre grace ny purroit avoir de lui, se en passa. Et lendemain matin, quant le dit duc prist conge du roi en son lyt, mesme le roi lui comanda sur sa benison q'il ne suffrist en aucune manere qe le dit monsire Nicholas irroit vers Irland, l'ordinance ent fatte le jour devant au contrarie nient contrestean; et ensy fuist le dit monsire Nicholas contremandez.

Quotation XXV: John Wycliffe, *De compositione hominis*, ed. by Rudolf Beer (London: Trubner, 1884), p. 20.

primum loyicum de recto et obliquo, que significant eandem rem et tamen equivoce propter disparem

habitudinem modi significandi casuum, cui correspondet dispar habitudo realis: ut homob in recto significat huminitatem sub habitudine, qua forme subicitur, ut essencie substanciali vel accidentali in diversas verborum manieres, que de homine predicantur. Sed obliqui huius recti significant eandem humanitatem sub racione, qua forme alicuius modi sibi insunt et sic equivoce propter disparem modum significandi.

Quotation XXVI: Augustine, *De bono conjugali, Augustini Hipponensis Episcopi: Opera omnia, Vol. VI*, ed. by J.P. Migne (Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1841), XXIV.32, pp. 394-5.

Haec omnia bona sunt, propter que nuptiae bonae sunt; proles, fides, Sacramentum. Nec prolem autem carnalem jam hoc tempore quaerere, ac per hoc ab omni tali opere immunitatem quamdam perpetuam retinere, atque uni viro Christo spiritualiter subdi, melius est utique et sanctius: si tamen ea vacatione sic utantur homines, quomodo scriptum est, ut cogitent quae sunt Domini, quomodo placeant Deo; id est, ut perpetuo cogitet continentia, ne quid minus habeat obedientia:

Quotation XXVII: Philip de Mézières, *Le songe du vieil pèleri, Debating the Roman de la rose: A Critical Anthology*, ed. and trans. by Christine McWebb (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 48-9.

Comment la vieille, Luxure figuree, se plaint a la royne Verite de ceulx qui en corrompant sa forge naturelle forgent les vilz et horribles besans contre nature. «Encores», dist la vieille Luxure, «dame royne, et non pas sans laermes je me plains a vous ou ciel et en la terre de mes faulx arquemistes qui ont faulcie ma forge. Or fussent ilz trahinez tous et penduz par la gorge, c'est assavoir de ceulx et celles dont saint Paul l'apostre en ses epystres publiquement se complaint, et Nature ma maistresse ou Livre de la Rose aigrement se douloit. Helas!» dist la vieille regulee Luxure, «de ceste tresvile ordure es royaumes d'occident, forgeant mes fins besans, jadis je estoie quipte et bien asseuree. Mais aujourduy en pleurant». «Helas!» je le dy: ma forge est bestournee. Les tresmaleureux chestis Gomorriens, pires que Juifz et priviez de Paradis, laisserent mes beaux houtiz et les precieux baisseaux de ma sainte forge ordonnee, et forgerent besans ors, pourriz et puans et sans aloy, qui n'ont point de duree. Or leur en preigne ainsi», dist la vieille, «comme il fist a l'empereur Noy-ron, qui prist l'abbit d'une femme et se fist espouser a un homme, et le tint comme son baron et villement ma belle forge faulsa.»