

Death at First Sight: The Duality of Love in
Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman

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Abstract

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(Under the direction of Sahar Amer)

This study compares between the secular love poetry of thirteenth-century *trouvère* Thibaut de Champagne and twelfth-century Andalusian author Ibn Quzman. Both poets portray passion as binary, since it incites both joy and pain. Their individual meditations on the duality of love focus especially on visual contemplation of beauty as the impetus to love. However, the effects of seeing beauty, like courtly love itself, are also binary. Both Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman attempt to deal with this optical paradox through the idealization of human passion: each poet sets up the beloved as an object of worship. In Thibaut, this appears as an ennobling, courtly love religion; while Ibn Quzman's visual considerations of beauty end up in sensual flesh worship. Without a way to settle the tension between joy and grief of profane love, the poet finally succumbs to passion in martyrdom; such a fate is seen in Thibaut and Ibn Quzman not only as inevitable, but also desirable.

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I. Introduction

In this study, I compare between medieval French and Hispano-Arabic lyric verse, with a specific focus on the secular love poetry of thirteenth-century *trouvère* Thibaut de Champagne (d. 1253) and early twelfth-century Andalusian author Ibn Quzman (d. 1160). Following the convention of courtly love in both French and Andalusian literary traditions, both poets portray human passion as a binary experience, since it incites both joy and pain on the part of the lover. Their individual meditations on the duality of love focus especially on visual contemplation of beauty as the impetus to falling in love: the unrequited desire to possess the beloved's physical beauty leads the lover to an obsession with the beloved. Channeled and refined through social codes, as well as expression in song, this obsession becomes a virtuous, "courtly" love which both poets portray as the height of human emotion. However, just as courtly love exhibits inherent dualities, the effects of visual contemplation of the beloved are also binary. Physical beauty affords sight while simultaneously making visual perception impossible. Thus each poet's *oeuvre* features numerous lines which portray courtly love in terms of an optical paradox, whereby visual contemplation of physical beauty is both a source of light which makes vision possible, and a blinding blaze which overwhelms the lover's eyes.

Both Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman attempt to deal with this optical paradox through the idealization of human passion: each poet sets up the beloved—and,

especially in Thibaut de Champagne, courtly love itself—as an object of worship. In Thibaut, visual contemplation of the beloved leads the poet to extol the virtues of courtly love as an ennobling, secular religion, personified in verse as the profane god Amor. By contrast, Ibn Quzman’s visual considerations of beauty end up in flesh worship, which takes the beloved as its love object. Both poets thus offer a secular religion of love as the solution to the dual effects of gazing on physical beauty, although they accomplish it in different ways. In the end, however, the solution of a profane love religion is as problematic as the optical paradox it seeks to address. A religion founded upon love is founded on a contradiction, since love is the source of life and death at once, and is therefore unsustainable at its core. Without a way to settle the tension between joy and grief, the love-struck poet finally succumbs to passion in martyrdom; in fact, such a fate is seen in Thibaut and Ibn Quzman not only as inevitable, but also something for which the lover yearns. In this way, the religion of love becomes a religion of death, in which the poet-lover is annihilated in the consuming fire of his own lusts. He consecrates his devotion to Love through the sacrifice of his own identity, giving up the very “je” which permits him a poetic voice, in order to be united with the object of his desire.

In terms of the two poets under consideration, a comparison between Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman makes sense in a number of ways. First, both poets wrote the bulk of their poetry in the profane love tradition, as opposed to religious love poetry of mystical bent, excepting portions of Thibaut’s devotional verse to the Virgin Mary. Second, as I hope to show, both poets take visual apprehension of the beloved as the starting point of

profane love, eventually arriving at an idealization of that love and the beloved as objects of worship. Ibn Quzman's admittance of the joys of the flesh is more explicit than in Thibaut, a difference which makes their comparison more intriguing than that of Thibaut and another Hispano-Arabic poet such as Ibn Zaydun. The latter's meditation on distance from the beloved establishes a certain "sustained congruence" between his own poetry and that of the troubadours, an acknowledged fact which has led to speculations on the direct relationship between medieval French and Hispano-Arabic poetry (Stewart 314). By choosing a poet from the Hispano-Arabic tradition (Ibn Quzman) whose thematic connections to the *trouvères* are not as immediately obvious, I hope to be able to draw out poetic nuances on both sides, contributing to a renewed view of each poet's lyrical output.

As for a comparison between medieval French and Hispano-Arabic literature, such a study brings with it several advantages. These two traditions have in common the topic of love as a central literary theme, and the form of lyric poetry as an expression thereof. Moreover, they each represent the prototypical literature of love in their individual geo-cultural spheres, both in terms of artistic achievement and influence on other literary traditions (Sigal 351; Sells 126-7). In more general terms, the flourishing of love poetry in both the medieval French and Hispano-Arabic literary traditions occurred during roughly the same time period, between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries. In addition, Medieval French and Hispano-Arabic poetry shared roughly the same geographical location, in the southwestern region of Europe bordering the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean,

which represents a shared spatial and cultural experience amongst these two literary traditions.

Despite this idea of a shared cultural experience, in this study I consciously avoid addressing the question of organic literary influence exerted by either tradition on the other. This is due partly to the nature of the inquiry being undertaken. Much work in the field of comparative Iberian studies employs close philological analysis to debate the possibility that troubadour poetry had its origins in the Hispano-Arabic lyric tradition and especially the *muwashshahāt*. Such studies are concerned primarily with contact linguistics and genre studies, which may yet yield important evidence one way or the other surrounding debates of influence. The purpose of this essay, however, is to treat not generic or linguistic matters, but rather thematic issues in medieval French and Hispano-Arabic love poetry. While philological methods are relied upon here, they will serve a theoretical comparison between two poets, rather than to argue for or against organic contact between two literary traditions. Moreover, questions of influence may be beside the point anyway, an issue which literary historian Maria Rosa Menocal addresses in her work on lyric poetry, *Shards of Love*. Writing from a revisionist standpoint, Menocal argues that traditional philology's search for "origins" has glossed over the possibility of interaction between medieval French and Hispano-Arabic poetry because of a lack of written textual evidence of such interaction; for her, debates about the beginnings of lyric poetry in either tradition goes back to nationalist enterprises on either side (155-6). Rather than vie for one side or the other, Menocal recommends a "baroque" reading of history which takes intercultural mixing into account. By avoiding a search for

“origins” or “influence,” I hope to contribute to a more inclusive kind of reading in literary studies, one which admits the possibility of multiple, simultaneous influences and origins.

II. Love as Optical Paradox

a. Thibaut de Champagne

A common trope encountered in *trouvère* verse is the portrayal of courtly love as a dual experience: it is a source of life and healing, while simultaneously a cause of suffering and even death. At its sweetest moments, such love surpasses all other worthy pursuits in its capacity to enlarge and ennoble the human soul. Its healing effects on the lover invite poetic meditations on human passion as more efficacious than the quickest drugs or the most skilled physician. Bernart de Ventadorn, one of the first major troubadours to appear in medieval France, wrote as early as the eleventh century:

Tan tai mo cor ple de joya,	[My heart is so filled with joy
Tot me desnatura.	That it transforms me entirely.
Flor blancha, vermelh'e groya	Like a white, red, and yellow flower
Me par la frejura,	Does winter appear,
C'ab lo ven et ab la playa	Since the wind and rain
Me creis l'aventura (Lazar 72)	Increases my happiness ¹]

Here, images of winter melting into spring represent the changes wrought by passion on human hearts, thus providing an apt symbol for the supposedly ennobling effect of passionate love. Lines such as these set the stage for an entire tradition of poetic devotion to ardent love as a virtue. At the same time, troubadour and *trouvère* extolment of courtly love goes hand-

in-hand with the recognition that the fruit of passion is bittersweet. In the medieval French and Occitan traditions, physical union with the beloved is an impossibility, a distant ideal which drives the poet to song (Zumthor 135). Among other troubadours, Jaufre Rudel exemplifies the total subservience to love's pangs seen in much medieval French poetry. Writing in the first half of the twelfth century, Rudel meditates on the concept of *amor de lonh*, or love from afar:

Iratz e jauzens m'en partrai,	[Triste et joyeaux, je me séparerai d'elle,
S'ieu ja la vei, l'amor de lonh:	si jamais je le vois, cet amour lointain;
Mas non sai quora la veirai,	mais je ne sais quand je la verrai,
Car tròp son nòstras tèrras lonh:	car nos pays sont trop lointains;
Assatz i a pas e camès,	Il y a tant de passages et de chemins que
E per aissò no'n sui devès...	je n'ose rien prédire.
Mas tot sia com a Dieu platz!	Qu'il en soit donc comme il plaira à
	Dieu!] (Bec 181-3)

More than a distant ideal to which the lover submits, poetic contemplation of physical union with the beloved engenders suffering on the poet's part. For the troubadours and later *trouvères*, then, courtly love means grief and despair as much as it does joy. The distant ideal of unrequited passion therefore becomes a binary experience, imbued with pleasure and pain simultaneously.

Thibaut de Champagne (d. 1253), King of Navarre and a zealous if unsuccessful crusader under Pope Gregory IX, is no exception to the trend among medieval French and

Occitan poets to view love as a double-edged sword. Thibaut treats in verse the notion that love rejuvenates and destroys simultaneously. In some instances, courtly love brings the greatest happiness (*joie*), such as we find in Thibaut's song "Douce dame, tout autre pensement":

Sanz vos ne puis, dame, ne je nel qier, [Without you, lady, I cannot have joy,
Ne ja d'autrui Dex ne m'i doint mès joie Nor do I wish that God would grant
me joy from another]

(Brahney 52-3).

The Old French text, which literally says "I don't want anything" (*ne je nel qier*) rather than "I cannot have joy," emphasizes the singularity of poetic devotion: the beloved is the only source of happiness. Such is the case even when passionate joy comes with a price, as we see two lines later in the same song. The poet affirms that he would rather be in the beloved's power "and undergo pain than to seek other benefit" (*et sousfrir mal qu'autre bien, se l'avoie*). We detect here poetic ambivalence concerning passion, which is more often than not painted in dual terms throughout Thibaut's verse: courtly love is both the source of happiness (*bien*) and cause of pain (*sousfrir mal*). For example, in the song "Les douces dolours," the poet employs pairs of antithetical terms to describe courtly love, such as "the sweet sufferings" (*les douces dolours*) and "the pleasant pains" (*li mal plesant*) (Brahney 106-7), thus offering succinct expression of the dual nature of human passion

The logical conclusion of such duality is, of course, a poetic vision of courtly love as essentially paradoxical. In Thibaut's poem "De bone amor vient séance et biauté," the poet makes this point explicit in discussing his wounds received through love:

Li cous fu granz; il ne fet qu' enpoirier,	[The wound was severe and becomes
Ne nus mires ne m'en porroit saner	still more inflamed,
Se cele non qui le dart fist lancier.	And there is no doctor who could
	cure me
	Except she who had the arrow shot at
	me.] (Brahney 124-5).

As these lines indicate, passionate love is deadlocked between two poles. The beloved represents both the cause of and solution to the bittersweet pangs of amorous devotion: she is the one who shoots the arrow of love, and at the same time she is the only one who can heal love's wound. Indeed, the word for "heal," *saner*, employed in the lines cited from "De bone amor" shares etymological roots with the Old French terms for hospital (*sanerie*) as well as integrity or welfare (*santé*) (Godefroy 304). The sense is that the beloved holds the power to make the poet whole, whether in terms of physical health or emotional well-being. It is from within this space, enclosed between joy and grief, that the poet must compose his verse. In other songs, such as "Ausi conme unicorne sui," Thibaut de Champagne dubs the lover's impasse between life and death at the beloved's hands a "sweet prison cell" (*la douce chartre en prison*) into which the lover is led, and where he slowly goes mad with love (Brahney

102). Trapped by his own feelings, then, the poet's only choice is to send out a song to his beloved and beseech her favors.

A key element in the dual nature of love portrayed in Thibaut de Champagne's verse involves visual apprehension of physical beauty. In several songs from his *oeuvre*, sight of the beloved is shown to be the impetus to falling in love. For example, the fifth strophe of "Contre le tens qui devise" affords the following insight into how the poet fell in love in the first place:

Dès que je li fis priere	[Since the moment I entreated her
Et la pris a esgarder,	And gazed upon her,
Me fist Amors la lumiere	Love made the light pass
Des euz par le cuer entrer.	Through my eyes into my heart.
Cist conduis me fet grever,	This passage causes me pain
Dont je ne me sai garder,	For which I know no defense,
N'il ne puet torner arriere ;	Nor can I turn it back ;
Li cuers melz voudroit crever.	My heart would rather break.]

(Brahney 10-14)

These lines provide a clear portrayal of the role of vision in courtly love. Using a vivid optical metaphor, the poet describes how, after gazing (*esgarder*) at the beloved, "Love" (*Amors*) caused light to pass through his eyes and into his heart (*des euz par le cuer entrer*).

We will see this direct connection between eyes and heart later in this chapter, in discussing Thibaut's rejection of physical sight as expedient to transcendent love. The notion that visual

contemplation of the beloved incites passion is a common trope in both medieval French lyric and prose treatises on the subject of courtly love. In fact, Andreas Capellanus begins his *De Amore*, a work reflective of medieval thought on love (Parry 3), with the following definition:

Amor est passio quaedam innata procedens ex visione et immoderata cogitatione formae alterius sexus, ob quam aliquis super omnia cupit alterius potiri amplexibus et omnia de utriusque voluntate in ipsius amplexu amoris praecepta compleri (3).

[Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace.] (Parry 28)

As indicated in the first clause, love is a feeling which stems first from sight (*procedens ex visione*) of the beloved, as well as "excessive meditation" (*immoderata cogitatione*) thereon. It is unrequited obsession with the beloved, therefore, which leads to feelings of passion. Hence the link between visual contemplation beauty and falling in love expressed in strophe 5 of Thibaut's "Contre le tens qui devise."

Statements about visual apprehension of physical beauty pepper much of Thibaut de Champagne's verse, as well as troubadour and *trouvère* song in general, often taking the form of a dualistic impasse running parallel to that of courtly love itself. On the one hand,

Thibaut de Champagne's songs portray physical beauty as an aid to vision. In "Tuit mi desir," for example, sight of the beloved is compared to light shed upon the world:

Trestout le mont en a enluminé,	[He lit the whole world with her light,
qu'en sa valor sont tuit li bien si grant;	for every virtue is present in her worth.
nus ne la voit ne vous en die autant.	No one who sees her would tell you less.]

(Goldin 456-7)

This notion of physical beauty as a light to humankind goes along with strophe 2, line 8 of "De bone amor vient séance et biauté," in which the beloved's "sweet glances" (*douz regart*) are compared to the sun, bathing the earth in light; those who think to enjoy the sunlight "at high noon would have darkness next to her" (*lés li seroit oscur en plain midi*) (Brahney 122-3). In these and other passages, the poet indicates the luminous quality of feminine beauty, which expands the vision and provides light where there is darkness, sight where there is blindness.

It is therefore interesting to note, on the other hand, the frequency of passages in which contemplation of feminine beauty also leads to a *lack* of sight or perception. For example, we read in the poem "Empereres ne rois n'ont nul pouoir" about the poet's loss of perception through visual contemplation of the beloved: "I am so distraught that I am losing my senses" (*Tant me destraint que g'en pert ma reson*) (Brahney 92-3). The word which Brahney translates here as "senses" is *reson*, an interesting choice given the fact that medieval thought puts sensory experience and the higher faculties of "reason" at odds with one another (Godefroy 350). In this case, it is reason, not the "senses," which visual

perception of beauty overwhelms. By lamenting the loss of his *reson*, the poet makes the connection between the sight of physical beauty and suffering from the failure of physical and mental faculties. In the same way that love overwhelms the lover emotionally, it also breaks him down physically. Thibaut writes the following lines on how, rather than an aid to physical and mental health, sight of the beloved only worsens the poet's condition:

1 Or n'i a plus fors qu'a li me conmant	1 I have no recourse but to place myself at
2 Car touz biens fez ai lessié pour celui :	her command
3 Ma bele vie ou ma mort i atent.	2 For I have forsaken all earthly goods
4 Ne sai le quel, mès quant devant li fui,	for her :
5 Ne me firent onc si oeil point d'ennui,	3 Either life or my death awaits me,
6 Ainz me vindrent ferir si doucement	4 I know not which, but when I was
	before her,
7 Par mi le cors d'un amoreus senblant :	5 Her eyes caused me no pain
8 Oncor i est le coup que je reçui.	6 For their amorous mien struck so sweetly
	7 Deep within my being,
	8 That the blow I received from them is still
	There.
1 Li cous fu granz ; il ne fet qu'empoirier,	1 The wound was severe and becomes still
2 Ne nus mires ne m'en porroit saner	more inflamed,
3 Se cele non qui le dart fist lancer.	2 And there is no doctor who could cure me

4 Se de [sa] main i daignoit adesper,	3 Except she who had the arrow shot at me.
5 Tost en porroit le coup mortel oster	4 If only she would deign to touch it with
6 O tout le fust, don j'ai grant desirrier,	her hand,
7 Mès la pointe du fer n'en puet sachier,	5 She could withdraw the mortal blow
8 Qu'ele bruisa dedenz au cop doner.	6 By its whole shaft ; this I long for—
	7 But the iron point cannot be removed,
	8 For it broke inside upon dealing the blow.]
	(Brahney 122-5)

These lines are from the song “De bone amor vient séance et biauté,” which we discussed above while demonstrating how the beloved is a source of light, given to humankind by God as a means of illuminating vision. Contemplation of sight in these two strophes begins with the poetic assertion that the beloved’s eyes, after becoming fixed on the lover, caused the poet no “pain” (*ennui*). However, the poet moves from these more optimistic statements about visual apprehension of the beloved to a meditation on sight which leaves the poet with a wound which “does nothing except fester” (*il ne fet qu’enpoirier*). Ironically, the beloved is both the cause of this wound and the only one who can cure it. Like a vaccine which cures disease by injecting a small enough amount of the illness for the body to build a resistance, the beloved’s ability to “cure” (*saner*) the poet resides in the fact that she is the source of love which caused so much pain in the first place. As noted earlier the beloved holds the power to *saner*, or make the poet whole, whether in terms of physical health or emotional well-being; at the same time, she can remove physical and mental health, driving the lover to

madness. Her gaze both causes and takes away love's wound, an optical paradox which puts a unique spin on the "mythic paradigm of the two-faced female" prevalent in medieval Franco-Provençal poetry (Burns 256).

Thibaut's reply to the optical paradox involves a tentative rejection of physical sight, in favor of the memory of the beloved contained in the poet's heart. Thibaut's poetic voice insists that he must look upon feminine beauty with the "eyes of the heart" (*les euz du cuer*), as opposed to his physical eyes, which are incapable of fully perceiving the beloved's splendor (Brahney 62-3). The "eyes of the heart" trope appears in several lines of Thibaut de Champagne's verse, such as the song "De grant joie me suit oz esmeüz":

De euz du cuer, dame, vous puis veoir,	[With the eyes of my heart, lady, I
Car trop sont loing li mien oil de ma chiere,	can see you
Qui tant m'ont fet penser pour vous avoir.	For much too far from my dear
	one are the eyes
	Which had given me so many
	thoughts of you.]

In this strophe, the poet's "eyes of the heart" (*euz du cuer*), or memory of the beloved, mitigates spatial and emotional distance from the object of desire. In yet another paradox, the poet's claim that his physical eyes are farther from the beloved than the "eyes of the heart" go against the earlier claim that it was physical sight of the beloved which caused passionate feelings in the first place (Brahney 60-1). In the poem "Tout autresi con l'ente fet venir," lines 9 and 10 of the third strophe read:

Ne je ne vos puis voir	[Nor can I see you
Fors d'euz clos et de cuer noir.	Except with eyes closed, in the depths
	of my darkened heart.] (Brahney 96-9)

Along with the strophe already cited, these lines embody the reversal of the outer and inner, or the “apparent” (□*āhir*)² and the “hidden” (*bā□in*) found in Sufi verse on divine love. The poet’s physical eyes are unable to apprehend the beloved’s beauty, and he must therefore rely on his heart’s memory of the beloved instead. Ironically, the image of physical beauty built up by the lover in his own heart surpasses the very sight of physical beauty in its capacity to induce passion.

Also at issue with regard to poetic distance from the beloved is the professional benefit derived by troubadours from the notion of beauty’s memory as more potent than beauty itself. In her article “The Man Behind the Lady in Troubadour Lyric,” E. Jane Burns points out the practical benefits of maintaining distance from the beloved: “Poetic creation is generally motivated by the lady’s rebuke; the choice of the poet to be a composer of love songs depends precisely on his not being loved. It is in this sense that longing for the Lady becomes more valuable to him psychologically and professionally than possession, and the *mal d’amour* can function as *le plus grand bien*” (264). The embrace of internal insight at the expense of physical vision goes along with Professor Burns’ remarks about poetic reliance upon a paradoxical view of women, in that rejecting physical consummation of love also preserves the distance from the beloved which drives poetic composition.

b. Ibn Quzman

Similar consideration of the dual nature of passionate love appears in the classical Arabic literary tradition in general, and especially in medieval Hispano-Arabic verse. While some scholars challenge the notion that there exists in Arabic poetry anything analogous to troubadour and *trouvère* portrayals of passionate love as an ennobling virtue (Abu-Haidar 251-2), it is difficult to ignore the lofty picture of love painted by Ibn Zaydun, writing in the first half of the eleventh century, leading up to the fall of the Andalusian Umayyad caliphate in 1031:

حَالَتْ لِفَقْدِكُمْ أَيَّامَنَا، فَعَدَّتْ سُوداً، وَكَانَتْ بِكُمْ بَيْضاً لَيَالِينَا
إِذْ جَانِبُ الْعَيْشِ طَلَقٌ مِنْ تَأْفِينَا، وَمَرْبَعُ الْلَهُوِّ صَافٍ مِنْ نَصَافِينَا

[Our days have been transformed by your absence so that they
have become black-morned, whereas with you our nights were white.
When the side of life was joyous by reason of our friendship
And the springtime habitation of joy was pure by our mutual
Purity [of friendship]] (Monroe 180-1).

As with much classical and medieval Arabic poetry, these lines—from Ibn Zaydun’s *Nūniyya*, his quintessential ode to princess Wallada—feature antithesis as a primary poetic device. Contrasting images of “black” (*sūdan*) and “white” (*bīḥan*), “our days” (*ayāmina*) and “our nights” (*layālina*) establish a dialectic fraught with both intimacy and tension. These formal tropes also point to a larger tension, that of the paradoxical nature of love. As in the medieval French tradition, Hispano-Arabic poets of the eleventh to thirteenth centuries

lament the effects of love as much as they praise it. The most pointed expression of the pangs of secular passion involves a trope used from before the advent of Islam in the seventh century A.D., that of love as a form of mental illness or insanity. This chaste, ‘*udhrī*’ love—named after the eponymous tribe whose young prince Qays, nicknamed “Majnun” (crazy), went mad with love for a woman of an enemy clan—results in tremendous mental and emotional suffering. This trope of suffering in love finds its way into medieval Hispano-Arabic poetry in the form of strophic odes, *muwashshahāt*, which often meditate on the pain endured at the beloved’s hands. We see this in the following lines, from a twelfth-century *muwashshaha* of Al-A‘maa at-Tuṭīlī, the blind bard of Tudela.:

أَهْلًا وَإِنْ عَرَضَ بِي لِلْمَنُونِ	بِمَا يُسِّ الأَعْطَافِ سَاجِي الجُفُونِ
يَا قَسْوَةً يَحْسِبُهَا الصَّبُّ لِينٌ	عَلَّمْتَنِي كَيْفَ تَسُوءُ الظُّنُونِ

[Welcome is he, though he expose me to death;

One supple of waist and languid of eye.

O hardness of heart which love sees as soft,

You have caused me to learn that thoughts can think ill!] (Monroe 248-9).

Here, the poet’s death (*manūn*) is a welcome (*ahlan*) alternative to life without contemplation of the beloved. By rhyming the words for “eye” (*jufūn*) and “thoughts” (□*unūn*), the poet establishes a connection between sight of the beloved and the thought of her, which incessantly torments the poet. As with the pre-Islamic tragedy of Majnun Layla, the poet of this *muwashshaha* “is an incessant wanderer in the wake of a beloved who is nowhere yet everywhere” (Sells 127).

Some of the verses which best exemplify the duality of secular passion in the medieval Hispano-Arabic tradition were penned by Ibn Quzman (d. 1160), the self-proclaimed Andalusī profligate and master of the *zajal* form of poetry. Even as he mocks the idealized model of pre-Islamic ‘*udhrī*’ love, we find lines in Ibn Quzman’s *Diwan*³ which elevate the experience of human passion:

لَمَّا رَأَى وَرَدَ خَدَيْكَ	قَدْ حَصَلَ قَلْبٍ فَالزَمَ
حَتَّى وَقَعْتَ فِي كَفَيْكَ	گَم وَگَم نَحْتَرَزَ مِنْكَ
رَأَيْتُ مَا بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْكَ	سِحْرَ هَارُوتَ وَمَارُوتَ
وَمَا اظُنُّ أَنْ نَسْلُمَ (Corriente 822)	نَسْأَلُ اللهَ (سلامه)

[The heart suffers to not see / The rose of your countenance.

How much I waited for you / Until I came to be in your arms!

In your eyes I see the magic / of Harut and Marut

I ask Allah for His peace / Since I cannot save myself]

These lines, taken from *Zajal* 129 of Ibn Quzman’s *Diwan*, underscore both the similarities and differences between Old French and Hispano-Arabic love lyric of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. On the one hand, the first line of Ibn Quzman’s strophe echoes the pangs felt for the beloved expressed in troubadour and *trouvère* poetry. The literal meaning of the first *bayt* is “the heart is fastened” or “yoked” (*fa’l-zamm*), a metaphor expressing the constrictive effect of profane desire on the lover’s ability to think or act. The “yoke” of Ibn Quzman echoes the idea of the *douce chartre* (“sweet prison”) mentioned earlier from

Thibaut de Champagne's song "Ausi conme unicorne sui," which demarcates the space between joy and grief occupied by the poet. In fact, Thibaut has some lines comparing the prison of love to an image more directly related to Ibn Quzman's "yoke":

Fort sont li laz et grant li couvertour	[Strong are the snares and large the net
--ce n'est pas gas—	--This is no boast--
En que cil est qui aime par amour.	In which the one who loves is caught.]

(Brahney 14-15).

In this way, the sense given by both poets is that the lover has been overtaken by impassioned feelings to the point of being unable to act. There remains an important difference, however, between the two poets: while Thibaut's entrapment in love leaves no choice but the composition of song, Ibn Quzman's strophe allows physical consummation of the love relationship. The poet waits for his beloved, "until I came to be in your arms!" (□*atta waqa'tu fi kafika*).

The notion of physical and emotional "union"—in the Arabic tradition, the term is *waqf* (Ormsby 245)—distinguishes Ibn Quzman from his *trouvère* counterpart, who takes as essential the spatial and emotional distance ("esloignace") from the beloved (Joris 103). It is this distance, and the pain experienced as a result, which undergirds much of medieval French lyric. Still and all, to a certain extent these lines from Ibn Quzman's *Diwan* undercut a trend among some scholars to place this poet firmly within the "libertinage" (*mujūn*) tradition of classical Arabic literature. By describing the poet's entrapment at love's hands, Ibn Quzman leans toward abstraction and even idealization of passion. Although it would be

irresponsible to deny the profligacy of Ibn Quzman’s *oeuvre*, Buturovic affirms Ibn Quzman’s multifaceted outlook on profane love, which “in many of [Ibn Quzman’s] poems is fastidiously calculated and utterly elusive. Indeed, it is colored with everything: coarseness, idealism, courtesy, machismo. Ibn Quzman seems to be at home with all” (300). Among other things, one goal of the comparison between Thibaut de Champagne, in whom we see reflections on love as lofty and ennobling, and the “profligate” *zajals* of Ibn Quzman is to tease out the transcendent, even spiritual nuances of the latter.

In terms of vision, Ibn Quzman expresses the tensions inherent in the dual nature of love through an optical paradox similar to that found in Thibaut de Champagne. The Hispano-Arabic tradition, as in the medieval French and Occitan poets, takes vision as the starting point of profane love. In *Zajal* 117, for example, Ibn Quzman states the following:

[The secrets of love	يعترى من النَّظْرُ	انما اصل الهوى
Are revealed by the gaze	خُلقت من السِّحْرُ	ثَرَّ عَيْنِينَا مِلاَحُ
You see beautiful eyes		
Created as if by magic]		

The immediate connection between these lines and those by Thibaut de Champagne seen earlier is the notion of gaze. In Old French, the verb utilized is *esgarder*, which shares etymological roots with the word for “glance,” *regart*. In Arabic, the term for “gaze” is a noun, *naḡar*, which in a mystical context invokes Sufi practices of gazing upon young boys as a means of worshipping God by meditating on the physical beauty of His creations. Here, Ibn Quzman employs the term in a secular context, positing the existence of love’s secrets in

visual contemplation of the beloved. The term *naẓar* appears elsewhere, often in the context of poetic uncertainty as to the outcome of physical sight. In Zajal 108, for example, the poet remarks, “A gaze from you gives me life / or I die from your gaze” (نَظَرَ / أو نَمُوتُ فِي نَظَرِهِ) (منكُ تَحْيِين). As noted, the duality of sight stems from the concept of vision as the source of impassioned feelings. As with medieval European thought, the Arabic belletristic tradition features meditations on sight as the impetus to love in both poetry and prose. Writing in the first half of the eleventh century, Ibn Hazm states the following in his treatise on profane love, the *Dove’s Neckring* (*ʿawq al-amāma*)⁴:

وأما العلة التي توقع الحب أبداً في أكثر الأمر على الصورة الحسنة، فالظاهر أن النفس حسنة تولع بكل شيء حسن وتمثيل إلى التصاوير المتقنة، فهي إذا رأت بعضها تثبتت فيه، فإن ميزت وراءها شيئاً من أشكالها اتصلت وصحت الحبة الحقيقية (9).

[As for what causes Love in most cases to choose a beautiful form to light upon, it is evident that the soul itself being beautiful, it is affected by all beautiful things, and has a yearning for perfect symmetrical images; whenever it sees any such image, it fixes itself upon it; then, if it discerns behind that image something of its own kind, it becomes united and true love is established.] (Arberry 28)

As this passage shows, Ibn Hazm takes a transcendent view of human passion as inspired by vision. Whereas in Andreas Capellanus passion is a result of excessive meditation on the physical beauty (*formae*) of the opposite sex (Parry 28), Ibn Hazm asserts that true passion involves going beyond the outer manifestation of beauty. For him, the gaze which seeks out a

beautiful form (□*ūra*) must penetrate behind that form in order to ascertain its essential nature. Only then can true love (*al-□ubba 'l-□aqīqiyya*) take place. As I will demonstrate shortly, Ibn Quzman makes the form and flesh itself, rather than the inner nature behind that form, the object of passion and even worship.

Ultimately, as in Thibaut, the optical metaphors used by Ibn Quzman to express the nature of love become paradoxical: at the same time that seeing the beloved opens physical sight, it also leads to suffering:

أَيَّ حَيَا تُرْتَجَى لِي (وَيْلِي) وَقَوْسُ عَيْنِيكَ أَرَمَتْ
بِسَهَامِ الضَّيَا السَّهْلَ، وَالْوَعْرَ غَطَّتْ؟

[How can I expect to live / When the bow of your eyes

Sends arrows to wound / Dispensing death in their wake?]

Here, the poet employs the stark imagery of war to describe his suffering in love. The beloved's eyes are now an arsenal, a "bow" (*qaws*) which hurls deadly "arrows" (*sahām*) to inflict the lover. The martial symbolism in these lines, from Ibn Quzman's *Zajal* 129, echo Thibaut's statement that it is only "she who had the arrow shot at me" (*cele non qui le dart fist lancier*) who can cure love's wound. They also go against what the poet writes earlier in this same *zajal*, using a metaphor of sight to praise the beloved:

وَأَنْتَ نَوْرَ عَيْنِي وَمُنْيَتِي وَحَيَاتِي

[And you are the light of my eye, my intent and my life]

In this line, the beloved is a light to the poet’s eye, a source of illumination which provides sight. This positive effect of looking, or thinking, on physical beauty contrasts with the bellicose imagery associated with visual apprehension of the beloved’s gaze. The optical paradox seen in Ibn Quzman appears in other Hispano-Arabic poetry as well, such as the poetic excerpts included by Ibn Hazm in the *awq*. In the section on “Breaking Off” (*al-hajr*), Ibn Hazm sums up the optical paradox faced by both Thibaut and Ibn Quzman in a simple yet powerful comparison between the sight of beauty and staring at the sun. The source of light is not to blame, he notes, “if feeble eyes are stricken blind / and cannot look upon its rays” (إذا فُصرت عنها ضفَاع البصائر) (Arberry 148). In other words, the beloved serves both as a source of light which permits sight, as well as a blinding blaze which overwhelms the eyes.

Whereas the King of Navarre tries to solve the optical paradox by rejecting physical sight for transcendent insight, Ibn Quzman takes a different track toward resolution. Although there is nothing as explicit as the notion of Thibaut’s “eyes of the heart,” the reader finds statements in Ibn Quzman’s verse which take visual contemplation of the beloved to a heightened level of devotion to her and to physicality itself. In Zajal 134, for example, the poet pauses before the beloved and attempts to define her beauty through a series of kinesthetic interrogations:

[Are you an emerald, or a pearl?

زَمَرْدًا أَمْ أَوْ جَوْهَرًا

Cinnamon or, perhaps, amber?

أَوْ قَرْفَه ات أَوْ عَنَبَرًا

Are you a candy or maybe sugar?

أَوْ حَلْوٍ أَنْتِ أَوْ سَكَّرٌ

The daily sun, another moon,

أَوْ شَمْسٍ أَوْ نَهَارٍ أَوْ بَدْرًا ثَانِي

or a combination of this all?] (Buturovic 303)

أَوْ فَيْكِ هِيَ ذَا الْخِصَالِ اجْمَعُ

While this strophe doesn't explicitly mention eyes, sight, or the effects of gazing upon physical beauty, it has its base in the poet's gaze directed at the beloved. Visual metaphors hold together a string of disparate images formed as the poet tries to put his finger on the nature of physical beauty. The poet bombards the reader's sense of sight, taste, smell, and touch with a barrage of items—emerald (*zamarrud*), pearl (*jawhar*), cinnamon (*qirfa*), amber ('*anbar*), candy (□*ilw*), sugar (*sukkar*), sun (*shams*), moon (*badr*)—in which the poet delights as much as he revels in being able to gaze at the beloved. The strophe thus “concentrate[s] on the poet's admiration for the beloved” through visual contemplation (Buturovic 303). The poet weaves these images, each a synecdoche of one physical sense or another, together in a sensual celebration of the beloved, and indeed of physical perception itself.

On another level, these lines by Ibn Quzman leave behind physical beauty and become centered “more on the poet than on the countenance of his beloved” (Buturovic 303): by focusing on the attempt to define physical beauty through metaphor, the poet supplants physical beauty with his own cognitive process as the center of poetic attention. This internality echoes the turning inward shown in Thibaut de Champagne, in whose “darkened heart” is the center of amorous contemplation. Even though Ibn Quzman chooses to have the

poetic persona move from visual contemplation of the beloved to a celebration of sensuality, as opposed to Thibaut's tentative rejection of physical sight, both poets thus come full circle to their own impassioned feelings. Indeed, it is these feelings with which they must ultimately wrestle. The binary nature of human love is impossible to untangle: the highest highs of passion are inevitably accompanied by its lowest lows. As we shall see in the next chapter, both poets would rather deal with the desperate valleys of passion in order to experience its elated hills, rather than to live without the highs. This leads both poets to erect idols out of their impassioned feelings, whether resulting in Thibaut's abstraction of love as the ennobling basis of a virtuous love religion, or in Ibn Quzman's worship of human sensuality.

III. The Religion of Love

We see in both Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman that tentative solutions to the paradox of love end up idealizing the beloved and indeed passionate love itself. Each poetic *oeuvre* contains verses idealizing aspects of courtly love, whether it is Thibaut's suggestion to look on the beloved with the "eyes of the heart," or Ibn Quzman's indulgence in the poetic gaze and celebration of sensual experience. Moreover, both of these poets' meditations on love go so far as to make the beloved into an object of worship, devotion to whom becomes a secular rite in a profane religion of love. As we see in the following section, both Ibn Quzman and Thibaut de Champagne use language and imagery from the organized, monotheistic religions of their respective geo-cultural traditions (Islam and Christianity) to express aspects of profane love in their verse. In so doing, they each replace those religions with profane devotion to physical beauty and even passionate love itself.

a. Thibaut de Champagne

The use of religious models to shed light on human passion is common in both the medieval French and Hispano-Arabic traditions of love poetry. One of the most salient examples from troubadour and *trouvère* verse appears in the works of Gace Brule, knight of Champagne and contemporary of Thibaut de Champagne. In the following strophe, we gain insight into the poet's dependence on passionate love:

Issi me plest, comment q'il m'en aviengne. [I like things as they are, whatever

Par tel reson sui povres asazez	happens to me
Quant je plus vueil ce dont plus sui grevez,	And I am so poorly contented,
Et en l'esmai m'estuet joer et rire :	for I want what harms me most,
Onc més ne vi si decevant martire.	And dismay makes me laugh and

play:

I have never seen martyrdom so
deceitful] (Gildon 398-9).

In a few brief lines, the poet has linked the trope, common in troubadour and *trouvère* verse, of the masochistic desire for love's pangs with a religious counterpart, martyrdom. Antithesis plays a strong role in developing this connection, juxtaposing "dismay" (*esmai*) with verbs like "please" (*plest*), "play" (*joer*), and "laugh" (*rire*). By crashing these opposing concepts together in verse meditations on profane love, the poet creates a linguistic microcosm of that love's dual nature. The final solution is martyrdom (*martire*) in the name of human passion, a demise which sanctifies the poet's devotion to the beloved, and indeed to love itself. In fact, the *oeuvres* of many troubadours and *trouvères* feature a personified *Dieu d'amour* who represents in anthropomorphized form the ennobling qualities of courtly love (Ménard 67). This represents a point of departure between the medieval French and Hispano-Arabic traditions, in that the latter does not idealize love itself to the point of personification. Although medieval Andalusian poetry does include numerous sayings about the religion of love, the god Amor is a uniquely French, and later German, conception of human passion,

taking the idea of *Frauendienst* as both a feudal and religious model of devotion to the beloved (Lewis 20).

Old French and Provençal lyric in general, and Thibaut's literary output in particular, often juxtapose visual or other contemplation of the beloved, with ostensible worship of deity. In fact, we can see such juxtaposition in Thibaut de Champagne's usage of just a single word. In strophe 4, lines 1-2 of Thibaut's poem "De bone amor vient séance et biauté," the poet writes:

Or n'i a plus fors qu'a li me conmant	I have no recourse but to place myself
Car touz biens fez ai lessié pour celui :	at her command
Ma bele vie ou ma mort i atent.	For I have forsaken all earthly goods for her:
	Either life or my death awaits me.
	(Brahney 122-3)

The a contrast between the material and the transcendent. The implication here is that "earthly goods" (*biens*) and the beloved are mutually exclusive, the latter infinitely and divinely superior to the former. By forsaking material concerns, the poet consecrates his desire for the beloved as a form of worship. Of particular note is the usage of the word *biens*, used here to mean physical "goods," a usage which corresponds to Saint-Palaye's exposition of the phrase *biens de nature*, "c'est-a-dire les richesses" (2).⁵ Elsewhere in the same poem, the poet contrasts this terrestrial sense of *biens* with that of such intangible characteristics as beauty, which "fine qualities" (*les granz biens*) his lady possesses:

1 Li coreor sunt la nuit en clarte,	[1 At night the couriers are in the light,
-------------------------------------	--

2 Et le jor sont por la gent oscurci:	2 And during the day, they are obscured
3 Li douz regart plesant et savore,	from view:
4 Et les granz biens qu'en ma dame choisi;	3 The sweet glances, gracious and charming,
5 N'est merveille se je m'en esbahi.	4 And the fine qualities I found in my lady;
6 De li a Dex le siècle enlumine,	5 It is no wonder I am awestruck by these
7 Car qui avroit le plus biau jor d' este,	things.
8 Les li seroit oscur en plain midi.	6 Through her presence God has illumined
	the world,
	7 For, whoever would have the fairest
	summer day
	8 At high noon, would have darkness
	next to her. (Brahney 122-3)

Here, the word *biens* appears in the context of lauding the beloved's transcendent luminescence, a nigh spiritual essence through which God provides light to the world. In this sense, it is closer to Saint-Palaye's understanding of *biens de nature*, or refined qualities which cannot be purchased or acquired (2). This second instance of the word *biens* in Thibaut's "De bone amor" echoes the statement in the poem "Tuit mi desir" that "her worth is composed of all great goods (*li bien*)," in which *bien* describes physical as well as spiritual characteristics of her eternal "worth" (*valor*) (Brahney 134-5); this corresponds to the *biens de grace* expounded by Saint-Palaye, personal characteristics of a more transcendent quality than the *biens de nature* (2). The poet's multiple usage of the word *biens* indicates the

juxtaposition of materiality and physical beauty with spirituality, thus making the word itself a microcosm of the poet's own vacillation between contemplating feminine beauty and consideration of love as transcendent. By merely gazing upon his lady, the poet moves between the sight of physical beauty and divine worship, culminating in apparent gratitude to God for His love as expressed through the beauty of His creations.

However, the polysemous nature of the word *biens* also invites ambiguity as to the nature of this poetic devotion. Nowhere does the poet address the problematic fact that by relying on physical beauty, divine worship becomes a product of earthly creation. The logical conclusion to the process of relying on earthly beauty to obtain spiritual communion is that creation itself supercedes the Creator as an object of devotion and love. In Thibaut de Champagne's song "Tout autresi con l'ente fet venire," the poet compares devotion to his lady with divine worship:

1 Dame, se je servise Dieu autant	[1 My lady, if I served God
2 et priasse de verai cuer entier	2 And prayed to him as truly and
3 con je faz vous, je sai certainement	wholeheartedly
4 qu'en Paradis n'eüst autel loier ;	3 As I do you, I know indeed
5 mes je ne puis ne servir ne prier	4 That I would not have to rent an
6 nului fors vous, a qui mes cuers s'atent,	altar in Paradise;
	5 But I cannot serve or pray
	6 Anyone but you, to whom my
	heart is attentive] (Brahney 96-7).

As these lines indicate, contemplation of feminine beauty ultimately provides a substitution for, rather than an aid to, worshipping Deity. In juxtaposing the poet's devotion to God and that of his lady, the latter wins out by an overwhelming margin. Also present in these lines is a sense of ambivalence. The poet is aware that his worship of the beloved supercedes that of Deity, even to the point of being unsure about his eternal reward. He only knows with certainty (*certainement*) that his reward would be great were it to be given in accordance with the passion he nurtures for the beloved.

As noted earlier, devotion to the beloved in Old French and Provençal lyric often features courtly love as a personified god, "Amor." Blondel de Nesle, another important *trouvère* and Crusade companion of Richard the Lion-Hearted, composed one of the most explicit strophes acknowledging the God of love. In his song "Se savoient mon tourment," Blondel describes in some detail the nature of the god Amor:

1 He, Dieus d'amour! Com as grant	[1 Ah, God of Love, how great is your
seignourie,	lordship,
2 Qui les amans pues ocirre et sauver !	2 You can kill or save all those who love.
3 L'un dounes mort, as outres dounes vie,	3 To one you give death, to others life,
4 L'un fais languir, l'autre rire et joër.	4 One you let languish, another laugh
5 Tu m'as ocis, or m'as rendu la vie,	and play.
6 Seur toutes rienz te doi je aouer ;	5 You killed me, now you have given me
7 Quar de cele, qui estoit m'anemie,	back my life,
8 M'as fait ami, dont mout te doi amer.	6 I ought to worship you above all things ;

9 Or chanterai de toi toute ma vie,

7 For the one who was my enemy

10 Si te voudrai servir et honorer.

8 You made my friend, and I must love you

for that.

9 Now I shall sing of you my whole life long,

10 And serve you willingly and honor you]

(Goldin 368-9).

This strophe is worth reproducing here in its entirety as a representative example of general troubadour and *trouvère* descriptions of the god of love. As with previous citations from Thibaut and other medieval French and Provençal poets, these lines from Blondel feature antithesis as a major device employed in describing the dual nature of the god Amor. The second line attributes both the ability to “kill” (*ocirre*) and “save” (*sauver*) those devoted to Amor’s secular religion of profane passion; line 4 juxtaposes the languishing (*languir*) lover with one who laughs (*rire*) and plays (*joër*); and lines 7 and 8 bring together the concepts of “friend” (*ami*) and “enemy” (*anemie*), the latter transformed into the former through Amor’s “lordship” (*seignourie*). As a binary being, imbued with such oscillating moods and powers as these, the god of love embodies the quintessential elements of courtly love espoused by the troubadours and *trouvères*. It is in this paradoxical vision of love as a circular motion from joy to pain and back that drives the poet to song.

In addition to the antithetical language of these lines, feudal and religious tones appear as well. In the last line, the poet pledges to “serve and honor” (*servir et honorer*) the profane god Amor his “whole life long” (*toute ma vie*) despite, or perhaps because of, the

potential suffering and death at Amor's hands. Such language echoes the ironic, feudal "love-service" of other medieval French and Occitan poets such as Bernart de Ventadorn and Jaufre Rudel, whose ostensible servitude ends up turning into a form of professional gain (Burns 266). Accompanying the feudal connotations of servitude are religious ones as well. The verb "servir," for example, takes on spiritual nuances in the above-quoted song "Tout autresi con l'ente fet venire," in which we see the term "serve" used in a religious context: "I cannot serve or pray anyone but you" writes the poet (*mes je ne puis ne servir ne prier / nului fors vous*). In analyzing the nuances of this strophe, one is struck by the prevalent language and imagery of religious devotion. The poet cannot "serve" (*servir*) nor "pray" (*prier*) to anyone but the beloved, not even God. This admission is exacerbated by the statement, made in lines 3 and 4, that the poet would be assured of not having a "similar reward" (*autel loier*) in Paradise, making it seem as though the gains from worshipping the beloved are greater than worshipping God. Indeed, these clear traces of sacred devotion serve a wholly profane god, Amor, whose exigencies take final precedent over traditional religious worship.

As we read in Blondel de Nesle, however, worship of Amor has dire consequences: "To one you give death, to others life" (*L'un dounes mort, as outres dounes vie*). The profane love god is passion personified, and therefore represents in deified form the binary nature of love. As noted, the joys of passion can never be fully separated from its pangs. Resigned to this truth, then, the poet in Thibaut's verse accepts suffering and even martyrdom as the price to pay for the hope of receiving love from the lady in return. In the song "Amors me fet commencier,"

the poet is comforted by the thought of a reward in the hereafter. He discusses how he must render service to his lady, even at the expense of his own life:

S'ele me fait languir,	[Even if she makes me languish,
Et vois jusqu'au morir,	And I go unto my death,
M'ame en sera sauvee.	My soul will be saved by it] (Brahney 2-3).

Of particular note in these lines are the three words which end them: “languish” (*languir*), “morir,” (*morir*), and “saved” (*sauvee*). By moving from suffering to fatality to salvation, the poet encapsulates the process of devoting oneself to the religion of love, a devotion sanctified by the very blood of the lover. The divine reward of a soul saved is the complement to a life of suffering at the hands of a distant, unattainable beloved. It is only through stoic perseverance on love’s battlefield that the poet might hope to transcend the paradox of human passion as the source of both life and death. By accepting physical demise, the lover consecrates his devotion to the religion of love and secures himself a transcendent reward.

However, it is ultimately not the beloved who causes suffering and death, but rather the poet’s own desire. As noted in the first chapter, courtly love in Thibaut de Champagne is a system of feudal and religious service turned inward, a “sweet prison cell” (*la douce chartre en prison*) in which the poet languishes inside of himself (Brahney 102). In Thibaut’s song “A enviz sent mal qui ne l’a apris,” the poet invokes the myth of Narcissus to describe his suffering :

Narcisus sui, qui se noia par soi.	[I am Narcissus who drowns of his own thirst.
Noiez sui prèz, loing est ma garison,	I am nearly drowned, distant is my cure,
S’entendre je touz jorz a son servise.	Even if I remain always at her command.

Servir doi bien pour si grant guerredon ; I must serve well for such a great reward;
Mult voudroie qu'ele en seust ma foi. Would only that she might know my faith !]

(Brahney 32-3)

The choice to employ the figure of Narcissus, who drowns trying to embrace his own reflection in a lake, underscores the internality of devotion to profane love. It is not physical beauty which causes suffering; rather, as Andreas Capellanus writes, the “obsessive meditation” (*immoderata cogitatione*) of beauty which constitutes courtly love, and leads ultimately to suffering and death. In this way, the poet becomes both lover and beloved, subject and object, enduring love pangs which take on a life of their own inside the poet’s heart. The structure of this strophe supports the view that it is the poet’s desire for the beloved, and not the beloved herself, which represents the basis of devotion to profane love and the source of suffering. Although the strophe laments the lady’s refusal to acknowledge the poet’s “faith” (*foi*) and devotion to her, the true source of suffering is the lover’s own “thirst” (*soi*) for passionate union with the beloved. The fact that these two terms, *foi* and *soi*, correspond in rhyme juxtaposes the idea of faith with that of desire. While the strophe doesn’t suggest equivalence between the two, the fact that the poet’s *foi* (faith) consists of enduring his own *soi* (thirst, desire) establishes even more fully the notion of a profane love religion, with the poet’s own desire and meditation on physical beauty as a site of worship.

The recursive nature of the profane love religion has significant consequences for poetic identity. As shown, the King of Navarre posits the poet’s demise as the final result of devotion to profane love. The final result of this is a death wish, a masochistic desire for

annihilation of the poet's own identity. Love's pangs are too difficult to bear, and yet their pain makes thoughts of the beloved all the sweeter. In the song "Dame, l'en dit que l'en muert bien de joie," we read :

Dame, l'en dit que l'en muert bien de joie:	[Lady, it is said that one can indeed die
Je l'ai douté, mès ce fu pour noient,	of joy :
Que je cuidai, s'entre voz braz estoie,	I have feared it, but it was for nothing,
Que je fenisse iluec joieusement.	For I believe that if I were in your arms,
Si douce morz fust bien a mon talent,	I would come to a joyous end.
Que la dolor d'amours qui me guerroie	Such sweet death would be to my liking,
Par est si grant que du morir m'esfroie.	For the pain of love inflicting me
	Is so very great that I fear death from it.]

(Brahney 142-3)

These lines are rife with ambivalence on the poet's part. On the one hand, suffering unrequited love is too difficult to endure, even to the point where the lover begins to fear he will die from it. On the other hand, the thought of union with the beloved is joyful enough that it could lead to the poet's "sweet death" (*douce morz*) in her arms. The lover desires death one way or the other, leading him to the conclusion that such demise will consummate his devotion to the beloved. His profane love religion therefore asks for the ultimate sacrifice, that of his own being. In the song "Empereres ne rois n'ont nul pouoir," the poet states:

Dame, ma mort et ma vie	[Lady, my death and my life
Est en vos, que que je die.	Are in you, whatever I say.] (Brahney 94-5)

These two lines represent Thibaut’s clearest expression of the desire behind the poet’s death wish, namely complete union with the beloved. By placing his life and death in the beloved, the poet affirms the first and last goal of the love religion, which is to be swallowed up by the beloved and her beauty.

b. Ibn Quzman

Ibn Quzman also sets up physical beauty as his object of worship in a profane religion of love, in which the beloved serves as an “erotic surrogate,” a metaphorical substitute for spiritual enlightenment attained through contemplation of physical beauty (Manzalaoui 120-1). As in Thibaut de Champagne, such visual apprehension of beauty leads not to Deity, but doubles back instead, becoming the “Religion of Love” proclaimed by such diverse Hispano-Arabic poets as Ibn Zaydun, Ibn ‘Arabi, Ibn Shuhayd, and Al-A’maa Al-Tuṭīli. Ibn Zaydun, for example, has the following lines from the beginning of his *Nūniyya* to the princess Wallada:

لَمْ نَعْتَقِدْ بَعْدَكُمْ إِلَّا الْوَفَاءَ لَكُمْ رَأْيًا، وَلَمْ نَنْقَلِدْ غَيْرَهُ دِينًا

[We have believed firmly in nothing after you [have left] save

In adopting faithfulness to you as our attitude, and other than

It we have not embraced any religion.] (Monroe 178-9)

Penned after Wallada’s departure from the lover, these two *bayts* hinge upon two important nouns: “faithfulness” (*al-wafā’a*) in the first *bayt*, and “religion” or “faithfulness” (*dīna*) in the second. The first is found in the context of much Hispano-Arabic profane love verse, as well as prose treatises such as Ibn Hazm’s *awq al-amāma*, as a virtue of love to be upheld; the second is the term, along with “worship” or “creed” (*al-i’tiqād*), commonly used to describe

religion as a formal practice. In this context, these two words represent the two poles of profane love, which begins with faithfulness or abject loyalty to the beloved, and ends with the idealization and worship of that same beloved and even profane love itself. In progressing from *al-wafā'* to *al-dīn*, Ibn Zaydun's brief line contains within it the sum of courtly love as expressed in the Hispano-Arabic tradition.

Similarly, Ibn Quzman's *Diwan* contains some of the most powerful expressions of the profane love religion found among the poets of his age. In Zajal 129, the poet meditates on the notion of service to the beloved, which culminates in enslavement and passionate idolatry:

1	أنا، والله، عبدك	والخلق أجمع عبيدك
2	زادك الله ملاحه	وحق باه أن يزيدك
3	الناس اجمع يريدك	فكف أنا لسن نريدك؟
4	فأنت اماتني حب	فأنت عيسى بن مريم
5	أنت ه اليوم ديني	وقبلتي وصلاتي
6	وأنت ه نور عيني	ومنيتي وحياتي
7	فعسى، أحبيبي،	تقبل قبل وفاتي
8	فوصالك لي جنة	و(في) صدورك جهنم

[1] I am your slave, by Allah, as are all men

2 May Allah increase your beauty, which deserves such increase.

- 3 If all the world loves you, then how can I not also?
- 4 Your love kills: you are Jesus the son of Mary.
- 5 Today you are my religion, my sacrificial altar, my prayer
- 6 And you are the light of my eye, my intent and my life.
- 7 Allah grant you will kiss me before my death
- 8 Since your love is heaven to me, and your breast a hell.]

These lines are striking in their fierce, declarative simplicity of language, as well as the numerous religious terms and images employed. The term “slave” (*‘abd*) used in the first line is particular to the religious realm, since the term for workers owned by masters were usually referred to by the term *riq*. Lines 5 and 6 both fire off a triplet of nouns in rapid succession, beginning with religious language followed by that of profane love: in line 5, the beloved is “my religion” (*dīnī*), “altar” (*qiblatī*), and “prayer” (*□alātī*); in line 6, “light of my eye” (*nūru ‘aynī*), “my intent” (*muniyyatī*), and “my life” (*□ayyātī*). The acoustic effect of repeating the first person personal pronoun suffix “my” (*-i*) serves to drive home the subjectivity inherent in the poet’s affirmation of the beloved as his own personal prayer rite, religion and sacrificial altar. At the same time, subjective or no, such statements mock formal religion all the more by contrast with continued references to God. “By Allah” (*wallāhi*) the poet writes, as well as, “May Allah increase you in beauty” (*zādaka ’llāhu malāḥahu*), ironic acknowledgements of Deity in the context of a poem in which the beloved is given precedent over the object of worship in traditional religion.

Ibn Quzman's affirmation of a subjective religion of passion is the secular counterpart to a rich tradition of religious poetry, in Arabic generally and Al-Andalus in particular, which uses profane love motifs to express affinity for the divine. Although this study focuses primarily on secular poetry which employs religious language and imagery, we would be remiss if religious love poetry were left entirely unmentioned. Ibn 'Arabi stands out among other figures in this particular tradition as one of the great Sufi thinkers and poets, not only of medieval Spain but in all of Arabic thought and literature (Manzalaoui 124). Indeed, much of his religious verse is ambiguous to the point where readers might read it as strictly profane love poetry. In the following lines, for example, the trappings of organized religion serve to decorate meditations on profane love, not the other way around:

فَمَرَعَى لِيْغَزْلَانَ وَدَيْرٍ لِرُهْبَانِ	لَقَدْ صَارَ قَلْبِي قَابِلًا كُلَّ صُورَةٍ
وَأَلْوَاحِ تَوْرَاتٍ وَمُصْحَفٍ قُرْآنِ	وَبَيْتٍ لِأوثَانٍ وَكَعْبَةٍ طَائِفِ
رَكَائِبُهُ فَالْحُبُّ دِينِي وَإِيمَانِي	أَدِينُ بِدِينِ الْحُبِّ أَنِّي تَوَجَّهْتُ

[My heart has adopted every shape; it has become a pasture

for gazelles and a convent for Christian monks,

A temple for idols and a Pilgrim's Ka'ba, the tables of a Torah

And the pages of a Koran.

I follow the religion of Love; wherever Love's camels turn,

There Love is my religion and my faith.] (Monroe 320-1)

The last line is Ibn ‘Arabi’s quintessential declaration of the similarity between profane love and monotheistic religion, even as he distinguishes between them in other circumstances (Manzalaoui 125). The strophe begins and ends with the notion of the poet’s heart denying its own identity, assuming “every shape” (*kulla □ūratin*), in order to follow the religion of love “wherever love’s camels turn” (*tawajjahat rakā’ibuhu*). Michael Sells affirms that the affirmation of a heart which has “adopted every shape” speaks to the “mystical philosophy of the constant transformation of the heart” (153). In terms of profane love, it is the final openness of the lover’s emotional state which renders him a devoted follower of the love religion.

Also present in these lines is the logical extreme of the secular love religion, espoused by poets of the medieval French and Hispano-Arabic poetic traditions: namely, self-annihilation, or *fanā’* in Sufi thought (Sells 153). Like Thibaut de Champagne, Ibn Quzman’s poetic voice also takes death as the result of devotion to love. In Zajal 129, the poet boldly proclaims “your love kills me” (*fā’idh amātunī □ubbun*), going on to posit the destructive effects of looking at the beloved’s eyes. Likewise, in Zajal 49, we see the logical conclusion of suffering for love:

[Love has diminished me; I will surely die of it.	الهوى قللن ومن نموت
My body is wasted thin as a spider’s thread,	ان ردد جسمي كخييط عنكبوت
So walk away, leave me to my demise	فامش ودعوني من قبل ان نفوت
Don’t make a fuss over me, I am already dead.]	غمضوا علي قد مت بعد

The poet’s emaciated frame, “like a spider’s thread” (*kakhay □ ankabūt*), is a vivid monument to the poet’s suffering in love. His claim to be dead already, literally “I have already died” (*qad*

muttu ba‘ad), from passion is an especially strong confirmation of the poet’s death wish. He would rather be dead and have an assured place with the beloved than to live without either the joy or pain of profane love. Elsewhere, self-annihilation takes the form not of a body starved from love’s pains, but rather consumed by flame. The following lines describe how the lover, infatuated with the beloved, burns with impassioned feelings as if by fire:

وَجَحِيمَ نَارِ الصُّدُودِ قَدْ نَزَلَ لَكَ فَالْجَسَدِ
 تَرَى جِسْمَكَ يَوْتَقَدُ تَرَى جِسْمَكَ يَشْتَعَلُ
 تَطْلُبُ اتَّ مِنْ الْحَبِيبِ مِنْ وَصَالِ بَشٍ يَنْخَمَدُ
 وَيَجِي كَثِيرَ الصُّدُودِ بُفُّ بُفٍّ وَيَوَقَدُ

[Hellfire from spite / Descended upon your body,
 You see your body ignited / Your limbs consumed;
 If water of love you request / To extinguish the flame,
 It comes from spite / And extinguishes, *buf buf!*] Zajal 117

In this strophe, the simple and stark vocabulary describing love’s “igniting” (*yawtaqad*) and “consuming” (*yashṭa‘al*) power represents a secular version of similar tropes in Islamicate and especially Sufi texts on the relationship between humans and the divine. The concept of *fanā’*, or “annihilation” of the self, becomes the goal of Sufi progression toward unity with Deity. In many instances, such as the poetic works of medieval Sufi saint Mansur b. al-Hallaj, this concept takes the form of literary symbols, such as the image of a moth, representing the Sufi disciple, circling a lamp or flame, representing Allah, and slowly being consumed by the heat (Mojaddedi).

Ibn Quzman's employment of a consuming fire as a metaphor of human passion reveals the inward nature of his conception of love. Rather than showing the beloved to be the cause of suffering and death, Ibn Quzman's poet identifies his own desire as the cause of self-annihilation. We see this in Zajal 26, which consists of an apostrophic conversation between the poet and the beloved's eyes. In the second strophe, the poet makes an explicit connection between the beloved's gaze and the feelings which have taken control of the lover:

[You planted a seed in my heart until it زرعتُم ذا الراي بقلبي حتى أنزرت
sprouted]

You said: "Even though you run, you will وقاتم "اشحال ما تهرب لا بد أن تقع
fall."]

Here, the addressee is the beloved's eyes, indicated by the second person plural pronoun suffix -*tum*. Their effect on the poet is to cause him feelings of desire, like a seed (*dhā'l-rāi*) which sprouts (*anzara'*) within the lover, who then hears the beloved's eyes affirming his demise. In these two brief lines, Ibn Quzman summarizes the vacillations of pious devotion to profane love, as the poet swings like a pendulum between visual consideration of the beloved's eyes and his own amorous desires. These lines also affirm the inevitability of the poet's demise, as he yields control to the passions germinating inside him. Like Thibaut de Champagne, Ibn Quzman makes his poet turn inward, gazing back at his heart's desire for the beloved's eyes, rather than facing outward to consider physical beauty itself.

Despite this and other similarities between the notion of love as a kind of secular religion in Ibn Quzman and Thibaut de Champagne, Ibn Quzman appears to embrace the

physicality of love more explicitly than his *trouvère* counterpart. It is union with the beloved, rather than distant meditation on her, which is the true prize. For example, Zajal 116 consists of a love poem to an adolescent boy, whose youthful beauty is compared to the light of the moon.

The poet goes on to extol physical embrace with the beloved:

[If you saw what strikes me	لو رأيتم ما أَرشَقُ
Whom I love and desire	مَنْ نَحَبُّ وَنَعشَقُ
I hear it said, “Embrace him!”	اسمَعِ اشْ قَلَّ "عَنَقُ"
And whoever kisses him would have	لَيْتَ مَنْ كَانَ يَقَبِّلُ
The worth of an afternoon in Paradise.]	بفضيلة نهار جنة

As we have seen, the impetus to feelings of passion in these lines come from visual apprehension of physical beauty. The beloved’s pleasing form “strikes” (*’arshaqu*) the poet, whose desire to possess the beloved leads him not to a lofty idealization of love itself, but the prospect of physical pleasure. “Embrace him!” (*’annaqu*) whispers the poet’s heart, urging him to union with the love object. The final comparison of the beloved’s kiss to an afternoon in Paradise confirms the idea that physical pleasure rivals traditional theology’s promise of eternal reward. Elsewhere in Ibn Quzman we encounter statements to the effect that sensuality is such a prize that chaste love serves no purpose. In Zajal 128, another meditation on visual apprehension of the beloved, the final strophe reveals the poet’s bias in favor of physicality:

[Others give themselves to chaste love.	عشَقَ المرؤَّ غَيْرِي يَدَّعِيهِ
Allah has granted me temperance in this.	الله يَرْزُقُنِي القنَاعَةَ فِيهِ

Kisses, embraces, and that which comes next!

قُبْلٌ وَتَعْنِيقٌ وَالَّذِي يَلِيهِ

Whoever asks more falls into meddling.]

مَنْ يَطْلُبُ أَكْثَرَ يَفْعُ فَالْفُضُولُ

These lines are a prime example of Ibn Quzman's sarcastic attitude toward idealistic visions of love, while simultaneously displaying his poetic ingenuity. The phrase used for "chaste love" or "courtly love" is *'ishq al-muruwwa*, which, as Gomez indicates, refers to the chaste *'udhrī* love espoused by pre-Islamic poets (643). The most comical of these four lines is the second, which claims that Allah has granted the poet moderation (*al-qanā'a*) in chaste love, a satirical inversion of traditional religious and especially Christian prescriptions against physical love (Lewis 30). The elliptical statement "and that which comes next" (*wa-lladhī yalīhi*) alludes to that which follows initial kisses and embraces, namely sexual union with the beloved. In this strophe, then, the poet sets up physicality as the end goal of the love religion, beyond which one "falls into meddling" (*yaqa'u fi'l-fuṣūli*), or asks too much. Transcendence in Ibn Quzman's love religion is really a return to its beginnings, a worship of the physicality whose effect on human eyes incited passionate feelings to begin with.

IV. Conclusion

As I hope to have shown, both Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman progress from visual apprehension of physical beauty to desire for the beloved, ultimately arriving at a transcendent devotion to love and its qualities. Although Ibn Quzman takes a more explicit approach to making sensuality a key facet of his meditation on passion, both poets take the beloved as a sacred object of worship in a secular religion of profane love. However, they don't stop there. As noted, both the King of Navarre and Ibn Quzman move from the beloved as object of devotion, to worshipping love itself, whether as an ennobling courtly virtue in Thibaut de Champagne, or as culminating in fleshly indulgence in Ibn Quzman. In this way, then, the love religion, like the *grant chant courtois* itself, is based on a circular movement (Zumthor 131): both poets moves from sight of the beloved to desire, and then on to worship of the beloved, which ultimately leads the poet back to abstract conceptions of his own amorous desires. The poet is thus assured of an eternal devotion to his beloved, since the thought or image of beauty sets off a chain of perpetual motion from consideration of the beloved to worship of passion and back again.

Moreover, this circularity of the secular religion of love takes self-annihilation as the end result of pious devotion to courtly love. Both Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman make poetic statements to the effect that death at the hands of love, and destruction of poetic identity in the process, is more desirable than life without the expectation of a return on their investment.

The concept of suffering and death for love in hopes of obtaining the beloved's favor represents the profane counterpart to monotheistic incentives to worship. Goodman describes how, in both Christianity and Islam, the idea of eternal reward establishes a sense of "complementarity of [this world and the next]...Mortification of the flesh (in Christian asceticism especially) is one expression of such a perceived symmetry: one profits in the next world by what one gives up here" (308). In other words, devout believers must give up their mortal bodies and selves in order to secure a place in the hereafter. As for the profane love religion shown in Thibaut de Champagne, the reward hoped for is that of union with the beloved, which represents the complement to a mortal life of suffering from unrequited love. It is only through stoic perseverance on love's battlefield that the poet might hope to transcend the paradox of human passion as the source of both life and death. By accepting annihilation of body and poetic identity, the lover consecrates his devotion to the religion of love and secures himself a final recompense.

It is self-annihilation in Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman, however, which raises questions about the nature of a religion based on the poet's desire to unite with the beloved. The circularity of the profane love religion means that the poet's own feelings of passion and desire for the beloved form the basis of the love religion. If the poet were to achieve the end goal of worshipping courtly love—namely, unity with the beloved—his feelings of passion would, along with this poetic identity, cease to exist. The basis for idealized devotion to profane love, i.e. the poet's own desire, would thus be negated. Sustainability of the love religion as a system would be impossible: the poet's desire for and obsession with the love object, which

obsession forms the basis of the love religion, would come to its end in his union with the beloved. Additionally, there would be no poetic identity to distinguish from the beloved in verse, leaving a silence where distance from the beloved once inspired song.

The love religion expressed by Thibaut de Champagne and Ibn Quzman therefore relies on the fact that the devout worshipper of courtly love can never obtain the end goal of that worship. It was noted in the first section that the medieval *trouvères* benefitted professionally from poetic inability to unite with the beloved, since distance from the beloved causes suffering to sing about. In like fashion, the secular religion of love benefits from the inability of its devotees to achieve their reward of union with the love object, since the desire experienced by distant lovers forms the basis of profane love worship. In this way, the religion of love is really a religion of absence, a system of devotion centered upon a vacuum. Several poets of the medieval French tradition exhibit this idea, especially Guillaume IX's verse meditating on the "rien absolu," or the present absence of the lost beloved (Joris 104). Likewise, the Arabic literary tradition encapsulates the idea of poetic meditation on nothingness going back to the pre-Islamic *mu'allaqāt* odes, wherein the poet pauses over the ruins (*aḥlāl*) of his beloved's campsite to lament her absence. In the end, the religion of love leaves neither comfort nor anguish because its object of worship is the presence of absence, both of the beloved and the poet himself, recorded forever in verse which simultaneously laments and preserves that absence.

Notes

¹ Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

² For Arabic transliterations, I use the system preferred by the editors of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

³ Subsequent references to Ibn Quzman's poetry will be given by number of the zajal, from F. Corriente's edition of the *Diwan*.

⁴ From the 1964 Ibrahim al-Abyaari Arabic edition.

⁵ The word "biens" is not listed in Godefroy (646).

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