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# Fortune and Desire
# in Guillaume de Machaut

by

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# Table of Contents

**Conclusion**

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# Declaration

I hereby state that this thesis is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

# Thesis Abstract

There is a pervasive tendency, in Machaut scholarship, to read his poetry as having value only insofar as it speaks to our postmodern age: either it is fragmented and riven with ambiguities, or it celebrates eroticism and the things of this world for their own sake; in any case, it resists religious and moral orthodoxy. Such readings, while often valuable in themselves, fail to take sufficient account of the influence which Boethian and Neoplatonic ideas had upon Machaut, and thus misunderstand his work on a fundamental level. By paying attention to the Boethian content in the narrative *dits*, and by analysing Machaut's verse more thoroughly than has been done before, my thesis demonstrates not only this author's moral orthodoxy, but also his extremely sophisticated didactic methods. I begin with the *Confort d'ami*, Machaut's most overtly moral work. The *Confort* engages with the supposed 'worldly' perspective of its imprisoned addressee, adapting biblical and classical *exempla* in order to coax Charles of Navarre towards a deeper understanding of worldly fortune. In Chapter 2 I show how, in the *Prologue* and the *Dit du vergier*, the ambiguity so beloved of critics can serve as a moral commentary on the carnality and self-absorption of the erotic and artistic points of view. Having established, in the preceding chapters, that this author's approach to his subject is ambiguous and critical, in Chapter 3 I explore the extremes of his pessimism, and show how his love poetry can incorporate sophisticated philosophical ideas, through my analysis of the *Jugement du roy de Behaigne*. The thesis culminates in a detailed reading of the *Remede de Fortune*. Through his deliberately idealised statements about education, through his application of these views to the art of courtly love, through his composition (and setting to music) of a sequence of virtuoso lyrics, and through his explicit invocations of and borrowings from Boethius, Machaut develops an empathic but ultimately, as I argue, deeply sceptical vision of earthly love.

# Prefatory Note

As I am registered for a degree in *English* literature, some explanation of my focus on a *French* poet would seem to be required. In the first year of my PhD, I undertook lengthy studies of the English poets John Lydgate and John Gower, and began reading Machaut in order to develop my understanding of the literary tradition in which Gower (and others) were writing. Initially I intended only to refer to Machaut in passing, or in an introductory chapter, as did Peter Nicholson in his recent book, *Love and Ethics in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005). However, the more I read of Machaut's poetry, the more I felt that it was necessary to devote the entire thesis to him. My findings on Machaut have wide-reaching implications for the way we read his English successors, and I look forward to exploring these implications in the future.

All translations in the footnotes are my own unless otherwise stated. In my own translations, I have primarily tried to convey the literal meaning of the original, even if this makes for awkward English. When quoting medieval French, I follow the given editor's practice with regard to accents, resulting in a certain amount of inconsistency.

# Introduction

*Inclusion and Exclusion: the Boethian Model*

In determining the nature and extent of the Boethian content in any medieval poem, a great deal depends on how we interpret the opening of the *De consolatione Philosophiae*, in which Lady Philosophy chases away the Muses who have been helping the prisoner to bewail his misfortune. She denounces these 'scenicas meretriculas...quae dolores eius non modo nullis remediis foverent, verum dulcibus insuper alerent venenis', adding that 'hae sunt enim quae infructuosis affectum spinis uberem fructibus rationis segetem necant hominumque mentes assuefaciunt morbo, non liberant' (*De consolatione Philosophiae* I.P1.29-34).[1] She says that the harm would not be so great if the prisoner were 'profanum' (35),[2] but laments over her loss of this man who 'Rimari solitus atque latentis / Naturae varias reddere causas' (I.M2.22-3).[3] After venting her sorrow in this *metrum*, however, she goes on in prose: 'Sed medicinae...tempus est quam querelae' (I.P2.1-2).[4] William of Aragon, introducing his commentary on the *Consolatio*, described Boethius' premise in the following terms:

> humanity is divided into two groups; that part of mankind which is motivated
>
> by passions rooted in the senses, and that which is elevated by intelligible

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[1] Boethius, *The Theological Tractates; the Consolation of Philosophy*, ed. and trans. by H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand and S.J. Tester (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973). All page and line references are to this edition, and all translations are Tester's, with occasional small alterations. Hereafter, the book, section and line number will be indicated in brackets after each quotation; page numbers will be given in the footnotes, *after* the translation. 'Theatrical tarts...who not only have no cures for his pain, but with their sweet poison make it worse. These are they who choke the rich harvest of the fruits of reason with the barren thorns of passion. They accustom a man's mind to his ills, not rid him of them', pp. 134-5.

[2] 'Unlettered', pp. 134-5.

[3] 'Sought and told all Nature's secret causes', pp. 136-7.

[4] 'But now is the time for cure rather than complaint', pp. 138-9.

goods through divine influence... Boethius has given himself the part of a man who is troubled and motivated by passions rooted in the senses, and introduces the figure of Philosophy in the part of a man who follows intelligible goods.[5]

William figures this as a dialogue between two different people, but by saying that Boethius has 'given himself' the role of the worldly man he also hints at the 'fictionality of the characters and their distance from the author himself';[6] or, to look at it another way, he recognises the extent to which the dialogue recounted in the *Consolatio* is *not* in fact between two people, but between two tendencies within one mind – perhaps the author's own mind.

We will see variations on Boethius' opening scene in nearly all of the poems analysed in this thesis. Machaut assumes the role of Philosophy in relation to Charles of Navarre in the *Confort d'ami*, coaxing him out of his assumed state of self-indulgent despair and into a more philosophical frame of mind. The relationships between the narrator of the *Dit du vergier* and the god of Love, the knight and lady of the *Jugement du roy de Behaigne* and the King of Bohemia, and the narrator of the *Remede de Fortune* and Hope (and perhaps also his lady), all repeat the Boethian pattern to some extent, while the *Prologue* dramatises the moment when two Philosophy-like allegorical figures take Machaut under their wing. Broadly speaking, then, this pattern of one figure descending from a higher realm to aid another, drawing the latter away from the 'wrong' towards the 'right' perspective, is one that influenced Machaut on the level of narrative. It is the *ideological* impact of the

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[5] A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott, (eds), *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100-1375: The Commentary-Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 331.

[6] Ralph Hanna, Tony Hunt, R.G. Keightley, Alastair Minnis and Nigel F. Palmer, 'Latin commentary tradition and vernacular literature' in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume 2: The Middle Ages*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 363-421 (401).

Boethian model upon Machaut's poetry that I will try to account for in this thesis, building upon Katherine Heinrichs' observation that:

> the impulse that animates medieval poets, early and late, to write about love...stems ultimately from the Augustinian and Boethian tradition of right love as the basis of all moral virtue. This tradition established the choice of spiritual allegiance – earthly or heavenly – as the most crucial decision of every man and the most fitting theme of serious poetry.[7]

As Augustine himself put it, 'scripture enjoins nothing but love, and censures nothing but lust, and moulds men's minds accordingly';[8] it would seem too narrow merely to repeat this claim on behalf of medieval poetry, but I propose to demonstrate that a 'moralised' reading of Machaut's poems can broaden, rather than limiting, our appreciation of them.

At the beginning of the *Consolatio*, the prisoner remains allied, despite his better judgement, to the world. The 'wrongness' of his perspective lies in the very fact of his lamentation, in his perception of his own fate *as* misfortune, and in his failure to perceive or at least have faith in the workings of divine providence. Later, explaining his sorrow in more detail, he says that it is not the *existence*, but the *success* of evil at which he marvels (I.P4.98-104): whereas before he could both understand and relate to others (*reddere*) Nature's 'latentis' and 'varias' causes, now he sees only an unnatural *dis*order in the world around him. Although he was aware of Fortune's changeability before his own fall from grace, the frustration of his personal fortunes, and the concurrent *success* of the fortunes of evil men, have in one

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[7] Katherine Heinrichs, *The Myths of Love: Classical Lovers in Medieval Literature* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), p. 138.
[8] Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, ed. and trans. by R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 76.

moment divested him of his philosophy. Even at a late stage in the *Consolatio*, the prisoner concedes the validity of Philosophy's arguments about the true nature of 'good' and 'bad' fortune, but points out that most people would not consider them worthy of hearing. She explains, 'Dum enim non rerum ordinem, sed suos intuentur affectus, vel licentiam vel impunitatem scelerum putant esse felicem' (IV.P4.98-100),[9] and indeed this is the prisoner's condition when Philosophy first finds him; that is to say, it is his inability either to fulfil his worldly desires, or to perceive the true order of things, which provokes his lament.

This concept would later prove central to much medieval love poetry. As a lover, one must either trust in the possibility that one's desire may actually be fulfilled, or fix that desire upon a more transcendent object. The internalisation of desire is often figured as a solution to the doubtful lover's predicament: he must love purely and *finely*, adoring an abstract image of his beloved rather than the real woman. The quasi-religious character of this devotion is significant, because in the *Consolatio* the prisoner's movement from fixation on his own desires to a perception of the 'order' of the world is dependent on his faith in God (singular); the new, transcendent desire on which he subsists by the end of the treatise is the desire to align his will with that of God, to seek God as the one and only true good. If this process is being mirrored in erotic texts, we need to consider whether the abstraction upon which the lover subsists is as fitting a 'remede de Fortune' as God Himself, and more than this, we need to consider whether the lover's supposed 'souffisance' is true self-sufficiency, or whether it is only a more sophisticated way of trying to attain the material object of desire.

In her tirade against them, Lady Philosophy is clear that the poetic Muses provide no 'remediis', but rather 'venenis', which she describes as 'dulcibus'. The

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[9] 'For while they have regard not to the order of the world but their own desires, they think the freedom to commit evil and go unpunished for the evil done is a happy thing', pp. 346-7.

motif of 'sweet poisons' – that is, the use of oxymora – would later become associated with love as well as with Fortune, and its association here with poetry is very suggestive. Philosophy herself has frequent recourse to verse, and she is evidently not condemning poetic discourse as such, but only poetic discourse which fosters unhappiness – and therefore, in the Boethian conception, sin – by dwelling upon the individual's desires rather than looking outwards and upwards, so to speak. The focus upon nature in Philosophy's *metra* has often been noted, and it would seem that one of the legitimate functions of poetry is to observe and reflect – in ordered metre – the ways in which God's purposes are manifested in the natural world. Another function is to provide solace and refreshment in between bouts of dense argumentation, but this solace comes not only from the comforting observation of divine order: Philosophy's tendency to resort to classical *exempla* in her verse bespeaks her desire to re-cast difficult ideas in terms of familiar and popular myths which will render those ideas accessible and, as it were, easier to swallow. Her use of pagan myths in the *Consolatio* may be classed alongside her use of Fortune, a figure who represents the very concept Philosophy is striving to dismiss. Simply put, Fortune is a generally understood motif, useful in practice for illustrating something to a pupil, despite her essential falsity.

'For Christian poets of the vernacular period...there was no greater artistic issue than the contemporary uses of ancient texts'.[10] Fleming's bold statement is echoed by Heinrichs' claim, quoted above, that the choice between flesh and spirit is the defining choice of every individual's life, and the most fitting theme of poetry. The medieval struggle to come to terms with pre-Christian culture was, essentially, a struggle to mediate between the worldly and spiritual points of view. Alastair Minnis has documented the renewed interest, among medieval scholars from the twelfth

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[10] John Fleming, *Reason and the Lover* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 122.

century onwards, in art and poetry, and neatly summarises the academic milieu of the time thus: 'Scriptural *auctores* were being read literally, with close attention being paid to those poetic methods believed to be part of the literal sense; pagan poets were being read allegorically or "moralised" – and thus the twain could meet'.[11] Broadly speaking, we might say that the literature, myths and heroes of pagan culture stood for a mindset allied to the things of this world.

The re-interpretation of this material in Christian terms was another manifestation of the Boethian narrative model I sketched above, in which a man allied to the world is appealed to on his own terms, but in order to show how those terms are valid only as a preliminary step on the way to spiritual enlightenment. As the twelfth-century scholar Conrad of Hirsau said, 'just as dill is thrown out when food has been seasoned with it and eaten, so worldly knowledge should be separated out from sacred studies once it has done its work in students, lest it get in the way of the sacred knowledge'.[12] The *accessus ad auctores* reveal, according to Vincent Gillespie,

> an emphasis on a hermeneutics based on the ethical foundations of Christian thought. Students acquired technical expertise and, more importantly, the active and searching application of a cultural and ideological perspective... Signification was never allowed to be an end in itself, and not all signification was considered worthwhile... Discrimination was necessary between worthless fiction, seductive ornament and useful narrative, and such discrimination was applicable to life as well as to art.[13]

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[11] Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (London: Scolar Press, 1988), p. 6.
[12] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 54.
[13] Vincent Gillespie, 'The study of classical authors: from the twelfth century to c. 1450', in Minnis and Johnson (eds), *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, pp. 145-235 (151).

Classical authors were read, in the first place, because of their technical mastery of the liberal arts, but this was the beginning, rather than the end, of such study: these ostensibly secular works were, ultimately, valuable insofar as they provided ethical instruction, paving the way to Christian salvation. The so-called *causa finalis*

> was the ultimate justification for the existence of a work... In the context of commentary on secular *auctores*, this meant the philosophical import or moral significance of a given work; in the context of Scriptural exegesis, it meant the efficacy of a work in leading the reader to salvation.[14]

The obvious hierarchy established here is important, but of less interest than the different approaches required of the commentator. Exegesis of a secular text means establishing its *utilitas*; exegesis of Scripture means facilitating its *utilitas*.

The sense that poetry is fundamentally limited, but at the same time of great practical use, will be a central theme in this thesis. By identifying the purpose of scriptural commentary as to reveal the efficacy of a given biblical text in bringing about the reader's salvation, Minnis also identifies the core medieval doctrine regarding secular literature. The scriptural commentary is superfluous to those enlightened souls capable of interpreting the Bible unaided, but useful for those at an earlier stage in their education. These same students might be instinctively drawn to the pleasures of reading poetry, and so the *accessus ad auctores* are there to lend some purpose to their reading. The implication is that just as pagan literature must be glossed before it can be worth reading, so Scripture must, for many readers, be glossed before it can be understood; pleasurable fictions, when read with care, can help lead the student towards such an understanding. Minnis quotes Thomas Waleys'

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[14] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 29.

*De modo componendi sermones*, which states that 'the preacher's task is not only to stir the intelligence towards what is true...but also, by means of narrative and likely persuasion, to stir the emotions to piety',[15] and in the end-note attached to this quotation, further instances are provided of preachers being advised to use a maximum of affective persuasion (for instance, through the medium of *exempla*), and a minimum of scholarly ornament, in their appeals to a congregation.[16] Pagan *fabulae* could thus legitimately serve a similar purpose to that of scriptural exegesis, especially as a means of engaging the minds and souls of a learned lay audience. Poetry, like Philosophy's *metra* in the *Consolatio*, reveals the divine order in the world we can see with our eyes, but leads us towards a higher discourse that treats of intelligible (and hence less visible) goods.

The preoccupation, in those *metra*, with the 'lessons' of the natural world, is connected to Paul's famous statement in Romans 15.4, 'All that is written is written for our doctrine'. Medieval compilers such as Ralph Higden used this verse to justify 'writings of all kinds' and the 'juxtaposition of pagan and Christian *auctoritates* on common subjects...St Paul did not say that all that is written is true... The onus is therefore placed on the discriminating reader'.[17] Minnis' emphasis tends to be on the movement towards the legitimisation of pagan and secular poetry on its own terms, as when he cites William of Aragon's praise of Socrates – a 'pagan martyr' and a 'friend of God' – and remarks, 'this is humanism of a kind'; 'of course', he goes on, 'not all late-medieval thinkers approved of these new developments'.[18]

The 'humanism' Minnis heralds is not un-Christian, but it is a highly inclusive form of Christianity, and by way of contrast we might look to Peter Abelard's commentary on Romans, where he draws a distinction between the Gospels and the

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[15] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 137.
[16] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, pp. 263-4, n. 82.
[17] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 205.
[18] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 143.

Pauline Epistles. The former 'teach us those things which are necessary for our salvation', while the latter 'retain this intention with the aim of moving us to obey the teaching of the Gospel...to increase the extent of our salvation or to protect it more securely'; in his letter to the Roman converts from Judaism and paganism, Paul educates his readers 'by enlarging upon the gifts of God's grace and by diminishing the merits of our works, so that no one may any longer presume to glory in his own merit, but may ascribe everything in which he prospers to the divine grace'.[19] Abelard goes on to say that Paul's purpose 'is to show that the Gentiles had no excuse for sinning, for even if they had not received a written law, they had a natural law whereby they could come to know God'.[20]

Romans 15.4 affirms that we can learn about God from any source whatever, and thus affirms the usefulness, for Christians, of Jewish and pagan writings, in which sense it can be seen as promoting inclusiveness. However, it also insists that these other perspectives, these products of pre-Christian culture, are valuable only insofar as they lead to Christian truth, and in this respect it is a thoroughly *ex*clusive principle. Rather than encouraging us to read Ovid, it encourages us to turn our reading of Ovid to a good end – to read with the *finalis causa* in mind, rather than mere *voluptas*. Boccaccio admits, rather grudgingly, that 'it would be far better to study the sacred books than even the best of these [poetic] works, and I suppose they who do so are more acceptable to God... But we are not all at all times subject to one inclination, and occasionally some men incline to poetical writers'.[21] The valorisation of poetic discourse is not just a question of mining the riches of pagan culture, it is also about coming to terms with the inclinations to which we are 'subject'. Not all

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[19] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 102.
[20] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 103.
[21] Charles Osgood, (ed and trans.), *Boccaccio On Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1930), p. 82.

fourteenth-century poets found it so easy to reconcile this subjection with the imperative to exert rational control over such inclinations.

Rita Copeland is speaking of intellectual, rather than ideological, inclusion and exclusion when she suggests that, in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, 'vernacular culture becomes the site for an ethical application of academic discourse, ethical because the vernacular makes it a discourse of inclusion rather than of privileged exclusion', the poet's aim here being 'to open the institution of learning to the widest possible audience and thereby empower it as a persuasive tool, leading to knowledge of the good'.[22] Earlier in her book, Copeland traces the process whereby 'in terms of its extrinsic rationale, rhetoric's office is revalued in terms of service to theology',[23] and for the purposes of my study I will suggest that the Middle Ages' proto-humanist spirit of cultural inclusiveness is best understood as part of an attempt to disseminate Christian doctrine more persuasively to an increasingly literate lay audience, rather than as a delighted re-discovery of pagan treasures. With regard to Jean de Meun's prologue to his *Livres de confort de Philosophie*, Copeland observes that 'the translation from Latin to vernacular represents a translation of a certain intellectual property...from clerical to lay culture', and suggests further that Jean's dedication of his work to Philippe the Fair indicates the development of an 'identification between academic privilege and secular political power'.[24] It is fascinating to see how a poet like Machaut tailors his work for an aristocratic lay audience: on the one hand, we might say that the clerical perspective of the author is diluted by its association with the more unstable, worldly perspective of his audience; on the other hand, we might focus our attention on the sophistication with which the author adapts his learning to

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[22] Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 219-20.
[23] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics*, p. 59.
[24] Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics*, pp. 134-5.

the needs of his audience, while maintaining the dissemination of Christian doctrine as his work's *finalis causa*.

Sophistication and exclusiveness are indeed defining features of *fin'amor* poetry: courtly love is invariably figured as a way of life open only to those refined and courteous enough to appreciate it, just as figurative language was defended on the basis that its obscurity protected the truth from the unworthy. Thomas Gallus, in his paraphrase of Pseudo-Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy*, defends the use of figurative language in theological discourse by explaining that:

> invisible heavenly things are represented by visible and lowly things, not just in order that our mind (which cannot directly reach out to contemplate intelligible things, but needs to be elevated by the use of figures which are familiar and natural to it) may be led by these [objects] to an understanding of heavenly things... [W]hile some of the figures, although of a lowly nature, illuminate the faithful, so that they attain to knowledge of things heavenly, their lowly appearance hides the divine truth from the wicked, lest that which is holy be given to dogs. For as the apostle says: "knowledge is not something possessed by all" [1 Corinthians 8.7].[25]

Those who do not deserve to perceive the secret truths of Scripture are later said to 'despise descriptions couched in such lowly terms, and do not care to follow them up'.[26] Here, again, we see a combination of inclusiveness and intellectual elitism, a sense that metaphors both tailor to the deficiencies of our perception and purposely exclude those whose perception is deficient.

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[25] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 177.
[26] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 181.

Richard Dwyer, citing the opening scene of the *Consolatio* and Boethius' statement of the 'pearls before swine' principle in his *De Trinitate*, complains that 'the extent to which Boethian tones are limited by his presumed audience has never been sufficiently stressed. For the group to which not only the *Consolatio* but the theological tractates was addressed was aristocratic and educated'; Dwyer then points to the medieval French translations and expansions of Boethius as good antidotes to this elitism, and this is a point I will return to later.[27] However, when Lady Philosophy says that she would not have minded the loss of one who was 'profanum', and bewails the degradation of a follower like Boethius, who was once so wise, she is not saying that he is only worth saving because he is learned. Indeed, at the start of the *Consolatio* the prisoner is just as learned as ever, but remains nonetheless in a state of ignorance. The wisdom he attains in the course of the treatise amounts, in the end, to a simple act of faith, and if complex arguments must be advanced to lead him to that wisdom, this indicates the extent to which his initial self is mired in falsehoods. Philosophy's discourse in the *Consolatio* requires no prior reading to be understood, but merely a prior faith in a singular God, and a willingness to pay attention. Gallus' designation of the 'swine' as those who find lowly figures unworthy, and lack the necessary patience to decipher them, indicates that the exclusive character of figurative discourse (in what I would call its most sympathetic form) is primarily moral rather than intellectual. Essentially, the point is the same as that made by Abelard about the Gentiles: if they do not find God in the world around them, it is not because they lack some special form of knowledge, but because they are not looking hard enough, and so are unworthy to find Him.

Boccaccio repeats this point in the course of defending poetry against its detractors:

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[27] Richard Dwyer, *Boethian Fictions: Narratives in the Medieval French Versions of the Consolatio Philosophiae* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1976), pp. 76-7.

such then is the power of fiction that it pleases the unlearned by its external

appearance, and exercises the minds of the learned with its hidden truth; and

thus both are edified and delighted with one and the same perusal. Then let

not these disparagers raise their heads to vent their spleen in scornful words,

and spew their ignorance upon poets! If they have any sense at all, let them

look to their own speciousness.[28]

Henry of Ghent had said much the same thing about theology a hundred years earlier.
According to Henry, the teachings of theology

should be tailored [by those imparting them] to suit various conditions of men,

so that the man who cannot assimilate more may be content with the surface

literal interpretation, but the man who can may seek the spiritual

understanding underneath the literal one, depending on the progress he has

made.[29]

The affirmation of poetry's potential value in theological terms was greatly aided by
the seemingly elitist principle that divine truths should be protected from the
unworthy, but if poetry was to be raised to (or at least near) the same level as
theology, it must be as inclusive in its salutary effects as the word of God was
supposed to be. Of course, the poetry I am concerned with in this thesis *is* addressed
to an aristocratic, and relatively learned, audience, so its inclusiveness is hardly very
wide-ranging, but my point stands: whatever theological truths may be hidden
beneath a poem's integuments ought to be accessible to any literate Christian who is

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[28] Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, p. 51.
[29] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, pp. 253-4.

prepared to listen carefully. It will be important to remember this when we turn to the debates over the moral intent of the *Roman de la rose*.

Gillespie has described the tendency, among some thirteenth-century commentators, to value the more profane classical works for the appreciation of moral complexity they fostered in their readers:

> searching for the ethical core of texts of this kind developed skills of perspicacity and balance in a reader that were readily transferred to other texts of moral ambiguity and sophistication (the longer works of Ovid, for example) and by extension to the complexities of moral decisions to be found in the real world.[30]

However, as Wetherbee comments, the 'structural complexity' of the *Metamorphoses* 'cannot be reduced to an allegory of intellectual or spiritual pilgrimage'; even in the twelfth-century commentaries on Ovid he detects a faltering confidence in the possibility of taming this material, 'and a new tendency to reduce literary materials to tools within a larger and more highly compartmentalised scholastic enterprise'.[31] An 'ethical sea change in favour of moral poems' occurred in the fourteenth century, and in the new anthologies studied in the schools 'the morally upright life is never represented as a matter of difficulty or complexity, or open to interpretation or personal responsibility'; these texts 'tell rather than show', and Gillespie speculates that

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[30] Gillespie, 'Twelfth century to c. 1450', p. 157.

[31] Winthrop Wetherbee, 'The study of classical authors: from late Antiquity to the twelfth century', in Minnis and Johnson (eds), *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, pp. 99-144 (140).

perhaps the removal of Ovidian material from these collections liberated fourteenth-century writers such as Chaucer in their reactions to these works...the moral challenges and ethical dilemmas of classical literature had to be confronted elsewhere in the academic curriculum, and, increasingly often, outside of the curriculum altogether.[32]

Indeed, once again Boccaccio's advice to 'those who would appreciate poetry' indicates the extent to which the scholastic defence of the classics had, by the fourteenth century, been appropriated by the new generation of vernacular poets:

you must read, you must persevere, you must sit up nights, you must inquire, and exert the utmost power of your mind. If one way does not lead to the desired meaning, take another; if obstacles arise, then still another; until, if your strength holds out, you will find that clear which at first looked dark. For we are forbidden by divine command to give that which is holy to dogs, or to cast pearls before swine.[33]

For Boccaccio, poetry – his own, for instance – is all the more worthy of serious attention because its profundity is hidden beneath a veil, and must be sought out by the diligent and responsible reader. In this respect it imitates the practice of Scripture, and it is significant that Boccaccio's description makes the difficult process of reading sound active, physical – like real life, in fact.

In the schools, challenging secular texts were valued for a time because they exposed their readers to interpretative problems that might be encountered in real life, but many scholars – Vincent of Beauvais among them – considered it dangerous to

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[32] Gillespie, 'Twelfth century to c. 1450', pp. 158-60.
[33] Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, p. 62.

present impressionable minds with morally ambiguous material. If this material came to be dealt with, increasingly, by contemporary vernacular poets, we might expect such poetry to offer similar interpretative difficulties, and to be imbued with similar concerns about the potential dangers of secular literature. Just as Aquinas had argued that 'likenesses drawn from those things which are furthest removed from God give us a truer estimation of God, showing that He is far above any words or thought we may use to describe Him',[34] so there were medieval poems that defended pleasurable literature by saying that 'such literature is worthless, but valuable insofar as it provokes its audience to recognise that worthlessness'.[35] Such a defence might seem self-defeatingly ingenious, but it is important to consider that the profundity hidden beneath a poem's figurative veil might consist in the revelation (to the diligent interpreter) of that very poem's fatuity, rather than in some grandiose spiritual epiphany.

In view of the widespread medieval hostility – evidenced, for example, in Boccaccio's defensiveness – towards pleasurable fictions, it should not be surprising if some poets reacted, not with defensive self-importance, but with reflective humility, and a pained but philosophical consciousness of their works' limitations. Poets such as Machaut and Gower were, as I will argue, very much alive to the notion that the poetic integument might conceal poison rather than sound doctrine, and explored this idea in their own fictions. Augustine, following Aristotle, affirmed the value of imagination in making ethical decisions, but also warned of its dangers: in the letters where he treats of this subject,

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[34] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 240.

[35] Kevin Brownlee, Tony Hunt, Ian Johnson, Alastair Minnis and Nigel F. Palmer, 'Vernacular literary consciousness c. 1100-1500: French, German and English evidence' in Minnis and Johnson (eds), *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, pp. 422-71 (438).

wise men who wrap up the truth in inventions are set beside foolish men who build up superstitions; poets and heretics are spoken of in the same breath. The imagination is, it would seem, as potentially misleading as it is wonderful...imagination can override reason.[36]

This is, of course, precisely the internal drama enacted in the *Roman de la rose*, and the conflict between imagination and reason is also explored, more subtly, in Machaut's poetry. The fears at issue in such poems are concerned not only with the dangers of erotic love, but also with the dangers of poetry that describes, celebrates and fosters erotic love.

Given Machaut's fame as a composer, it is worthwhile to note that Boethius, in his influential textbook on music, echoes Augustine's ambiguous sentiments about imagination: he affirms that 'humanam vero musicam quisquis in sese ipsum descendit intellegit. Quid est enim quod illam incorpoream rationis vivacitatem corpori misceat, nisi quaedam coaptatio et veluti graviam leviumque vocum quasi unam consonantiam efficiens temperatio' (*De institutione musica* I.3).[37] He also warns, 'nec dubitanter appareat, ita nobis musicam naturaliter esse coniunctam, ut ea ne si velimus quidem carere possimus. Quocirca intendenda vis mentis est, ut id, quod natura est insitum, scientia quoque possit conprehensum teneri' (I.2),[38] and with regard to his own era he complains of music's power to change a whole people's

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[36] Alastair Minnis, 'Medieval Imagination and Memory', in Minnis and Johnson (eds), *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, pp. 239-74 (243).

[37] Boethius, *Anicii Manlii Torquati Severini Boetii De institutione arithmetica libri duo, De institutione musica libri quinque, accedit Geometria quae fertur Boetii*, ed. by Gottfried Friedlein (Leipzig: Teubner, 1867). All Latin quotations are from this edition. Translations are from Boethius, *Fundamentals of Music*, ed. by Claude V. Palisca, trans. by Calvin M. Bower (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). Hereafter, page numbers will be given after the translation in the footnotes. 'Whoever penetrates into his own self perceives human music. For what unites the incorporeal nature of reason with the body if not a certain harmony and, as it were, a careful tuning of high and low pitches as though producing one consonance?' (Friedlein, pp. 188-9; Bower, p. 10).

[38] 'It appears beyond doubt that music is so naturally united with us that we cannot be free from it even if we so desired. For this reason the power of the intellect ought to be summoned, so that this art, innate through nature, may also be mastered, comprehended through knowledge' (Friedlein, p. 187; Bower, p. 8).

character for the worse: 'Nulla enim magis ad animum disciplinis via quam auribus patet...Quod vero lascivum ac molle est genus humanum, id totum sciencis ac theatralibus modis tenetur' (I.1).[39] Boethius clearly affirms the need for music to obey the dictates of *ratio* if it is to fulfil its duty of uniting incorporeal reason with the body in a responsible manner. Degenerate poetry, according to the opening of the *Consolatio*, is the sort which represents and dramatises the individual's corporeal suffering and accustoms him to it, rather than attempting to reconcile it with something *outside* the self.

The main intent of this first section has been to outline the ambivalent medieval attitude towards poetry. Its status as an acceptable form of discourse depends on its moral utility, which in turn depends on its capacity to appeal to readers' worldly inclinations. This power enables fiction-writers to engage their audience's emotions, as well as their moral and intellectual faculties, and as such is potentially both useful and dangerous depending on the good intent of the author and the interpretative sensitivity of the audience. In the next section, I will show how this same ambivalence was embodied and interrogated in one of the most influential poems of the Middle Ages.

*Extending the Boethian Model: the* Roman de la rose

Lady Philosophy, as we have seen, locates her pupil's tragedy specifically in the falling off of his wisdom: if he were 'profanum', she would not have cared so much. In the *Roman de la rose*, we are presented with a protagonist who is decidedly

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[39] 'Indeed no path to the mind is as open for instruction as the sense of hearing...Since the human race has become lascivious and impressionable, it is taken up totally by representational and theatrical modes', (Friedlein, p. 181; Bower, p. 3).

'profanum' and un-learned. Jean de Meun's narrator describes how Love deals with the Boethian teachings of Reason:

> Hors de ma teste, a une pele,
>
> Quant au sermon seant m'aguiete,
>
> Par une des oreilles giete
>
> Quanque raisons en l'autre boute,
>
> Si qu'ele i pert sa paine toute (*Roman de la rose* 4634-8).[40]

Reason's speech is not dauntingly erudite, nor is the narrator's intellect too weak to comprehend it. Rather, his ignorance is specifically the result of Love's influence upon him. Boethius already knew all of Lady Philosophy's lessons in theory – they had come in through his ear, so to speak – but only when the truth of those lessons was proven to him by his real-life circumstances, and only when he took the time, in his solitude, to 'tell himself' those lessons, was his mind stirred to a full understanding of them. The *Rose*-narrator's encounter with Reason is clearly a parody of the Boethian model: the lover also converses, in solitude, with the wiser part of his mind, and is similarly incapable of arguing against it with any coherence; but after the conversation, he puts this wisdom to one side and completely ignores it.

Earlier I identified Boethius' initial confusion as a result of his having suffered worldly failure despite his virtue, and of the apparent worldly success of evil people. Finding himself in a position from which he could not possibly escape to enjoy any form of worldly success, he was forced to reconcile himself to his fate. The

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[40] Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. by Armand Strubel (Paris: Livre de Poche, 1992). All quotations are from this edition. All translations are from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *The Romance of the Rose*, ed. and trans. by Frances Horgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Hereafter the line number will be given in brackets after each quotation; page references for both editions will be given in the footnotes, *after* the translation. 'Whenever he spied me sitting listening to the sermon, he took a spade and threw out of my head by one ear whatever Reason had put in the other, with the result that she wasted her time completely', (Strubel, p. 300; Horgan, p.71).

lover's circumstances in the *Rose* are markedly different, in that he still has a chance of attaining success in this world. His sorrow, such as it is, results merely from his having failed to capture the rosebud, and the allegorical sense of the passage quoted above is that his desire for erotic success, coupled with the vague possibility that he might one day succeed, prevents him from behaving rationally. Jean is making a wry comment upon Boethius' text, implying that it is all very well for a philosopher on death row to set his mind upon higher things, but for an ordinary, comparatively un-learned layman in love with a beautiful woman, it is harder to loosen the bonds of worldly desire. This encounter between the lover and Reason suggests that the *Rose* is, at least in part, an attempt to mediate between Boethius and the amorous mindset which, presumably, will be less susceptible to the *Consolatio*'s austere and rather bleak lessons.

By beginning his continuation of the *Rose* like this, Jean is making a bold opening statement about his protagonist, and one which will colour our reading of everything that follows: this lover's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, indeed his whole being, are determined by Love, but the narrator's may not be, nor need ours be. Since Philosophy identifies Boethius' condition, at the start of the *Consolatio*, as an essentially *sinful* one, it is telling that the *Rose*-narrator, who remains in such a condition despite the promptings of Reason, resorts to increasingly duplicitous behaviour in his attempts to win the rose. Guillaume de Lorris shows the lover, after Reason's departure, taking Friend's advice to flatter Rebuff (*Dangier*) (*Rose* 3135-43), and Jean de Meun repeats this pattern, expanding each stage of it: Reason's speeches are now clearly based on the *Consolatio*, Friend's pragmatic advice provides an even more striking contrast – 'Et m'est avis, au mains de fait, / Qu'il set

plus que raisons ne fait' (10009-10),[41] marvels the narrator – and the lover's subsequent conduct is far more explicitly (indeed, *literally*) allied to False-Seeming. The consummation scene with which the poem concludes might be seen as the culmination of this moral descent, while the narrator's sudden awakening in the final line – 'Atant fu jourz e je m'esveille' (21780)[42] – might recall Philosophy's comments on the suddenness with which the prosperity of the wicked falls away: 'quorum magna spes et excelsa facinorum machina repentio atque insperato saepe fine destruitur, quod quidem illis miseriae modum statuit' (*Consolatio* IV.P4.23-5).[43] Boethius had difficulty absorbing Philosophy's lessons because of his extreme misfortune; for the lover, it is his overwhelming and as-yet unsatisfied desire which impedes his progress. Boethius' misfortune was irrevocable, but also inevitable to the extent that he would have had to face death eventually; the lover's misfortune can be remedied by a certain amount of erotic success, but the ending of the *Rose* indicates that even this is only a temporary remedy. Later we will see how Machaut foregrounds the capacity of infidelity and death to put a swift end to the lover's happiness.

Whether the *Rose* ought to be read in this way, as an essentially moral text, or merely as an immoral celebration of and exhortation to carnal pleasures, has been a cause of much controversy from the fourteenth century to the present day, as evidenced by Christine McWebb's and Earl Jeffrey Richards' invaluable anthology of medieval responses to the poem. McWebb implies, unwittingly, that she finds it hard to read the *Rose* in a 'moralised' sense when she introduces Gilles li Muisis' praise of

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[41] 'And it seems to me that, in this case at least, he knows more than Reason does', (Strubel, p. 592; Horgan, p. 153). Strubel suggests in a footnote (p. 593) that the word 'fait' here indicates the more concrete, experience-based advice of Friend.

[42] 'Then it was day and I awoke', (Horgan, p. 335). This line is not included in Strubel's edition, so I have taken it from Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la rose*, ed. by Ernest Langlois, 5 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1924), vol. 5, p. 97.

[43] 'Their great expectation and the heights of their evil machinations are suddenly destroyed and brought to an end, often unexpectedly; and that indeed sets a limit to their wretchedness', pp. 340-1.

Jean de Meun with the remark, 'it certainly is puzzling why a Benedictine abbot who holds Christian morality in high esteem would praise Jean de Meun's doctrinally controversial text', and then suggests that Gilles must have 'focused less on content than on rhetorical eloquence'.[44] A solution to the puzzle is presented a few pages later when Gilles himself comments that 'Li trouveur de la Rose...trop bien fisent; / Par leur dis moult de gens sens et crémeur acquisent; / Sagement, soutieument tous les estas reprisent'.[45] Clearly, he assumes that the text is a satirical one, just as Pierre Col and Jean de Montreuil would do years later when they defended the *Rose* against Christine de Pizan's and Jean Gerson's claims that it was an immoral, corrupting book.

It is important that we try to distil the essence of what these two opposed sets of readers disagree about. Pierre Col's argument is that Jean de Meun shows us the immoral and carnal behaviour of the foolish lover in order to warn us, his readers, away from such conduct: 'quant tu vas au sermon, n'ois tu pas aux prescheurs respondre les vices que tous les jours font homes et fames, affin qu'ilz aillent le droit chemin?...on doit ramentevoir le pié de quoy on cloche pour plus droit aler'.[46] In response to Gerson's condemnation, he retorts that this critic cannot understand the account of a foolish lover because he has never been one himself, and 'j'ose bien dire que s'il meismes l'eust esté et ne le fust a present, il entendist mieux la moitié qu'il ne fait: car trop plus a experience de ne say quelle puissance que n'a meismes l'effait

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[44] Christine McWebb and Earl Jeffrey Richards, (eds and trans.), *Debating the* Roman de la rose (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 3. All translations are taken from this edition.

[45] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 12-3. 'The composers of the *Rose* did only too well: with their poems many people have gained understanding and fear; carefully and with wisdom, they criticise all groups of people.'

[46] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 326-7. 'When you go and listen to a sermon, do you not hear the preachers respond to the vices which men and women commit every day, in order to lead them onto the right path? One must remind a person of the foot with which they limp in order to make them walk straight.'

de vive voix'.[47] Col is saying that the *Rose* is aimed specifically at foolish lovers –
people who limp, as it were – in order to show them the folly of their condition and
thus encourage them to abandon it. He is also, crucially, saying that *only* those with
experience of foolish love can understand a work like the *Rose*, just as St.
Bonaventure had said that Solomon 'had to be the sort of person...who was powerful,
wealthy, fond of luxury, and of an enquiring mind or wise' in order to write the book
of Ecclesiastes, for 'no one who talks about the contempt of such things has any
credibility unless he actually has experienced them himself'.[48] Col seems to imply
that the *Rose* provides a remedy for love which had not previously been available:
indeed, he claims that he lent it to a friend who was in love, 'et luy ay oÿ jurer par sa
foy que c'est la chose qui plus li a aidié a s'en oster'.[49]

Christine de Pizan retorts:

> je te promet se tu eusses appresté a ton amy...aucune bonne legende
> introduisant a sauvement et a demonstrer que il n'est que une seule amour
> bonne – en laquelle on doit ficher son cuer et son affection, en la maniere que
> Philosophie le demonstre a bone – ou autre chose semblable, tu lui eusses
> mieux fait son prouffit.[50]

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[47] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 310-1. 'I dare say that even if he had been one and was no longer one he would understand a great deal more than he does: for experience has much more power than that which one is simply told.'

[48] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 231.

[49] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 332-5. 'And I heard him swear by his faith that this was the thing which most helped him rid himself of it [love].'

[50] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 174-5. 'I promise you that had you loaned your friend...some good legend intended to lead one to salvation and to show that there is only one good love in which one ought to place one's heart and affection, as Lady Philosophy shows Boethius ['a bone' may not be a specific reference to Boethius, but it seems reasonable to infer that Christine is alluding to the *Consolatio*], you would have helped him much more.'

She insists that 'nature humaine, qui de soy est encline a mal, n'a nul besoing que on lui ramentoive le pié dont elle cloche pour plus droit aler',[51] and in another letter, Gerson asks Col rhetorically, 'sont faillies ailleurs bonnes et pures doctrines sans meleure de mauvaistié?'[52] Gerson too cites the frailty of human nature in support of his argument, and insists that 'veoir ou oïr aucunes choses charnelles nuement et selonc leur premier estat esmouveroit les pecheurs regardans a tres villains desirs...c'est pour la fantasie qui plus s'esmeut, et la fantasie est celle qui fait tout le desir';[53] such a remark recalls the ambivalent Aristotelian/Augustinian notion of imagination, referred to in the previous section. The question here is indeed whether the poet's imagination has been exerted towards a good or a bad end. It would, in Gerson's view, have been acceptable if Jean de Meun had used the poem 'en reprouvant le mal, et tellement que chascun eust apperceu le reproche du mal et l'aprobacion du bien, et – qui est le principal – que tout se fist sans excés de legiereté'.[54] In short, these two deem the *Rose* to be a tissue of exhortations to vice, incapable of improving anybody's morals because it does not explicitly condemn the behaviour it describes, and because the mere description of such behaviour is enough to ignite people's lecherous instincts.

As may be apparent from the quotations I have selected, the real cause of disagreement here has to do with differing perceptions of the *Rose*'s audience. Ostensibly it has more to do with the intent of the author, but since in the case of Jean de Meun this is so opaque, the debate must necessarily revolve around the effect

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[51] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 132-3. 'Human nature, which is in itself inclined to sinfulness, does not need to be reminded of its limp in order to walk straight.'
[52] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 290-1. 'Have other good and pure teachings which are not mingled with evil consequently failed?'
[53] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 298-301. 'To see or hear carnal things in plain and natural language awakens very villainous desires in the sinners who are watching...it is because the imagination is more agitated, and all desire is the result of imagination.'
[54] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 288-9. 'With the intent of refuting evil so blatantly that everyone would grasp the reproach of evil and the approval of good, and – this is essential – that all this had been done without an excess of frivolity.'

the poem is likely to have upon the reading public. Minnis acknowledges this when he observes, with regard to Christine's objection to Reason's obscene language, that she 'moves from locating obscenity within the *speaker*'s intent to the idea that the *hearer*'s reaction is crucial for the definition of obscenity, whatever the speaker's purpose may or may not have been'.[55] What is particularly interesting is that although Christine and Gerson both dismiss the idea that the *Rose* may be engaging with its readers' flaws in order to correct them, they also affirm the prevalence of lecherous tendencies among those very readers: while *they* consider Jean de Meun to be exacerbating these tendencies, Col would say that the poet is trying to *slake* them using an empathic method where the more severe remedies of Boethius had failed. When Christine suggests that a moral text such as the *Consolatio* would have helped Col's friend far more than the *Rose*, or when Gerson asks whether more overtly moral texts have 'faillies', they unwittingly reveal the main (but perhaps un-speakable) assumption behind Col's argument, which is that moral texts which do not on some level identify with the position of the foolish lover are incapable of drawing such a lover towards an appreciation of true goodness.

The modern scholarly debate over the *Rose* has also centred upon disagreements as to the nature of Jean de Meun's audience. To those modern critics, like D.W. Robertson and John Fleming, who argue that contemporary readers would have been expected to perceive the irony and satire in the *Rose*, Minnis retorts, rather sarcastically, that this assumed readership seems 'an extraordinarily consistent and consensual interpretative community'.[56] As Minnis and Ian Johnson put it more recently, 'many of Robertson's readers have been unconvinced or even repelled by what they see as a kind of interpretative determinism that impoverishes the possible

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[55] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, 150, n. 69.
[56] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 86.

range of meanings available to authors of literary texts'.[57] To suggest that 'the medieval reader expected to find philosophical utility in poetry through allegorical analysis',[58] or that good Christian doctrine 'was a part of the normal expectation of the medieval reader, and to say that an author intends it is simply to say that he is a Christian',[59] is, then, perceived to be an overly homogenising view of 'the medieval reader'.

In many respects, such objections to the Robertsonian approach are justified. Referring to the discourse of Reason in the *Rose*, Robertson says that 'he who seeks Jean de Meun's opinions will find them here, not in the discourses of other characters',[60] and this view has been strenuously echoed by Fleming, who insists that Reason's 'is the one voice within the poem to which we can confidently listen for the moral adjudication of the poem's amatory doctrine'.[61] Neither critic is willing to give ground to the notion that the poet in question might have had some genuine sympathy for the worldly, amorous point of view of their fictional protagonist. 'Guillaume [de Lorris] may have at one time been misled by idleness to pursue the delight of the flesh for its own sake... But whether he did or no has no relevance to his poem',[62] claims Robertson. Yet, as Pierre Col himself argued, the *Rose*-authors' empathic engagement with the mindset of the foolish lover was essential to its effectiveness.

In medieval fictions which invited the audience's empathy and imaginative participation, according to Robertson, 'the audience involved was unsophisticated'.[63] The medieval writer lacked 'the ability to induce us to share, at least momentarily, the

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[57] Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson, 'Introduction', in Minnis and Johnson (eds), *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, pp. 1-12 (6).
[58] D.W. Robertson, *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 346.
[59] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, p. 502.
[60] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, p. 199.
[61] John Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 3.
[62] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, p. 198.
[63] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, p. 38.

feelings' of protagonists whose mindsets present us with 'new psychological experiences' and 'aberrations';

> the commonly accepted medieval system of values was not subject, except, perhaps, among the very unlearned, to the kind of initial fragmentation necessary to produce an Hegelian tragic situation... In medieval tragedy, the manner in which a tragic figure subjects himself to Fortune and thus falls into the order of justice is always clear...it is impossible to regard Adam's initial appetite for "forbidden fruit" as a good, however providential its results may have been.[64]

Beyond the elitism of Robertson's remarks about 'illiterate' and 'unlearned' audiences, there is a profound oversimplification here of the response supposedly demanded by medieval authors from their readers. In a strictly Boethian conception, Adam's appetite for the forbidden fruit might indeed be regarded as a good, precisely because of its providential results, for *everything*, even the most evil act, even a soul's damnation, is good, in that it has been willed by God.

The problem goes deeper than this, however, for it could reasonably be objected that, far from being 'impossible', it is extremely common to regard the appetite for worldly things as a good. If it were not, there would be no need for a Bible, or for a *Consolatio*. Human beings instinctively, habitually and deliberately pursue the delights of the flesh for their own sake, and to say that the *Rose*-authors 'may at one time' have done this themselves, but that this is irrelevant to their poem, does a terrible disservice to the very interpretation Robertson is trying to advance. Minnis has commented on Pierre Col's own delicate suggestion that 'even if Jean had

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[64] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, pp. 42-4.

written his poem while under the influence of foolish love, this would not have interfered with the text's clerkly, philosophical and theological achievements', speculating that 'he had in mind the notion, which has its source in Aristotle, that certain kinds of moral shortcoming do not impinge on one's intellectual ability'.[65] Col's hesitation to press such an argument home is understandable, since to picture Jean de Meun as a lecher writing of his own experiences would scarcely have strengthened the case of Jean's defenders. In Hermann the German's translation of Averroes' commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics*, it is stated that some writers incline towards virtue and the description thereof, while others prefer to be 'imitators of vices' and so 'are less perfect and closer to evil' than the imitators of virtue, even though both groups have 'no other purpose than the pursuit of what is becoming and the rejection of what is base'.[66] The implication is that those who describe and condemn vices must have experience of the said vices, and betray their own imperfections in the process of condemning them. It is very important to our understanding of the *Rose* that we allow for the possibility that the author had experience of and sympathy with the worldly activities being described.

I would wholeheartedly support the notion that Reason's is the most morally authoritative voice in the *Rose*, but to say that it is *only* in this section of the poem that Jean de Meun's opinions are to be found, or to claim that 'the intellectual confusion of the mind which manifests its "own thought" in the lengthy and contradictory discourses of Genius, Nature, the Vekke, and Lady Reason must be very great'[67] is to deny the human capacity to know one thing and believe another. Clearly, the *Rose*-narrator himself understands and even approves of Reason's opinions, but Love prevents him from living according to them. It is instructive also

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[65] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 251.
[66] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 291.
[67] John Fleming, *The Roman de la rose: a Study in Allegory and Iconography* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 191.

to turn to Katherine Heinrichs' discussion of the idle Monk in the *Canterbury Tales*: we are assured that the proper interpretation of such a character

> is narrowed down...by the fundamental agreement of practically all of us upon the social value of work... [O]ur ability to understand the perspective, and assess the roles, of narrators in medieval poetry depends greatly upon our ability to interpret what they say in the light of the knowledge and values that poets of the time shared with their audiences.[68]

Again, however, it must be objected that this 'fundamental agreement of practically all of us' upon any given value is tenuous at best. The 'agreement' referred to is indeed one we ostensibly share as a society, but as individuals it would be safer to suggest that practically all of us are more inclined to doubt the value of work, and to spend our lives in more enjoyable pursuits. I am fighting such an inclination at the very moment of writing, less because I believe in the social value of work and more for personal gain of the intellectual (and, in time, financial) variety.

Even in a seemingly unambiguous case like that of Chaucer's Monk, we must allow for an amount of empathy in the reader's response. This is of course even more true of love poetry. Discussing the conflict between the voice of reason and that of the irrational lover in a poem, Heinrichs says that

> the effete, mannered voice of the lover...embodied the conventions governing the expression of the irrational, passionate, and impulsive side of human nature (a side which, fascinated by its potential for danger, medieval poets never tired of exploring). The rational voice is the one of which the poet, and

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[68] Katherine Heinrichs, *The Myths of Love: Classical Lovers in Medieval Literature* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), p. 8.

everyone else, approves, but it is able only with great effort to achieve even temporary control over the passions.[69]

There is some recognition here that medieval poets acknowledge the difficulty involved in subduing the passions through the exercise of reason, but clearly the 'potential for danger' was not the only aspect of erotic love which made it an attractive subject for writers, and it is, again, presumptuous to declare that 'the poet and everyone else' approve of the rational voice rather (or more) than that of the lover.

Heinrichs takes the objections about over-homogenising the medieval readership into account, admitting that it is often difficult to reconstruct the contemporary views that would have determined a 'correct' interpretation. She insists nonetheless that 'through historical investigation, it is possible to achieve reasonable certainty about the views of fourteenth-century court poets on the accepted meaning of this small number of related myths',[70] and eventually concludes that 'the conventions governing the use of classical lovers by medieval poets are among the clearest and most circumscribed in all literature'.[71] The dangers of circumscribing one's interpretations in this way will become apparent when I engage with some of Heinrichs' over-determined readings of the *Jugement Behaigne* and *Remede de Fortune* in chapters 3 and 4, but for now it is enough to affirm that the dangers are there.

In the third part of this introduction, I will also try to defend the Robertsonian perspective against some of its critics, and will align my own point of view, to a great extent, with that of Robertson, Fleming and Heinrichs. Before concluding this

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[69] Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, p. 47.
[70] Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, p. 24.
[71] Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, p. 260.

section, however, I would like briefly to refer to a text which Robertson himself made much of, and which throws some light on the interpretative battle I have been discussing. Andreas Capellanus' *De amore*, written in the late twelfth century, chimes uncannily with the underlying purpose Pierre Col saw in the *Rose*. The first two books of the *De amore* consist of advice given by Andreas to a young friend, Walter, recommending various techniques of erotic seduction. In the third and final book, Andreas reveals that he has complied with Walter's request for such a handbook, 'non quod amare tibi vel alicui hominum expedire credamus, sed ne nostram in aliquo valeas arguere tarditatem', and that in fact the goal of the work has all along been to argue that 'Sapiens ergo quilibet amoris cunctos pluribus ex causis actus tenetur abiicere et eius semper obviare mandatis' (*De amore* III.1-3).[72] The rest of the book is taken up with a thorough, un-ironic diatribe against the sinfulness of love, in which many of the earlier, positive statements about it are explicitly revoked. The implication of the chaplain's claim that 'in prima parte praesentis libelli tuae simplici et iuvenili annuere petitioni volentes ac nostrae quidem in hac parte parcere nolentes inertiae' (III.117),[73] is that it is not sufficient – indeed, that in this context it is lazy – simply to preach good virtue, as this shows no awareness of or engagement with the experience of everyday men and women.

Don A. Monson has recently provided a superb account of Andreas' attempts to reconcile the spirit of Ovidianism with Christian morality. The first two books of the *De amore* represent an extended effort to 'moralise the vernacular love ethic', locating those values in troubadour love poetry which 'are easily assimilated to Christian charity' and shifting them subtly 'in the direction of a Christian

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[72]Andreas Capellanus, *Andreas Capellanus On Love*, ed. and trans. by P.G. Walsh (London: Duckworth, 1982), pp. 286-7. All translations are from this edition. 'Not because I believe it profitable for you or any man to love, but so that you could not censure my reluctance to aid you in any way...Each and every wise man is bound to renounce all acts of love, and always to oppose Love's commands for many reasons.'

[73] Andreas Capellanus, *On Love*, pp. 322-3. 'In the first part of the book I was seeking to comply with your ingenuous and youthful request, and here I refused to indulge my idleness.'

interpretation'.[74] However, 'having apparently set out to limit sexual activity, the Chaplain achieves the paradoxical result of illustrating the limitations of the limitations',[75] and so 'having failed in his efforts to reform love from within...Andreas adopts the opposite tactic of attacking it from without'.[76] When Monson says that Andreas' 'expressed preference for fidelity and for what he calls "pure love" seems genuine, but he is obliged to recognise, on the basis of his own love psychology, that neither is a realistic long-term prospect',[77] it is evident that he sees this text as one whose meaning is constructed and altered in the course of writing: Andreas sets out with certain intentions, finds them impracticable, and changes his mind about the whole subject. Unlike the Robertsonian reading, this one does not picture the author's intent as being thoroughly ironic throughout, but rather posits that he feels a genuine sympathy and identification with the amorous point of view, even though he ultimately rejects that point of view.

With reference to Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris*, Minnis observes that 'the art of love and its remedy therefore go together: the one follows, and indeed presupposes, the other', and this 'sequence became a narrative sequence in the works of certain medieval Ovidians',[78] first among whom Minnis names Andreas Capellanus. Monson emphasises the *divergence* of Andreas' text from the Ovidian model, in the sense that the *De amore* does not offer remedies for love, but merely rejects it: 'the term *remedium* occurs sixteen times in the treatise, but not once in Book Three'.[79] Clearly, the medieval re-working of this Ovidian sequence, at least in the case of the *De amore*, is fixated more upon the *moral* implications of being in love than on the *practical* difficulties of getting into, then out of, a love affair.

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[74] Don A. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus, Scholasticism, and the Courtly Tradition* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), p. 293.
[75] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 313.
[76] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 343.
[77] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 342.
[78] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 295.
[79] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 333.

Andreas' thoroughly empathic treatment of the art of love shows not only that he
knows all there is to know about the subject, but also that he is capable of identifying
and sympathising with the point of view of a lustful young man: he demonstrates a
full understanding of how overwhelming a force love can be, and of the idea that, as
one of the male seducers puts it, 'Post rei tantum experientiam decet recusare
probatum' (*De amore* I.6.212).[80] Having demonstrated all this, however, he 'finally
rejects love because it conflicts with Christian morality',[81] and this disorienting
juxtaposition of moral perspectives is one of the defining features of the medieval 'art
of love'.

Ovid began the *Ars amatoria* by insisting that he was not inspired by any
Muses, but rather that 'Usus opus movet hoc: vate parete perito; / Vera canam' (*Ars
amatoria* I.29-30),[82] and later, Apollo, the voice of authority, tells the author (and us)
that 'Qui sibi notus erit, solus sapienter amabit' (II.501),[83] by which he means that
each person should know their particular talents or qualities, and use them
appropriately. It is telling that Boethius begins the *Consolatio* by dismissing the
Muses and looking within for true consolation, but it should also be clear that in his
book these gestures function on a much more profound level than in Ovid's. His
experience of unhappiness, and his own doubts concerning divine providence, qualify
him above all not to advise us on how best to emulate such behaviour, but to warn us
away from it. Andreas too is attempting to establish not only his practical, but also his
moral authority on the subject of love, and those who came after him – Jean de Meun
and Machaut among them – build on his example when they combine their claims of

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[80] Andreas Capellanus, *On Love*, pp. 100-1. 'It is right to reject what is on trial only after experience of
it.'
[81] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 334.
[82] Ovid, *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, ed. and trans. by J. H. Mozley and G. P. Goold
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 14-5. All line and page references to the *Ars
amatoria* and *Remedia Amoris* refer to this edition, and all translations are Mozley's and Goold's.
Hereafter line numbers will be given in brackets after each quotation; page numbers will be given in
the footnotes. 'Experience inspires this work: give ear to an experienced bard; I sing the truth.'
[83] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 100-1. 'Only he who knows himself will love with wisdom.'

experience with a cautionary message about the dangers involved in acquiring such experience.

As I suggested earlier, the disputes over the *Rose* are hardly surprising given the extreme opacity of its principal author's moral attitude to his material. However, the example of the *De amore* is enlightening in this respect, in that it throws into relief what Jean's poem *isn't*: assuming that he did want to discourage foolish lovers, he might have taken Andreas' approach and recanted his entire treatise in its conclusion, so what did he have to gain by not doing so? The *De amore* fulfils the demands made by Christine de Pizan when she tells Col that if the author of the *Rose* had spoken 'de plusieurs choses a quoy nature humaine est encline et qui adviennent, et puis ramené au propos et fait sa conclusion en meurs de bien vivre, tu eusses plus grant cause de dire que il le fist adfin de bien'.[84] From the amorous reader's point of view, though, such an explicit *volte-face* might seem rather condescending. To flatter one's audience and buy into their way of life, as Andreas does, before suddenly removing this mask to reveal a censorious preacher underneath, implies a good deal of contempt for the audience in question. The implication is that they, like children unwilling to take their medicine, have to be cheated into listening to the sermon. Dante said in the *Convivio* that 'since it often happens that admonishment appears to be presumptuous, under certain conditions the rhetor speaks to others indirectly',[85] and Evrart de Conty explained Boethius' imaginary vision of Lady Philosophy as a way of avoiding presumption, 'presumably meaning that by using the figure of Philosophy he avoided setting himself up as a great authority on fate and divine

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[84] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 166-9. 'About several things to which human nature is inclined, and had then returned to his conclusion about customs of moral living, you would have had a stronger argument when you said that he did so in order to promote virtue.' Cf. Hermann the German's translation of Averroes' commentary on the *Poetics*: 'it is necessary for the writer whose intention is to blame evil men and evil deeds to praise and extol good men and good and virtuous deeds, so that by this means evil and base deeds may be thrown into sharper relief', Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 294.

[85] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 408.

providence.'[86] Clearly, by addressing his friend Walter, and by inhabiting the role of the *magister amoris* for the majority of the text, Andreas was working on the same principle, but in other texts this avoidance of presumption through indirection – or misdirection – could be much more developed and elaborate.

If the *Consolatio* assumes too much philosophical wisdom on the part of its readers, and the *De amore* assumes too little, the *Roman de la rose* may be located in between the two. The real lesson to be drawn from the vehemence and stubbornness which characterise the various disputants in the *querelle* over the *Rose* is that this is an insoluble dispute: the text *can* be read either as an exhortation to, or as an exposé of, carnality; it is up to the individual reader to decide. Minnis compares the *querelle* to modern disputes over violent films, and observes very astutely that 'the problem is, in essence, a rhetorical one – a matter of *who* is presenting the material in question and at *whom* it is aimed'.[87] Those who object to violent films often appear to assume that cinema audiences are highly susceptible and should not be exposed to material which might incite them to commit violent acts, while those who defend such films often appear to assume that those same audiences are well-adjusted, self-assured and fundamentally moral people, or that if they are not the violent films are unlikely to make them any worse.

Broadly speaking, I would place Jean de Meun in the latter camp. Whereas the *De amore* designates those foolish lovers among its readership as unquestionably 'in the wrong', the *Rose* serves as a kind of non-judgemental moral barometer, which the reader is free to utilise as a spur either to virtue (as does Pierre Col's amorous friend) or to vice (as does the Jankyn-like reader who is said to beat his wife while reciting the complaints of the jealous husband).[88] I have borrowed the image of the barometer

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[86] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 287.
[87] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, pp. 233-4.
[88] McWebb and Richards, *Debating the* Roman, pp. 174-5.

from Heinrichs, who suggests that writers spilt so much ink over the subject of love – despite their clerkly scorn of its follies – under the influence of 'the Augustinian notion of love as barometer of the soul's health', and on the basis that 'in reading or hearing of what men do and feel, we recognise ourselves, a process that was...more accustomed and less uncomfortable to medieval readers than to modern ones'.[89] Despite making too few allowances for the author's own possible investment in what he is describing, Heinrichs clearly has a better grasp on the medieval use of empathy than Robertson did. I would suggest that the *Rose* not only shows us ourselves, but also implies an identification between the author and his *personae*, inviting the reader to reflect not only upon their own amorous tendencies, but also upon the doubtful authority of poetic discourse. As we read the poem, we orient our moral sense in relation to it, perhaps looking down in scorn on its vanities, perhaps fleeing them in horror, or perhaps merely acknowledging (and enjoying) our own participation in those vanities.

The two sides of the *querelle* cannot agree because neither is wrong, and the *Rose*'s implicit affirmation of moral responsibility can in itself be seen as a brilliant extrapolation of a lesson that was central to the *Consolatio*. Where Boethius deals with the prickly issue of free will and determinism through the dense argumentation in the *Consolatio*'s final book, Jean de Meun challenges his readers not only to accept that they must act morally, but even to decide for themselves whether that is what they are being exhorted to do. Contrary to Minnis' objection about the homogeneity of the readership posited by Fleming, the only assumption Jean de Meun makes about his audience is that they want to hear about erotic love – either to hear it satirised or celebrated, but in any case described thoroughly – and perhaps Col was right when he suggested that Gerson (and in a different sense Christine) did not like the *Rose*

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[89] Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, pp. 96-7.

because they did *not* want to hear about this sort of love. Similarly, it may be that modern critics have read these texts differently because they are pre-disposed to do so, and in the next section I will try to show how such pre-dispositions have manifested themselves.

In the subsequent chapters of this thesis, I will highlight the ways in which Guillaume de Machaut exposes the flaws, self-contradictions, sins and follies of erotic love, but will also suggest that his approach is distinguished from that of Jean de Meun in that, rather than adopting a hard-nosed, amoral stance on his subject, he invests more empathically and earnestly in the perspective of the lover. When Gerson identified the *Rose*'s worst sin as its 'legiereté', I think he was referring precisely to the scurrilous, satirical tone which others held up in the poem's defence. Jean de Meun is coolly detached from his hapless, rather character-less protagonist – a fact evidenced, if nowhere else, by the god of Love's infamously mind-boggling account of the poem's composition (*Rose* 10530-678) – but Machaut gives the impression (however false) that he really is recounting his own experiences. Thus he both asserts his authority as a commentator on love and appears, at least, to empathise with his audience's presumed fascination with this subject on a far deeper level than Andreas or Jean had done. In this respect he is a better imitator of Boethius, who also figured *himself* as the one in need of instruction, and his subtler use of empathy is coupled with an equally subtle pedagogical technique.

*Scholarly Determinism*

The question of Boethius' Christian faith, and whether or not this is demonstrably present in the *Consolatio*, is a controversial one, and one which I do not intend to

address at any great length here. However, since I will be contesting the opinions of critics who play down the Christian content of Machaut's poetry, some attention must be paid to this controversy, insofar as it relates to Machaut. As Léglu and Milner point out, 'traditionally the interpretation of literature was part of the mediating function of clergy, thereby ensuring a Christian reading...Boethius' text was usually Christianised',[90] while Fleming (following Christine de Vogel) dismisses more insistently the 'paganising interpretations of Boethius' life and his best-known book';[91] certainly Nicholas de Albertinis, in a letter to Nicholas Trevet, refers to Boethius as 'that most Christian philosopher' without feeling any need to qualify this phrase.[92] I said earlier that Boethius' argument depended on, and concluded with, God: as Seth Lerer puts it, 'Boethius' claim for the eternal presence of God fills the void left by the rejection of worldly goods and human company which the *Consolation* had chronicled',[93] and without God none of Philosophy's arguments would hold water.

Danuta Shanzer is not exactly wrong when she cites the scarcity of allusions to divine grace in the *Consolatio* and says, further, that 'instead [it] mostly emphasises self-help, making the ascent on one's own',[94] but in fact one's ability to make this ascent on one's own depends absolutely on one's faith in a singular, omnipotent, omnibenevolent God. Without this objective standard of 'good' to aspire to – for that, essentially, is the purpose God serves in Boethius' argument – and with 'self-help' as the only recipe for happiness, moral relativism would creep in, and the evil but successful men who have overthrown Boethius might be said to be seeking

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[90] Catherine E. Léglu and Stephen J. Milner, 'Introduction: Encountering Consolation', in Léglu and Milner (eds), *Erotics of Consolation*, pp. 1-18 (5).
[91] Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, p. 43. Cf. C.J. de Vogel, 'Boethiana', in *Vivarium* 10 (1972), pp. 1-40.
[92] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 341.
[93] Seth Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue: literary method in* The Consolation of Philosophy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 234.
[94] Danuta Shanzer, 'Interpreting the *Consolation*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, ed. by John Marenbon (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 228-54 (242).

the good on their own terms and therefore to be truly happy. The prisoner could still conceivably find consolation under these circumstances, but not from Lady Philosophy. Glynnis Cropp argues that medieval French writers did not focus on Boethius as a Christian martyr, but 'were impressed rather by the human side of his story, his endurance and fortitude',[95] and no doubt there is some truth in this as well, but against this emphasis on what we might call his inclusive or humanist qualities, I would argue that another thing carried over from Boethius into medieval poetry is his complex attitude towards God.

I have been stressing the theme of 'mediation', and in a sense the whole of the *Consolatio* is built around the importance of the *via*, or the method, by which one arrives at the truth: it is about how we mediate between a seemingly distant God and ourselves. Shanzer, speaking of the era and country in which Boethius lived, says that 'there was no reason for a Christian to be coy about his Christianity, although there is evidence that high functionaries would wisely function on a vague common level by merely talking about *divinitas*, perhaps to avoid Christological divisions'.[96] It is in this phrase, 'vague common level', as well as in the idea that Boethius was catering to an ideologically varied readership – Fleming characterises the Christian culture of the time as 'promiscuous and syncretistic'[97] – that I believe the key to this issue lies. Whether or not Boethius intended the *Consolatio* to be perceived as specifically Christian, one of the aims of his book is to demonstrate that, for those who adhere to a monotheistic belief system, goodness and happiness are attainable through reason. He addresses readers who, like the prisoner at the start of the text, have in practice (though unwittingly) swerved from monotheism to put faith in things other than God and 'the good', and he appeals to their professed religious faith in order to show how

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[95] Glynnis Cropp, 'Boethius and the *Consolatio philosophiae* in XIVth and XVth-century French writing', *Essays in French Literature*, 42 (2005), 27-43 (p. 30).
[96] Shanzer, 'Interpreting the *Consolation*', p. 243.
[97] Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, p. 44.

this faith can, by a logical process, render worldly existence explicable and endurable. The 'suppression of religious specifics' is an essential element in the author's tailoring of his argument to the needs of his audience.[98]

The *Consolatio*, in short, assumes belief in God on the part of the reader, but also assumes an absorption in worldly things that has distanced the reader from this belief. By inhabiting and describing that absorption (for instance, through Philosophy's impersonation of Fortune), he is able to work from it, one logical step at a time, towards the complete, almost superhuman, faith in divine providence which is asserted at the end of the book. Whether or not we (or Boethius) judge this process to be Christian, there can be little doubt, I think, that Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Machaut were Christians, and that in re-casting this Boethian process in a new context, and in carrying over the integral role played by God in this process, they saw this process as, ultimately, a Christian one. In the thesis proper, I will argue for the presence – sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit – of the Christian God in Machaut's poems. If, as critics have often suggested, this God is not as obviously or consistently present as one might expect Him to be in the writings of a cleric, this absence is best understood in relation to the Boethian didactic method, as part of the author's appeal to his worldly audience.

As we saw in the previous section, the big problem with the Robertsonian perspective was its over-determined application of Christian orthodoxy to certain texts, to the point where medieval poets are supposed to have been incapable of engaging seriously or sympathetically with any point of view that conflicts with such orthodoxy. When Robertson repeatedly uses phrases like 'quite properly', 'very naturally', 'very appropriately', 'correctly' and 'becoming scepticism' to describe those statements in the *De amore* – in these cases the rebuffs offered by the various

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[98] Shanzer, 'Interpreting the *Consolation*', p. 242.

women to their ingenious suitors – which support his own interpretation of the text,[99]

or when Heinrichs uses similar language with reference to the arguments of scholars

that accord with her own,[100] or when Fleming says that the ending of the *Rose* is

'deeply obscene, and its implications can rightly be called revolting',[101] it is hard not

to feel that one is being pushed rather too hard towards this 'correct' understanding.

Although Fleming claims that his work 'does not aspire to the creation of meaning

nor to the discovery of any but medieval meanings in the poem',[102] it is easy to see

why some readers have felt that a meaning is indeed being imposed upon the *Rose* by

a critic pre-disposed, for whatever reason, to interpret it in this way.

For many other scholars, the value of medieval poetry seems to *depend* on the

absence of God, the lack of didacticism, the focus on and celebration of the things of

this world. In 1962, Robertson complained that among many critics the medieval poet

> is envisaged as a man who is torn between a fascination for the untrammelled
>
> freedoms of his pagan inheritance, or what, rather inexplicably, are supposed
>
> to be those freedoms, and the confining bonds of Christian morality... 
>
> Happily, scholarship in this field is now advancing beyond these
>
> tendencies.[103]

Such tendencies – the 'modern insistence on hedonistic aesthetics'[104] – are still very

much with us almost fifty years later. Prior to developing her argument about the

Boethian content of Machaut's *Remede de Fortune*, Kay says of the *Consolatio* itself

that 'Philosophy's prose may console the Boethius figure in the sense of eliminating

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[99] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, pp. 427, 430, 432, 436, 438.
[100] See, for examples, Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, pp. 179 n. 26, 187, 190, 198.
[101] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 237.
[102] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 5.
[103] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, p. 18.
[104] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, p. 361.

him as an independent entity, but the poetry remains as a bodily pulse that is not recuperable to her overwhelming prose…This, rather than the rooting out of unhappiness by philosophy, may be the most significant legacy of the *Consolation* to the poets who imitated it'.[105] Kay suggests that poets such as Machaut felt a certain 'unease with Philosophy's position, being…attuned to a view of knowledge grounded in the senses and of existence as located in individuals'.[106] Rather than relinquishing his ego as Boethius' prisoner does, the protagonist of the French *dit* 'is not (unlike in Boethius) aberrant to the extent of having to be eliminated'.[107] Later on I will engage more thoroughly with Kay's argument, but for now I wish to point out the evident hostility, in this sort of criticism, to the relinquishing of the sensual, worldly needs of the individual, and a privileging of the idea that the author may have been subversively championing those needs.

The hostility comes from the other direction in the Robertsonian approach. With reference to the Old Woman in the *Rose,* Fleming says that 'to listen to her one would never know that unchecked irrational passion was not regarded as freedom in the Middle Ages, but as a kind of enslavement'.[108] It must again be pointed out that such a statement is belied by the discourse of the Old Woman herself, who clearly, like many people, *does* regard unchecked irrational passion as freedom, despite living in the Middle Ages. 'In abjuring his reason', Fleming says later, 'Amant sins against God...and it is no more fitting for Jean to be merciful and sympathetic in his attitude toward Amant's sin than it would be to demonstrate such attitudes towards Adam's – or his own'.[109] Although Fleming goes on to affirm the importance of divine grace

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[105] Sarah Kay, 'Touching Singularity: Consolation, Philosophy, and Poetry in the French *Dit*', in *The Erotics of Consolation: Desire and Distance in the Late Middle Ages*, ed. by Catherine E. Léglu and Stephen J. Milner (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 21-38 (27).
[106] Kay, 'Touching Singularity', p. 28.
[107] Kay, 'Touching Singularity', p. 30.
[108] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 181.
[109] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 247.

and mercy in the poem, he seems here to be unduly resistant to the notion that sin should be treated with mercy and compassion, as well as with judgement.

Dwyer speaks of Boethius' French translators as 'extending to the Boethian deity such qualities as compassion',[110] arguing that the *Consolatio* itself has little time for human weakness in the face of misfortune and pain. In different ways, Dwyer, Kay and Fleming all overstate Boethius' severity, and accordingly overstate the medieval break from (or alignment with) the *Consolatio*. Citing an *exemplum* in which a thief attains salvation, while the hermit who gave him his penance, perplexed by the workings of God's grace, is damned, Dwyer observes:

> we thus pass from the lofty position of Boethian logic that the perfect deity can author no evil to the ethical mystery of his power to detect the saving sparks in thieves and murderers, and we similarly pass from Roman notions of human virtue to one that sees it as essentially non-public and apolitical. Needless to say, there are no such obscure, holy sinners among Boethius's exemplary patricians.[111]

In the *Consolatio*, the prisoner himself is of course an obscure, holy sinner of sorts, not a thief or a murderer but a (supposed) traitor to his king, condemned as such in the public, political world, but saved in his cell by his completely non-public and apolitical virtue, which is only visible to himself and to God. Whatever public status he had before his downfall is irrelevant to his current situation, since he has lost it entirely. Pierre de Paris's tale of the damned hermit and the saved thief is in essence a re-telling of Boethius' own story, but Dwyer's conception of the *Consolatio* as a cold and elitist text prevents him from giving due acknowledgement to the continuity here.

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[110] Dwyer, *Boethian Fictions*, p. 75.
[111] Dwyer, *Boethian Fictions*, p. 77.

However, he is undoubtedly right to suggest that the anecdote in the French version is an attempt to bring the Boethian doctrine closer to the world of the everyday sinner, to strip away its learned veneer for those readers who might feel alienated.

That is to say, a compromise can be reached between these differing perspectives: Kay is right that the approach of medieval poets is more sympathetic to those powerful human instincts Boethius wishes to obliterate, but this is an extension of the Boethian model, rather than a break from it. It is evident that Kay sees Philosophy's verses as representative of some form of 'freedom' (an unquenchable 'bodily pulse'), and her more austere prose as 'overwhelming' and repressive. But this is precisely the prisoner's own point of view at the beginning of the *Consolatio*, and the allowances made to that 'bodily pulse' in the *metra* are intended to facilitate the learning process, not to subvert it; at least, their facilitating function must be acknowledged before they are made out to be subversive. Kay aligns herself too closely with the 'early' Boethius, while Fleming's point of view reflects the 'later', wiser perspective to an immoderate degree. It is important to acknowledge that irrational passion was figured as a kind of enslavement, and to see how this principle was manifested in erotic poetry, but it is also important to acknowledge the role played in such poetry by the 'unease' Kay refers to – the difficulty of absorbing Philosophy's and Reason's lessons – and the significance of the seemingly un-Boethian conclusions to the *Rose*, or to the *Remede de Fortune*. The protagonist of the French *dit* is indeed left, at the end of the poem, with his individual passions fully intact, and while it is, I think, misguided to see this as a rejection of Philosophy's teachings, it is also misguided to understate the importance of its overt deviation from the *Consolatio*.

Referring to Dante's and Gower's moralising glosses on their own work, Minnis argues that the 'exclusively moral interpretation' put forward in each case only represents 'one possible meaning' of the text in question:

> the fact that the moral understanding is the one which any wise man would adopt does much to recommend it but does not enshrine it as the one and only "real" understanding. A single text can have different kinds of meaning, depending on the kind of reader, or the kind of reading in which the reader is engaged at a given time.[112]

He goes on to figure these different meanings as mountains to be climbed by the interpreter, the point being that there is not always a single peak to be attained, but rather many different peaks, each demanding a different method of interpretation. He refers to the opinion of 'Bernard Silvester' that 'some poets write because of utility, like the satirists, and some write because of delight, like the writers of comedies, while others both instruct and please, as do the historians'.[113] Perhaps influenced by this division of the various types of *utilitas*, in his introduction to a selection of texts by Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio in which self-commentary is employed to aggrandise vernacular literature, Minnis again cites the *Confessio*, arguing that

> Gower's work may be seen to offer many things to many men: discerning and wise readers, guided by the self-commentary, will be very aware of its "lore", a different kind of reader may be interested in its "lust" or pleasure-giving

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[112] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. xvi.
[113] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 23.

qualities, while others may appreciate both its profit and delight in good measure.[114]

There is much value in these remarks, but at the same time they invite many questions.

If it is indeed a 'fact' that the 'moral understanding' of the text is the one that 'any wise man would adopt', surely that does more than 'much to recommend it'? It does everything to recommend it, unless wisdom (which in Christian terms must be understood as a form of knowledge which brings one closer to God, God being the goal towards which the human soul yearns just as philosophers yearn towards wisdom) is no longer to be counted as the highest good a person can seek. If it is not, what sort of wisdom are we talking about here, and what other goods are there to be sought? How would one characterise the 'different kind of reader' who chose to adopt a different understanding? Not being wise, they would presumably have to be stupid, or at least less wise to the extent that they deviated from the moral understanding. According to Minnis, the moral (and wise) understanding is not the only 'real' one, but what does 'real' mean in this context? Is there some form of reality which is accessible to the less wise reader, but not to the wise one? Minnis speaks of the text's 'lust, or pleasure-giving qualities', but what kind of pleasure is the text supposed to give? Does the moral reading – does *wisdom* – not give pleasure, even if it leads the reader towards the true and everlasting bliss of Heaven? In the Boethian conception, all worldly pleasures which do not bring the soul closer to God are in reality pain-rather than pleasure-giving, so presumably a reader who appreciated the text on this level would be implicitly affirming that genuine pleasure could be derived from

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[114] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 380.

pursuits which did nothing to bring his or her soul closer to God, and thus defying Boethius.

Minnis does not explain how his metaphor of the various mountains of interpretation chimes with the notion of authorial intent – he seems to suggest that medieval authors meant many things at once, and that only one of these meanings is the morally orthodox one – but since pursuing worldly pleasures for their own sake defies a central doctrine of the *Consolatio*, and arguably of (medieval) Christianity itself, is Minnis saying that Gower (for instance) would be happy for his readers to take away a meaning from his text which directly undermined their Christian beliefs, thus endangering their souls? After dividing Gower's readers into those (the 'wise and discerning') who appreciate the lore of a text and those (the 'different kind') who appreciate its pleasure-giving qualities, Minnis also posits a third group who 'appreciate both its profit and delight in good measure'. The phrase 'in good measure' seems to identify this group as the most moderate and indeed rational of the three: they avoid the extremes of joyless moralisation and foolish delight, but what exactly is the nature of this middle-ground interpretation? Either the text's 'lust' is to be distinguished from its 'lore', as Minnis suggests, in which case these pleasure-giving qualities are a distraction from the true goods to be found in the exercise of Christian virtue, or the pleasure-giving qualities are, as (I think) all of the material anthologised by Minnis and Scott suggests, valuable only insofar as they serve to lead the reader towards wisdom and 'lore', in which case these two categories (lust and lore) ought not to be distinguished but rather brought into relation with each other, and arranged in a hierarchy with lore above and lust underneath.

Minnis' championing of plurality is invaluable insofar as it serves to correct the over-determined readings of other scholars, and is of crucial importance to the argument I will advance in this thesis. Furthermore, in a later work Minnis provides a

slightly different account of the *Confessio*, suggesting that the more educated reader would gain a 'more profoundly moral' understanding of the text, and picturing such a reader 'reading aloud a section of the *Confessio* to a group of aristocrats, and...conveying such material from the Latin apparatus as he thought fit, in accordance with the taste and mood of his audience.'[115] Such an account accords very well with my own sense of how poets like Gower and Machaut tailored their work so that, as in the Bible, the text could offer morally profitable amusement to readers with varying degrees of understanding.

Monson expresses a view similar to that of Minnis when he raises this objection to Robertson's ironic readings of medieval love poems:

> one cannot help but wonder why the orthodox doctrine of Christian charity was expressed so systematically in such an indirect and obscure fashion, and also why medieval writers devoted so much energy to ironising about a secular view of love in which no one apparently believed... Medieval Christianity was certainly a dominant force in the culture, but...it found itself in constant confrontation with such competing forces as the political and social reality and...a strong secular current in the intellectual sphere.[116]

My own response to the first half of this quotation was partially outlined in the previous section, where I cited Monson's own reading of the *De amore* as an example of how a medieval text could be seen as exploring, understanding and empathising with a point of view which it would ultimately come to reject. The Robertsonian reading does indeed falter when it tries to suggest that 'no one believed' in the values ostensibly being espoused by texts like the *De amore* and the *Rose*: such an

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[115] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 300.
[116] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 135.

interpretation renders these texts redundant. Monson's affirmation of the 'competing forces' with which Christianity found itself in conflict also seems to me very clear-headed, and it highlights what is valuable in Minnis' project to broaden the scholar's interpretative scope. Even assuming that Jean de Meun or Machaut were good Christians, they might not have been so all the time, and might have written their poems with more secular concerns in mind: one could go further, I think, and say that they undoubtedly did.

Nonetheless, although my aim in this thesis is to moderate the approaches of Robertson, Fleming and Heinrichs, it is, as a rule, towards their approaches that I incline. Fleming said in 1969 that 'literary criticism seldom addresses itself to the definition of subject matter in a direct fashion',[117] defined his own 'modest aim' as 'the definition of the significant content of the *Roman de la Rose*',[118] and at the end of his book proclaimed, more simply, 'my aim has been no more ambitious than to describe what the *Roman* is about'.[119] Such an aim may seem ambitious enough, and hardly modest. It may seem arrogant, in fact: to 'define' the poem's content is to draw boundaries around it, and the term 'significant content' throws up almost as many questions as did the above quotations from Minnis. Fleming quotes the assertion from Wellek and Warren's *Theory of Literature* that 'the whole idea that the "intention" of the author is the proper subject of literary history seems, however, quite mistaken',[120] but says that 'such a task nonetheless remains, in my view, the labour next awaiting us.'[121] Approached simplistically, such a task might well lead to a limited and limiting account of 'what Jean de Meun was trying to say'.

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[117] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 17.
[118] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 26-7.
[119] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 245.
[120] René Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (1942; repr. London: Penguin, 1993), p. 42.
[121] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 246.

However, Fleming does not approach this task simplistically, but admits the justice of some of Wellek's and Warren's claims: the critic

knows that he can never, however hard he may try, recapture the significantly mutable cultural milieux of Homer or Chapman's *Homer* or Keats' "Chapman's Homer". He can only make what he hopes are intelligent attempts to do so. He can only, in Boccaccio's words, "read, persevere, sit up nights, inquire, and exert the utmost power of his mind".[122]

Boccaccio also defends fiction-makers by tracing the word *fabula* back to *confabulatio*, meaning 'conversation': 'hence, if it is a sin to compose stories, it is a sin to converse... For nature has not granted us the power of speech unless for purposes of conversation, and the exchange of ideas'; to the objection that fiction is idle nonsense, Boccaccio responds that, on the contrary, 'fiction is a form of discourse, which, under guise of invention, illustrates or proves an idea; and, as its superficial aspect is removed, the meaning of the author is clear. If, then, sense is revealed from under the veil of fiction, the composition of fiction is not idle nonsense'.[123] Fleming's point in quoting Boccaccio is that the exchange of ideas between the poet and the critic is not straightforward, even when that critic is attempting to recover the original, intended meaning of that author: 'the exercise of the historical imagination requires both hard work and creative insight; it can promise at best only partial success, and it often fails totally'.[124]

No doubt, Fleming's historical imagination fails him at times, as on the very page just quoted where he draws too absolute a distinction between medieval and

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[122] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 4.
[123] Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, p. 48.
[124] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 204.

modern attitudes to sexuality. However, as regards authorial intention we have no less an authority than Boccaccio equating poetic discourse with conversation, and when conversing with another person we attempt to discern their intended meaning. This can be a challenge even during the simplest of conversations, let alone during a conversation with a medieval poet who has concealed their ideas beneath the veils of fiction. As Monson puts it, 'any work of literature, like linguistic utterances generally, has as its ultimate purpose the communication of a certain meaning', although he goes on to say that, all too often in scholarly accounts, 'a predetermined meaning presides over the selection of materials to be examined'.[125] Nonetheless, I think there is room for an approach to the *Rose*, or to Machaut, which is predicated on the notion that the author in question saw the value of their work as residing in the Christian doctrine to which the *fabula* indirectly points; such an approach is not limited or deterministic simply because it takes such authors at their word that they are Christians. My own analysis of Machaut is based, rather exhaustively, on his 'word': rather than assuming a Christian intent behind his poems, I have inferred it while reading them, and in subsequent chapters will try to show how this Christian intent is manifested in the texts under consideration.

Here is how Minnis summarises the medieval attitude to *intentio auctoris*:

medieval commentators were more interested in Truth than in the personal and subjective areas wherein we individualistic moderns are accustomed to seek the true intention of the author. Should we, then, moralise medieval texts in this manner, on the ground that, as an authentically medieval interpretive method, it must reveal the intended meaning of those texts? Our answer must surely be in the negative. We can treat a medieval work in the way in which

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[125] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 2.

medieval commentators treated their authorities *only* if the work in question clearly demands such treatment. Otherwise we are simply perpetuating the medieval interpretive system in an unthinking and highly reductive kind of way, with little regard for that rich diversity of style and sense which is such a marked feature of medieval textuality.[126]

Again, there are questions to be asked. Just how do we determine whether a work 'clearly demands' a moral exegesis? More importantly, to treat a medieval work in the way in which medieval commentators treated their authorities would mean applying *modern* values to these ancient texts, in order to show how they paved the way towards whatever modern ideology we wished to espouse, and indeed this is precisely what many critics – perhaps all of them, Fleming and myself included – have done. On the other hand, if these commentators' attitudes to *intentio auctoris* were as influential upon the practice of medieval poets as Minnis is at pains to argue they were, then given that such commentators invariably identified 'Truth' (Minnis does not specify, but in this context the word clearly refers to Christian Truth) as the only worthwhile *finalis causa* of a work, and the only *intentio auctoris* worth considering, then surely the suggestion that medieval poets adopted this principle themselves is a valid one, and worth pursuing?

Boccaccio quotes Augustine's suggestion that the Psalms were written in obscure language 'that they may call forth many understandings, and that men may go away the richer, because they have found that closed which might be opened in many ways, than if they could open and discover it by one interpretation'.[127] It is important to note here that Augustine says there are many ways of opening a single thing: the truth to be discovered remains singular, however plural are the ways of

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[126] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. xiv.
[127] Osgood, *Boccaccio on Poetry*, p. 60.

discovering it. 'Augustine the convert had said that many paths led to Truth, only to be contradicted by Augustine the bishop', says Fleming, discussing the possible influence of 'the optimism of Augustine's intellectual infancy' upon Boethius' 'fiction of the sufficiency of naked Philosophia'.[128] Minnis and Scott record the thirteenth-century controversy over the 'manifold meanings' of scripture: according to *Alexander's Sum of Theology*, 'the mode of Holy Scripture must be manifold, and that for three reasons', namely that the Holy Spirit is single yet multiple and takes many forms, that the wisdom of God likewise takes many forms and must be represented through multiple modes of signification, and that 'the conditions of men are manifold', so that Scripture must use a multiple mode to lead them to salvation.[129] Henry of Ghent strenuously objected that, despite the manifold nature of God's wisdom and the conditions of men, 'one should in no way claim that there should be a different mode of imparting that knowledge because of the different conditions of men, so that often a science that is one whole should be dealt with in different ways, which is absurd'.[130]

Even the notion that many paths might lead to truth was hotly debated, but none of these debaters is positing the existence of more than one truth. If Minnis is to argue that there is more than one mountain to be climbed within these texts – more meanings besides the one that leads to Christian Truth – then his defiance of the ostensible beliefs of the writers being discussed requires some explanation, just as the Robertsonian argument that there is only one way to interpret these texts requires moderation. If there is a risk of limiting our interpretation of a text with un-nuanced historicism, there is also a risk of being 'unlimited' to the point of advancing an interpretation which not only contradicts the evidence of the text and its context, but

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[128] Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, p. 48.
[129] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 219.
[130] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 253.

which even fails to make sense on its own terms. Minnis' account of the many meanings of medieval poetry is, to reiterate, stimulating and important insofar as it promotes an appreciation of that 'rich diversity of style and sense which is such a marked feature of medieval textuality', but it is also open to question, insofar as it attempts to affirm the authority of the wise and moral reading, but in the same breath affirms the 'reality' of those readings which find inherent value in worldly pleasures. Either type of reading is potentially valid, but I do not believe they can exist in harmony with each other.

Minnis expresses similar views in relation to Machaut and Froissart, whose

sceptical realisations of Youth are particularly remarkable since they feature in a genre which generally celebrates and recommends a refined version of the emotion with which that age of man's life was irrevocably associated. They betray the clerical training of Machaut and Froissart inasmuch as they evince theological distrust of the body and its pleasures, not to mention the Boethian relegation of human desire as an inferior good which must be left behind as the soul ascends towards the *summum bonum*. But other discourses in their texts often offer a more positive version, of *fine amor* as at once a transformative experience and a learning process which ennobles the lover and makes him...superlatively sensitive and highly ambitious in every area of activity which befits his aristocratic station in life.[131]

Of the idea that Machaut's scepticism about love 'betrays his clerical training' I will have more to say presently, but for now I want to focus on the idea that there are both negative and positive discourses regarding *fin'amor* in Machaut's poetry. The

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[131] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 60.

negative discourse is the one which pictures physical desire as an inferior good which serves only as a stage on the way to the *summum bonum* of eternal bliss; the 'more positive' discourse is the one which pictures erotic love as 'ennobling'. According to Minnis, *fin'amor* is ennobling in the sense that it instils in the lover the sensitivity and ambition which befit an aristocrat, but it is not clear why this is a 'more positive' image of love: surely the clerical designation of love as a first step towards Heaven elevates love's status to an infinitely greater degree than the more secular account of love as a useful pastime for the upper class? The question is not a facetious one, for the key to finding a compromise between 'modernist naturalism...and Robertsonian moralism'[132] is, I think, to see these poems as celebrating erotic love as a kind of induction into higher truths. The values of *fin'amor* are capable of fostering real virtue in the lover, but after a certain point the 'theological distrust' must kick in – the dill must be thrown away, so to speak – and the lover must turn his or her attention away from these worldly signifiers, towards the inherently worthwhile goods they point towards. Such is, as I will argue in this thesis, the underlying sense of Machaut's poems. Minnis' location of the value of *fin'amor* in its capacity for training aristocrats is also problematic insofar as the aristocratic values being promoted are not being exercised with an eye towards Christian virtue. I will not say any more about this here, but to demonstrate how Machaut complicates the aristocratic values associated with *fin'amor* is one of the tasks of this thesis.

The idea that Machaut's scepticism regarding bodily pleasures betrays his clerical training would seem to suggest that only clerical training – rather than, say, ordinary Christian faith – would instil such scepticism in an author, and that the author in question might otherwise have been expected to emphasise the 'more positive' view of love. Minnis discusses the 'rather vain attempt to police the

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[132] Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, p. 17.

meaning of Ovid's erotic poetry, by controlling it through moral structures and strictures' in commentaries and *accessus*, adding that 'of course the texts resist such imposition', and going on to suggest that such repressive scholarship ironically 'helped to make available to practising poets an array of possibilities which the standard commentaries could do little to contain...traditional teaching about poetry, despite its efforts at regulation, in some measure afforded a licence to poets'.[133] Speaking of the various 'medieval Ovids' – Ovidian poems such as Jean de Meun's and Machaut's, as well as more scholarly works – Minnis claims that Ovid's work

> remained a vital index to pagan sex and science, ever-resistant to allegorical *reductio*...marked by inherent instability of meaning...interpreted and augmented by medieval scholars and writers in ways which often accentuated that instability... Stabilising structures were imposed, of course; explicitly Christian statements set in place to shore up edifices of dubious ethical import. But such measures often achieved little success... Ovidian poetics remained obstinately resistant to closure, refused to be reducible to neat critical aphorism. This was, of course, a wonderfully creative space for a writer to inhabit. And the best of the writers treated below made the most of it.[134]

Later, defending a Guido Cavalcanti poem which Dante Gabriel Rossetti had dismissed as 'a fly-catcher for priests and pedants', Minnis says:

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[133] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 38 and n. 13, in which Minnis cites the work of Warren Ginsberg and Nicolette Zeeman in support of his argument.
[134] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 12.

a love-song which did not conform to the interpretative priorities and standards which had been established by "priests and pedants" could not hope to attain the approval of the cultural establishment, and it was that approval which many of the most self-aware and theoretically articulate vernacular poets, along with their "new" commentators, were seeking. In the traditional value-laden strategies of Latin commentary they found a means of bestowing value on vernacular literature.[135]

Referring elsewhere to the efforts of the Trecento poets to defend poetic discourse, Minnis and Scott argue that the 'introduction of theological allegory into a discussion of the meaning of secular poems was something...which was done with a definite sense of occasion. And the main feature of that occasion was the aggrandisement of the vernacular'.[136]

What emerges from all this is an unwillingness to take seriously the notion that medieval love poets might have been sincere in their attempts to bestow moral *utilitas* upon their works. Poets, in Minnis' view, benefited from the example of Ovid in the sense that he allowed them to say all the erotic, de-stabilising things their inclinations drove them to say, and thus to aggrandise vernacular discourse, while the vain attempts of clerics and scholars to police Ovid's texts only gave these poets – the best of them, anyway – more defences with which to protect their erotic, de-stabilising masterpieces. Jean de Meun, in his continuation of the *Rose*, is

leaving open the possibility that the entire poem may be read as a passion-induced fancy on the part of the lover-narrator...who vividly illustrates that overthrow of rational judgement which commonly occurs during sleep. Yet

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[135] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 312.
[136] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 386.

the *Rose* stands as a work which contains "the whole art of love"... That certainly was how it was received, for better or worse... Reductive readings should therefore be avoided, and the shifting ambivalence of the text respected.[137]

It is in this shifting ambivalence, and in the poem's ability to mix together different and contradictory discourses, that Minnis seems to locate the value of the *Rose*: tempering some of the more serious readings of Jean's treatment of 'proper' and 'improper' language, he warns that

> the playful nature of so much of the *Rose* must never be forgotten, the extraordinary way in which the subversive clerical laughter of sexual comedy interweaves with the morally righteous laughter of satire to produce effects in which earnest and game are virtually impossible to segregate... There is no master discourse relating to linguistic and literary theory which can be seized upon and made the hermeneutic key to Jean's entire text.[138]

The first part of Minnis' characterisation of the *Rose* here is a very apt summary of the text's disorienting mix of tones and registers. A poem in which earnest and game cannot be segregated – in which moral righteousness is infused with more subversive elements – can still have moral utility, in that (as Gillespie argued) such a poem would test the reader's ability to deal with the complexity and ambivalence of the real world. However, to say that there is 'no master discourse' in the light of which to interpret Jean's text is to deny any possibility of interpreting the text in the light of the author's (or readers') presumed Christian faith, for the discourse of religion is the

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[137] Minnis, 'Medieval Imagination and Memory', p. 250.
[138] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 159.

master discourse *par excellence*, a hermeneutical key to all things, complex treatments of language in erotic poems included.

In Minnis' view, and contrary to Gontier Col's prediction, the *Rose* became a famous and influential text 'not because Jean de Meun was successful in formulating coherent doctrine in "saincte theologie" or "philosophie" but rather on account of his disinterest in doing so – or, better, his interest in a far wider range of textual engagements'.[139] I would agree warmly with the second part of this last statement, and with Minnis' overall contention that it is misguided to try and pin down the meaning of the *Rose*. However, while it may be true that the *Rose*, as a text, does not directly present us with any 'coherent doctrine', I would still argue, as I did in the previous section, that it is first and foremost a moral text, in relation to which we situate our own moral condition as we read. Minnis says that the poem can be read as a satire upon the foolish, dreaming lover whose reason is overthrown, but sets in opposition to this 'reductive' reading Guillaume de Lorris's claim that the poem 'contains the whole art of love'. Yet these two readings were not seen by Andreas Capellanus as contradicting each other; indeed, in the *De amore* they are interdependent.

Monson, in response to the readings of Robertson and Alfred Karnein, objects that if Book 2 of the *De amore* merely contributes to its encyclopaedic character, this contradicts these critics' claim 'that the *De amore* is not a *summa* on love and was not so interpreted by Andreas's contemporaries'; if this part of the work is merely factual and morally neutral, as Karnein insists, 'then it inevitably weakens that [ironic] interpretation by diluting it and blurring its focus'.[140] Indeed, as I have suggested, the major weakness of the Robertsonian school is its refusal to accept that works such as the *De amore* and the *Rose* can be pleasure-giving encyclopaedias on love-doctrine

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[139] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 33.
[140] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 137.

and morally orthodox critiques of love at the same time. Providing a factual account of love does not dilute the ironic reading, it simply backs it up with more evidence, and further cements the author's authority. Minnis characterises the *Ars amatoria* as 'a courtship manual which nevertheless reveals the follies of youth', observing that Ovid was regarded in the Middle Ages as 'the expert on both the pursuit and the eradication of love' and that his poetry 'could be taken as emitting either positive or negative signals about human desire – or indeed, confused signals, which could be decoded either way',[141] but the example of the *De amore* shows, I think, that these signals need not be confused: it is possible for an author to describe the art of love and then, on the basis of that description, make the case for its foolishness. In the *Rose*, Guillaume and Jean are telling us that love is a passion-induced fancy, an irrational dream – whatever else they are saying through the two encounters with Reason, however the rest of the poem alters our perspective, and however serious they are being, this reading is surely incontestable – but when the *Rose*-narrator receives this lesson he ignores it, and we are free to do the same.

Monson, referring to Bishop Tempier's condemnation of the *De amore* in 1277, argues that this fact works against the Robertsonian interpretation of that text, because 'being a fellow cleric, Bishop Tempier was presumably an ideal audience for Andreas' irony', and 'if he missed the irony, then many others must have missed it as well, all of which casts doubt on the effectiveness with which Andreas communicated it in the first place, if indeed that was his intention'.[142] But according to Gillespie's account of changing attitudes towards such morally complex texts, it is not at all incongruous to suggest that a work designed to confront readers with a difficult moral dilemma should have been regarded as suspicious by more austere minds, such as those of Tempier or Jean Gerson. Indeed, the *querelle* over the *Rose* proves that the

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[141] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 102.
[142] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 142.

existence of Tempiers and Gersons did not preclude the satiric and moralising interpretations of Gilles li Muisis and Pierre Col: the official refusal to see the *De amore* as ironic (if that is what Tempier's condemnation constitutes) is not as heavy a blow against Robertson and his followers as Monson suggests.

That erotic love is irrational, worldly, deceptive and, in Christian terms, sinful, is an essential part of the 'art of love'; that is, no art of love would be complete without highlighting this characteristic of its subject. To apply the Robertsonian 'passion-induced fancy' reading is not necessarily reductive. We must simply add to it the acknowledgement that the *Rose* does not instruct us in any dogmatic way, but leaves us to make what we will of its materials. These materials reflect the complexities and difficulties of real life, hence the poem's rich incoherence, hence its effectiveness as a discursive meditation on worldly desires, and hence its power both to win the admiration and incur the condemnation of differently disposed readers. To read a medieval poem morally is not to reduce its complexity, as long as the author in question's attitude towards morality was not itself simplistic, as it clearly was not in the case of Jean de Meun. In short, Minnis' hostility towards the moral reading leads him to draw an artificial distinction between two functions of the *Rose*-text which in fact work in harmony.

In objecting to Robertson's and Fleming's analyses, Minnis points out that the defenders of the *Rose* in the *querelle* 'did not indulge in integumental analysis' or 'promote hermeneutics of a kind which allegorised the text's troublesome indeterminacies and subversions out of existence', nor did they 'exploit the "satire justification"', but rather discussed the poem as an Ovidian art of love 'which conveyed its doctrine in a manner that no one had to dig deep to understand'.[143] Elsewhere, Minnis defends the claim, made by himself, H.R. Jauss and Winthrop

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[143] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, pp. 26-7.

Wetherbee, that the *Rose* is a predominantly literalist text: although Jean de Meun 'sometimes drew on mythographic materials and displayed an awareness of the allogorical or "integumental" method of interpreting them',[144] the integumental impulse plays against the satiric, satire being regarded, in the Middle Ages, as a kind of literal truth whose 'literalism often expressed itself in language which was plain, blunt, and got straight to the point'.[145]

Minnis' treatment of this subject is too rich and complex to be done justice to here, but I would like to suggest that there may be a problem with his insistent definition of satire as a literal discourse whose meaning is contained in the surface of the text. As he remarks himself, 'irony, here denoting a form of wit in which one says the opposite of what is meant...may be identified as satire's characteristic form of mockery',[146] and Monson describes a medieval theory of irony which figures its typical function as 'to blame through a pretence of praise'; moreover, it 'was seen not only as a localised figure of speech, but also as a figure of thought that could be maintained throughout an entire discourse'.[147] A whole text, then, might demand that its readers look beyond its surface to find the intended meaning. Fleming says this of the *Rose*'s satirical content:

> in a moral allegory more obvious in its techniques and less dependent on the
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> sophistication and iconographic sensitivity of its readers, the Lover's Friend
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> would be a Mr. Worldly Wiseman or Wicked Counsel... Jean did not conceive
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> of satire, as so many of his contemporaries did, primarily in terms of polished
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> and hyperbolic *sententiae* on the wickedness of man; he chose another,

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[144] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 86.

[145] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 91.

[146] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, pp. 93-4. Cf. Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 130: satire 'often makes use of irony, but it can also be expressed directly, through the use of invective'. One thinks, for example, of the potent mix of irony and invective in the discourse of *Faux-Semblant*.

[147] Monson, *Andreas Capellanus*, p. 124.

perhaps higher, road which led to extended ironic and dramatic formulations requiring the reader's engagement and arbitration, indeed his complicity, rather than his passive acquiescence in unexceptionable commonplaces grandly stated.[148]

The reference to 'iconographically sensitive' readers at the start of this passage is a distracting reminder of the scholarly tendency Minnis takes issue with, but I think the account of satire here describes very well what is going on in the *Rose*.

Gillespie refers to the

medieval definition of satire as an ethically engaged genre where, even if the poet's moral intention is only indirectly manifested, satire follows rhetoric in its desire to praise or blame...the moral intention of any author in any text, no matter how elliptical, can thus be deduced by the ability of medieval commentators to generate a moral reading of the text.[149]

Gillespie goes on to say that 'despite its use of the literal sense and naked expression, by no means all satire was open and clear', and that 'in many cases the endemic irony of the satiric mode introduces a certain interpretative responsibility on its readers to locate its moral centre of gravity'.[150] This conception of satire chimes very well with the moral purpose of the *Rose* as I have described it, as well as with Fleming's comment, in support of his approach to the foolish Amant, that 'one general strategy of the satirist is to flatter the reader at the expense of the satiric butt, and this is an

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[148] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 149.
[149] Gillespie, 'Twelfth century to c. 1450', p. 165.
[150] Gillespie, 'Twelfth century to c. 1450', p. 226.

evident technique of the "dialectical" dialogues of the Ciceronian mode.'[151] Indeed, Minnis and Scott themselves cite an instance in Juvenal's Satire IV where Domitian is caricatured as 'a bald Nero', and the medieval commentator mistakes this for a reference to Nero himself, thus misinterpreting the entire text: a proper understanding of the poem 'is rendered possible by information about the historical background which the medieval commentator did not possess'.[152] This is a clear case in which the surface text will not suffice, but must be supplemented by both the specialist knowledge and the interpretative skill of the reader.

In summary, the notion that satire 'was supposed to have a methodology that was diametrically opposed to that of *integumentum*' in the sense that it was a 'quintessentially literalistic form' which 'sought to strip away all the veils of social and textual subterfuge to expose the naked truth'[153] is open to question, especially when it is being used to discredit the approaches of Robertson and Fleming. If Jean de Meun was, at times, 'writing under the influence of the medieval literary theory and practice of satire',[154] his doing so did not prevent him from writing a text which concealed its true meaning beneath an ironic surface. It is no more valid to oppose the notion that the *Rose* exposes the sinful follies of love to the notion that it 'contains the whole art of love' than it would be to suggest that the praise heaped on the institution of marriage by Chaucer's Merchant is at odds with his scathing contempt for it.

'The *Roman de la Rose* is ironic':[155] this, rather than his appeal to a homogenous medieval readership, or his over-use of 'integumental' readings, is the core of Fleming's argument, and it depends primarily on the assumption that the *Rose* was written by a Christian for a Christian audience, and I would suggest that, in

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[151] Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, p. 109.
[152] Minnis and Scott, *Medieval Literary Theory*, p. 118.
[153] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 18.
[154] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 19.
[155] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 50.

essence, Minnis' disagreement with such an interpretation has a lot to do with the fact that he values the *Rose* for its instability, incoherence, ambivalence, and lack of a 'master discourse'. While I would not question the reasonableness of valuing the text for these qualities, it should be clear by now that it is not possible to praise the *Rose* on these terms without denying the historical fact (or at least, the likely supposition) that its author was a Christian. Medieval literary theory, as represented by Minnis, was dependent on the idea that classical poetry contained, or at least pointed towards, Christian truths, but Minnis insists that Ovid could not be reduced and policed like this, and that his poems' resistance to these imposed Christian doctrines was seized on with relish by his medieval imitators. The vain attempts by scholars to tame Ovid only served, ironically, to protect the poets who 'made the most of' this subversive material. This portrait of medieval writers as subversives in search of opportunities to defy the oppressive 'master discourse' of Christianity is exhilarating, but over-determined.

Moreover, the Robertsonian approach is not always as limiting and deterministic as it is sometimes made out to be. Fleming himself admits that 'iconographic logic is not inexorable, and iconographic meaning changes with shifts in points of view'.[156] Whereas a poet like Spenser tended 'to tie the dangling threads of his allegory into tidy bows, to move from implicit to explicit judgements', the *Rose* authors 'implicitly invite that careful reading and moral sensitivity, that willingness not only to comprehend but also to assess, which Boccaccio insists is the fruitful labour of all readers of allegory'.[157] There are times, as I have said, when Fleming does presume to know rather too much about the 'careful and sensitive' medieval reader, but at the same time I feel that it is possible to go too far in obliterating that reader. A poem which tries to aggrandise the vernacular by engaging chaotically with

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[156] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, p. 82.
[157] Fleming, *Allegory and Iconography*, pp. 78-9.

a broad range of contradictory discourses, but which has nothing coherent to say beneath this dazzling fireworks display, seems to me less interesting and less worthy of study than a poem which engages with a broad range of contradictory discourses in order to reflect the chaos of worldly endeavours and convey profound truths about the human condition, while inviting the involvement and complicity of the reader's moral intelligence. This is a very subjective comment, of course, and it is not hard to see why some readers find the former account of the poem the more attractive.

The real strength of the Robertsonian account, at least for me, is that it matches both my own impression of the *Rose* when I first read it and my impression of the impact it had upon Chaucer and others. In this thesis, the reading I advance of Machaut's poems will to some extent depend on the idea that the 'ideal reader' of these texts would have known their Boethius, and as such I may be seen as guilty of Robertsonian homogenisation. Primarily, however, I will rely on the evidence of the texts themselves, and will try to give a thorough account of what these texts have seemed to me, on a first reading and on subsequent readings, to be saying. Later I will argue that the mistakes made by Heinrichs – and I think it is fair to call them mistakes – in her discussions of the *Jugement Behaigne* and *Remede de Fortune* arise from a failure to pay sufficiently close attention to the details of these texts. Although I largely agree with her approach, I hope to eschew her determinism by doing as full justice as I can to the intricacies and subtleties of Machaut's writing. Close analysis of this kind is, I believe, the best method for developing an appreciation of this author's achievement, and the strongest defence of the moral reading as one which reveals, rather than stifles, the breadth of that achievement. Before embarking on this analysis, however, I will conclude my introduction by briefly surveying some manifestations, in Machaut scholarship, of the bias towards the 'non-moral', 'non-clerical' and 'pro-love' view of this poet.

*The Profane and Playful Machaut*

In discussing the 'relevance of the *Romance of the Rose* to Machaut's world', Karl Uitti suggests that the *Rose* 'is, and was perceived to be, a defence and a renewal of poetry...[it] constitutes a transformation; in fact, it celebrates the very idea of poetic transformation and energy'.[158] One aspect of this 'transformation' is the founding of a new 'idea' of poetry, according to which an encyclopaedic text such as the *Rose* can stand alongside a more 'serious' scholastic *summa*: 'this open-ended total discourse is the province of a new kind of person whose chief duty...was, no more and no less, the defence of this discourse'.[159] Such poetry is 'open-ended' in that it is ambiguous, inconclusive and, in short, does not impose some clearly-defined, edifying message upon the reader; it is also deemed to be 'total' in that it takes into account the whole of human existence, or at least is capable of doing so. As Huot puts it, Jean de Meun's *Rose* is 'not only lyrico-narrative but lyrico-encylopaedic', with even the rubrication in some manuscripts calling to mind techniques 'employed by medieval encyclopaedists'.[160]

For the sceptical, secular reader of today, 'total' and 'open-ended' are interdependent terms, since from a sceptical, secular viewpoint, existence *is* fundamentally ambiguous, lacking as it does the theological coherence which, I will argue, a poet such as Machaut did in fact ascribe to it. Uitti's point seems to be that the *Rose* was important for Machaut because, among other things, it provided a model for portraying the dynamism, the disunity, and the refusal to 'make sense' of human life. When Uitti says that Jean de Meun defines 'the poet's function and notion of

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[158] Karl Uitti, 'From *Clerc* to *Poète*: The Relevance of the *Romance of the Rose* to Machaut's World', in *Machaut's World: Science and Art in the Fourteenth Century*, ed. by Madeleine Pelner Cosman and Bruce Chandler (New York : New York Academy of Sciences, 1978), pp. 209-16 (210).
[159] Uitti, 'From *Clerc* to *Poète*', p. 215.
[160] Sylvia Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 99.

identity...in a fashion, I daresay, that is still very much with us today',[161] he fulfils a perceived but unspoken need to legitimise the medieval writer as contemporary and relevant to our own age.

Paul Imbs voices this need, with greater clarity, in his comments upon the religious background to Machaut's *Voir-Dit*. While discussing the pervasiveness of religious dogma in Machaut's time, and the dangers of not taking this into consideration when reading his poetry, Imbs comments tellingly, 'il suffit d'avoir lu quelques pages du *Voir-Dit* pour constater à quel point ce texte reste médiéval, malgré des manifestations non moins évidentes d'une certaine "modernité", qui colorent l'œuvre d'une ambiguïté qui peut faire son charme permanent'.[162] This seems to me an unguarded moment in a text Imbs did not have the chance to complete or edit before his death, but he was one of the pre-eminent Machaut scholars, and I quote this passage because it encapsulates very neatly an important distinction: insofar as a text is grounded in the constrictive religious doctrines of its time, it is 'medieval'; insofar as it is ambiguous, it is 'modern'; and of course, as in Minnis' account of the *Rose*, it is this latter quality which enables a text to stand the test of time.

Deborah McGrady's study of the *Voir-Dit* and its representation in manuscripts includes fascinating information about one 'remanieur' who 'appropriated and rewrote Machaut's corpus to give form to his own ideas...transforming Machaut's metanarrative into a decidedly didactic text', converting 'the practice of reading courtly poetry into a tool for his salvation and that

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[161] Uitti, 'From *Clerc* to *Poète*', p. 214.
[162] Paul Imbs, *Le* Voir-Dit *de Guillaume de Machaut: Étude littéraire* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1991), p. 11. 'It suffices to have read a few pages of the *Voir-Dit* in order to realise the extent to which it remains a medieval text, despite some no less evident manifestations of a certain "modernity", which colour the work with an ambiguity capable of lending it a permanent appeal.'

of his subsequent readers'.[163] These comments suggest that McGrady regards this manuscript (Pierpont Morgan, MS M 396) as a violation of Machaut's intent, but in fact her treatment of the subject is more objective: she tacitly acknowledges the didactic potential of the original poem when she says that, edited thus, it 'serves as a sombre warning to the wayward cleric who is fooled in love'.[164] Machaut's poem is arranged, in this manuscript, alongside more overtly moral texts, including the *De consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius, and McGrady comments usefully on the resulting effect: 'just as Boethius was a champion of pagan literature as a valuable resource for strong moral conduct, the implied message is that vernacular literature – even that of the venerable love poet and musician – can also fulfil a spiritual need'.[165] This is not a central concern of McGrady's book, but her description of the implied relationship between the *Consolatio* and Machaut's love poems is essentially very similar to the one I will develop in this thesis.

In placing such importance on this relationship I follow in the footsteps of Sylvia Huot, who has written extremely perceptively on the subject, but who, like several other critics, identifies Machaut's project as 'to redeem poetic discourse and to reverse the moral polarities established by Boethius'.[166] Here, too, the conclusion is shaped, in part, by the scholar's concern to affirm Machaut's morally uncritical stance on his own art. As I have said in the earlier sections of this introduction, my own reading has more in common with that of Katherine Heinrichs, who dismisses the quasi-religious exaltation of love in Machaut's poems as 'the pseudo-Boethian utterance of a partisan of love *par amours* who misuses philosophical wisdom in the

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[163] Deborah McGrady, *Controlling Readers: Guillaume de Machaut and His Late Medieval Audience* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), p. 191.
[164] McGrady, *Controlling Readers*, p. 207.
[165] McGrady, *Controlling Readers*, p. 208.
[166] Sylvia Huot, 'Guillaume de Machaut and the Consolation of Poetry', *Modern Philology*, 100.2 (2002), 169-95 (p. 185).

service of a false conclusion'.[167] The falsity of the conclusion consists in its secularity, and in constructing a 'moral Machaut' it is important to recognise his scepticism about the inherent value of both erotic love and amorous poetry, which are interdependent in his work.

William Calin provides yet another take on Machaut's 'distortions' of Boethius when he states that the poet 'diverges from the Boethian tradition' and 'is not in the least interested in relating happiness to the Good Life or to God', concluding that 'Boethius's treatise is broadly philosophical and religious in a way Machaut's poem [the *Remede de Fortune*] never claims to be'.[168] We are faced with an interesting spectrum of viewpoints on this subject: Calin finds no moral profundity at all in Machaut's re-appropriations of Boethius, Heinrichs argues that the very 'aestheticism' of these re-appropriations serves as a moral judgement on the poems' limited protagonists, while for Huot the Boethian ideas are carried over intact, but altered to reflect more positively on Machaut's profession. I will engage with these arguments in more detail at the appropriate time, but what is clear at this point is that one's reading of the Boethian elements in the *dits* will determine – or perhaps simply indicate – whether one takes Machaut seriously as a moral writer, and more specifically as a *Christian* writer.

Sarah Kay's book, *The Place of Thought*, begins by declaring its 'antihegemonic' intention to deviate from 'a critical orthodoxy that privilege[s] playfulness, irony, multiplicity, and indeterminacy', and instead explore what Kay calls 'oneness',[169] as it is manifested and explored in various didactic texts. Nonetheless, despite paying some attention to the ethical dimensions of his poetry,

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[167] Katherine Heinrichs, '"Lovers' Consolations of Philosophy" in Boccaccio, Machaut, and Chaucer', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 11 (1989), 93-115 (p. 100).
[168] William Calin, *A Poet at the Fountain: Essays on the Narrative Verse of Guillaume de Machaut* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1974), p. 60.
[169] Sarah Kay, *The Place of Thought: the Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p. xi.

Kay's chapter on Machaut aligns itself with the views of those critics who, as she says, 'have all demonstrated how playful and equivocal he is, and how preoccupied with the intricacies of form and literary discourse'; it is, Kay goes on to tell us, 'evident that Machaut's *dits* are not didactic' in the ordinary sense of the word, but rather that they 'extend the remit of didacticism so that it includes directions as to how to write poetry'.[170] Kay is interested in 'oneness' and 'unity', but primarily in the sense that such unity is complicated and compromised. Instead of 'promoting the integration of the individual with a higher One, Machaut exploits his comic disjunction, and in this sense his poetic practice is non- or even anti-Boethian'; Machaut's 'supreme good' is only furthered 'in being instructed to go on writing'; he is 'a poet and not a philosopher or theologian'.[171]

Despite her opening mission statement, Kay seems here to display a familiar reluctance to take Machaut seriously as a Christian moralist, and to fall back on the claim, axiomatic in the scholarship devoted to this author, that if he teaches us anything it is how to write good poetry and music. This emphasis on the subversion of authority, and on the primacy of Machaut's *art* – the inherent value of poetry, for its own sake – is something we see again and again in Machaut scholarship. Kay's limiting formulation of the 'poet, not philosopher or theologian' echoes Jacqueline Cerquiglini ('le *Voir Dit* n'est pas d'abord un texte de moraliste, mais de musicien'),[172] Isabelle Bétemps ('Machaut, lui, ne cherche pas à provoquer la conversion du lecteur. Les exemples qui abondent dans son œuvre ont pour finalité de provoquer une adhésion intellectuelle plutôt que d'alimenter la foi'),[173] Didier

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[170] Kay, *The Place of Thought*, p. 95.

[171] Kay, *The Place of Thought*, p. 107.

[172] Jacqueline Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil': Guillaume de Machaut et l'Écriture au XIVe Siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1985), p. 84. 'The *Voir Dit* is not primarily the work of a moralist but that of a musician.'

[173] Isabelle Bétemps, *L'Imaginaire dans l'œuvre de Guillaume de Machaut* (Paris: Champion, 1998), p. 217. 'As for Machaut, he does not seek to convert the reader. The abundant *exempla* in his work are intended to stimulate intellectual support rather than to strengthen faith.'

Lechat's focus on Machaut's works as 'l'occasion...de prodiguer un enseignement poétique',[174] or Jane Taylor's comment that the generation of lyric poets to which Machaut belonged was 'powerfully aware of the manner, not the matter, of verse'.[175] These critics are not 'wrong' to argue that courtly poetry is primarily interested in itself and its own methods, rather than in moral issues – indeed, much of the time this is certainly the case – but their comments serve to indicate the scholarly orientation I am describing.

R. Barton Palmer, while celebrating the revival of interest in this author thanks to 'the creation of a "postmodern" Machaut',[176] remarks that the focus of current scholarship sadly 'reflects a judgment about literary categories that is thoroughly modern...a division between the fictional, mimetic, and entertaining, on the one hand, and the occasional, rhetorical, and didactic, on the other',[177] resulting, for instance, in the relative neglect of an obviously didactic (and occasional) poem like the *Confort d'ami*. This bias in Machaut criticism is unsurprising, given that interest in his poetry, particularly among English-speaking critics, has only flourished in the last forty years or so. It is generally assumed that the value of his work lies in its self-conscious play with ideas of literariness and its engagement with 'a world of unstable and relative meanings'.[178]

The general line on the subject of Machaut's religious convictions is well represented by Jacqueline Cerquiglini's comment that Machaut's *Prologue* lacks any visible 'inquiétude religieuse...L'œuvre s'assume comme profane, amoureuse...Cet

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[174] Didier Lechat, *'Dire par fiction': Métamorphoses du je chez Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Froissart et Christine de Pizan* (Paris: Champion, 2005), p. 188. *'An occasion for giving lessons in poetry.'*
[175] Jane H. M. Taylor, 'Lyric poetry of the later Middle Ages', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, ed. by Simon Gaunt and Sarah Kay (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 153-66 (157).
[176] R. Barton Palmer, 'Introduction', in *Guillaume de Machaut: Le Confort d'ami (Comfort for a Friend)*, ed. and trans. by R. Barton Palmer (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. xvi-xci (xxv).
[177] Palmer, 'Introduction' (*Confort*), p. xxvi.
[178] Laurence de Looze, *Pseudo-Autobiography in the Fourteenth Century* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), p. 15.

art poétique, consciemment, se place sous le signe de la subtilité'.[179] 'Art poétique'

here refers both to the conception of art put forward in the *Prologue* and to the

'subtlety' that defines all of Machaut's poems. Machaut was not 'un vrai philosophe

ou un théologien soucieux avant tout de l'unité de sa pensée et de son expression',

although 'à défaut d'unité on ne saurait lui dénier un certain souci de cohérence'.[180]

Lechat too affirms the 'perspective profane' of the *Prologue*, claiming that the gifts

from Nature and Love 'dispensent en quelque sorte Machaut des préceptes religieux

si souvent répétés en tête des prologues', assuring the poet of his genius and fame and

so excusing him from resorting to 'l'humilité convenue'.[181] Machaut's prayer to God

in the *Prologue* is 'en quelque sorte déceptive, les véritables destinataires des œuvres

de Machaut sont plutôt les pratiquants de la *fin'amor*'.[182] The repetition of the phrase

'en quelque sorte' in both quotations from Lechat betrays a hesitancy, a need to

qualify this portrait of the profane artist. In these excerpts from Cerquiglini and

Lechat, we once again see tributes to Machaut's justifiable pride in the subtlety and

excellence of his own writing, and to his tacit refusal to allow any religious content

into the poems.

It is on the profane, or at least secular, level of subtlety and ambiguity that

these poems tend to be appreciated. Much energy has been devoted to exploring the

self-conscious construction of Machaut's literary identity as a courtly lover, and just

as it is said that the subtle artifice of his poetry 'moves the audience's centre of

interest away from the force of the lover's sentiments and towards the ingenuity and

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[179] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 21. 'Religious concern...The work [or Machaut's œuvre as a whole] accepts itself as profane, amorous…This poetic art consciously designates itself as one defined by subtlety.'

[180] Imbs, *Le* Voir-Dit, p. 193. 'Mythological figures like Venus or allegorical figures like Fortune…a real philosopher or a theologian concerned above all with the unity of his thought and expression…in the absence of unity, one cannot deny him a certain concern for coherence.'

[181] Lechat, *'Dire Par Fiction'*, p. 29. 'In a sense free Machaut from the religious precepts so often repeated at the head of prologues...conventional humility.'

[182] Lechat, *'Dire Par Fiction'*, p.30. 'Somewhat deceptive, the true dedicatees of Machaut's work being rather those who practise courtly love.'

felicity of his achievement as rhetorician',[183] so it is usual to assume that this canon of Reims cathedral was more concerned with ingenuity and rhetorical skill than with the expression of sincere religious sentiment. I have already referred, briefly, to the idea that medieval poets tended increasingly to value worldly sentiments – such as erotic love – for their own sake, sometimes at the expense of Christian principles, but Machaut, in critical evaluations such as Wimsatt's, has retreated yet further away from those principles, abandoning even human eroticism in favour of a solipsistic obsession with poetic technique. Again, by noting this preoccupation with technique I am anticipating a later point of my discussion, and a major concern of this thesis, but in a good deal of Machaut criticism this preoccupation is interpreted, not as a manifestation of the concern with the *method* of philosophical enquiry and spiritual progress – which I will later argue it is, in part – but merely as a form of aesthetic navel-gazing.

The tendency among scholars is either simply to assert that there *is* no doctrinal incongruity in the *dits*, as when William Calin declares that 'neither Machaut nor his public found it incongruous for a man to serve the Cathedral chapter of Reims and the king of Navarre...for them, the world of art includes a place for *fin'amor* as well as for *Caritas*',[184] or they argue that Machaut did not wish to (or could not) say anything spiritually profound. So, for example, Douglas Kelly maintains that 'God' and 'love' remain 'distinct categories' in the *Remede de Fortune*: 'human love does not become a stepping stone to higher forms of love', although 'the idea of using it in this way could have occurred to [Machaut] from reading the *Consolation*, or by analogy: he relates the music of love poetry to angelic music in the *Prologue* (V, vv. 105-46)'; instead, Machaut's lady 'remains very much

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[183] James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries: Natural Music in the Fourteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), p. 85.
[184] Calin, *A Poet at the Fountain*, 240.

in this world, as does the love itself'.[185] Again, we see how important the *Consolatio* is to our understanding of this issue, but because the poet does not explicitly cover the same ground as Boethius, it is assumed that the great philosopher's more weighty lessons were beyond this worldly lyricist's understanding.

In problematising analyses of Machaut, remarks on the syncretism of his thought – that is, its mixture of sacred and profane ideology – privilege the notion of ideological disunity, allowing only for 'un certain souci de cohérence', as Imbs put it. My own approach draws on these ideas to a large extent, not least because my research has centred around Fortune, the quintessential figure of disunity, and her relation to love, also typically characterised by its ambiguity. As Cerquiglini observes, 'l'union des contraires n'est pas un fait de raison, mais d'expérience'.[186] Catherine Attwood, discussing 'l'engouement des auteurs pour les *insolubilia*' in the Middle Ages, quotes Cerquiglini and remarks, 'l'expérience est avant tout le domaine de Fortune'.[187] Such a comment may seem to reflect that modern sensibility I have been discussing, which sees in reality – that is, in the *real* world of experience, rather than that of ideals – only chaos, without the ordering structures provided by religion. Nonetheless, that Machaut presents life, and especially love, as experiences perpetually subject to change, and that, in his *dits*, experience tends to undermine ideals, are central tenets of this thesis.

Isabelle Bétemps, having explored various problematic elements within Machaut's work, seems to be moving beyond the usual, limited reading of the author as self-consciously literary and ambiguous when she says, 's'il remet en question les significations toutes faites, c'est sans doute pour mieux nous dire *autre chose*', but

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[185] Douglas Kelly, *Medieval Imagination* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), p. 136.
[186] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 164, n. 20. 'The union of contraries is not a fact of reason but one of experience.'
[187] Catherine Attwood, *Fortune la contrefaite: L'envers de l'écriture médiévale* (Paris: Champion, 2007), p. 133. 'Authors' passion for *insolubilia*...experience is above all Fortune's domain.'

this 'other thing' to which Machaut is directing us turns out to be quintessentially mundane: 'l'auteur cherche à se déprendre des codes symboliques pour se tourner vers l'observation du monde et des phénomènes considérés pour eux-mêmes et non plus en vertu d'une signification autre qui les dépasse'.[188] Moving away from God, away from the erotic relationship, and away even from art for art's sake, we end up with a strangely pure form of materialism, in which all is devoid of meaning and yet somehow inherently valid and beautiful.

Bétemps is certainly right to suggest that Machaut exposes the disorder and disunity of codes and symbols, but what needs adjusting, I think, is our sense of *why* he does this: what is the 'autre chose' to which he means us to turn, after regarding this disorder? Jerold Frakes sums up Fortune's role in the *Consolatio* in terms so appropriate to this discussion that it is worth quoting the paragraph in full:

> In considering the total concept of *fortuna* in the *Consolatio*, it becomes clear that there is neither an outright denial of her existence (as one often finds elsewhere among early Christian theologians), nor is the discussion of the nature of this power only a preliminary to the analysis of the problems of primary philosophical significance, addressed in Books IV and V. Rather, the concept plays a twofold essential role in the *Consolatio*. Initially, *fortuna* is presented as the principle of disorder in the cosmos which opposes the divine *ordo*. By methodically defining the various parts of the principle of disorder – the vicissitudes of Fortuna, the personality, the ephemerality of her gifts, the

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[188] Bétemps, *L'Imaginaire*, p. 284. 'If he problematises accepted meanings, it is surely in order the better to tell us *something else*...the author seeks to free himself from symbolic codes in order to direct his attention to the observation of the world, and of phenomena regarded for their own sake and no longer because of some other meaning which lies beyond them.'

abstract principle of chance – Boethius defines by contrast his view of divine order.[189]

What Frakes says about Fortune's role in Boethius applies also to the treatment of love in Machaut. Worldly sentiment is not condemned outright, as it perhaps is in the *Rose*, nor is it a mere preliminary for what Machaut really wants to say, as is arguably the case in the *De amore* or the *Confessio Amantis*. Rather, the methodical formulation and exploration of love in all its profane disorder ultimately directs us, by implication, to an alternative set of values. Thus, although the world *is* the subject of Machaut's *dits*, he makes this his subject precisely in order to communicate to – and educate – those readers who share the worldly, amorous perspective of these poems. The world, and everything in it, is interesting not for its own sake but because of what it signifies.

In the course of this thesis, I will also develop the argument that Machaut questions the moral value of his own art, and it may seem perverse to devote a book-length study to proving that this writer held the poetry and music he is famous for in such low esteem. Léglu and Milner suggest, rather bleakly, that 'preaching, prayer and intercession are all mediating practices, as is literature itself which connects the writer to the reader, and one reader to another, but does not do more than mark the distance it seeks to abolish', and further that, when we have read the *Consolatio*, 'if we do not share the Platonic vision she proposes, Philosophy is no more than the prisoner's construction of a series of certainties in the hours before his execution'.[190] For the most part, this is exactly the sort of statement I wish to argue against, in that it is a transparent application of a modern, atheistic worldview to a text which seems

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[189] Jerold C. Frakes, *The Fate of Fortune in the Early Middle Ages: the Boethian Tradition* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), p. 63.
[190] Léglu and Milner, 'Encountering Consolation', p. 14.

very clearly to affirm both the capacity of literary mediation to bridge (rather than just 'mark') the distance between the reader and God, and the 'Platonic vision' and 'series of certainties' which the prisoner constructs before his execution.

However, as an atheist I can sympathise with this sort of interpretation, and can see much value in it. Insofar as I appreciate these poems on an aesthetic level, I feel that their great achievement is not simply to celebrate the beauty of human existence, but to make something beautiful out of its most disturbing aspects. It is important to try and understand Machaut on his own terms, and this is why I will focus on demonstrating, against the grain of scholarship, his moral and religious orthodoxy, his sophisticated didacticism, and the ultimately rather austere principles he expounds through his seemingly frivolous erotic poems. But it will be seen that these austere principles are balanced by, and indeed depend upon, Machaut's sympathetic – and allegedly very personal – appreciation of the lover's mindset and of the amorous way of life. For those who wish to see in Machaut a celebrant of these worldly emotions, my analyses should enhance the understanding of how much care, effort and empathy Machaut invested in his portrait of love. If, ultimately, I see him as coming to a more religiously-oriented conclusion, then, as Léglu and Milner suggest, and as I have argued with regard to the *Roman de la rose*, it is up to us what we take from our reading: either the conclusion, or the beautiful poetry that leads up to it.

For those who prefer the Machaut who de-stabilises meaning and exposes the world for the always already fragmentary place it really is, the chapters that follow may be taken as an account of how Machaut 'marks the distance' between things, rather than bridging it. Integral to my reading of these poems is the idea that they are written in a mood of insecurity and fear, full of scepticism about the possibility of meaningful contact between human beings – whether in the form of love or poetry –

and providing an overall portrait of the world as a frightening, ambiguous place. Machaut's vision of love is so often that of the outsider, the 'excluded one',[191] trying to break into this courtly game of love but uncertain of his ability to do so, or of his ability to hold his place in the game, or of the value of the game's rewards. What functions, on one level, as moral seriousness, functions on another as an agonised attempt to come to terms with the dangers and challenges involved in relating to other people, to the world at large, and to one's own nature. Machaut's tendency to end his poems on an ambiguous note tells us a lot about his conception of both love's and poetry's limitations, but it also bespeaks the difficulty of attaining the faith, wisdom and self-sufficiency required to withstand the vicissitudes of Fortune and the goading of desire.

In advancing my reading of a 'moral Machaut', it makes sense to begin with Machaut's most overtly moral poem, the *Confort d'ami*. The first chapter of this thesis is devoted to an analysis of the *Confort*, first showing the subtle way in which Machaut communicates Boethius' lesson to his incarcerated patron, then showing the place occupied by love in this moral scheme. Chapter 2 is concerned with the 'beginning' of Machaut's love-oriented œuvre, the *Prologue* and the *Dit du vergier*. In this chapter I will establish some of the ideas about love and love poetry which will be fundamental to the rest of the thesis, largely to do with the ambiguous and often negative picture of the love experience which underlies Machaut's superficially positive account. Chapter 3 focuses on the first *Jugement* poem, and hence on the most negative statements about love to be found in this author's work. In the *Jugement du roy de Behaigne*, we see more clearly than elsewhere Machaut's intense preoccupation with the moral and religious implications of a love affair. It is also here

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[191] Kay, *The Place of Thought*, p. 96.

that the relationship between love and Fortune comes to the fore more insistently than in Machaut's earlier work. Fortune's role within the lover's experience finds full expression in the *Remede de Fortune*, discussed in Chapter 4. Here we see Machaut's most perfect re-casting of the *Consolatio* in an amatory context; this claim has often been made for the *Remede*, but its implications have, I think, never really been followed up or explored. To show exactly what the title of this poem *means*, and in what sense it 're-casts' the *Consolatio*, is the end goal of this thesis.

# Chapter 1

# Re-defining Consolation in the *Confort d'ami*

*Comfort for a Prince*

In discussing this poem, I will begin by trying to assess Machaut's attitude towards his patron, Charles II of Navarre. The ambivalence with which the author treats his imprisoned dedicatee reveals not only his shrewd political diplomacy but also the subtlety and misdirection which characterise his approach to morality and love. The aim of this first section is not to attempt any definitive reading of the poem's political content, but rather to suggest that this political content serves the development of the Boethian doctrines around which the poem is structured. After considering what the *Confort* may have meant in the context of Charles's imprisonment, I will show how Machaut's poem also transcends these circumstances in order to speak to a readership beyond the prison walls of his patron. Having described the workings of this poem's didactic content, in the second section of the chapter I will focus in greater detail upon the central passage in which Machaut addresses the theme of erotic love. As well as transcending historical circumstance, this author's work also transcends its ostensible governing theme – namely love – and the main intent of this chapter is to show how that theme works within a more general moral framework.

Claude Gauvard characterises the tone of the *Confort* as 'amical ou sévère mais toujours incisif' and points out that the idea of a 'consolation' 'n'exclut donc pas la critique du prince ni le désir de le voir s'engager dans une vie nouvelle'.[1] The

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[1] Claude Gauvard, 'Portrait du prince d'après l'œuvre de Guillaume de Machaut: étude sur les idées politiques du poète', in *Guillaume de Machaut : poète et compositeur*, Actes et Colloques 23 (Paris :

question of just how critical of his patron Machaut allows himself to be in this poem is not easy to resolve. As Palmer says, 'while [Machaut] does suggest that God may be punishing [Charles], the poet makes it clear that this would be for private crimes',[2] and even such moral censure as there is in this poem may only be veiled flattery. Both critics identify Machaut with the reformist movement of the 1350s,[3] and the reformers' sympathy for the King of Navarre is well attested. Charles the Bad, as he had not yet been dubbed in 1357, 'devient, sans peut-être le savoir, l'espérance d'une large portion des habitants du royaume',[4] and after the capture of King John of France at the battle of Poitiers, the reformers petitioned to have Charles released from prison. Nicole Oresme's 1355 treatise, *De moneta*, was implicitly critical of King John's debasements of the coinage, and in October 1356, Jean de Craon, 'porte-parole du clergé'[5] and archbishop of Reims – where Machaut had served as a canon for almost twenty years – aired similarly critical views about the king's fiscal and military activities, as well as the integrity of his counsellors. Many of the reformers' concerns are raised in the *Confort*, especially towards the end when Machaut is offering advice on how to manage finances, wage war, and maintain a circle of trustworthy advisers. With King John a prisoner Charles had a claim to the French throne, so what appear to be admonishments in Machaut's poem may instead be advice to a prospective ruler.

When he finally did escape from prison, Charles declared that he had a better claim to the throne than Edward III of England, but that all he wanted was to support

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Klincksieck, 1982), pp. 23-40 (26). 'Friendly or severe, but always incisive…therefore does not rule out criticism of the prince, or the desire to see him embark upon a new life.'

[2] R. Barton Palmer, 'Introduction', in *Guillaume de Machaut: Le Confort d'ami (Comfort for a Friend)*, ed. and trans. by R. Barton Palmer (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. xvi-xci (xxxvii).

[3] Gauvard, 'Portrait du prince', p. 28; Palmer, 'Introduction', *Confort*, p. lvii.

[4] Raymond Cazelles, *Étienne Marcel* (Paris: Tallandier, 2006), p. 232. 'Became, perhaps without realising it, the hope of a large portion of the kingdom's inhabitants.'

[5] Alain Demurger, *Temps de crises, temps d'espoirs (XIVe-XVe siècle)* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1985), p. 25. 'Spokesman for the clergy.'

his own king against his enemies.[6] His subtle bolstering of his own cause extended to preaching 'une sorte d'homélie pieuse',[7] taking as his text Psalm 10, in which David asks the Lord how he is to escape his enemies: 'ecce peccatores intenderunt arcum...iustus autem quid fecit' (Psalm 10: 2-4).[8] The psalm's insistence upon the Lord's all-seeing eye and impartial regard for justice (6-8) might be taken, by Charles's supporters, as an oblique assertion that, in the eyes of God, he had more right to the throne than John, even if, like the psalmist, he found himself beset by enemies. Ostensibly, though, the King of Navarre cast himself as a defender of the realm, *against* the 'peccatores' rather than being one himself. Machaut curries favour with his patron by appearing to admonish him but really, perhaps, admonishing his rival, King John, and implicitly looking forward to Charles's seizure of power; his methods are as subtle and self-effacing as those of his dedicatee.

At about the mid-point of the *Confort*, Machaut tells his princely correspondent that if he wishes to know 'Dont viennent richesse et noblesse' (*Confort d'ami* 1903)[9] he should 'Resgarde eu livre de Boësse, / Qui te dira, s'oïr le vues, / Que tous les biens que perdre pues / Sont de Fortune' (1904-7).[10] True nobility, he says, 'Vient de bon et noble corage. / Li roy n'i ont autre avantage' (1915-6),[11] the last line ironically implying that the only true 'advantage' or good fortune possessed by kings is their inner virtue. This conforms not only with the sentiment of Charles's speech on his escape from prison, but also more fundamentally (and explicitly) with

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[6] François Pietri, *Chronique de Charles le Mauvais* (Paris: Éditions Berger-Levrault, 1963), p. 70.
[7] Pietri, *Chronique*, p. 69. 'A sort of pious homily.'
[8] *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem*, ed. by Roger Gryson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), p. 780. All Bible quotations are from this edition. Translations are taken from *The Holy Bible: A translation from the Latin Vulgate in the light of the Hebrew and Greek originals* (London: Burns and Oates, 1955), Old Testament, p. 482. 'The rebels have strung their bows...what hope, now, for the just man?'
[9] Line and page references are to Palmer's edition, and all translations are his, with occasional small alterations. Page references for this primary text will follow the translations in the footnotes. 'The origin of power and nobility', pp. 100-1.
[10] 'Look to the book written by Boethius, who will tell you, should you wish to listen, that all the goods you can lose come from Fortune', pp. 100-1.
[11] 'Has its origin in the good and noble heart. Kings have no more than this to their credit', pp.100-1.

the Boethian principle that only those gifts which do *not* come from the fickle goddess really benefit us, and that 'good fortune' in its usual sense is a misnomer. 'Car vertus,' Machaut goes on, 'sont dons que Diex donne / A homme qui a bien s'ordonne' (1939-40)[12] and unlike Fortune's gifts they 'luisent et luiront' (1963)[13] like stars 'mises eu firmament / Pour luire pardurablement' (1961-2).[14]

We have already seen how the apparently confrontational lines quoted below could be intended as a veiled comment on the fall of King John and the imminent rise of Charles; Machabey remarks that in these lines, Machaut 'manifeste encore sa tendance "démocratique"',[15] aligning himself with the reform movement:

> se des vices separez
>
> Estoit et des vertuz parez,
>
> Uns savetiers nobles seroit,
>
> Et uns rois villains qui feroit
>
> Maises œuvres et villonnie (1909-13).[16]

Again, however, we must consider the more obvious, and perhaps more important, sense of these lines. In the context of the poem, they imply that Charles's current predicament is the result of some wrongdoing. Indeed, Machaut has already said, in as many words, that he disapproves of Charles's lifestyle, telling the king, 'tu as ton creatour / Mis en oubli' (1847-8),[17] blaming this on his material prosperity, and insisting, in terms which recur often (though in a different context) in Machaut's love

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[12] 'For the virtues are gifts God bestows on the man who lives righteously', pp. 100-1.
[13] 'Shine and will shine', pp. 102-3.
[14] 'Placed in the firmament to give light forever', pp. 102-3.
[15] Machabey, *Guillaume de Machault*, p. 75. 'Manifests once more his "democratic" leanings.'
[16] 'If he were free from vice and supplied with virtues, a shoemaker would be a nobleman and a king a peasant, that is if he did evil and villainous things', pp. 100-1.
[17] 'You have forgotten your Maker', pp. 96-7.

poetry, that 'ne l'as mie tant servi / Qu'aies sa grace desservi' (1851-2).[18] This critical attitude seems to contradict Machaut's fervent insistence, at the beginning of the poem, that:

> par ma foy, quant a ton fait,
>
> Je croy que tu n'as riens meffait,
>
> Si t'en dois a Dieu conforter
>
> Et tes meschiés plus biau porter (17-20).[19]

We might resolve the contradiction by seeing the lines just quoted as an affirmation of Machaut's support of Charles's cause, and the later accusations as evidence of Machaut's agreement with the austere principles of Charles's supporters. We might, alternatively, argue that the discrepancy in these two points of view highlights a progression that takes place in the poem, from one philosophical position to another.

Certainly it is not unreasonable to posit that Machaut really is directing a personal rebuke at his patron, but choosing his words – and the structure of his argument – with care. His complete silence about the King of Navarre, subsequent to this poem, has sometimes been taken to imply that Machaut, like many others who had supported Charles, became disillusioned by the latter's increasingly vainglorious and hubristic behaviour.[20] Martha Wallen usefully summarises Machaut's diplomatic approach: 'if Charles had become king, the poem could have been considered a testimonial to his innocence. But if King John returned, Machaut could yet prove that

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[18] '[You] have hardly served Him well enough to merit His grace', pp. 96-7.

[19] 'By my faith, what you have done I believe was no crime at all, and thus you should find consolation from God, bearing more easily your sorrow', pp. 2-3.

[20] Hoepffner, 'Introduction', *Œuvres*, vol. 1, p. xxxiii. However, Lawrence Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut: A Guide to Research* (New York: Garland, 1995), pp. 37-8, cites further research suggesting that the relationship between Charles and Machaut continued for some years after the *Confort*.

he had not imprudently sided with the treacherous Charles'.[21] It is this very diplomacy which contributes to the *Confort*'s relative uselessness as a commentary on the circumstances of its time, but aside from evidencing a certain understandable pusillanimity on Machaut's part, it is also an important element in his didactic project.

The decision to draw most of the poem's *exempla* from the book of Daniel in the early part of the poem was an intelligent one. On the one hand, the stories about the young Daniel proving Susannah's innocence, the survival of the three Jews in the oven, and Daniel in the lions' den, all concern unjustly accused or imprisoned figures who are saved by their innocence; on the other hand, Daniel is also uncompromisingly honest in pointing out and correcting the sins of his monarchs, and his interpretation of the writing on the wall during Belshazzar's feast could only have had discomfiting associations for Charles of Navarre. Charles had been taken prisoner during a lavish banquet, and although the brutality exercised on that occasion had drawn blame upon King John,[22] in Machaut's poem the parallel with Belshazzsar figures this arrest as a punishment from God.[23]

Lechat suggests that the function of such *exempla* in the *Confort* is 'une transposition dans le domaine politique de ce qu'elle était dans *Le Roman de la rose*, à savoir une manière de s'exprimer *apertement*',[24] that is, a way of speaking frankly about potentially controversial subjects. The comparison with love poetry – the motive of diplomacy replacing that of prudery – is significant, as will become apparent later on, when we look at the way Machaut uses the discourse of courtly love to communicate unpalatable lessons to his readers. Thus the use of *exempla* is

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[21] Martha Wallen, 'Biblical and Mythological Typology in Machaut's *Confort d'Ami*', *Res Publica Litterarum*, 3 (1980), 191-206 (p. 204).
[22] Demurger, *Temps de crises*, p. 23.
[23] Wallen, 'Typology', p. 194. See Palmer, 'Introduction', *Confort*, pp. xxxix-xl, on the possible critique of King John in this *exemplum*.
[24] Lechat, *'Dire par Fiction'*, p. 62. 'A transposition into the political realm of what it had been in the *Romance of the Rose*, namely a way of expressing oneself *openly*.'

intended not only to veil political commentary, but also to facilitate genuinely edifying moral instruction. Deborah McGrady remarks, on the subject of Machaut's use of Daniel, that he 'moves from the expected reading of Daniel as a model for the prince to Daniel as a precursor of the vernacular poet', providing 'a scriptural precedent for his strongly worded advice to Charles',[25] and indeed Machaut cements his moral authority over Charles when he specifies that it is Daniel's role as the man 'Qui maintes fois prophetisa / Et qui le songe devisa / Dou roy Nabugodonosor' (437-9)[26] which makes his life a fitting source for the lessons Macahut is about to dispense. To reiterate: Machaut's politically astute balancing act also effects a transition from a stance of humility and flattery to one of stern and, I think, very earnest didacticism.

As we have seen, another transition occurs between the point, at the beginning of the poem, where Machaut stated that Charles was innocent of any crime, and the point about halfway through, where Machaut tells Charles that it is God, not King John, who has brought about his misfortune. Insofar as King John has imprisoned Charles, Machaut calls the action (as tactfully as possible) unjust; but insofar as God has caused Charles to be imprisoned, Machaut considers this a just punishment for his pride and attachment to worldly things. Palmer argues that there is a conflict between the idea that the just man will always prevail and the Boethian view of suffering as something that visits the just and the unjust alike, saying that 'although Machaut connects these two understandings of misfortune by suggesting that Charles must have forgotten God and that is why Fortune has turned away from him, they cannot ultimately be reconciled'; because of the supposed political orientation of the poem, 'the Boethian position must be subordinated to the expectation that God's purpose is

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[25] Deborah McGrady, 'Guillaume de Machaut', in Gaunt and Kay (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Medieval French Literature*, pp. 109-22 (112).
[26] 'Who prophesied many times, interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar the king', pp. 24-5.

revealed within the public and historical...if [Charles] is not to be delivered, then there is no point in offering advice on how to rule a kingdom'.[27]

Machaut is attempting to deal with the problem of applying Boethian philosophy to a situation which resembles that of the *Consolatio*'s prisoner, but is not quite as desperate. The poet cannot simply tell Charles to renounce all worldly goods, because he may escape and resume his princely duties: in practice, to embrace the message of Boethius would mean retiring from all worldly pursuits and living as a hermit, like Diogenes in his tub. It is not that Machaut has to 'water down' the philosophy, but rather that he has to mediate between the austere, elevated Boethius and the mindset of his own worldly readership. If we look carefully at the *Confort d'ami*, we will detect a progression – not a linear one, but one which pervades the text – from the worldly to the spiritual point of view, from one conception of Providence to another.

At the outset of the *Confort*, Machaut explains his lofty intentions:

> Par exemples te vueil prouver,
>
> Qui sont contenu en la Bible
>
> Et qui sont a nous impossible,
>
> Qu'adès cils qui en Dieu se fie,
>
> S'il a raison de sa partie
>
> Et s'il l'aimme, sert, et honneure,
>
> Adès son fait vient au desseure (46-52).[28]

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[27] Palmer, 'Introduction', *Confort*, pp. xxxiv-v.

[28] 'I intend here to offer proof by examples contained in the Bible (and these seem impossible to us) attesting that the man who trusts in God, if he acts according to reason, and loves, serves and honours Him, will come out on top at last', pp. 4-5.

The claim here seems to be that the virtuous man will always prosper in the end, and in a very earthbound sense: that is, the imprisoned Charles II, if he trusts God and has reason on his side, will ultimately be freed. The point of view is similar to that found in Machaut's later remarks about the shoemaker and the king, who owe their respective fortunes to their respectively sinful and virtuous conduct. Superficially, this expresses a complacent belief in the justness of whatever befalls us on earth, and raises the question as to whether virtuous behaviour will find its reward during life, or only after death.

Several of the early *exempla*, drawn from the Old Testament, insist 'on a justice which will be experienced in history, on a righting of wrongs in the here and now through the moral perseverance and unwavering faith of the righteous man'.[29] Both Hopeffner and Palmer assert that Machaut adapted his biblical stories directly from the Vulgate Bible, without referring to any of the vernacular versions then current,[30] and for the most part, with respect to Machaut's translations, Hoepffner's comment that they 'donnent au récit plus de clarté, plus de vraisemblance et plus de vie; elles lui impriment souvent une allure plus dramatique ou un caractère plus naturel et plus familier'[31] serves as a reasonable assessment of this section of the *Confort*. As with his alleged 'subordination' of the Boethian perspective in favour of a more worldly conception of salvation, Machaut adapts his biblical *exempla* in order not only to make them more interesting and comprehensible, but also to support a rather simplistic message about the tangible benefits to be had from trusting in God.

In addressing these stories to Charles, Machaut seems to be saying that if only he trusts in God, he is sure to be delivered from prison and returned to his kingdom. Similarly, towards the end of the poem, Machaut will advise Charles that, if his

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[29] Palmer, 'Introduction', *Confort*, p. xxxiv.
[30] Hoepffner, 'Introduction', *Œuvres*, vol. 3, p. iii. Palmer, 'Introduction', *Confort*, p. lix.
[31] Hoepffner, 'Introduction', *Œuvres*, vol. 3, p. vi. 'Lend greater clarity, realism and life to the story; they often impress upon it greater dramatic appeal, or a more natural and familiar character.'

enemies 'gisent par leur effort, / Maugré toy, dedens ton païs' (3240-1)[32] he must not be 'si esbahis / Pour riens qui te puist avenir' (3242-3)[33] that he tries to make peace with them. Instead, rather puzzlingly, the king is advised to 'Laisse Fortune couvenir / Qu'après seur eaus chevaucheras / Plus fort' (3248-50).[34] Since Machaut reins in this apparently war-mongering attitude a few lines later, his point here is evidently that if you have been *wronged*, then you can charge into battle and trust Fortune to give you the victory. He is speaking of Fortune rather than God, but nonetheless recommending faith and hope as the best weapons against one's enemies, and so implying that a sinful ruler, unable to put such faith in Providence, would not have such good fortune. The passage invokes the old-fashioned chivalric principle, beloved of older courtly literature and central to the idea of the 'trial by combat', that Fortune favours those with right on their side – a distinctly anti-Boethian moral.

By the end of his long attempt at consolation, we find that the author has moved, in a familiar progression, from Fortune to God. Act virtuously, he tells Charles, and *then* 'tu te reposes, / Si lai de toutes autres choses / Dieu, nostre pere, couvenir. / Einsi porras terre tenir' (3941-4).[35] The last line quoted could be read ironically, as a reference to Charles the Bad's grasping territorial endeavours, an implicitly critical acknowledgement of his desire to cling to his *terrestrial* fortunes – the prosperity upon which Machaut had earlier blamed Charles's predicament. In one sense, Machaut is holding out to Charles the earthly redemption promised by many of the stories he has related in the course of the poem, but on a deeper level we might see him as affirming the need for a different kind of redemption. As we saw earlier, the *Confort*'s political content often makes it difficult to settle on a single reading of

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[32] 'Through their efforts they occupy your lands despite you', pp. 168-9.
[33] 'So overwhelmed by what might happen to you', pp. 168-9.
[34] 'Leave everything to Fortune, and ride after them even more forcefully', pp. 168-9.
[35] 'You may rest, leaving God, our Father, to take care of everything else. Thus you can hold onto the land', pp. 204-5.

any given line, but if we look elsewhere in the poem we can find abundant evidence that Machaut's philosophical stance is not as worldly and anti-Boethian as it may seem from the evidence cited thus far.

In the first place, we may briefly point to the stories of Nebuchadnezzar's transformation into an ox, the writing on Belshazzar's wall, and Manasseh's imprisonment, which cumulatively demonstrate that proud and idolatrous rulers will receive God's punishment, and will be pardoned only as a consequence of sincere inward repentance, not with the help of their riches or their powerful connections. In Machaut, as in the Bible, the contrast between the fates of Belshazzar and his father is emphasised by Daniel's reference to Nebuchadnezzar's repentance while he was an ox, and by the framing of this story (and Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall) with Belshazzar's attempts to reward the prophet with material gifts (Daniel 5.16-29, *Confort* 774-944). Machaut, however, expands the interpretation of the three ominous words, in order to make his warning to proud monarchs the more fearsome. What makes this especially piquant is that Machaut addresses his treatise to a prince who is, at the moment of writing, suffering misfortune.

Later, while ostensibly insisting to Charles that 'chose n'est si neccessaire / Pour le fait que tu as a faire / Comme est avoir bonne esperence' (2241-3),[36] Machaut supports his case with some very dubious examples. He tells the story of Orpheus' descent into Hades, of the 'amours, qui les cuers affole, / Et desirs, ou pensee fole' (2559-60)[37] which made him look back at Eurydice and so lose her, and of his subsequent death at the hands of the women of Sicany. At the conclusion of the tale, Machaut asks,


Cuides tu se Orpheüs sceüst

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[36] 'Nothing is as necessary for what you must do as the possession of an unshakable hope', pp. 116-7.
[37] 'Love or desire, that drive hearts mad, or some crazy thought', pp. 132-3.

Qu'Erudice avoir ne deüst,

Qu'il se fust mis en aventure

D'entreprendre voie si dure?

Nennil! Mais Espoirs l'i mena

Qu'i si bonnement s'en pena

Qu'il heüst son fait achevé

S'amours ne li heüst grevé (2633-40).[38]

As a story illustrating the triumph of hope, Orpheus' is distinctly unedifying, and one effect of Machaut's rhetorical question is to underscore the futility of Orpheus' struggles, given that he ultimately lacked the discipline necessary to fulfil his quest. Although Machaut says that nothing is as necessary for Charles as hope, and that 'c'est la milleur compaingnie / Qu'a cuer puist estre acompaingnie' (2643-4),[39] the story in fact shows the *limitations* of hope, and suggests that something more is necessary if one is to succeed in overcoming misfortune.

Machaut implicitly condemns Paris for giving the golden apple to Venus and abducting Helen, because of which 'toute Troie fu destruite, / Et tuit li sien mort ou en fuite, / Et il meïsmes en fu mors' (2663-5).[40] Yet, again, the moral is conveyed in a deliberately knuckle-headed rhetorical question: would Paris have gone to seduce Helen if he had thought he would fail?

Nennil! Mais quant pas ne failli,

Je di qu'espoirs moult li vali,

---

[38] 'Do you think that had Orpheus known he should not possess Eurydice, he would have risked following a path so arduous? Not at all; but Hope led him on to struggle so nobly that he would have accomplished his aim had love not prevented him', pp. 136-7.

[39] 'She is the friend that can best accompany a heart', pp. 136-7.

[40] 'Troy was completely destroyed, its people all killed or put to flight, and he himself dead as well', pp. 138-9

> Qu'espoir, ymagination
>
> Font le cas, c'est m'entention,
>
> Et les besongnes miex en viennent
>
> A tous ceaus qui en bien les tiennent (2677-82).[41]

The penultimate line does not refer specifically to 'the end', as Palmer's translation does, but it nonetheless asserts that things 'come out' better for hopeful or imaginative people such as Paris, a claim thoroughly contradicted by the preceding account of the fall of Troy. Machaut's designation of this lesson as his 'main point' ('opinion' or 'interpretation' might be a better translation of 'entention') must surely contain some irony. 'Carry the day' seems, in this context, a rather positive translation of 'font le cas', while Kelly's suggestion, 'make the argument valid',[42] is surely mistaken given that Machaut is explicitly talking about the success granted to Paris by his hope and vaunting imagination, rather than his own argument. I take the phrase to mean something like 'determine events' or, still more awkwardly, 'make fate'. Read as such, the phrase serves to indicate that hope itself – again, in conjunction with love – was instrumental in sparking off the ensuing tragedy. We are being asked to recognise that something is missing from the author's moralisation.

To judge from the classical *exempla* upon which Machaut has been drawing, worldly love is the force most likely to scupper any hoped-for victory; one could go further and say that it is the hope of love itself, especially in the case of Paris, which brings about these characters' tragedies. Having already said that hope cannot accomplish everything, Machaut goes on to say exactly what form of love *will* guarantee success:

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[41] 'Not at all, but since he didn't fail, I maintain that hope availed him greatly, and it is hope and imagination that carry the day – here is my main point – and all those who cling well to them, their affairs come to a better end', pp. 138-9.

[42] Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 125.

> Mais, pour chose que je te die,
>
> Garde toy bien que t'estudie
>
> Soit adès tout premierement
>
> En servir Dieu devotement,
>
> Qu'il n'est amour qui se compere
>
> A s'amour, foy que doy saint Pere,
>
> Ne chose, tant soit pure, eu monde (2763-2769).[43]

In her analysis of this passage, Heinrichs sees it as conforming to a pattern common in medieval texts, in which 'passionate sexual love is first praised, classical *exempla* are adduced, and finally love is regarded *sub specie aeternitatis* and found wanting'; she goes on to insist: 'that a medieval poet would suggest seriously to his king that he ought to imitate Paris is not a possibility'.[44] As a statement applicable to *all* medieval poets, this seems a little too strong, but with reference to the *Confort* it is simply common sense. Given his outlining of these classical heroes' inglorious fates, and given the statements about love and God quoted above, it is almost inconceivable that Machaut did *not* wish his readers to regard these *exempla* with some scepticism. To illustrate the importance of hope, the author has recounted a sequence of classical tales about men who were prompted by hope to undertake some great endeavour, but were ultimately defeated because they were weak or too much governed by worldly lusts. He invites us both to emulate and to move beyond the flawed and heroic behaviour he describes.

Towards the end of the poem, Machaut begs Charles:

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[43] 'But, for the reason I will explain, make certain that your energies should always – and first of all – be directed to serving God devotedly, for there is no love that compares to His love, by the faith I owe the Holy Father, not anything worldly, however pure', pp. 142-5.

[44] Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, p. 89.

que tu te conseilles

A bons gens et que tu veilles

A faire le commun pourfit,

Einsi com Boësses le fit

Et com maint philosophe firent

Qui mainte doleur en souffrirent

Et furent chacié en essil.

L'escripture le dit, mais cil

Qui ce faisoient, verité

Destruisoit leur iniquité (3749-58).[45]

In asking his patron to emulate Boethius and 'maint philosophe' or unjustly persecuted figures, Machaut holds out the hope, no longer of worldly redemption, but of the 'truth that destroys iniquity' *after* death, that is, the hope of eternal salvation. A prince, whatever happens to him, 'Por povreté, ne pour richesse' (1755),[46] 'Ne doit muer qu'il ne soit fermes / Com Socratès' (1757-8),[47] and should always strive 'Qu'aus philosophes comparez' (1760),[48] emulating them in preferring any misfortune than 'Que ce qu'on peüst parcevoir / Qu'en leur bon propos variassent, / Ne que verité declinassent' (1764-6).[49] Machaut adds, in an ominous one-line sentence, 'Il ne doubtoient riens la mort' (1767),[50] aptly enough since both Boethius and Socrates were executed. If such reflections make Charles melancholy, 'c'est grant

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[45] 'To take counsel from virtuous men and to be eager to do what is good for all, just as Boethius did, and many other philosophers at one time, suffering much pain as a result and being chased into exile. Scripture says the same, for those who so act, the truth destroys their iniquity', pp. 194-5.
[46] 'Whether it is poverty or good fortune', pp. 92-3.
[47] 'Never vary his firm demeanour, just as Socrates never did', pp. 92-3.
[48] 'To be like the philosophers', pp. 92-3.
[49] 'Being seen varying in their good opinions or backing away from the truth', pp. 92-3.
[50] 'Nor did they fear death in any way', pp. 92-3.

folie', since 'Tu scez bien que morir te faut' (1770-1),[51] and 'ta loiauté te garde / Et gardera, n'en doubte pas, / Et te gettera de ce pas' (1776—8).[52] Clearly, being helped out of misfortune does not necessarily mean being delivered from prison, or even being kept alive: it involves rather the maintenance of virtue and integrity practised by Socrates and Boethius, which supposedly earns one the honour and grace that only God can bestow.

I began my discussion of the *Confort d'ami* by citing Machaut's earlier recommendation of Boethius' doctrines about true nobility and virtue, and the way that he characterised Providence as benevolent but also incapable of being understood by an ordinary mortal. I also quoted his stated intention, at the beginning of the poem:

> Par exemples te vueil prouver,
>
> Qui sont contenu en la Bible
>
> Et qui sont a nous impossible,
>
> Qu'adès cils qui en Dieu se fie,
>
> S'il a raison de sa partie
>
> Et s'il l'aimme, sert, et honneure,
>
> Adès son fait vient au desseure (46-52).[53]

The third line quoted might literally be translated as 'And which are impossible for us'. The tales of divine intervention saving Daniel and his companions *seem* impossible to us, which is what makes them miracles, and the point of the assertion, translated thus (as 'seem impossible', Palmer's version), might be that we should

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[51] 'That is terrible folly. You know well you must die', pp. 92-3.
[52] 'Your truthfulness watches over you and will keep doing so, do not doubt it, helping you out of this misfortune,' pp. 92-3.
[53] 'I intend here to offer proof by examples contained in the Bible (and these seem impossible to us), attesting that the man who trusts in God, if he acts according to reason, and loves, serves and honours Him, will come out on top at last', pp. 4-5.

have faith that a miracle can effect the redemption of a virtuous man *today*. However, the way Machaut expresses it is more ambiguous, and could convey the sense that such miracles *are* not in fact 'possible to us', that they are not likely to happen to us, or at least that we cannot expect them to.

The real lesson to be drawn from such *exempla* is that, even if a man is cast into an oven or the lions' den – that is, even if he is killed – God will save him nonetheless, if he trusts in Him and has 'raison de sa partie'. This last phrase casts reason in the role of consoling companion, the 'ami' of the poem's title who provides the real hope and the real comfort in times of misfortune, more so than any physical rescue could. After recounting the story of the fiery furnace, Machaut says that:

> nuls n'a si grant desconfort,
>
> Se son cuer et s'amour li porte
>
> Et donne, qu'il ne le conforte,
>
> N'avoir ne puet homs confort tels
>
> Com d'estre de li confortés (652-6).[54]

Palmer's addition of 'on his own' to the penultimate line quoted is perhaps necessary in translation, but Machaut is literally, and simply, saying that a man cannot discover – cannot 'have' in the sense of taking and possessing – the type of comfort God provides; that is, its origin and nature are totally mysterious to us. The simplicity and realism of Machaut's own versions of these *exempla* are intended to make them seem more 'possible', but primarily in order to help us follow an argument which leads to a more spiritual point of view.

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[54] 'No one suffers so great a sorrow that, after granting and giving both heart and love to Him, He will not console him, nor might a man on his own discover such comfort as that which comes from Him', pp. 34-5.

The two main conclusions of this first section are: first, that Machaut's most overtly serious and moral work ultimately affirms, rather than subordinating, Boethian philosophy; and second, that Machaut accomplishes this, to a great extent, by means of indirection and gradual or cumulative argumentation. Even when moralising apparently simple stories such as those found in the book of Daniel, Machaut works to instil in his readers a more mature and spiritual sense of the consolations to be found in trusting and loving God. The overt intention of the poem is to offer Charles the hope of being released, but Machaut's underlying conception of 'confort' is a more transcendent one, and he indicates this in the text through his clever, increasingly ironic, retellings of and commentaries upon well-known biblical and classical *exempla*. He accomplishes something similar, with even more subtlety, in a passage that comes mid-way through the poem, where Machaut puts into Charles's mouth the laments of an angst-ridden lover, and then attempts to assuage his amorous pain.

*Comfort For a Lover*

The transition to the subject of love is jarring, and this passage is, at first sight, something of an anomaly in a poem largely concerned with political and moral discourse. Indeed, the effect is almost comic: it is as though Machaut has neglected his favourite subject for too long, and simply cannot proceed any further until he has gone over, once again, this story of the agonised lover and his salvation at the hands of Sweet Thought, Memory, Hope, and so on. Paul Imbs reads the poem in this way, identifying it as a primarily moral work, in which 'ce n'est que marginalement que le

thème de l'amour retrouve quelques droits'.[55] In fact, what seems at first to be an intrusion into an already episodic and fragmentary text turns out, on closer inspection, to be a calculated stage in the poem's didactic scheme. The passage, when read in relation to the rest of the *Confort*, helps to reinforce the moral about true consolation which lies at the heart of the poem. It is also, due to the atypical subject matter of the *Confort*, very revealing about the place of love within Machaut's larger view of existence.

When we look at the passage which precedes the change of focus to the subject of love, we find straight away an echo of the notion – ardently espoused by the narrator of the *Remede de Fortune* – that love should be, and usually is, undertaken when one is young. In the *Remede*, as we shall see, the point is that one should give oneself to love as a young man, because in youth we have not yet taken shape as human beings, so it is as well to commit to a path that will foster virtue and noble behaviour, as love does. At the beginning of the passage in question in the *Confort*, Machaut instead suggests that God may be punishing Charles for having 'mis ton cuer et t'entente / En vices et en vanitez' (2016-7)[56] when he was a young man. Not wishing to accuse the adult Charles of vice and vanity, Machaut instead speculates that the follies of his youth might have brought about his current misfortune, again taking care to admonish his patron tactfully. That he is also echoing the discourse of his love poetry is no accident, since he will continue to do so, in the next forty lines, as he draws closer to the subject of love.

In Charles's youth, Machaut goes on to speculate, 'n'as pas recongneü / Les biens que tu as receü / De Diex' (2019-21),[57] returning to the idea he had treated earlier, that Charles may be suffering for having considered his good fortune to result

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[55] Imbs, *Le Voir-Dit*, p. 156. 'It is only marginally that the theme of love reclaims certain rights.'
[56] 'Directed your heart and mind towards vice and vanity', pp. 104-5.
[57] 'You did not recognise the goods you had received from God', pp. 104-7.

from his own merit, rather than from the grace of God. Even, Machaut says, if Charles had received nothing from God except life and baptism, and if he were 'pardurables / Par ton merite et aggreables / A li plus qu'onques sains ne fu' (2027-9),[58] he could still only be considered:

> chose de refu,
>
> Ne dignes n'iès pour li servir,
>
> Tant que peüsses desservir
>
> De .v.c. mil fois une part
>
> Des grans biens dont il te repart
>
> Et dont meintes fois reparti
>
> T'a, de son bien, non pas par ti (2030-6).[59]

The word 'dignes' in the second line quoted clearly means 'worthy' in a moral sense, but by translating it as 'of high enough rank', Palmer underlines Machaut's implicit critique of aristocratic value systems. Even if Charles had received no favours from God, but instead achieved everything through his own merit and virtue, he would still not possess enough nobility to deserve the reward of God's grace, so how much less can he be considered to deserve it when he has had the good fortune to be born into wealth and privilege, and has hardly been a paragon of virtue (at least in his youth)? Again, Machaut recalls a common motif in his love poetry, namely that however diligently one might strive to 'servir' one's lover, one could still never 'desservir' the kind of transcendent joy that her grace would bring.

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[58] 'Immortal by your merit, and more pleasing to Him than any saint ever was', pp. 106-7.

[59] 'Something to reject, nor of high enough rank to serve Him, deserving of only one part in every five hundred thousand of the great goods He gives you, and which He has bestowed many times on you, these from His merit, not yours', pp. 106-7.

The parallel remains conspicuous in the lines that follow, where Machaut tells Charles to be grateful for the punishment he is receiving, since it should prompt him to 'toudis penser et viser / A mettre jus tout villain vice, / Et a faire son dous service' (2044).[60] Rather than 'serving Him sweetly', the last phrase surely means 'perform His sweet service', echoing the common description of love as an experience whose very 'maus' (2235),[61] as Machaut says later, are 'tuit dous, sans point d'amer' (2236).[62] In relation to the service of God, Machaut's point is that it is sweet to suffer if one thereby corrects one's sins. Several direct references to love help cement the impression that Machaut, in speaking of Charles's relationship with God, is implicitly comparing it to his relationship with his lover: God 'a s'amour te duit et adresse' (2045);[63] if Charles repents as Manasseh did in prison, 'De s'amour seras si refais / Qu'il te rendra tout ton païs' (2050-1),[64] and all those who hated him 'T'ameront au tour d'un soleil / S'a s'amour as le cuer et l'ueil' (2053-4).[65]

The reference to regaining one's land echoes the restoration of Manasseh to his kingdom, and looks forward to the later promise that Charles will be able to 'terre tenir' (3944),[66] while the use of the word 'tour' perhaps reminds us of Machaut's *annominatio* on that word at the moment when Manasseh turned his will towards God (1427-42). Machaut, it seems, is still focussing on Charles's political and territorial concerns. He prepares for the shift in subject matter he is about to make by emphasising the links between religious and amorous service, lessening the abruptness of the transition. That he chooses to emphasise these links at this point, when such central tenets of the Boethian philosophy are being expounded, is

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[60] 'Always to intend and attempt the defeat of every villainous vice, while serving Him sweetly', pp. 106-7.
[61] 'Pains', pp. 106-7.
[62] 'All [or entirely] sweet, not bitter in any way', pp. 106-7.
[63] 'Is pushing and urging you towards his love', pp. 106-7.
[64] 'You would be so transformed by God's love that He would return you all your land', pp. 106-7.
[65] 'Will come to love you in one turning of the sun, if your eye and heart are directed towards His love', pp. 106-7.
[66] 'Hold onto the land', pp. 204-5.

extremely suggestive. It is of course very likely that Machaut's attempts to console Charles's longing for this woman (presumably his wife) are genuine. Nonetheless, this poem was intended to be read by more than one person and, as Machaut seems to imply from the outset, was unlikely to have been read by the King of Navarre while he was in prison. The way Machaut prepares the ground for the love lessons he is about to dispense, and the nature of the consolation provided by these lessons, indicate that there is more to this section of the poem than merely a particular relevance to a particular love affair.

Machaut introduces the subject of love in a very oblique manner. He puts himself into the role of his patron, and voices what he imagines to be Charles's response to the consolation the poet has provided so far. Charles, as impersonated by Machaut, does not say immediately that he is speaking of love, only that he has 'plus de mille remors' (2058),[67] and 'plus de cent mille pensees' (2059)[68] which torment him. In complaining to his comforter that his woes are of too great an extent to be assuaged by any form of consolation, Charles is indicating that he has a grief more cutting than those Machaut has so far dealt with, for as he says at the end of his lament, 'riens tant ne me tourmente, / Prison, n'autre mal que je sente' (2101-2).[69] That this grief to end all griefs turns out to be love is consistent with the way love is typically exalted – indeed, raised to a transcendent, quasi-religious plane – in love poetry.

However, since Machaut has just been offering to Charles all the consolations the *real* God has to offer, the fact that the prisoner responds to this with indifference and claims to feel a sorrow even the grace of God could not lessen implies that his is a limited and self-absorbed perspective. Before we find out that his sorrow is that of a

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[67] 'More than a thousand troubles', pp. 106-7.
[68] 'More than a hundred thousand thoughts', pp. 108-9.
[69] 'No other thing troubles me so much, even prison or any other pain I suffer', pp. 110-1.

lover, we may, if we have bought into the philosophy Machaut has been dispensing until now, consider Charles something of an unresponsive, ungrateful blockhead, and this is essentially what Machaut will call him in his reply to the lament. Cerquiglini points out that, in didactic texts such as this, 'la création d'un interlocuteur relève ouvertement d'une technique pédagogique',[70] and in the case of Charles's speech in the *Confort*, 'ce désir de dialogue témoigne du goût qu'ont les poètes, à partir de la fin du XIIIe siècle, de voir s'animer la parole, de la voir se concrétiser, que celle-ci soit didacticque, comme dans le *Confort d'ami*, ou amoureuse'.[71] In the passage in question, it is clear that the creation of a fictional, lovesick Charles of Navarre has a multi-layered pedagogical function: first, Machaut is instructing the real Charles; then, he is creating a Charles with whom we, the readers, can identify, and thus benefit from Machaut's instruction ourselves; and finally, Machaut constructs Charles's speech so as to encourage his readers to engage with, and perhaps judge, its perspective. The amorous mode of which Cerquiglini speaks is of course that of the lover's entreaty, in which a response from the interlocutor is implicitly required. The importance of this similarity – between the didactic and the amorous poem's engagement with their respective addressees – will become clear in the course of this thesis.

Finding out that Charles is lovesick perhaps increases our sympathy for him, but for the first thirty lines or so of his complaint we are more likely to assume that he is still talking about the misery of being a prisoner to his enemies. He says he is tormented by 'desir qui toudis veille' (2063),[72] which could easily describe his constant desire to escape from the prison in which, perhaps, he himself 'toudis veille'.

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[70] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 99. 'The creation of an interlocutor is an overtly pedagogical technique.'

[71] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 101. 'This desire for dialogue is testimony to the taste poets acquired from the end of the thirteenth century for seeing the word animated, for seeing it concretised, whether in the didactic mode, as in the *Comfort for a Friend*, or in the amorous mode.'

[72] 'Desire, ever sleepless', pp. 108-9.

That this desire 'jusques a mort me traveille' (2064)[73] might allude to his fear of execution at the hands of his captors, the 'tres petit espoir' (2065)[74] that he retains could refer to his despair of ever being released, the 'Souvenir' (2071)[75] which brings him no comfort (2073) may simply be the memory of his kingdom, and the impossibility of any comfort coming from there may echo Machaut's frustration, expressed at the start of the poem, at not being able to send any form of consolation to his master. The lines, 'tuit mi penser contre my / Sont, et mi mortel anemy' (2069-70)[76] could be read in more than one way: it could mean, as Palmer suggests, that Charles's thoughts have become his mortal enemies, and this meaning emerges as the logical one once we know what Charles is complaining of; it could also, perhaps, be translated, 'my thoughts oppose me just as my mortal enemies [that is, Charles's captors] do'. At the very least, the phrase 'mi mortel anemy' recalls the grim reality of Charles's circumstances, just as the claim that his agonies 'Chacent de moy par leur rigour / Sanc, couleur, maniere, et vigour' (2077-8)[77] could describe his deteriorating physical state in prison. The language of physical combat in the lines, 'Desir me point; desir m'assaut. / Desir me rent maint dur assaut' (2079-80),[78] could be taken to allude to the way he has been besieged and overcome by his enemies, although the repeated references to 'desir' would seem to be pushing us towards the truth.

If the lament had begun, as it in fact ends, by declaring that Charles's real sorrows were 'tout pour ma tres chiere dame, / Que j'aim tres loiaument, par m'ame, / Que päour ay que ne la perde' (2089-91),[79] we would immediately have understood

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[73] 'Torments me to the brink of death', pp. 108-9.
[74] 'So little hope', pp. 108-9.
[75] 'Memory', pp. 108-9.
[76] 'All my thoughts oppose me and are my mortal enemies', pp. 108-9.
[77] 'With their power drive off my blood, colour, self-control, and strength', pp. 108-9.
[78] 'Desire stabs me; desire assails me. Desire assaults me forcefully and often', pp. 108-9.
[79] 'All on my dear lady's account, whom I loyally love, by my soul, for I'm afraid of losing her', pp. 108-9.

his resistance to the religious consolation so far offered, since it is well known that love conquers all and knows no law. By skilfully limiting his vocabulary for most of the lament, however, Machaut allows us to think that no transition has taken place, and that Charles is still fixated on his defeat and captivity. The sympathy we are supposed to feel on discovering the cause of his pain is withheld for as long as possible, and we assume a critical attitude towards Charles's incessant laments: Boethius, certainly, would have learned his lesson by now. When we reach line 2089 and Charles starts to speak of his 'chiere dame', we do not simply revise our judgement of his suffering. We are forced, if only for a moment, to stop and consider why, and whether, Charles's status as a lover should make his complaint more sympathetic.

One reason is that such exaggerated laments are a kind of aristocratic game, to be treated more lightly than the graver concerns of the man in prison, as Machaut's subsequent light-hearted attempts at consolation demonstrate. Palmer argues that we should not assume, from what Machaut says, that Charles actually 'suffered especially because of an enforced separation from his wife', but rather that, as an aristocrat, 'Charles must be represented as a noble soul capable of refined emotion...Literary tradition so demands'.[80] Rather than seeing this as a sop to tradition, however, I would suggest that the way Machaut introduces the subject in this poem, and the way he brings it into relation with the rest of the work, indicate that he wishes to foster a somewhat distanced, questioning attitude towards love in the minds of his readers. He is engaging with the tradition, not just invoking it for its own sake.

'Charles', as impersonated by Machaut, has altered the terms of the discussion, and of course Machaut, the great love poet of his time, adapts to these

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[80] Palmer, 'Introduction', *Confort*, pp. xlix-l.

terms with ease, signalling the new beginning by repeating the word with which he opened the poem: 'Amis, bien te responderoie / A tous ces poins se je voloie' (2103-4),[81] he boasts, vaunting his expertise in matters of the heart. However, before he deals with Charles's complaints in detail, he makes an interesting request:

> Mais y couvient premierement
>
> Apliquer ton entendement
>
> Ad ce que tu bien entendisses
>
> Mes paroles et retenisses,
>
> Car cils qui escoute et n'entent
>
> Ce qu'on li dit, fait tout autant
>
> Com cils qui riens ne prent et chace,
>
> Car il pert son temps et sa chace (2105-12).[82]

When we remember that Machaut cannot communicate with Charles himself, and that he has therefore had to put words into his mouth in order to get him to bring up this subject, it might seem strange that he is here addressing himself so directly to his absent correspondent.

Of course, I am being obtuse: Machaut's demand for complete, undivided and intellectually engaged attention, along with the transition to a topic of more universal application than that of a man in prison, signals to us that the author is not really, or at least not only, talking to Charles of Navarre. Rather, he is doing what he does best, using the protagonist of his poem (Charles) as a model lover in order to explore the nature of love, and, in this case, give generally applicable advice on how to deal with

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[81] 'Friend, I could respond well to all these points if I wished', pp. 110-1.

[82] 'But first you must direct your attention and listen closely to my words, retaining them, for the man who, though listening, doesn't understand what's said to him, fares the same as the one who seeks yet doesn't find, wasting his time and his search', pp. 110-1.

separation from the object of one's affection. The demand that we retain the advice we are to hear is crucial, in a very basic sense, to the advice itself, which is that one must retain a memory of the beloved object and satisfy oneself with that. The hunt is also a common motif in love allegory, and in warning us that we will chase without capturing our prey if we don't pay careful attention, Machaut is preparing us for what will turn out to be a lesson in patience, as well as in the effective use of memory.

Yet there is, I believe, a greater significance to this passage. It occurs in a poem that addresses itself to a real man who is really imprisoned, at a point when the focus of the poem has suddenly, and disorientingly, shifted to treat a predicament – separation from one's lover – which most people will be able to identify with. We may already be asking, as I did earlier, what relevance this topic could have to the overall drift of the *Confort*, so when Machaut tells us – and I mean *us*, not Charles – to pay very close attention to what he says, and to work hard to understand it, the effect is to imply that there may indeed be some hidden significance to what will follow, some underlying relation to the deeper philosophical issues with which the author has been grappling. Lechat points out a correspondence between the passage in question and the words of Christ when he explains to his disciples why he uses parables, rather than a more direct method, to teach people: 'Ideo in parabolis loquor eis quia videntes non vident et audientes non audiunt neque intellegunt' (Matthew 13.13).[83] Machaut, likewise, is asking us to perceive something we might not see if it were presented to us simply and overtly. Just as Jesus' parables provide his congregation with an easily accessible way in to the important message, so we may see Machaut as using the discourse of love to 'sugar the pill', as it were.

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[83] Lechat, *'Dire par Fiction'*, p. 132. *Biblia Sacra*, p. 1545; *Holy Bible*, New Testament, p. 13. 'If I talk to them in parables, it is because, though they have eyes, they cannot see, and though they have ears, they cannot hear or understand.'

Indeed, it was not unheard of for medieval preachers to make use of profane love poetry: one such preacher in Amiens quotes from a lyric about the 'sweet pain' of love, and 'applique ingénieusement ces vers qui, conformément à l'éthique courtoise, font de la souffrance de l'amant à la fois un mérite et une condition du plaisir amoureux, aux tribulations du chrétien en ce monde, qui lui vaudront les récompenses du paradis'.[84] Clearly the point of such a comparison was to engage the listeners' attention through reference to a discourse they found more appealing, but then to suggest that the ethic promoted by that discourse was only a pale reflection of the Christian model of salvation. Although Machaut identifies more closely with the amorous point of view than the preacher of Amiens presumably did, he uses that point of view in a similar way. In his poem, the love ethic corresponds in interesting ways with that of Boethius, but the correspondence is intended to highlight the instability and untrustworthiness of the love ethic, as opposed to the Boethian one.

Into the love lesson which follows the demand for attention, Machaut incorporates several echoes of the religious discourse from elsewhere in the poem:

> au cuer moult de dueil et d'ire ay
>
> Quant ton bien en mal convertis
>
> Et quant tu miex ne t'avertis
>
> De congnoistre le bien parfait
>
> Que Douce Pensee t'a fait,
>
> Avec Souvenir et Desir
>
> Et Bon Espoir, que plus desir

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[84] Michel Zink, 'La prédication en langues vernaculaires', in *Le Moyen Age et la Bible*, ed. by Pierre Riché and Guy Lobrichon (Paris: Beauchesne, 1984), pp. 489-516 (513). 'Ingeniously applies these verses (which, in accordance with the courtly ethic, make of the lover's suffering both a merit and a condition of amorous pleasure) to the tribulations of the Christian in this world, which will earn him the rewards of Paradise.'

> Qu'i te compaingne et te conforte,
>
> Que bien qu'il soit de tele sorte (2114-22).[85]

The admonition about recognising the 'bien' of one's 'sorte' rather than wilfully converting it into 'mal' is here repeated, with Douce Pensee and its colleagues substituted for God. The use of the verb 's'avertir' in the third line quoted also repeats the motif, developed most forcefully in the tale of Manasseh, of 'turning' oneself in the right direction, rather than bewailing the turns of Fortune. Machaut had said earlier that God was enticing Charles towards his love (2045), and here Bon Espoir is cast in this role, its proffered companionship and comfort rejected by the stubborn lover. When Machaut promises to tell his patron 'De quoy Douce Pensee sert, / Quant amans le vaut et dessert' (2131-2),[86] he echoes the earlier passage in which he affirmed the impossibility of our ever truly deserving God's grace. In all these ways, then, we are already being made aware of the connections between the doctrines of courtly love and the religious doctrines found elsewhere in the poem.

The first thing Machaut says about Sweet Thought sums up the core of his advice to Charles the lover: 'Douce Pensee est une chose / Qui est en cuer d'amant enclose' (2133-4).[87] Just as the captive prince must rely on his inner virtue and faith in God if he is to hope for salvation, so the hapless lover bereft of the circumstantial pleasures to be found in the presence of his beloved must look within for consolation: there are 'po de choses plus sades' (2139)[88] than Sweet Thought for those hearts 'qui d'amours sont malades' (2140).[89] The word 'sades' carries connotations of

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[85] 'In my heart I am angered and pained because you have turned your benefit into an ill, and because you were not better prepared to recognise the perfect good that Sweet Thought created for you, along with Memory and Desire, and Good Hope, which desires even more to stay with and comfort you, that happy he should be to have such a fate', pp. 110-1.
[86] 'What Sweet Thought provides when a lover merits and deserves it', pp. 110-1.
[87] 'Sweet Thought is something enfolded in a lover's heart', pp. 110-1.
[88] 'Few things more satisfying', pp. 112-3.
[89] 'Which are sick with love', pp. 112-3.

nourishment and satiety, and in conjunction with 'malades' it suggests that love is like a sickness brought on by excessive (or deficient) consumption, and that one must minister to oneself in curing the disease, by improving and regulating one's diet, as it were. Hence,

> comment qu'elle soit sensible,
>
> Vraiement, elle est invisible,
>
> Car nuls homs ne la voit ne sent
>
> Fors cils en qui elle descent.
>
> Et comment qu'en son cuer la sente,
>
> Il ne voit ne li, ne sa sente (2141-6).[90]

Machaut insists, to the point of repetitiousness, that the cure for a lover's malady has no material existence, but is rather an intangible *sensation* known only by, and within, the heart of the lover in question. The idea that this curative force 'descent' (2144) upon its beneficiaries connects it once more to the operation of God's grace, and overall this passage evokes the transcendent, almost spiritual quality Machaut believes Sweet Thought to possess.

In order to enjoy Sweet Thought, Charles must use Memory to recall what his beloved is like, and then: 'Tu dois en ton cuer concevoir, / Ymaginer, penser, pourtraire / La biauté de son dous viaire' (2160-2)[91] and all her other attractive physical attributes; and 'Après tu dois considerer / Dedens ton cuer et figurer / Les vertus dont elle est paree' (2176-8).[92] With regard to both the lady's physical and

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[90] 'However much she makes herself felt, she is invisible, in truth, for no man sees or touches her save him to whom she comes. And though he feels her in his heart, he never sees her, not even a trace', pp. 112-3.

[91] 'You should conceive in your heart, imagine, develop and form the image of her sweet face's beauty', pp. 112-3.

[92] 'Then you should consider and number in your heart the virtues she is blessed with', pp. 114-5.

moral qualities, Machaut goes into considerably more detail than I have quoted here, in order to demonstrate by example how one might go about re-creating in one's mind the image of a person's appearance and character. Though Machaut does devote a substantial passage to this description, the details form a very conventional, generic and non-individualised portrait of the good and beautiful woman, and he is still emphasising – in the last two passages quoted – that this picture is one that the lover creates within his *heart*, and is therefore not necessarily dependent on external reality. One envisages both the physical and moral aspects of the lady in one's Sweet Thought so as to possess an effective substitute for the whole, real, absent person.

This function of Sweet Thought is developed even further:

> Lors dois avoir l'impression
>
> De ceste ymagination
>
> Et de ceste douce figure
>
> Que Dous Penser en toy figure,
>
> S'en dois en ton cuer une ymage
>
> Faire, a qui tu feras hommage (2185-90).[93]

Again and again we are told that the lover's consolation is an 'image', a 'figure', even an 'imagination' – the product of a self-contained creative act on the lover's part – and the first line of the above passage even suggests that what consoles the lover is not the image itself, but an 'impression' of the image, as though it has been used to fabricate a mould from which any number of duplicates can be manufactured as and when they are needed. We should also briefly note, at the end of this passage, the

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[93] 'At this point you should have the imprint from making the image of this pleasant figure Sweet Thought conjures up for you, and thus you should build an image in your heart, doing homage to it', pp. 114-5.

potentially controversial suggestion that the lover should pay homage to this internal graven image in his heart. 'Paying homage' may not carry serious connotations of idolatry, but this was after all the central issue in two of the *exempla* from the book of Daniel earlier on in the poem, where it was the Jews' failure to pay homage to the golden statue, or Daniel's defiant prayers to his own God, which brought about their persecution. If we recall how vehemently Machaut was moved to condemn idolatry on those occasions – and I will examine these condemnations in more detail shortly – we can hardly help questioning his recommendation of it here.

The lady is certainly placed (and not for the first time) in the role of the fortune-dispensing God in the next lines, as Machaut highlights through a reference to her 'grace':

> Et se des amoureus biens fais
>
> T'a de sa grace aucuns biens fais,
>
> Present li dois tire a tire
>
> Doucement recorder et dire (2191-4).[94]

It is interesting that the lover is instructed to show his gratitude to the lady 'Present li', though clearly the 'li' in this case is not the lady herself but the image the man has made of her. The 'biens' enjoyed by the lover are presumably favours granted by the actual woman in times past, since they are given in exchange for the 'biens fais' performed by the lover, yet here it is the *imaginary* version of the woman who receives his grateful homage. Perhaps Machaut is only talking about the relationship between the lover and the image in his heart, and the 'amoureus biens fais' are not 'lover's good deeds' but the loving re-creation, or 'making' of that image which the

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[94] 'And if you have gained the benefit of her favour from your lover's good deeds, then in her presence you should recall and relate them demurely, one by one', pp. 114-5.

lover was advised to 'faire' (2190) at the beginning of the previous line. The 'biens' which the lady has 'fais' out of her 'grace' are therefore the comforts provided to the lover by the image itself. Machaut continues to refer to the image as 'elle' in the following lines, as though it were the real woman, and he drives home the point when he says that 'Ta famine säoulera / Et ta grant soif estanchera' (2199-2200),[95] returning to the idea that this consolation is like good nourishment, and that in fact it signifies *self*-sufficiency rather than any comfort that might come from without.

Machaut also extols the power of Hope in similar terms to those he used when recommending Sweet Thought:

> en amours n'a si bonne chose
>
> Ne qu'amant doient amer si
>
> Comme esperence, après merci.
>
> Si te lo que tu la repreingnes
>
> Et que dedens ton cuer la teingnes
>
> Avec l'ymage gracieuse.
>
> S'aras compaingnie amoureuse,
>
> Aussi comme une trinité,
>
> Car ce sera une unité
>
> De toy, d'espoir, et de l'image (2254-63).[96]

Machaut said earlier that there were few things more nourishing for a suffering lover than Sweet Thought, and here he says that Hope is the best thing in love, apart from mercy. That exception is interesting, since mercy is a gift that can be supplied only by

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[95] 'She will nourish your hunger and slake your terrible thirst', pp. 114-5.

[96] 'In love nothing is so good, nothing a lover should love as much as hope, after mercy. So I advise you to regain and keep it firmly in your heart along with her gracious image. And then you will have a lover's company, just like a trinity, for here will be a unity of you, hope, and the image', pp. 118-9.

the beloved in person, and not by the Sweet Thought of her, or the Hope of gaining her favours. Some hint as to the limitations of these comforts may be intended in this passing remark. Hope is allied with Sweet Thought, and the idea that these two can join with the lover to form a trinity reiterates the quasi-religious nature of this consolation, but again there may be an undertone of idolatry to this metaphor.

Having looked in some detail at the relation between religious and amorous discourse in this poem, and having raised the issue of idolatry, I would like now to look in detail at what Machaut has to say on this subject. The relevant passage comes just after the story of Daniel in the lions' den, and just before that of Manasseh, both stories in which idols have to be renounced in favour of the true God. My reason for waiting until now to refer to this passage in detail is that its main interest lies in what it might be taken to imply about Machaut's ideal of erotic love, and in particular about a lover's fabrication and worship of an 'image' of their lady. Machaut holds it a great foolishness:

> Qu'.i. entailleur fait une ymage
>
> De corps, de membres, de visage,
>
> Et quant faite l'a gente et bele,
>
> Son signeur et son dieu l'apelle.
>
> Il scet bien qu'il est plus grant mestre
>
> Que l'ymage ne porroit estre (1289-94).[97]

The process described here is certainly comparable to that which Charles is later instructed to go through in remembering and constructing a full-blooded and

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[97] 'That a sculptor makes some image with a body, limbs, and face, and, having made it beautiful and noble, then he calls it his lord and god. He knows well such a thing is much greater than any image possibly could be', pp. 68-9.

complete image of his lady in his mind, and then worshipping it. Palmer's translation seems to suggest that the second 'il' and the 'mestre' in the penultimate line quoted is God, as when Machaut concludes his description of the unmoving, unchanging God by saying that 'c'est grans eürs, / Autant au grant comme au meneur / Qui tient tel dieu pour son signeur' (1342-4).[98] Later I will discuss the idea of 'serving the right master', which is an important theme with regard to Love and Fortune, so it is as well to take note of this possible meaning.

However, it seems more likely that the lines 'Il scet bien qu'il est plus grant mestre / Que l'ymage ne porroit estre' means, 'The sculptor knows that he himself is a better master [or greater, more powerful] than the image could possibly be.' This reading makes more sense in the context of the immediately following explanation as to why 'il' is a greater 'mestre' than the image:

> Car il l'a fait comme soutis
>
> A ses mains et a ses outis,
>
> Et si la porroit bien deffaire,
>
> Mais l'image ne puet riens faire,
>
> Car vie n'a ne sentement,
>
> Mouvement, scens, n'entendement (1295-1300).[99]

Here Machaut is drawing on the *Consolatio*, in which Philosophy asks:

> Sic rerum versa condicio est ut divinum merito rationis animal non aliter sibi splendere nisi inanimatae supellectilis possessione videatur? ...cum vilissima

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[98] 'This is very fortunate, as much for the greater as the lesser men who hold to such a God as their Lord', pp. 70-1.

[99] 'For he made this with ingenuity, using his own hands and tools, and he could easily destroy it, but the image can do nothing, lacking feelings and life, movement, sense, or understanding', pp. 68-9.

rerum vestra bona esse iudicatis, eisdem vosmet ipsos vestra existimatione

submittitis, quod quidem haud immerito cadit (*Consolatio* II.P5.72-5, 82-4).[100]


In an odd sense, the idolatrous sculptor becomes contemptible precisely because of

his own skilfulness: it is absurd for him to worship the image, because the beauty of

the image derives from his subtle craftsman's hands, rather than from itself. The

image reflects well on him, but has no inherent qualities. The disparagement of the

image on the grounds that it cannot do anything and has no 'sentement' connects to

Machaut's later assertion that the only thing better than Hope and Sweet Thought for

a lover is mercy. Mercy, as I said above, can only come from a living, feeling person,

and this issue of the lover's need for reciprocation of his feelings is absolutely central

to so much of the conflict and ambiguity found in Machaut's love poems. That the

craftsman should not worship the image because he can easily 'deffaire' it

foreshadows the episode in which the *Voir-Dit*'s narrator locks up his portrait of the

lady, punishing it for the real woman's supposed infidelity.

'Images being a feature of memory, they assure the constant presence of the

descriptive Image of the lady and make permanent its beneficial influence on the

lover's character and disposition';[101] but clearly, if the image that sustains the lover

depends upon a real person, and if that person changes in some respect so as to falsify

the image, then the beneficial effects of this process will be anything but permanent.

The image Charles must form, and from which he must draw nourishment, *is* an

idealised one, and although Machaut does not say or imply in this poem that it is not

an accurate representation of the real, flawed woman, nonetheless the gap between

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[100] 'Is the state of nature so upside-down that man, a living and rational – and therefore godlike –
animal, can only appear splendid to himself by the possession of lifeless stuff? When you judge the
lowest things to be your goods, you put yourselves in your own estimation lower than them – and
entirely deservedly', pp. 204-5.
[101] Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 102.

such an ideal image and the truth is another central cause of anxiety throughout Machaut's work. I would argue that the implied relationship between what Machaut says about idolatry and what he says about love is the form this anxiety takes in the *Confort*.

Just as the *Confort d'ami* as a whole works to foster an *in*dependence from Fortune and circumstance, so the central love-oriented passage ultimately suggests that the only way to sustain a love affair is to become independent from one's beloved. I argued earlier that Machaut's use of *exempla* (to illustrate the power of hope) in the next part of the poem is partly intended to suggest the *limitations* of hope, and the need for something more – virtue, faith in God, and so on – if success is to be attained. I have shown how Machaut employs subtle didactic techniques, sometimes subverting what appear to be his own arguments, with the ultimate intent of drawing his readers away from an attachment to worldly things and towards a Boethian self-sufficiency, founded on virtue. The very fact that he is writing the poem for a patron who cannot read it, and advises this patron that his best consolation will come from within, provides a model for the mutually self-sufficient relationship which, for Machaut, seems to represent the ideal of the erotic love affair.

I have also tried to show, however, that this poem undermines the integrity of erotic love, making it seem at best a well-meaning imitation of man's relationship with God, and at worst self-absorbed, destructive and even idolatrous. This impression is conveyed most strongly through the positioning of courtly love discourse *after* the more serious first half of the poem, which is concerned with the consolations to be derived from virtue and faith in God. Paul Imbs encapsulates the effect of this structure when he says that the *Confort d'ami* 'se termine sur le conseil de soumettre sa vie morale à l'inspiration, non pas comme précédemment de l'Amour, trop compromis par sa ressemblance avec Fortune, mais du Dieu de

l'Évangile'. It is indeed precisely love's resemblance to Fortune – that is, its grounding in worldly instability – which renders it problematic, in Machaut's account. However, Imbs goes on: 'ce moralisme religieux n'était cependant pour Guillaume de Machaut qu'un moment fugitif de sa pensée'.[102] Having shown the sort of didactic methods this poet uses in the supposedly anomalous *Confort*, I will now go on to show how this 'moralisme religieux' manifests itself in his earlier *dits amoureux*, and how they too work to undermine – and, crucially, *replace* – the courtly ethic they ostensibly celebrate.

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[102] Imbs, *Le* Voir-Dit, p. 200. 'Finishes with the advice to submit one's moral life to the guidance, not as before of Love, too compromised by its resemblance to Fortune, but of the God of the Gospels...However, for Guillaume de Machaut this religious moralism was no more than a fugitive moment from his usual thinking.'

# Chapter 2

## Introducing Love in the *Prologue* and the *Dit du vergier*

*Nature and the Love Poet: the Impact of the* Rose

Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet argues that the didactic elements in Machaut's poetry 'étaient subsumés sous le régime de l'amour, comme dans *Le Roman de la Rose*'; by contrast, in Christine de Pizan's work we see 'l'écriture d'amour non comme une matière totalisante, mais comme une étape dans son écriture'.[1] In their proper context, these remarks are intended to highlight the more learned, erudite orientation of Christine's writing as compared to Machaut's, and her ambition to compose texts inspired by science and wisdom rather than by love. In the previous chapter, we saw Machaut's attempt to write a poem grounded in philosophical and political, rather than erotic, discourse, and one in which love serves very much as a 'stage' – significantly a *middle* stage – in a didactic work operating under the 'régime' of God, Boethius, and its own royal patron. I began by discussing that poem in order to suggest that love plays, or at least can play, a subordinate and intermediary role in Machaut's work.

From now on, however, I will be discussing those poems in which Cerquiglini-Toulet identifies love as the 'matière totalisante', the Prime Mover of Machaut's literary activity. It is significant that she draws a parallel between this aspect of Machaut's poetry and the *Roman de la rose*: that the *dits amoureux* of the

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[1] Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, 'Introduction: L'Amour de Sophie. Poésie et savoir du *Roman de la Rose* à Christine de Pizan', in *Poetry, Knowledge and Community in Late Medieval France*, ed. by Rebcca Dixon and Finn E. Sinclair (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2008), pp. 1-15 (3). 'Were subsumed under the regime of love, as in the *Romance of the Rose*...writing concerned with love, not as a totalising subject matter, but as a stage within her writing.'

fourteenth century, especially those by Machaut, were written in the shadow of that text has long been an axiom of scholarship. As Sylvia Huot says, Machaut 'used the *Rose* as a point of departure; as a central presence in his works, it does contribute to the unity of the œuvre as a whole'.[2] Whatever one's stance in the *querelle* over Guillaume de Lorris's and Jean de Meun's attitudes towards love, one would have to concede that these attitudes are at the very least ambiguous, if not actually incoherent and indecipherable. Douglas Kelly warns that 'we must beware of reading our scholarly sense of irony and propriety into an aristocratic spirit widespread in French literature of the Middle Ages – at least not before we are clear in our own minds regarding the terms of the quarrel of the *Roman de la rose*',[3] but in the first place I am not sure it is possible, or desirable, to be entirely 'clear' on what the *Rose* tells us about love, and in the second place, to read courtly texts ironically is not an activity peculiar to scholars. As well as refraining from imposing excessively ironic, 'scholarly' perspectives on texts which are essentially playful, we must also beware of assuming too straightforward or uncritical an attitude towards his subject matter on Machaut's part.

Alastair Minnis, attempting to crystallise the nature of Jean de Meun's transgressive humour in the *Rose*, suggests that 'the laughter at issue here is that of those who fundamentally *believe*, who have no problem in accepting the tenets of the current culture but who nevertheless – indeed, I doubt if they would see any contradiction here – are aware of its paradoxes, tensions, and apparent absurdities'.[4] To re-apply this principle to Machaut – to reverse it, in a sense – we might say that his poems were written for an audience who not only enjoyed highbrow celebrations of courtly eroticism, but also *expected* the author to approach his subject with moral,

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[2] Huot, *From Song to Book*, p. 236.
[3] Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 128.
[4] Alastair Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 193.

as well as aesthetic, sophistication, and to expose, albeit delicately, the paradoxes, tensions and absurdities of the doctrines being extolled.

In short, one might reasonably anticipate that to adopt the *Rose* as one's 'point of departure' would imbue the resultant œuvre with as much ambiguity as unity. We will find that Machaut often alludes to passages in this enormous and confusing poem which would seem to lend an air of scepticism and irony to his own more genteel narrative. Although Machaut eschews Jean's flamboyance and scurrility, establishing 'a new courtly paradigm in which the lover practises submission over exploits, favours dreams over deeds, and privileges sublimation over conquest',[5] this paradigm itself is deconstructed and discredited from within, in a manner which recalls the (arguably) self-defeating narrative of Jean's Amant, and which engages critically with the traditions of *fin' amor* lyric-writing.

Towards the end of his life, Machaut wrote a preface to his complete works, known as the *Prologue*, to be immediately followed by his first major narrative poem, the *Dit du vergier*.[6] In the *Prologue*, Nature and Love instruct Machaut to embark on his poetic career, and give him the skills he needs to do so. As Huot points out, there is an echo of the *Rose* in the fact that 'under the conjoined auspices of Nature and Love the poetic-amorous quest is fulfilled', but while she is right to suggest that Machaut hereby 'writes himself into the tradition'[7] of love poetry, it is hard to determine what effect he achieves by referencing the alliance between these two quasi-deities.

In both poems, Love and Nature each bestow three gifts upon the narrator: from Love, the *Rose*-narrator gets 'douz pensers' (*Rose* 2643), 'douz parlers' (2669)

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[5] McGrady, 'Guillaume de Machaut', p. 111.
[6] As Earp (*Guide to Research*, p. 205) shows, in some manuscripts only the four *ballades*, without the subsequent narrative section, are presented, immediately followed by Machaut's lyrical (rather than narrative) works. This may have implications for my later arguments about the distinction between lyric and narrative poetry, but I will not explore them at the present time.
[7] Huot, *From Song to Book*, p. 237.

and 'douz resgars' (2716),[8] while Machaut gets 'Doulz Penser, Plaisance, et Esperance' (*Prologue* 64);[9] Jean de Meun's Nature complains that she has given mankind '.Iii. forces, que de cors que d'ame, / Car bien puis dire sanz mentir, / Jel faz estre, vivre et sentir' (*Rose* 19040-2),[10] while Machaut receives from her 'Sens, Retorique, et Musique' (*Prologue* 9).[11] As to the gifts from Love, it is worth noting here that Machaut's are more self-contained than Guillaume de Lorris's, less dependent on contact with another person, as illustrated in Jean de Meun's continuation when the God of Love asks the lover whether he still has the three comforts, and he replies that 'Douz regarz faut' (*Rose* 10422),[12] although he still has the other two gifts; 'N'as tu esperance?' (10427),[13] asks Love, and the lover affirms the comparative longevity of this additional gift. It is with such qualities, which the lover must nurture within himself regardless of his outward fortunes, that Machaut's Love is primarily concerned.

The very possibility that Machaut is alluding to the two different passages in the *Rose* is intriguing. In Jean's poem, Nature recites the gifts she has given to mankind in order to decry his obstinacy in refusing to fulfil his natural instincts, despite possessing these three attributes in common with brute animals, and also possessing the 'entendement' (19059)[14] given to him by God. Huot reads Genius' later condemnation of Delight's garden as saying that 'like homosexuality, courtly love is a form of idleness because it fails to accomplish procreation, just as song fails

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[8] Strubel, p. 186-8; Horgan, p. 40-2.

[9] Guillaume de Machaut, *'The Fountain of Love' and Two Other Love Vision Poems*, ed. and trans. by R. Barton Palmer (New York: Garland, 1992), pp. 6-9. All line and page numbers for the *Prologue* and the *Dit du Vergier* refer to this edition, and all translations are Palmer's, with occasional small alterations. For these primary texts, page numbers will *follow*, rather than precede, the translations in the footnotes.

[10] 'Three physical and spiritual forces, for I can truthfully say that it is I who give him existence, life, and feeling' (Strubel, p. 1092; Horgan, p. 293).

[11] 'Meaning, Rhetoric, and Music.' pp. 2-3.

[12] 'Pleasant Looks is not here' (Strubel, p. 617; Horgan, p. 160).

[13] 'Don't you have Hope?' (Strubel, p. 617; Horgan, p. 160).

[14] 'Understanding' (Strubel, p. 1094; Horgan, p. 293).

to produce an artefact',[15] and although Jean's god of Love seems to ally himself with Nature and Genius by facilitating the penetration and impregnation of the rose, Badel has pointed out that Reason too 'condamne dans la *fine amor* la recherche du plaisir pour le plaisir'.[16] 'Mais l'amour qui te tient ou laz,' says Jean's Reason to the lover, 'Charnel delit te represente, / Si que n'as aillors t'entente' (*Rose* 4596-8),[17] and Nature exalts Reason several times in the course of her confession, most notably when she says that man's God-given reason 'les fait, tant est sage et bonne, / Samblables a dieu et aus anges, / Se mors nes en feïst estranges' (18880-2).[18] In other words, the advice of Reason – to abandon the god of Love and use procreative organs solely for procreation – would seem to be in accord with that of Nature and Genius, so that the Nature/Love alliance in the *Rose* emerges as a profoundly ambiguous, conflicted one.

Several critics have observed that the role of Nature in Machaut's *Prologue* – especially the fact that she comes before Love – suggests an analogy between natural and artistic creation, and Huot adds that 'Machaut casts himself in the guise of Genius, also sent as Nature's emissary to address the amorous'.[19] Again, if we are to take the parallel with the *Rose* seriously, Machaut's 'address to the amorous' may be as critical of *fin' amor* and its trappings as is the sermon of Genius, while remaining, like that sermon, ostensibly a message in support of love. In the *Prologue*, 'Nature est du côté de la forme de la poésie, Amour, de la matière; et l'on s'aperçoit que dans la

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[15] Huot, *From Song to Book*, p. 97.
[16] Pierre-Yves Badel, *Le Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle* (Geneva: Droz, 1980), p. 30. 'Condemns, in courtly love, the pursuit of pleasure for its own sake.'
[17] 'But the love that has ensnared you offers you carnal delight, so that you have no interest in anything else' (Strubel, p. 298; Horgan, p. 70).
[18] 'Is so wise and good that it would make them like God and his angels, were it not for death' (Strubel, p. 1084; Horgan, p. 291).
[19] Sylvia Huot, *The* Romance of the Rose *and its Medieval Readers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 268.

pensée de Machaut la forme est première'.[20] This relates to another axiom of Machaut scholarship, namely that he replaces (or subsumes) erotic activity with literary activity, and Huot especially makes much of the connection between procreation and writing, suggesting that, as the Genius-like 'scribe' of Nature, Machaut 'participates in the work of nature by writing actual books'.[21]

To look at this issue from a different angle, however, we might suggest that it is not so much that Machaut prefers 'forme' to 'matière' in a literary sense, but that he considers the values and gifts of Nature – 'Sens, Retorique et Musique' – to be important in ways that transcend their association with Love. In the *Confort d'ami*, Machaut condemned idolatry on the grounds that it was contrary to 'le dieu de Nature' (*Confort* 1309)[22] to worship inanimate objects, and the analogy – present to some extent in that poem – between idolatry and courtly love is manifested in a different guise in this distinction between 'forme' and 'matière'. The 'forme' derived from Nature has to do with 'sens' – which is sometimes translated as 'reason' – and with the liberal arts of rhetoric and music, which is to say that it is essentially a reflection of divine order. As I said earlier, the gifts given to Machaut by Love – 'Doulz Penser, Plaisance, et Esperance' – are more inward- than outward-looking, and although ideally they represent that self-sufficiency which all good lovers should strive to attain, Machaut's poetry will show that, in practice, both Love and Nature are more problematic than their gifts would suggest, and that the love doctrine he espouses is not in such perfect accord with the divine order of God's universe as, in the *ballades* at the start of the *Prologue*, it appears to be.

Catherine Attwood insists that Fortune, rather than Nature, is the real patron of Machaut's writing: 'si Nature fournit les outils de l'écriture, c'est Fortune qui, le

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[20] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 17. 'Nature is on the side of poetic form, Love on the side of subject matter; and here one sees that, as far as Machaut is concerned, form comes first.'
[21] Huot, *Rose and its Readers*, p. 269.
[22] 'The God of creation', p. 68-9.

plus souvent, en assure la matière',[23] she says, later going so far as to claim that 'Nature intervient au niveau de la forme, tandis que l'influence de Fortune touche à la fois la forme et la matière'.[24] Attwood is here speaking generally about medieval literature, rather than just about love poetry, and one obvious point to take from her remarks is the identity between Fortune and Love, who indeed are often equated as figures representing the vicissitudes of worldly experience. But Attwood also pictures Fortune intruding on the 'forme' ostensibly derived from Nature, citing (on p.28) the example of Machaut's *Voir-Dit*, which is structured around the movements of Fortune's wheel. It is as if Fortune – and, by association, Love – were only a more extreme manifestation of the instability which is already visible in the workings of Nature, who, by her own account in the *Rose*, 'Onques ne fis riens parduarable: / Quanque je faz est corrompable' (*Rose* 19065-6).[25] It is Genius' job to write down all these 'corrompable' works of Nature (16250-4): corruptibility, temporality and worldly variation make up both the *matter* of Genius' writing and, since he goes on doing it perpetually, the *form* as well. Robertson figures Genius, in the *Rose*, as 'the inclination of created things to act naturally',[26] and if his duties as scribe associate him with the love poet, the latter also becomes a figure defined, to some degree, by temporality. Nature and poetry share the same limitations.

Wetherbee provides a helpful summary of Nature's role in the poetic process, here in relation to the *De planctu Naturae*: 'poetry, then, is the language in which Nature communicates with man, and thus the limits of poetic expression become an

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[23] Attwood, *Fortune la contrefaite*, p. 28. 'If Nature provides the tools for writing, it is usually Fortune who secures its subject matter.'

[24] Attwood, *Fortune la contrefaite*, p. 49. 'Nature intervenes on the level of form, while Fortune's influence simultaneously affects form and subject matter.'

[25] 'I have never made anything eternal, and whatever I make is corruptible' (Strubel, p. 1094; Horgan, p. 293).

[26] Robertson, *Preface to Chaucer*, p. 200. See also p. 199, where Guillaume de Conches is cited as having labelled Genius 'naturalis concupiscentia'.

index to the limits of man's ability to realign his life with the natural order'.[27] Love is the favourite subject matter of poets precisely because it is a force of *nature* which no man can resist, and in the discrepancy between the ideals of divine, uncorrupted nature and the corrupted reflection of those ideals visible in the doctrine and practice of earthly love, we, as readers, and Machaut, as a writer, can measure the extent of our mis-alignment with the natural order. When, in the following pages, I point out contradictory or troubling moments in Machaut's celebration of, in the *Prologue*, poetry and music and, in the *Vergier*, love itself, I am arguing that these moments serve to highlight the aforesaid discrepancy.

In the previous chapter, I introduced a model of Machaut's didactic method, to suggest something of the covert, cumulative manner in which his writing works to edify the reader. The present chapter also serves a largely *introductory* purpose: in the *Prologue* and the *Vergier*, Machaut brings into play certain themes and motifs which will become more important in later works. On their own they do not constitute an especially scathing critique of *fin' amor* or love poetry, and at times my interpretations may seem to fall into the trap mentioned earlier by Douglas Kelly, of imposing a 'scholarly sense of irony' upon straightforwardly celebratory courtly literature. The full import of these interpretations will only become clear when we look at the *Jugement Behaigne* and the *Remede de Fortune* in the final two chapters. For now, we are still establishing the ground rules of Machaut's poetry, and crystallising his fundamental conception of love, in the light of which the more sophisticated love-critique in subsequent poems should become more transparent.

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[27] Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 193.

*Love in the Abstract*

The poetry Machaut has been ordered to write, according to Shirley Lukitsch's summary, 'is to have only one purpose, one metre-making argument: the celebration of the joy to be found in the imaginative experience of love – in reverie, in the pleasure it entails and in the hope which results'.[28] This is a fair assessment of the task set by Nature and Love in the series of *ballades* with which the *Prologue* opens, but it does not quite do justice to what follows. At first, Machaut seems to affirm this rather mindlessly happy ideal of love poetry, claiming that it is the best way he could possibly spend his time 'Pour avoir noble et lié corage' (142),[29] because:

> tout homme qui ad ce pense,
>
> Il ne riote ne ne tense,
>
> N'il ne porroit penser a chose
>
> Ou villenie fust enclose,
>
> Haïne, baras, ou mesdis.
>
> Je le say trop bien par mes dis,
>
> Car quant je sui en ce penser,
>
> Je ne porroie a riens penser
>
> Fors que seulement au propos
>
> Dont faire dit ou chant propos;
>
> Et s'a autre chose pensoie,
>
> Certes mon ouevre defferoie (145-56).[30]

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[28] Shirley Lukitsch, 'The Poetics of the *Prologue*: Machaut's conception of the purpose of his art', *Medium Aevum*, 52 (1983), 258-71 (p. 262).

[29] 'So as to have a noble and happy heart', pp. 10-1.

[30] 'No man intent on such things quarrels or argues; and he doesn't think of anything pertaining to immorality, hate, foolishness, or scandal. I know this very well through my poems, for when I am

By saying that a good love poet 'ne riote ne ne tense' and cannot think of 'Haïne, baras, ou mesdis', Machaut seems to distinguish between his form of love and that practised by the *Rose*-narrator, who increasingly has to reconcile himself to the use of duplicity and violence in order to achieve his ends. Machaut's lover/poet can think of nothing that contains 'villenie', and although this word may connote un-courtly vulgarity rather than immorality as such, these lines serve, in part, as a promise that Machaut's writing will not plumb the depths of 'villenie' as Jean de Meun's did. Jane Taylor sees the passage as emphasising Machaut's 'need for quiet and concentration',[31] the need, that is, to devote time and effort to perfecting the verse. I feel there is a specific emphasis on the pacifying and ennobling properties of *love* as a subject matter, rather than simply of versifying as a profession, but perhaps, indeed, the distinction is really between the lover as such and the love *poet*, with the latter's detached, refined perspective representing a kind of ideal of love service.

For now, what I wish to draw attention to is the impression of monomania conveyed by this passage. It calls to mind the figure of Idleness (Oiseuse) in the *Rose*, who says, 'a nule rien je n'entens / Qu'a moi joer et solacier' (*Rose* 586-7),[32] or of Youth, who 'ne pansoit / Nul mal ne nul engin qui soit, / Mais mout ere envoisie et gaie, / Car joene chose ne s'esmaie / Fors de jouer, bien le savez' (1260-4).[33] To some extent, this kind of single-mindedness is a symptom of personification allegory, where each figure must embody a single attribute and behave accordingly. However, Idleness is the gatekeeper of Delight's garden, and both it and Youth are necessary prerequisites to being a lover, at least in the terms of courtly poetry, so their self-

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thinking about them, I can't attend to anything except to the matter that gives the poem or song good sense; and if I thought of anything else, I would ruin my work for sure', pp. 10-1.

[31] Jane Taylor, *The Making of Poetry: Late-Medieval French Poetic Anthologies* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), p. 40n.

[32] 'I have no care but to enjoy and amuse myself' (Strubel, p. 74; Horgan, p. 11).

[33] 'Never thought of any evil or trickery whatsoever, but was very joyful and gay, for, as you know, young people's only care is to amuse themselves' (Strubel, p. 110; Horgan, p. 20).

absorption is an integral part of the love experience. Moreover, Machaut's purported inability to think of anything but love also recalls Jean's narrator's rejection of the advice of Reason: 'Car amours si forment m'atire, / Que par trestouz mes pensers chace, / Com cil qui partout a sa chace, / Et toz jours tient mon cuer souz s'ele' (4630-3).[34]

Machaut is 'under the wing' of Love, like the narrator of the *De planctu Naturae*, to whom Nature says despairingly, 'Credo te in Cupidinis castris stipendiarie militantem' (*De planctu Naturae* 8.261).[35] as George Economou observes, in Alanus' text 'the narrator's behaviour illustrates what has gone wrong with the sublunary world; he would prefer a lesson on Cupid to one on divinely ordained procreative law'.[36] The protagonists in the *Rose* and the *De planctu* have devoted themselves to a system of values which is figured as a deviation from the 'correct' one, and if Machaut's devotion, in his *Prologue*, to the path of *fin' amor* seems less 'ironised' than in those other two examples, he will, in the *dits* to which the *Prologue* serves as an introduction, develop a more thorough and sophisticated portrait of the limitations and biases of the amorous frame of mind.

It is important to note the terms of Lukitsch's helpful summary: what Machaut is concerned with in the *Prologue* is 'the imaginative experience of love', rather than the practical reality of it. Even, Machaut says, if the poet's theme is 'triste matiere' (*Prologue* 157),[37] then 'est joieuse la maniere / Dou fait' (158-9),[38] for the heart can

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[34] 'For Love drew me strongly, pursuing me through all my thoughts like the hunter who hunts everywhere, and always keeping my heart under his wing' (Strubel, p. 300; Horgan, p. 71).
[35] Alan of Lille, *De planctu Naturae*, ed. by N.M. Häring in *Studi Medievali*, 19.2 (1978), 797-879. Translations are from Alan of Lille, *The Plaint of Nature*, trans. and ed. by James J. Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1980). 'I believe that you are a soldier drawing pay in the army of Desire' (Häring, p. 841; Sheridan, p. 148).
[36] George D. Economou, 'The Two Venuses and Courtly Love', in *In Pursuit of Perfection*, ed. by Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou (New York: Kennikat Press Corp., 1975), pp. 17-50 (27).
[37] 'Sad things', pp. 10-1.
[38] 'The style of their treatment is joyful', pp. 10-1.

only sing when it is filled with joy. In the mind of a true lover, seeking inspiration for his poetry:

> quant Souvenirs recorder
>
> Fait l'amant par Douce Pensee
>
> La tres bele et la bien amee
>
> A qui il est mis et donnez
>
> Et ligement abandonnez,
>
> Plaisant ymagination
>
> Met en son cuer l'impression
>
> De sa douce plaisant figure
>
> Et Dous Pensers qui la figure,
>
> Don son fait cent fois embelist:
>
> Sages est qui tel vie elist (170-80).[39]

The use of the word 'sages' in the last line again recalls the *Rose*, where the lover boasts to his master that Reason 'Ne m'en tint pas sanz faille a sage' (10348),[40] and the god of Love responds to his promises of devotion, 'or diz tu que sages!' (10389).[41] The implication is that the definition of 'sagesse' depends very much on the 'vie' one 'elist'.

That the man who sings of love *has* to be joyful in order to do his job well implies, among other things, that his will necessarily be a one-sided account. This was implied from the very beginning of the *Prologue* in the prose 'argument'

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[39] 'When Memory makes the lover recall through Sweet Thought the woman who is very pretty and well loved, and to whom he is given and devoted, as well as faithfully abandoned, pleasant imagination makes in his heart the impression of her sweet, pleasant face, along with Sweet Thought, who draws the image, and thus his poem is improved a hundredfold: he is wise who chooses such a life', pp. 12-3.

[40] 'Certainly did not think me wise' (Strubel, p. 610; Horgan, p. 159).

[41] 'Now you speak wisely' (Strubel, p. 614; Horgan, p. 159).

preceding the first *ballade*, in which Nature was described as 'voulant orendroit plus que onques mes reveler et faire essaucier les biens et honneurs qui sont en Amours' (*Prologue*).[42] She not only wishes to *reveal* the 'biens' of love, but also to make them *exalted*, and Machaut conveys the slightly comical sense that he is a tool in a propaganda exercise, especially when Nature then tells him that she 'fourmé / T'ai a part pour faire par toi fourmer / Nouveaux dis amoureux plaisans' (3-5).[43] Lechat argues that 'la création poétique, "former des dits", désignée du même terme que la "formation" du poète par Nature, est à son tour engendrement'.[44] Lechat's point is that Machaut is presenting a fictionalised narrative in which he, the poet, is engendered by Love and Nature, and then engenders poetry in his turn. This artificially contrived 'genealogy' of Love, Nature, Machaut and poetry emphasises the extent to which Machaut's role as a celebrant of love is one that has determined every aspect of his thought and being.

Through the rhyming of Nature's 'formation' of Machaut and his own act of poetic creation, these lines also succinctly inform us that the latter act is subordinate to, indeed dependent on, the former: Machaut has been genetically programmed to exalt love, and in a sense he is telling us that everything he writes is dictated by Nature. In Poirion's reading, the precedence of Nature over Love in the *Prologue* signifies that 'avant l'enseignement d'Amour, reçu à la cour, ou dans l'expérience qui s'y attache, le poète a reçu l'enseignement de Nature',[45] while Sarah Jane Williams interprets this feature of the poem as suggesting that 'Machaut owes his powers to

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[42] 'Wishing more than ever before to make known and exalted the goods and honours pertaining to Love', pp. 2-3.

[43] 'Have created you especially to create new and pleasant poems about love', pp. 2-3.

[44] Lechat, *'Dire par fiction'*, p. 28. 'Poetic creation, "to form *dits*", designated by the same term as the "formation" of the poet by Nature, is in its turn a form of engendering [or conception].'

[45] Poirion, *Le Poète*, p. 193. 'Before the teaching of love, received at the court or in the experience associated with it, the poet has received the teaching of Nature.'

natural gifts (the gifts of Nature) rather than to theoretical mastery of skills'.[46] I would argue that Machaut is equating the all-consuming monomania of the lover with the notion that love 'conquers all': love is a natural desire implanted within us at the moment of conception, and we are powerless to resist the influence it exerts over our lives. In the context of the *Prologue*, what this means is that the 'Nature' which impels us to love, even when we know this is not the wise or the morally correct course, *also* impels Machaut to write poetry, and through it to celebrate love. The single-mindedness of Idleness, Youth, and the Cupid-fixated protagonists of the *Rose* and the *De planctu* is manifested not only in the behaviour of Machaut's own protagonists, but also in his very creative process – that is, in the biased perspective of his writing.

Machaut accentuates our sense of this bias by acknowledging the alternative to the blissful life he has so far envisaged. When the sad man pictures ('ymagine' (181)) the beauty of

> celle qui n'a de li cure,
>
> Dont li venroit envoiseüre
>
> Que elle aimme un autre que li?
>
> Je ne me tien pas a celi,
>
> Qu'il a tant de dueil et de rage
>
> Que c'est merveilles qu'il n'enrage,
>
> Ou qu'il ne se tue ou se pent,
>
> Ou que d'amer ne se repent;
>
> Si qu'il ne porroit nullement
>
> Riens faire si joliement

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[46] Sarah Jane Williams, 'Machaut's Self-Awareness as Author and Producer', in Cosman and Chandler (eds), *Machaut's World*, pp. 189-98 (191).

> De sa matiere dolereuse
>
> Com li joieus de sa joieuse,
>
> Pour ce qu'il n'a riens qui l'esgaie,
>
> Ne matiere lie ne gaie,
>
> Et s'a desir, et povre espoir
>
> Qui sa doleur empire espoir (183-98).[47]

'Espoir' in the penultimate line can mean 'expectation' or 'anticipation' as well as 'hope', hence its identity with the word for 'perhaps' in the last line, but the association with 'hope' is clearly intentional. When love goes wrong, the hope – 'esperence', one of the gifts with which Love presented Machaut earlier in the poem – which is such an integral part of a lover's joy, becomes the mere 'espoir' that one's pain will increase just as one's pleasure would in the case of a *successful* love affair. By insisting that he wants nothing to do with such unhappy cases, while at the same time vividly describing the misery of the betrayed lover, Machaut exposes his own limited perspective. The author here casts himself, somewhat atypically, as an unambiguously successful lover, so of course he writes of the joys of love, in accordance with the mission given him by Nature and Love; the implication is that if he had *not* found favour with those two, he would not have lived to tell the tale. For the unsuccessful lover, the only choice, as Machaut sees it, is between madness, suicide and repentance.

By imagining the situation of a lover whose lady has granted her affection to somebody else, Machaut has suggested a circumstance about which it would be

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[47] 'The woman who doesn't care for him, will joy come to him since she loves someone else? I don't take the side of this man, for he has such sorrow and rage that it's a wonder he doesn't go mad, doesn't kill or hang himself, or doesn't repent of loving; and thus he can in no way compose anything as pleasing from his mournful material as the happy man can from his happiness, because he has nothing that cheers him, no theme happy or gay, and he has desire, and the poor hope that his pain will perhaps grow worse', pp. 12-3.

impossible to compose verses while remaining obedient to Love's command: 'N'aucunement des dames ne mesdi' (*Prologue* 77).[48] When, in the previous line, Love also warns Machaut not to 'faire chose ou il ait villennie' (76),[49] she is literally forbidding anything that *contains* immorality, and not poetry that is immoral in itself. The wording of the passage is deliberately ambiguous, but it could be that Love is simply telling Machaut only to report good things about ladies, for if he does not, 'Je te feray tres cruelement detraire' (80).[50] The word 'detraire' here most likely means something like 'tear apart', but Love could also be threatening to slander or denigrate Machaut.[51]

If Machaut says anything derogatory about women, he will himself be slandered in revenge, or he will not have any more success as a lover, or he will be tortured. This is very much a gangster's threat, reminiscent of the unscrupulous methods used by the god of Love's army in the *Roman de la rose*. Love comes across here, though not as strongly as in the *Rose*, as a powerful figure more concerned with the maintenance of her dominion and reputation than with moral conduct as such. There is certainly an in-joke contained in Machaut's reply to this warning, when he says 'des dames blasmer me garderay, / Ne, se Dieu plaist, ja n'en seray repris' (111-2),[52] since he will be very forcefully 'repris' – both in the sense of 'accused' and 'seized' – for exactly this reason in the *Jugement Navarre*, just for having declared, in the *Jugement Behaigne*, that the betrayed knight suffers more than the bereaved lady. In other words, the mere recounting of a story in which a woman – the knight's unfaithful lover – behaves immorally is considered an infringement of Love's command. It is in this sense that Machaut must write, as he himself promises, 'sans

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[48] 'And don't ever vilify a lady', pp. 6-7.
[49] 'Write anything immoral', pp. 6-7.
[50] 'I will take very cruel vengeance upon you', pp. 6-7.
[51] *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/ Article: 'detraire'.
[52] 'I will refrain from finding fault with women, and, please God, I will not be accused of this', pp. 8-9.

penser a vice' (122),[53] that is, without even acknowledging vice or taking it into account.

As Calin says of the *Navarre*, the narrator's guilt in the eyes of the women who put him on trial 'is based upon a simple tautology: to undermine *fin' amor* results in the undermining of *fin' amor* and is surely a crime in a value system based upon the sanctity of *fin' amor*…Unfortunately, the poet and at least a section of his public may adhere to a different system with different rules and different icons'.[54] It is, of course, not Machaut's undermining of *fin'amor* as such that is at stake: Calin's conflation of 'women' with '*fin' amor*' hints at the extent to which the Middle Ages' ambiguous attitudes towards love and women are inextricably linked. It also implicitly reads the *Jugement Behaigne* as a critique of love, as I will do (more explicitly) in a later chapter. In any case, it is evident from the *Prologue* that Machaut has limited options as to what he may write about love (and hence about women): ostensibly the command to write 'sans penser a vice' enjoins him to write only about virtuous forms of love, but as will become clear later in Machaut's œuvre, it also hints at the dangers of speaking honestly about dishonest lovers.

Love's blinkered attitude towards wrongdoing is intimately connected to its refusal to acknowledge the unhappier aspects of a lover's experience. Music, as Machaut famously says later on, is a science:

> Qui vuet qu'on rie et chante et dance.
>
> Cure n'a de merencolie,
>
> Ne d'homme qui merencolie
>
> A chose qui ne puet valoir,

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[53] 'With no thought of vice', pp. 8-9.
[54] William Calin, 'Machaut's Legacy: the Chaucerian Inheritance Reconsidered', *Studies In the Literary Imagination*, 20 (1987), 9-22 (p. 14).

<div align="center">Eins met tels gens en nonchaloir (200-204).[55]</div>

The phrase 'metre en nonchaloir', in all the instances I have seen, means something like 'pay no attention to',[56] yet Lukitsch glosses this last line as meaning that music will not 'enable a man…to persevere in his grief', to support her claim that Machaut always 'insists on the essentially consolatory power of poetry'.[57] He certainly does insist upon it immediately afterwards, when he says that music 'Les desconfortez reconforte' (206),[58] but there is a sense in the lines quoted above that Love does, as in Palmer's translation, 'ignore' unfortunate lovers such as the one Machaut has just described.

When Machaut says, near the end of the *Prologue*, that 'joie et doleur, ce me samble, / Puelent petitement ensamble' (281-2),[59] he again confronts us with a somewhat ambiguous piece of proverbial wisdom. Huot comments, 'as in the *Consolation of Philosophy*, then, the ideal is to develop a poetic discourse that will foster cheerful and optimistic sentiments, and a serene disposition',[60] but the way in which Machaut describes the workings of Memory and Sweet Thought in the lover's mind seems more akin to the self-consuming mindset in which the prisoner is sunk at the beginning of the *Consolatio* than to the self-sufficiency he has achieved by the end.[61] Cerquiglini remarks of these lines that although 'la raison exclut la coexistence

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[55] 'Which likes people to laugh and sing and dance. It cares nothing for melancholy, nor for a man who sorrows over what is of no importance, but instead ignores such folk', pp. 12-3.

[56] As in 'je met tout, fours vous, en nonchaloir' (*Louange des dames* LXIII, 13), p. 77. 'I care for nothing except you.' All page and line references to the *Louange* refer to Guillaume de Machaut, *Poésies Lyriques*, ed. by Vladimir Chichmaref, 2 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1909; repr. Geneva: Slatkine, 1973).

[57] Lukitsch, 'Poetics of the Prologue', p. 263.

[58] 'Comforts the disconsolate', pp. 12-3.

[59] 'Joy and misery, it seems to me, can accomplish little together', 16-7.

[60] Sylvia Huot, 'Consolation of Poetry', p. 170.

[61] Indeed, Huot argues that Machaut is revising the terms of Boethius' text, and I will treat this subject in more detail in my discussion of the *Remede de Fortune*.

des contraires', experience teaches Machaut that 'il lui faut…penser l'ambiguïté'.[62] In fact, ambiguity – the coexistence of contraries, discovered through bitter experience – provokes and forms the subject matter of love poetry, and it is curious that Machaut should declare such ambiguity to be counter-productive.

Several critics have pointed out that Machaut's work often demonstrates the power of melancholy to inspire great poetry,[63] and Catherine Attwood suggests that 'là où la lyrique du haut Moyen Âge encense l'"endroit" de la Joie, celle du Moyen Âge tardif chante l'"envers" de la Mélancolie'.[64] Commenting on a lyric in which Machaut blames his melancholy for the low quality of his verses, Attwood argues that this modesty is false and ironic – she cites an allusion to Rutebeuf in support of this – and that, for Machaut and his contemporaries, '*sentement* est à mettre en rapport avec le domaine esthétique plutôt qu'avec le domaine sentimental'. This 'détachement des poètes du Moyen Âge tardif par rapport à la matière amoureuse'[65] results in an even more radical form of ambiguity than that found in the Adam de la Halle lyric quoted above, because it means that even Machaut, who insists vehemently on the need for love poetry to derive from the true sentiments of the poet, in fact feels one way and writes another. From an aesthetic point of view, this supports the idea that Machaut invests more in the form than in the matter of his verse, but our sense of Machaut's 'detachment' may also prompt us to see him less as a celebrant of or participant in the game of love, and more as a wry, critical observer.

In ending my discussion of the *Prologue* I will briefly take note of the examples cited in support of the claim that music 'les desconfortez reconforte' (206): namely David, who made such good music 'Que sa harpe a Dieu tant plaisoit / Et son

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[62] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 164. 'Reason forbids the coexistence of contraries…he must think in terms of ambiguity.'

[63] E.g. Bétemps, *L'Imaginaire*, p. 174; Williams, 'Machaut's Self-Awareness', p. 192.

[64] Attwood, *Fortune la Contrefaite*, p. 7. 'Where the lyric of the high Middle Ages celebrates the "right side" of Joy, that of the late Middle Ages sings the "wrong side" of Melancholy.'

[65] Attwood, *Fortune la Contrefaite*, p. 65. '*Sentiment* is to be understood in relation to the aesthetic, rather than the sentimental, domain…detachment of late-medieval poets from amorous subject matter.'

chant' (247-8),[66] and Orpheus, who 'mist hors Erudice / D'enfer, la cointe, la faitice, / Par sa harpe et par son dous chant' (249-51).[67] The portrayal of David as a man who sang to 'apaisier l'ire / De Dieu' (241-2)[68] seems designed to contrast him with Orpheus, who sang to appease the denizens of Hell. Kelly argues that this passage, 'which juxtaposes the sacred song of David and the profane song of Orpheus'[69] has been anticipated in Genius' comparison of the profane and divine gardens in the *Rose*, which perhaps overstates the case a little, but certainly the contrast says something about the dual nature of love. Orpheus, of course, was both famous for his singing and infamous for his homosexuality and death at the hands of enraged women;[70] he is in a sense 'un modèle féminine pour Guillaume de Machaut',[71] while David, in thrall to his love of Bathsheba, presents a different form of 'effeminacy'.[72] In summary, these *exempla* encapsulate the ambivalence of music, its capacity to mingle the sacred with the profane.

Lukitsch argues that the love described in Machaut's poetry 'remains a purely human love, grounded in natural, physical desire; yet that same love enables him to experience, however momentarily, the harmony of the universe'.[73] In the *Prologue*, Machaut lays the ground for his life's work by introducing his ideas about a type of poetry which 'both approximates and remains distinct from the *musica mundana*', which 'both is and is not paradisal'.[74] The main focus of this chapter – and the next one – is *ambiguity*, and here in the *Prologue* we see the first hints at Machaut's conception of music as both heavenly and infernal, both improving and corrupting; a

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[66] 'That his harp and his song pleased God greatly', pp. 14-5.

[67] 'Released Eurydice, that attractive and elegant woman, from Hell with his harp and sweet song.' pp. 16-7.

[68] 'Appease the anger of God', pp. 14-5.

[69] Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 76.

[70] Machaut refers to this aspect of the story in the *Confort d'ami* (2585-90).

[71] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 147. 'A feminine model for Guillaume de Machaut.'

[72] Palmer suggests that Machaut may have intended to recall the Bathsheba episode by describing David as singing to appease *God's* rather than Saul's anger. See Palmer, 'Introduction', in *Guillaume de Machaut: The Fountain of Love*, pp. xvi-xcvi (xxxii).

[73] Lukitsch, 'Poetics of the Prologue', p. 268.

[74] Lukitsch, 'Poetics of the Prologue', p. 269.

conception which we will see come to fruition in the *Remede de Fortune*. This same ambiguity determines his conception of love: one's relationship with the beloved object both imitates and parodies the believer's relationship with God, demanding and fostering both virtue and hypocrisy. The intent behind this pervasive ambiguity, I would argue, is to *mediate* between these seemingly polarised standpoints, to find the 'heavenly' potential in earthly love and also reveal its capacity to turn one aside from God, towards the earth and the flesh.

Earthly love and music both reflect divine order, partaking as they do of a Nature which is the corruptible, and corrupted, manifestation of that order. Machaut's poetry gives eloquent expression to these earthly forms of harmony, evoking both their paradisal and profane qualities. He displays mastery of his art not only by practising it but also by exploring its limitations. In the *Prologue*, he introduces his lover-poet-protagonist who, like Boethius' prisoner, begins his journey in a limited frame of mind, and possibly too much in thrall to certain questionable authority figures. This poem is deliberately positioned as the first 'entry' in Machaut's complete works, presenting the lover whose exploits we are to follow as young, inexperienced and naïve, affirming an idealised conception of love and poetry precisely in order to throw into relief the more qualified vision of these things which will emerge when we enter the realm of actual experience. Thus we are invited to identify with this idealistic initial perspective, and to partake, ourselves, of the protagonist's subsequent learning experience, which begins in earnest in what is, chronologically, Machaut's first major poem, the *Dit du vergier*.

*The God of Love*

The intent of this section is, like the *Dit du vergier* itself, quite straightforward: to show how Machaut's first major poem illustrates the ambiguous nature of love. The word 'ambiguous' here stands for several different aspects of the love experience, including the self-contradictions within the lover's thoughts and feelings, the god of Love's potential to be both a morally improving and a corrupting master, the issue of sexual desire, and the lover's dependency on external, changeable things. Moving through the poem from beginning to end, analysing selected passages, I will treat these topics in roughly this order.

As in the previous two sections, my comments here are largely introductory. It may already be apparent that the topics just listed are all issues which associate Machaut's discourse on love with the teachings of Boethius. The confused, conflicted protagonist being visited and consoled by an allegorical figure, the question as to whether the narrator's master (like Fortune) is a good or bad one, the vagaries of worldly pleasures, and the issue of dependency all echo the *Consolatio*, but it is only when we turn to the *Jugement Behaigne* and the *Remede de Fortune* that we will see these associations brought firmly into the open. The *Prologue* and the *Vergier* together introduce a number of ideas about poetry and love which will be developed and commented upon in subsequent poems. These prefatory works establish not only the themes in which Machaut is interested, but also the very principle that such themes may be present, at one stage, in a veiled, germinal state – in other words, that such moral issues may remain latent in these deliberately simple, archetypal love poems, but emerge more fully as the lover-poet's knowledge and experience increase.

After a long passage in praise of the marvellous work God and Nature have done in fashioning the beloved lady, the lover-narrator finishes by saying that she is

'en tous biens parfaite' (104),[75] with one exception: 'elle est vers moy trop dure. / Vraiement, c'est tout le deffaut / Qui en son gentil corps deffaut' (106-8).[76] One of the central tenets of love lyrics is that, however supremely good and beautiful the object of one's affection is, this counts for nothing if they do not in some way reciprocate one's feelings, hence Machaut's own lament in the *Louange des dames* that there is not as much pity as beauty in his lady, and that 'elle vuet vers moy estre si dure' (*Louange* XLVI 33),[77] or Thibaut de Champagne's heavily qualified rule of love: 'Seur toutes riens doit on Amors amer; / en li ne faut fors mesure / et ce qu'ele m'est trop dure' ('Empereres ne rois n'ont nul pouoir' 12-4).[78] This claim that Love's only flaws are a lack of moderation and a failure to reciprocate the lover's service is one that applies very well to Love as pictured in the *Vergier*. The issue of reciprocation – what sort is required, how it is to be obtained – is also important in this poem, but I will discuss it in more detail when I look at the *Jugement Behaigne*.

It would appear, in any case, that it is this single 'deffaut' (*Vergier* 107) in the lady which preoccupies the narrator, 'qu'onques je n'os plaisence / A chose que ou vergier veïsse' (110-1).[79] Then, however, we find that this explanation is too simple. What occupies his mind is also 'La grant biauté qui me maistroie' (114),[80] and the fact that 'Amours, pour moy plus amender, / Me fait servir et honnourer / Loiaument, sans penser folour' (123-5)[81] this lady; 'Que nuls cuers penser ne porroit', he says, 'La joie que li miens avoit' (127-8).[82] During his earlier explanation of his distraction,

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[75] 'Perfect in every virtue', pp. 26-7.
[76] 'She is too harsh towards me. Truly, that's her only defect, the only thing her gentle person lacks', pp. 26-7.
[77] 'It pleases her to be so harsh towards me', p. 61.
[78] Thibaut de Champagne, *The Lyrics of Thibaut de Champagne*, ed. and trans. by Kathleen J. Brahney (New York: Garland, 1989), pp. 92-3. 'Above all things one must love Love; she fails in nothing except restraint, and in that she is too harsh towards me.'
[79] 'So I never enjoyed anything I saw in the orchard', pp. 26-7.
[80] 'The great beauty that mastered me', pp. 26-7.
[81] 'Love, to improve me greatly, made me serve and honour in loyalty, while intending no foolishness', pp. 28-9.
[82] 'And no heart could conceive the joy that was then mine', pp. 28-9.

the narrator said that he thought of his lady 'Loyaument sans villain penser' (72), and throughout the narrative so far we have seen this emphasis, not only on the superlative virtues of the lady, but also on the loyalty and purity of the man's feelings. This is very important to our understanding of the lover's predicament, for it is 'quant je pensay ensement / Comment je l'aim tres loiaument, / Et elle n'a cure de moy' (129-31)[83] that the narrator's joy turns to grief. Despite his loyalty, she makes him 'en dolour languir' (133),[84] although 'elle me deüst par droit / Des biens amoureus orendroit / Faire aucune joie esperer' (135-7).[85] This protest, at the heart of the lover's complaint, that the lady should give him a reward 'par droit' – that is, his appeal to her virtue – suggests that it is precisely this contradiction between what he thinks he knows about the lady and her unjust treatment of him that has thrown him into confusion.

A resolution, of sorts, to the lover's tormented state is close at hand: he finds himself in a clearing, in the centre of which twelve beautiful young people are gathered around a tree, in which perches 'une creature / De trop mervilleuse figure' (165-6),[86] who turns out to be the god of Love (a masculine figure, unlike in the *Prologue*). When this god addresses the narrator, his primary concern is to assert his own power over and positive influence upon the human race. He claims, for instance, that 'Je puis faire d'un fol .i. sage / Se je le met en mon servage' (305-6),[87] because anyone who serves love is 'apris / De scens, d'onneur, de courtoisie' (308-9),[88] and taught to 'deshonneur enhaïr' (313)[89] and 'tout vice fuïr' (314).[90] 'Scens' is one of the gifts Nature gives Machaut in the *Prologue* in order to help him write poetry, and

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[83] 'As I was thinking about how very loyally I love her, while she has no thought for me', pp. 28-9.
[84] 'Languish in misery', pp. 28-9.
[85] 'She, to be just, should make me hope for some joy in lover's goods', pp. 28-9.
[86] 'A creature of quite extraordinary appearance', pp. 30-1.
[87] 'I can turn a fool into a wise man by taking him into my service', pp. 36-7.
[88] 'Brought to reason, honour and courtesy', pp. 36-7.
[89] 'Hate dishonour', pp. 36-7.
[90] 'Flee from all vice', pp. 36-7.

there Palmer translates it as 'meaning' (or as 'intelligence' in line 410 of the *Vergier*), while Lukitsch admits that the word is 'cryptic' and suggests that in the *Prologue* 'its function is to co-ordinate or harmonise the various facets of the poet's work'.[91] Which of a good lover's attributes the word refers to in line 309 of the *Vergier* is unclear, and perhaps Palmer's 'reason' is not a bad estimate, but my point is that this is clearly not 'raison'; in other words, the passage does not claim that Love bestows *reason* on his servants. Placed as it is alongside honour, courtesy, and the ability to flee vice, the word seems to connote not simply the ability to distinguish between good and bad, but the specific qualities and skills required of a courtly lover: in other words, 'scens' here is a form of knowledge, *savoir faire*.

When the god of Love says, 'Et si fais le sage mesure / Trespasser, raison, et droiture' (317-8),[92] he seems now to be confessing, albeit in a lightly humorous tone, that he is also a cause of immorality. We might see a tempering suggestion that he only gives *pride* a fall in his boast that 'de tant qu'il iert plus soutis, / Haus, nobles, puissans, ou gentils, / De tant sera il plus batus' (323-5),[93] but 'haus' is more likely to mean 'eminent' or 'dignified' than Palmer's 'haughty', so there is no very strong reason to see the fall described as a punishment for sinful presumption. Love continues to flesh out his 'bad' side when he says, 'Je suis comparez a la mort, / Car je pren le foible et le fort, / Que nul ne m'en puet eschaper' (329-31),[94] but in fact Love is not 'just like' death, as Palmer suggests, only *comparable* to it, for 'je ne pren pas a tel guise / Com fait la mort, qui riens ne prise' (341-2).[95] Instead of destroying them outright, Love puts his captives in a prison, 'Qui est appellee "joieuse". /

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[91] Lukitsch, 'Poetics of the Prologue', p. 259.
[92] 'And yet I can force the wise to disregard reason, temperance, and justice', pp. 38-9.
[93] 'The more cunning, the more haughty, noble, powerful, or genteel, the more beaten down he will be', pp. 38-9.
[94] 'I'm just like death itself, for I seize the strong and weak, and so no one can escape me', pp. 38-9.
[95] 'I don't take the same way death does, valuing nothing', pp. 38-9.

Delitable est et gracieuse' (345-6).[96] Saying that the prison 'est *appellee* "joieuse"' is an effective, gently ironic way of encapsulating the paradox that lovers are imprisoned, but call their prison joyous. That it is 'called', rather than simply *being*, joyous, again suggests the lover's skewed perspective, which causes him to refer to things by inappropriate, or at least unusual, names. The fact that it is love which makes him do this is implied when Love states, baldly, that the prison *is* 'delitable et gracieuse': love is the source of these contorted, inverted signifiers which designate pain as pleasure. As McGrady comments, the amorous milieu depicted here is 'a system dominated by an especially violent and indifferent master' whose 'more sinister side'[97] is brought out even more strongly than in the *Rose*.

Following the reference to the 'joyous prison', the god of Love re-affirms its uncompromised 'joyousness' when he explains how his allegorical servants – Will, Sweet Pleasure, Pity, Hope, and so on – are called upon to play their part in the hypothetical developing love affair. Once the lover has been enticed into the prison and dedicated to the love of a particular lady, then:

> Plaisence, qui maint cuer maire,
>
> Fait que riens ne li puet desplaire
>
> Qu'en mon service puist sentir;
>
> N'il ne se porroit assentir
>
> Que nuls amis en amer sente
>
> Amer ne riens qui le tourmente.
>
> Einsois tient a fine douçeur
>
> Ce q'uns autres tient a doleur.
>
> Einsi Plaisence le soustient

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[96] 'Which is called "joyous". It is delightful and genteel', pp. 38-9.
[97] McGrady, 'Guillaume de Machaut', p.110.

Et en mon service le tient (*Vergier* 659-68).[98]

So far, so good: at this stage the lover dwells happily in that mindlessly blissful condition spoken of in the *Prologue*, and even if pain does come to him, he mistakes it for pleasure. The last two lines quoted suggest that this state of mind is brought about in the lover in order to sustain his devotion to Love's service, because if things were difficult at such an early stage, he would merely repent and give up.

Thus 'si plaisenment asseveure / Mes biens que Desirs li court seure' (671-2),[99] and it is when Desire comes into play that the story takes a darker turn. Desire gives the lover the 'apetit / De plus grant joie recouvrer' (675),[100] but first 'la faut desservir' (677)[101] by serving the lady well; and yet

vraiement, ja desservie,

Tant peüst dame estre servie,

Ne seroit de tous les servans

Qui en ce monde sont vivans (679-82).[102]

The hyperbole typically used in praising the lady here turns against her suitor, since it logically implies that nothing he could ever do would merit the supreme reward of her love, which in the context of such hyperbolic poetry is elevated to divine status.

Having been greatly tormented by the fearsome personifications guarding the 'joie' of love, and by Desire, the lover is eventually comforted by 'Esperence, la

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[98] 'Pleasure, who masters many a heart, makes sure that nothing he might experience in my service displeases him; for he could not agree to any lover finding bitterness or torment in his loving. Instead the man thinks pure sweetness what another considers pain. In this way Pleasure sustains him, and keeps him in my service', pp. 54-5.

[99] 'My goods taste so sweet that Desire follows him closely', pp. 56-7.

[100] 'Appetite to gain even greater joy', pp. 56-7.

[101] 'He must be deserving of it', pp. 56-7.

[102] 'Truly, this could never be merited, however well the lady were served, were it by all the servants living in this world', pp. 56-7.

seüre' (749)[103] and Memory, who revives in his mind the sweet thought of his beloved, 'Si qu'il met dou tout en oubli / Le desir qui l'a aissailli' (729-30).[104] It is from the remembrance of his lady's virtue, and his own loyal service, that the lover's 'gracieuse esperence / Pour son bien et pour s'aligence / S'engenre' (741-3).[105] Hope assures the lover that a lady so virtuous must have pity and generosity in her, so she is bound to grant him 'joie et confort, / Mais qu'il soit loiaus et secrez' (760-1).[106] These latter two virtues emerge as the most important to the success of a love affair, and we will need to consider their significance more deeply later on. It is easy to see why Hope and Memory are valuable as weapons against Fortune and Desire. Memory appeals to the past, and draws encouragement from it in order to engender Hope for the future: that things have been better before implies that they will be so again, and this provides comfort when the lover is at a low point in his affair.

The consolations of Memory and Hope work in a cyclical manner, feeding off the imaginary pleasures of the past (or the future) rather than drawing one towards a goal. After the hypothetical lover of the *Vergier* has been maintained for a long time in a state of joy, it is inevitable that the wheel will turn again, and like clockwork, 'Ades Desirs en lui s'avive / Et volenté de recouvrer / La joie qu'il ne scet rouver' (774-6).[107] Desire gives him the appetite for love, but his own superlative admiration of the beloved object disqualifies him from ever deserving this love, and so he is left with no choice but to subsist on the transient nourishment provided by Memory and Hope, to dwell in the cycle (or prison) which they form around him.

The possibility of a conclusion to these vicissitudes is implicitly affirmed during a long hypothetical debate over whether this hypothetical lover should be

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[103] 'Hope, the stable one', pp. 60-1.
[104] 'For thus he will forget completely the desire assailing him', pp. 58-9.
[105] 'Gracious hope for his own welfare and relief is born', pp. 58-9.
[106] 'Joy and relief, but only if he is faithful and secretive', pp. 60-1.
[107] 'Desire soon revives within him, as well as the will to gain that joy he does not know how to request', pp. 60-1.

allowed to attain his goal. Finally, the god of love Love passes his (hypothetical) judgement:

> Et quant je puis apercevoir
>
> Qu'il est dignes de recevoir
>
> La joie qui est nompareille,
>
> Saches que, qui vueille ou ne vueille,
>
> Moult tres liement li ottroy
>
> De la joie don et ottroy.
>
> Mais c'est toudis sauve l'onnour
>
> Des dames et sans deshonnour;
>
> Car a nul fuer n'ottrieroie
>
> Joie a nul amant ne donroie
>
> Dont dame fust deshonnouree;
>
> Eins vueil que l'onneur soit gardee
>
> Des dames quel part que ce soit (1047-59).[108]

Exactly what this 'joie qui est nompareille' *is* is not specified, nor is the extent to which the lover will be able to partake of this joy without compromising his lady's honour. As in the *Roman de la rose*, one might assume that the joy being spoken of is sex, yet the emphasis on honour in the lines quoted above suggests that this is not the reward in question, and Imbs insists quite reasonably that this is 'une joie qui exclut l'acte charnel, que refuse une dame d'honneur et qui est interdit au clerc voué au

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[108] 'And when I can see that he is worthy to receive the joy that is unequalled, know that I very gladly grant him, no matter who wills or not, the gift and present of the joy. But this is always for the preservation of the honour of ladies, and without dishonour; for I would never grant or permit the joy to any lover who might dishonour a lady. Instead I intend that the honour of ladies be preserved wherever possible', pp. 74-5.

célibat'.[109] We are certainly a long way here from the lewd allegorical victory with which Jean de Meun ended his poem. Machaut says nothing specific about the joy or the reward: he says only that the lover will be given the joy insofar as this can be done without causing dishonour to the lady. His refusal to explain what this means is not just coyness. Rather, he is appealing to us, his readers, to exercise our own judgement on the matter, and settle the question according to our own sense of what constitutes the 'joy' of love, and what constitutes dishonour.

William Calin, in debating whether Love's gift consists in 'physical possession' or 'a profound, passionate, but chaste love…in which consummation is thwarted to maintain desire in its most intense state',[110] wisely avoids settling the matter: the 'semantic range of courtly vocabulary is sufficiently wide' to allow both interpretations, and we can only imagine that 'readers or listeners were free to interpret such words each in his own way, according to his own temperament'.[111] There is certainly, from Machaut's point of view, a moral dimension to this issue of personal 'temperament', and whatever we imagine 'joie' to consist in, if we follow what the author has written we will each imagine what, in our minds, is an *honourable* conclusion. From an ethical point of view, Machaut thus leaves himself impeccable, in a typically elusive and elegant fashion: when it comes to matters of sexual propriety, and the specifics – the gory details, as it were – of a love affair, Machaut's attitude is very much 'honi soit qui mal y pense'. As Minnis points out, in relation to the *Rose*, the 'take the good and leave the evil' defence is problematic, for 'it can be used to justify practically anything - …any text whatever, whether it be edifying, innocuous or offensive',[112] and perhaps Machaut's intent is not so much to

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[109] Imbs, *Le* Voir-Dit, p. 108. 'A joy that excludes carnal knowledge, which any honourable lady would refuse and which is forbidden to cleric vowed to celibacy.'
[110] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 27.
[111] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 28.
[112] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 241.

disclaim all responsibility for the morality or otherwise of the 'joie' being extolled, but rather to acknowledge – and force us to acknowledge – its ambivalence, its potential to be both honourable and dishonourable. Love, in other words, is not an *inherently* ennobling way of life.

Nor, as we have seen, is it an uncomplicatedly consoling one, rather it is characterised by an instability brought about (like the potential for dishonour) by sexual desire. The *Vergier*-narrator is told, in answer to one of his questions, that reason abandons him when he sees his lady because:

> il n'est nuls vivans
>
> Qui soit amis s'il n'est doubtans.
>
> Car on doit sa dame doubter,
>
> Et li de courrous eschuer,
>
> N'on ne li doit dire ne faire
>
> Chose qui li puisse desplaire (1145-50).[113]

Aside from the contradiction between the promised sweetness and painlessness of love, and the description of the painful fear and doubt which is said to be an inescapable part of the lover's experience, we should note the connection between 'doubte' as described here and the 'desir' which is said, in the *Confort d'ami*, to be a similar guarantee of the strength of one's affection ('Qu'aussi com li desirs est grans / Est li amans d'amer engrans' (*Confort* 2215-6)).[114] The principle that a lover should draw comfort and joy from his own pain and fear is a nice summation of the paradoxical nature of love: love *is* fear and desire, in a sense; more importantly,

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[113] 'No man living could be a lover without being fearful. For a man must fear his lady and avoid her anger, shouldn't say or do anything to displease her', pp. 80-1.

[114] 'For a lover is impelled to love in proportion to his desire', pp. 116-7.

desire is the thing the lover should nurture and be proud of, but is also the thing that should engender fear and shame.

The most provocative statement in this passage is that it is the very strength of desire which forces the lover to remain quiet. The clue as to what this might mean is given a few lines later:

> Et avec ce tant yes honteus
>
> Devant li et si paoureus
>
> Qu'aucune personne ne sache
>
> L'amour qui en ton cuer s'atache,
>
> Et que ne soies perceüs,
>
> Dont estre puisses deceüs,
>
> Que cela dou tout bestourner
>
> Fait ton voloir et destourner
>
> Le hardement que tu avoies
>
> Ou cuer quant dire li voloies (1173-82).[115]

What is being described here is part of the secrecy demanded of the lover: the *Remede*-narrator, at the climax of that poem, will learn that he must not be overly demonstrative or affectionate in public, so this kind of fear is an essential part of the 'doubte' which is one of the inescapable pains of love. On the surface, it would seem that Love's parting reiteration of his promise that the narrator will 'estre garis de tes maus' (1193),[116] if he is faithful and discreet, will be fulfilled, since the narrator will

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[115] 'And also you are so abashed before her, and so afraid that someone might detect the love which is rooted in your heart, that you could be found out, and ruined in the event, and this above all derails your will and undermines the resolve that you have in your heart as you intend to speak to her', pp. 80-3.

[116] 'Be cured of your ills', pp. 82-3.

presumably initiate an affair with the woman once Love has softened her heart. But the promise rings a little hollow when we consider that the crippling fear Love has just described will continue to be integral to this affair, and is not just a symptom of unrequited love. The lover will not so much be 'garis' of his 'maus' as perpetually inflicted with still more wounds, sustained only by this ever-renewed promise of comfort.

Let us examine a little more rigorously what the god of Love has said about fear and desire. The fear has two important aspects: first, the fear of offending the lady; second, the fear of exposing one's feelings in public. Love's observation that desire itself forces the lover to remain quiet, and hold within that which he wishes to reveal, in conjunction with the fact that the lover is quiet because he doesn't wish to offend his lady, implies that he is afraid of offending her with the force of his desire. Similarly, he would be 'deceüs' (1178) if these feelings became known to other people, not necessarily because the feelings are sinful in themselves, but because other people would assume them to be so. Such is the fear of the lady in the *Remede*; moreover, in the *Jugement Behaigne*, it is said that no one can love without carnal, sinful desire, so perhaps the fear which is also a necessary part of love relates to its inescapable sinfulness. The fear being spoken of is closely tied up with that fear which drove the guardians of the 'joie' to spurn the suppliant lover. This is the fear of shame, of immorality, of the death of the flower: that is, of the loss of virginity and the fulfilment of sexual desire.

Desire, by definition, cannot exist once fulfilment has taken place. Cerquiglini comments on the close relation between Fortune and desire, suggesting that 'dans ce type de textes, le visage que prend Fortune est celui de Désir...L'une et l'autre

relèvent du même rythme'.[117] Like Fortune's wheel, Desire represents the will to rise, to achieve something better, and it will therefore start to decrease when one has reached the highest point on the wheel; the desire for something better will begin its assault once more. The two primary virtues demanded of the lover are, as we have seen, loyalty and discretion. The first asks that he be constant in his love and therefore in his desire, while the second asks that he never give full rein to that desire or bring it any closer to fulfilment.

Wetherbee speaks of 'the apparent impossibility of permanence in human love except through sublimation, or the crystallisation of poetry',[118] and Huot unites both these ideas when she suggests that 'Machaut's sublimation of love – what we might call "love for love's sake" – is an essential quality of his poetic œuvre and is related to the primacy of writing in Machaut's concept of the poetic process'.[119] It has also been suggested that by investing so much in the 'primacy' of art as a 'crystallisation' of a love that is otherwise temporary, Machaut distinguishes his own approach from that of Jean de Meun, for whom *procreation* was the crystallising force, the means to the end of permanence.[120] For Machaut, as these critics argue, artistic creation is an end in itself, translating 'love for love's sake' into 'art for art's sake', as though the latter formulation offered more permanence and stability. If we think back to Guillaume de Conches' comments on the poetic muses in Boethius, however, we might consider that art in fact shares with love this unattainable, shifting (and perhaps unnatural) quality, and that the poet can only sustain his activity by deferring its conclusion. As we shall see, this often seems to be the case with Machaut's *dits*, and it is one of many themes I will return to in later chapters. It is especially interesting to

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[117] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 64. 'In texts like these, Fortune takes on the guise of Desire...The one and the other are governed by the same rhythm.'
[118] Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 142.
[119] Huot, *From Song to Book*, p. 237.
[120] See Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 214 and Sylvia Huot, *Rose and its Readers*, p. 270.

note, at this point, that just as Machaut appeals to his readers to exercise their own sense of honour in determining the sexual content of his poem, so his poems often remain unresolved in a way that seems to invite a response from the reader, or at least to suggest a world and a life beyond that depicted in the text, where the lover's exploits continue. I will look at the *Vergier*'s ambiguous ending shortly, but it is telling that both the lover and the poem are trying, on some level, to 'crystallise' their activity, to be self-sufficient, but that both lover and poem are ultimately revealed as dependent on an unknown external quantity – the response either of the lady or of the reader.

The *Vergier*-narrator's attempt at self-sufficiency, and his inescapable dependency, are revealed when the god of Love takes wing and leaves him to his own devices. As he departs, Love shakes some cold dew-drops from the tree, which:

> me fist tout tressaillir
>
> Si qu'a moy me fist revenir
>
> Et mist hors dou transissement
>
> Ou j'avoie esté longuement (1207-10).[121]

Although from a certain point of view the narrator's encounter with Love has settled the questions that had been plaguing him, in another sense he has only attained a more thorough understanding of the alternating emotional states of which a love affair typically consists. The doubt and fear that characterise the amorous life result from the lover's enslavement to desire, and from his dependence on the affections of another person – an enslavement, and a dependence, represented allegorically in this poem by the blind, capricious and despotic god of Love – so it is fitting that he should

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[121] 'Made me tremble all over, so that it made me come to myself and put me out of the trance that I had long been in', pp. 82-3. I have translated these lines more literally than Palmer does.

be plunged back into a state of tormented uncertainty when his guardian and tutor leaves him to his own devices.

As he leads into the poem's conclusion, Machaut ostentatiously displays his poetic skill through repeated use of *annominatio*, most interestingly when he plays on the word 'fin'. The lover promises to serve his lady:

> Jusques a mon definement
>
> De bon cuer si tres finement
>
> Qu'einsois sera mes corps finez
>
> Et mes cuers li tres affinez
>
> Partis en .ii. pars, que je fine
>
> D'amer de loyal amour fine
>
> Li et s'onneur, de cuer si fin
>
> Qu'elle me mettra a ma fin,
>
> S'elle n'est de tele fin nee
>
> Et par Pitié si affinee
>
> Que le mal face definer
>
> Qui Paour me fait definer.
>
> Ainsi jamais ne fineray;
>
> Car plus chier a definer ay (1269-82).[122]

Throughout this passage, the meaning of the rhyming words alternates between 'ending' and 'refinement', ostensibly in order to say that love is too refined to end,

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[122] 'Until my life ends with a good heart, and so very purely that my body would die, and my heart, so perfected, would be divided in two before I'd stop loving her and her honour with a faithful, pure love and a heart so refined that she would send me to my end, if she were not, without a doubt, born with and so refined by Pity that she will end the misery that Fear makes me feel. And so I will never end, for I prefer to die', pp. 86-7.

and that it is such refinement which saves the lover from death, but also subliminally *equating* fin' amor with death (that is, as well as placing the two in opposition). The repeated rhyme also highlights a contradiction at the end of the passage: the narrator states that his love is so refined that his lady would bring him to his end if she were not so refined by Pity as to end his fear and pain. Then 'Ainsi jamais ne fineray', he says, the most obvious meaning of which is that he will never stop loving, but which could also mean that he will never come to the 'end' – death – which his love would drive him to, since the lady's pity will save him from such a fate. Given that the hope he expresses of being saved by her pity seems a conditional one, and is certainly left unfulfilled at the conclusion of the poem, the line 'Ainsi jamais ne fineray' also signifies that no conclusion will ever be reached; and, coming as it does immediately after the lover has expressed his hope that the lady will 'le mal face definer', the line also serves to contradict that hope, and suggest that this 'mal', induced by 'paour', will never end.

The narrator's failure to say *what* he will never 'finer' allows for a plurality of meanings, all of which are supported by the complexity of the preceding passage and of the poem as a whole. 'We have here', Brownlee observes, 'an exploitation of the *annominatio* on *fin* as a signal of closure for a particular poem, which serves particularly to heighten our awareness of the presence of the poète figure (in contradistinction to the narrator) and of the dit's existence as verbal object, as poetic artifact'.[123] Brownlee seems to read the wit of 'jamais ne fineray' as consisting in the fact that it refers to Machaut's poetic activity: at the moment when he is bringing this poem, and this narrator, to an end, he utilises this display of virtuosity to boast of the great works he has yet to compose, concluding, as in the *Prologue*, with the promise of a new beginning. Reading the poem in terms of its moral content, one could also

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[123] Brownlee, *Poetic Identity*, p. 35.

see this differentiation of the 'poète' from the narrator as implying the former's superior, potentially critical perspective on the latter. The extended play on the word 'fin' in fact signals the *lack* of closure, not only in the poet's activity but also in the lover's experience, an irony to which the lover himself is oblivious, but which is exposed by the poet for the reader's benefit.

The last lines of the *Vergier* are, like the rest of the poem, outwardly positive and hopeful, but their wording in fact leaves the narrator in a very uncertain position. He says nothing of joy, proposing only to 'attendre / Le don qui m'a esté promis' (1286-7):[124]

> Pour c'en doubtance et en cremour
>
> Vueil ma douce dame oubeïr,
>
> Servir, celer, et sans partir
>
> Vivre en son amoureus dangier.
>
> Ci fenist *Le Dit dou Vergier* (1290-4).[125]

The poem ends with doubt, fear, dependency, concealment, and that ambiguous and multi-faceted word, 'dangier', whose meaning has been much discussed. Kelly observes that it derives from the word 'domniarium', meaning 'lordship, dominion', and suggests that 'dangier' 'expresses aristocratic prerogatives…[which] may be rightly or wrongly exercised…the power to give, and therefore to withhold'.[126] At the end of the *Vergier*, the word clearly signifies the lady's domination of her lover, and coming as it does at a conclusive moment, its implication of the contingency, the uncertainty, of the lady's actions, is all the more interesting. 'Dangier' normally

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[124] 'To await the gift that was promised me', pp. 86-7.

[125] 'Thus in doubt and fear I propose to obey my sweet lady, to serve her and dissemble, and without departing live under her amorous domination. Here ends *The Story of the Orchard*', pp. 86-7.

[126] Kelly, *Medieval Imagination*, p. 89.

serves in love allegory as one of the most fearsome obstacles to the success of the lover's suit, because it represents the lady's capacity for turning down that suit, and hence is sometimes translated as 'haughtiness'. The poem announces its own conclusion in the moment when 'dangier' is answered with a rhyming word taken from the title, 'vergier': Machaut underlines the fact that he has concluded (and in a sense 'summed up') the story on a note of fearful expectancy. The poem itself, like its narrator, will never finish, because we never learn of the success or failure of this lover's suit. Like its narrator, therefore, it is at once perpetually self-maintaining and perpetually dependent on an unstable, external force.

This correspondence between the nature of the poetic art and the nature of love will be yet another persistent theme in Machaut's poetry. The *Prologue*, thought to have been composed at the end of his career, tells the story of how and why he embarked on that career; and it leads directly into his first major work, the *Vergier*, in which he tells the story of how and why he embarked on an amorous lifestyle. Machaut ends his career by introducing its beginning, and as Brownlee comments, the 'juxtaposition and explicit connection between these two poems…serve to poeticise the codex, to present Machaut's collected artistic output as constituting a unified œuvre'.[127] Brownlee's concern is Machaut's construction of his own identity both as the author of his works and as the lover-narrator who figures in them, but what I wish to draw attention to is the way in which both of these poems end by declaring their dependence on the future. In this chapter I have shown how, by a number of different methods, the *Prologue* and *Vergier* present the idealised world of love and love poetry in such a way as to suggest its limitations, its paradoxes, and its worldliness – that is, its dependence on worldly circumstance. How such dependence

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[127] Brownlee, *Poetic Identity*, p. 25.

might (and should) be overcome is one of the primary concerns of the *Jugement*

*Behaigne*.

# Chapter 3

# Debating Love in the *Jugement du roy de Behaigne*

*Stating the Case*

The *Jugement Behaigne* begins with an encounter between two tormented lovers, a knight and a lady. The lady, 'que pensee argua' (61),[1] like the *Vergier*-narrator, is self-absorbed, and fails to notice the knight's greeting at first. The echo serves, in part, to indicate that Machaut is inviting comparison with his previous *dit*: here he will explore the theme of love from a different angle. For both the narrator and the hypothetical lover in the *Vergier*, the outcome of their affair remained a future event, but the fates of these two lovers have already been decided. The lady is mourning her lover's death, while the man has been betrayed by his, and now suffers the fate of the unfortunate lover described in the *Prologue*, who had to see another man enjoying the prize he had lost. We saw something of Machaut's calculated use of contradictory hyperbole in the *Vergier*, but here the question as to which statement is an exaggeration and which is in fact true is brought to the fore when both lovers insist upon the superlative quality of their own misfortune. 'A dire voir', says the lady, referring to her terrible pain, 'Nulz cuers qui soit n'en porroit plus avoir' (100-1);[2] the man retorts that 'soiez bien certaine, / Qu'il n'est dame, ne creature humaine, / Ne n'iert jamais, / Qui telle paine endurast onques mais' (106-9).[3] Thus begins the friendly argument over who suffers more. After advancing their respective cases, they

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[1] 'Whom thoughts tormented', pp. 62-3.
[2] 'To tell the truth, no heart could ever bear more', pp. 64-5.
[3] 'You can be certain that there is no lady, no human being, nor ever was, who ever endured such pain', pp. 64-5.

decide they need a third party to judge which of them is right, and at this point the narrator emerges from his hiding place to lead them to his master, the King of Bohemia. At the royal court, the matter is debated by Reason, Loyalty, Love and Youth. Ultimately the judgement is awarded to the knight: he suffers more from his betrayal than the lady does from her bereavement.

In the course of discussing the portrayal of love in the *Confort*, the *Prologue* and the *Vergier*, I have frequently had to differentiate between what Machaut is 'ostensibly' saying and the 'underlying' point in order to suggest that we, his readers, are being invited to regard the doctrine and practice of courtly love with a sceptical and perhaps condemnatory attitude. Now, the figures of the betrayed lover and the unfaithful woman are no longer sidelined, but provide the main focus of the poem. The *Jugement Behaigne*'s in-depth exploration of the two ways in which a love affair can end – death or infidelity – amounts to a refutation of the idea that love provides enduring happiness. It is a given in this poem that all love affairs end in sorrow. The question that remains is: which way causes more suffering? The potential flaws in the doctrines of love, which I outlined at the end of the last chapter, are here foregrounded and interrogated. The paradox of the ideal lady who nonetheless lacks the crucial virtue of mercy, which was referred to but not dwelt upon by the *Vergier*-narrator, is, as we shall soon see, at the centre of the male lover's torment in the *Behaigne*.

Machaut's exploration of these themes partakes of a long tradition of medieval love debates, and the *Behaigne* is effectively an expanded *jeu-parti.* Around two-hundred *jeux-partis* from the thirteenth century are preserved in Arthur Långfors' invaluable edition,[4] and when we consider the collection as a whole we notice that, as

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[4] Arthur Långfors (ed.), *Recueil général des jeux-partis français*, 2 vols (Paris: Champion [SATF], 1926). Hereafter the number of the *jeu-parti*, as given in this edition (in Roman numerals) will be

well as being very consistent in form, these debate poems nearly all share the same core concern, despite the apparent variation in tone and subject matter. Each *jeu* begins with one poet asking the other a question in a short piece of rhymed verse; when the other has responded, the first takes up the opposing side of the debate, and the two exchange stanzas in a light-heartedly combative manner before either leaving the argument unresolved or appealing to a third party for arbitration. None of the final judgements survives, so it may be assumed that these debates were performed 'live' in front of the designated arbitrators.

Perhaps the most obvious comment to be made on this peculiar literary form is that it is, first and foremost, a *jeu*, a game. In one example, the instigator of the debate announces the topic – in this case, whether false or true lovers suffer more – and then says to his partner, 'Dites m'en droit, / Sire, tot orendroit / Et si prenez l'un des dous maintenant, / Et j'avrai l'autre partie' (IV 9-12).[5] This is the unspoken rule of all *jeux-partis*: choosing a side is as arbitrary as deciding whether to take the black or the white pieces in a game of chess, and the one who initiates the game seems prepared to defend whichever position contradicts his opponent, regardless of what he (or she) in fact believes to be 'droit'. The *jeux-partis* almost invariably descend into abuse and ridicule, as the debaters accuse each other of stupidity, naivety, and ignorance of the ways of love. Rhetorical skill, rather than the moral or intellectual soundness of an argument, seems to be prized above all in these exchanges.

However, there is another unspoken rule in this tradition, which is that nearly all *jeux-partis* are concerned with the tension between pragmatism and idealism, between worldliness and transcendence. Consider, as a representative example, the *jeu* in which Jehan Bretel asks which is more fitting conduct for a lover: 'Ou qu'il

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indicated in brackets after the quotation, followed by line numbers; page numbers will be given in the footnotes.

[5]Långfors, *Recueil des jeux-partis*, vol. 1, pp. 15-8. 'Tell me the truth about this straight away, sir, and take up now one side of this question, while I will take up the other.'

faille / A sa joie recevoir, / Pour paour de percevoir, / Ou qu'il goe en percevance, / Dont sa dame ait mesestance?' (XXX 6-10).[6] Jehan Grieviler responds that a lover should never do anything 'Dont cele se puist doloir / Que vous amez d'amour franche; / L'amour c'est droite vaillance' (18-20),[7] to which Bretel retorts derisively that one should always take that for which one is striving, for 'Qui le grain voit aparoir / Et dont n'en prent fors la paille, / Sa vitaille / Pert par son povre savoir' (24-7).[8] Notice that 'joie' is used here, as in the *Dit du vergier*, to signify the lover's goal, and that it is explicitly figured as a kind of joy which would cause scandal if others became aware of it. Grieviler emphasises the importance of 'amour franche' and 'droite vaillance' – that is, virtue – while Bretel's food metaphor is quintessentially materialistic. The argument seems to be quite a specific one about what counts as good conduct in love, but by any normal moral standards, the conduct recommended by Bretel would be deemed unambiguously 'bad': really the two poets are debating whether virtue has a place in an erotic love affair, or whether love is simply about sating one's physical desire.

Thus, although it might appear that Bretel comes out of this debate looking unscrupulous and immoral,[9] from his own point of view he is just being honest about what love involves, while his opponent 'fait enfance' (49),[10] an insult commonly directed at the 'idealistic' participant in *jeux-partis*. The implication is that youthful idealism will inevitably be replaced by a more pragmatic conception of love as one gains in experience, a perspective voiced by Bretel again when a young man asks him whether he should make advances to a friend's lady, left in his care: 'Garde la bien et

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[6] Långfors, *Recueil des jeux-partis*, vol. 1, pp. 111-4. 'Whether he should abstain from attaining joy, for fear of being seen, or take his pleasure openly, thereby bringing misfortune on his lady?'
[7] 'Which might cause sorrow to her whom you love sincerely; love consists in upright virtue.'
[8] 'Whoever sees a grain come forth, and then only takes the chaff, loses his nourishment through ignorance.'
[9] It is worth noting that Bretel sometimes defends the opposite point of view, and is patronised by Grieviler in similar terms to the ones he uses here, as in no. XLVII, pp. 175-8.
[10] 'Behaves like an infant.'

soies avisez' (XCV 13),[11] says Bretel, before admitting to his opponent that, since he is 'tes ainsnez' (14),[12] he would not refrain from trying to seduce the woman in question. He explains, 'Trop est joenne couart et poi senez / Qui ne s'aïde entreuz qu'il est en vie' (47-8).[13]

Courtly lovers – especially Machaut's – often lament that the unscrupulous get everything they want, while *they*, who have always behaved honourably, are left out in the cold. This is always a lesson learned through experience, and it amounts to a realisation that the lover's fate is determined by Fortune: whether one attains one's desires or not depends on worldly circumstance. It is only by being pragmatic and taking advantage of opportunities – seizing the grain when it appears, seducing the woman entrusted to you – that a lover can hope to improve his chances of success. James Wimsatt comments: 'the debate topic of Machaut's *Behaigne*, involving the question of who suffers more, the betrayed or the bereaved, brings to the fore the same problem the story of *Troilus* poses: when if ever is it permissible to stop loving the mate whom Love has assigned?'[14] (I will come back to the idea that love 'assigns' a mate at the beginning of the next section.) Indeed, Chaucer's poem effectively concludes in the same way as Machaut's: just as the knight in the *Behaigne* suffers more from his betrayal, while the lady finds consolation after her lover's death, so Troilus cannot stop loving Criseyde after she has abandoned him, but attains a sense of perspective – and therefore a form of consolation – in death. The playful *jeux-partis* set the idealists against the pragmatists, implicitly throwing into question love's transcendence and its capacity to improve and edify those who practise it. In Machaut's *Jugement Behaigne*, the *jeu-parti* is expanded into a narrative *dit* and, as we shall see, the extended 'debate and judgement' section at the end lends the

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[11] Långfors, *Recueil des jeux-partis*, vol. 1, pp. 346-8. 'Guard her well and be discreet.'
[12] 'Your elder.'
[13] 'He is a young and unlearned coward who will not look out for himself while he is alive.'
[14] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, p. 150.

proceedings a greater moral seriousness by providing a rather austere resolution to the conflict. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, the debate is, as it were, fully narrativised, and the conclusion is yet more explicit in its affirmation of the vanity of love and the futility of virtue or fidelity in an erotic context.

That interpretation of *Troilus* is open to question, but my concern here is to argue that these love debates, which to all appearances are little more than frivolous and arbitrary games, are in fact asking the same questions about love as Chaucer's apparently more serious, tragic poem. Clearly, the pleasure to be derived from the *jeux-partis* consisted not only in the rhetorical skill on display, but also in the debate generated among their listeners. The third party stands for all of these: he (or she) and the other audience members (or readers) are asked to decide which position they sympathise with, the idealistic or the pragmatic one. Although it might seem absurd to describe the *jeux-partis* as morally edifying, either in themselves or in the conversation we may assume they provoked, we must recognise that their success as 'ice-breakers' depends on their formulation of a suitably controversial moral dilemma – one which will provide the necessary *frisson* to spark an argument.

In this chapter, I will argue that Machaut's *Jugement Behaigne* not only dramatises a *jeu-parti* and the ensuing debate and judgement, but also, in so doing, engages very deliberately with the moral issues highlighted by the original question. As Palmer phrases it, 'the original question – who suffers more? – is turned toward a deeper, underlying issue: the possibility of reconciling emotional release, represented by the abstraction Youth, to understanding, represented by the character Reason'.[15] This is, as I will show later on, another way of expressing the conflict between pragmatism – the insistent physical demands of Youth – and idealism – the 'higher' principles of understanding and Reason. The way in which the debate at Bohemia's

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[15] R. Barton Palmer, 'The Metafictional Machaut: Self-Reflexivity and Self-Mediation in the Judgment Poems', *Studies in the Literary Imagination,* 20 (1987), 23-39 (p. 33).

court gets derailed, and the way in which it comes to focus entirely on the situation of the betrayed knight, reveals the centrality of these moral issues within – or beyond – the *jeu-parti* itself. Machaut's way of resolving these issues also tells us a great deal about his attitude both to the subject of love and to his own profession as love poet.

First, I will analyse the knight's lament in the first part of the poem, to show how the contrast between his predicament and the lady's throws into relief issues about the carnality of his love and his moral responsibility. Then I will look at the debate, judgement and conclusion, and suggest that Machaut is here imposing a specific interpretation on what has gone before: in particular I will focus on what he is telling us about the relationship between youth and love (already touched on in the above discussion) and, recalling the poem's opening, his implicit comments on the nature of his own art. This will prepare the ground for my focus on these same issues in the subsequent chapter on the *Remede de Fortune*.

*The Knight's Lament*

In his recent book on courtly love in Middle High German texts, James Schultz puts forward the following hypothesis about the quality that, in his eyes, distinguishes the medieval from the modern conception of love:

> the efficient cause of courtly love is completely unlike concupiscence, appetite, and modern desire. It is not a constitutive element of our fallen human nature...nor a drive or an instinct or raging hormones or a sexual orientation, nor is it the always deferred hope of satisfying a lack that is built

into our unconscious. Courtly love is exogenous. It is caused by something external to the body.[16]

Schultz is here reacting against the 'Lacanian' conception of the always already insatiable desire that drives mankind, and suggesting that in the Middle Ages – at least in the literary tradition – love was seen far more literally in terms of the 'Cupid's arrow' metaphor, as something which originated outside the desiring subject. It is not for me to say whether this is true of the texts Schultz studies, but for the purposes of my discussion of the *Behaigne*, the above quotation provides a useful position to take issue with. Different authors may of course take a different view of these things, but let us look at Machaut's poem and ask whether he is really suggesting that love has been *inflicted* on his characters, rather than chosen by them. Ovid tells his readers in the *Ars amatoria*, 'Elige cui dicas "tu mihi sola places." / Haec tibi non tenues veniet delapsa per auras' (*Ars amatoria* I.42-3).[17] Clearly, such an aggressive and proactive attitude would be incompatible with the medieval courtly ideal of humility and servitude on the part of the male, but I will now try to show that there is something of the Ovidian lover's free agency in Machaut's betrayed knight.

A sort of paradox is evident from the beginning of the knight's story. He explains how he came to love his lady in the first place:

> tres dont que je me sceuz entendre,
>
> Et que mon cuer pot sentir ne comprendre
>
> Qu'estoit amer, je ne finay de tendre
>
>     A estre amez;

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[16] Schultz, *Courtly Love*, p. 75.
[17] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 14-5. 'Choose to whom you will say, "You alone please me." She will not come floating down to you through the tenuous air.'

> Si que lonc temps, pour estre amis clamez,
>
> Ainz que mon cuer fust assis ne donnez
>
> Ne a dame nulle ottroiez n'assenez,
>
>   A Bonne Amour
>
> Par maintes fois fiz devote clamour
>
> Qu'elle mon cuer asseïst (*Jugement Behaigne* 261-9).[18]

The first four lines of this passage indicate that the knight embarked on the amorous life of his own free will. The 'me' in 'je me sceuz entendre' implies an attainment of *self*-awareness, and the emphasis in the next line remains on this awakening emotional and intellectual understanding of the nature of love. With his eyes very much open therefore, he 'ne finay de tendre' to be loved, that phrase conveying an insistent and deliberate striving to obtain something for himself. He seems to have begun by falling in love with the *idea* of love, and in the next line when he moves from 'estre amez' to the more indirect 'estre amis clamez', this reinforces our sense that he has some ideal conception of what being a lover means, and wishes to play this 'role' of lover in real life. Despite the evidence of his willingness in the first few lines, in the second half of the passage quoted he casts himself in a more passive role: his heart is something to be 'assis', 'donnez', 'ottroiez' and 'assenez', and it becomes clear that someone else must perform this ceremony of 'assigning' his heart when he says that he prayed to Good Love to do him this favour.

    It is hard to discern where the responsibility lies for what happens next:

> il avint qu'en une compaignie

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[18] 'Ever since I attained understanding and my heart could feel and comprehend what love was, I constantly sought to be loved. Thus, in order to earn the name of a lover, for a long time before my heart was assigned or given, granted or alloted to any lady, I pleaded often and devoutly with Good Love that she place my heart', pp. 72-3.

> Ou il avoit mainte dame jolie,
>
> Joine, gentil, joyeuse, et envoisie,
>
> Vins par Fortune,
>
> Qui de mentir est a tous trop commune (281-5).[19]

Of his own free will the lover has put himself in the power of Good Love, and now Fortune is governing his actions. Fortune is described here as though she were a whore, 'common to all in her dishonesty', and indeed her role in this scene is to bring this amorous man and the, as it turns out, promiscuous woman together. The lover's claim that he has been lied to is important, in that it relates to this central paradox about a woman who appears, or is said, to be virtuous, but in fact is not. It is also important, however, that the emphasis is already on the outward beauty and elegance of these ladies, not on their virtue. 'Si en choisi entre les autres une' (286),[20] the lover goes on, the verb 'choisir' in Old French tending to convey the passive act of 'catching sight of' something, but with connotations here, I think, of a capacity to distinguish one woman from among others. What follows is a very long and hyperbolic description of the chosen lady's worth, all couched in terms of physical beauty, and concluding fittingly: 'onques encor en ma vie ne vi / Corps de dame si tres bien assouvi' (405-6).[21] All of this lover's attention is fixed upon the 'corps'.

At the moment when his hubris reaches its peak, and the knight declares himself 'Li mieux amez des amans et li roys' (683),[22] the reversal of fortune occurs:

> Mais quant Fortune,

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[19] 'It happened that Fortune, who lies too much to everyone, brought me to a company of many beautiful ladies, all young, noble, joyful and gay', pp. 74-5.
[20] 'I caught sight of one among them', pp. 74-5.
[21] 'Never in my life have I seen a woman's body more beautifully formed', pp. 80-1.
[22] 'The best-loved of all lovers, and their king', pp. 94-5.

> La desloyal, qui n'est pas a tous une,
>
> M'ot si haut mis, com mauvaise et enfrune,
>
> Moi ne mes biens ne prisa une prune;
>
>    Ains fist la moe,
>
> Moy renoya et me tourna la joe;
>
> Quant elle m'ot assis dessus sa roe,
>
> Puiz la tourna, si cheï en la boe (684-91).[23]

Before, Fortune was characterised as she 'Qui de mentir est a tous trop commune' (285), which is as much as to say that her only fidelity consists in lying to everyone. The word 'commune', as I said before, also conveys something of her promiscuity, but now she 'n'est pas a tous une'. The phrase expresses the same thing as the earlier one, but more succinctly: it means not only that 'she is not the same with everybody', but also that she is 'not-one' – that is, double, two-faced – with 'tous', in this respect paradoxically maintaining consistency. In other words, this line could be read in two contradictory ways, one signifying partiality (she treats everyone differently), the other signifying impartiality (she is deceitful to everyone). The effect is to create a self-defeating statement, and one which says a great deal about the lover's state of mind.

    The knight continues by explaining the *cause* of Fortune's treacherous behaviour, in the process giving us further insight into his state of denial, and his confusion as to where the responsibility lies for his predicament. Fortune betrayed him, he says, because:

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[23] 'But when Fortune the traitor, who behaves differently to each one, had thus raised me on high, like a sullen scoundrel she didn't give a fig for me or my happiness; instead, she made a face at me, renounced me, and turned her cheek from me. After she had placed me atop her wheel, she turned it, and I was cast down into the mud', pp. 94-5.

> Dieus et Nature la belle,
>
>   Quant il fourmerent
>
> Celle que j'aim, si fort se deliterent
>
> En la tres grant beauté qu'il lui donnerent,
>
> Que loyauté a mettre y oublïerent (692-9).[24]

The knight imagines the omnipotent and unchanging God to be as susceptible as he is to the delights of a beautiful body, coupling his own all-consuming affections with the imagined ones of God and Nature. As the knight's lament takes on a more questioning, philosophical tone, he reveals that the root cause of his despair is precisely his misattribution of responsibility: 'Mais ce qui fait mon cuer partir et fendre, / C'est ce que je ne me scay a qui prendre / De mon ennuy' (722-4).[25] His heartbreak is born out of the confusion and mutability that have come to dominate him since he discovered that his lady is not as he had thought she was. Having characterised his as a distinctly earthly love, we may observe that he is now in thrall to the unreliability of earthly things, and having made such things his idols – and being aware that he did so of his own free will – he at once blames them, and then retracts this blame.

    The first potential culprit on his list, predictably enough, is Fortune. However, instead of complaining about her, he demonstrates his awareness of her untrustworthy nature by parroting the doctrines of Boethius, and affirming that Fortune has only taken away what she gave in the first place (725-33). The theme of dependence on an untrustworthy master is brought up shortly afterwards, when the knight considers that

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[24] 'God and Fair Nature, when they formed the one I love, took so much pleasure in the beauty they gave her that they forgot to place any loyalty in her', pp. 94-5.
[25] 'But what makes my heart shatter and break is that I don't know to whom to complain of my distress', pp. 96-7.

he also cannot blame his lady, because 'Elle s'est mise en la subjection / D'Amours a qui elle a fait de li don / Entierement' (750-2),[26] so that:

> se ma dame a plaisance et desir
>
> De moy lessier pour .i. autre chierir,
>
>   Ce fait Amour,
>
> Non pas ma dame en qui tant a valour,
>
> Car elle fait son devoir et s'onnour
>
> D'obeïr a son souverain seignour (758-63).[27]

Here the knight seems to be saying that if one has placed oneself in subjection to a figure such as Love, one is no longer responsible for one's actions, seemingly contradicting my earlier suggestion that, since he has embarked on this affair and climbed aboard Fortune's wheel of his own free will, he must be responsible for his own fate. It would certainly appear that the lady, too, has willingly 'fait de li don', making a present of herself to Love – a rather courtly way of saying that she has sold her soul. The knight is almost literally saying this is what she did, since she now has no will of her own, and everything she does is in a very real sense 'done' by Love. There is still this insistence upon the great 'valour' (761) that resides in this 'dame de pris' (767),[28] but now, in conjunction with the description of her as a 'don' (751), such terms as 'valour' and 'pris' have taken on more materialistic connotations. The knight's reaffirmation of her 'value' and 'worth', even after she has been unfaithful, only indicates the earthly values by which he is governed.

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[26] 'She is in Love's power, to whom she has given herself completely', pp. 96-7.
[27] 'If my lady wishes and is pleased to leave me for another love, this is Love's doing, not my lady's, who is the abode of all worth, for she is only doing her duty and maintaining her honour by obeying her sovereign lord', pp. 98-9.
[28] 'Worthy lady', pp. 98-9.

The statement that it is good and honourable to serve one's 'souverain seignour' (763) may prompt us to reflect that this title should really belong only to God. In his discussion with himself about whether Love should be blamed for what has happened, the knight undermines the idea that she is a suitable 'souverain seignour', first by saying that she 'a plus mespris / Par devers moy' (766-7),[29] then by admitting that 'je ne sui mie par li destruiz, / Qu'elle ne puet / Muer les cuers, puis que Dieus ne le voelt' (795-7).[30] This is nothing less than an affirmation of the lady's – and, by implication, the knight's – God-given free will, and simultaneously of God's proper status as our supreme sovereign. The knight is saying that Love cannot determine what we do, and indeed the rest of his discussion of Love dwells upon the fact that he has only had from her what he wished for and requested.

Having decided that Love cannot be responsible for what has happened, the knight says boldly that 'Nature et Dieus firent grant ignorance, / Sauve l'onneur d'eulz et leur reverence, / Quant il firent si tres belle semblance / Sanz loyauté' (809-12).[31] This is the clearest instance we have yet seen of a remark which we, as readers, are supposed to distance ourselves from. The knight has just finished saying that God would not allow Love to alter people's hearts – affirming His omnipotence and mankind's free will – so to accuse the all-knowing God of 'ignorance' can only be seen as crass ignorance on the part of the knight. The line, 'Sauve l'onneur d'eulz et leur reverence', comes across as empty and misplaced courtly rhetoric of the sort that Machaut himself will use when finding fault with his accusers in the *Jugement Navarre*. The knight's implicit assumption that a 'belle semblance' must have loyalty is one of the central tenets of courtly love as presented in Machaut's poetry, but here

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[29] 'Transgressed against me more [than my lady]', pp. 98-9.
[30] 'I have not been brought low by her, for she cannot alter hearts, since God doesn't wish it', pp. 98-101.
[31] 'Nature and God made a great blunder, with all respect to their honour and reverence, when they fashioned such a beautiful semblance without loyalty', pp. 100-1.

it is coupled with the speaker's mildly blasphemous ignorance and superficiality to make it seem like further evidence of his flawed character.

Wimsatt comments on this unfortunate remark – and a similar passage in Chaucer's *Complaint of Mars* – that 'it is both natural and in accord with the French conventions for distracted, despairing lovers to blame the Creator for their woes, and instead of exploring the philosophical implications one should probably see in this a feature of characterisation'.[32] Even if we think of this 'blaming the Creator' motif as a conventional pose for fictional lovers to adopt, the conventionality of the motif is not in itself a reason for not exploring the philosophical implications arising from a speech like this: having acknowledged that this ostensibly blasphemous 'pose' is more or less a fixture of the lover's complaint, it is important to ask *why* it is a fixture. Whether or not this motif *invariably* implies a moral critique of the lover, in the case of the *Jugement Behaigne* it is clear from the rest of the knight's lament, and from the subsequent debate at Bohemia's court, that this 'feature of characterisation' relates to moral and philosophical issues central to the action of the poem.

After his apparently thoughtless condemnation of God and Nature, the knight goes on to reveal a very clear-sighted appreciation of his lady's insubstantiality:

> Car s'elle eüst .c. fois mains de beauté,
>
> Et elle fust loyaulz, la grant bonté
>
> De Loyauté l'eüst plus honnouré
>
>   Que s'elle fust
>
> .c.m. fois plus belle, et mieux pleüst;
>
> Et en tous cas trop mieux plaire deüst,

---

[32] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, p. 122.

Pour ce qu'en li riens a dire n'eüst (813-9).[33]

There is a stark contrast between the way words like 'bonté', 'honnour', 'belle' and 'plaire' are being used here and the way the knight has used them so far in telling his story. If the distortion of his values and priorities were not already apparent enough, this contrast shows beyond a doubt that the knight is enamoured with his lady because of her surface charms. He stands back from himself and, for a moment affirming that true beauty lies in inner virtue rather than in anything visible to the eye, attains the self-awareness he seems to have been avoiding so far. The lady, he says, would have been more *pleasing* had she been virtuous, but because his is a carnal affection it leads him to seek *pain* rather than pleasure.

Reviewing his situation, the knight seems for a moment to lose sight of God and Nature: 'Si que je croy / Qu'a Bonne Amour, n'a Fortune, n'a soy / Riens demander de mes dolours ne doy' (820-2).[34] After he has asked himself, 'Et en puiz je riens demander a moy?' (823),[35] it becomes clear that he has omitted God and Nature from the preceding list because if he is to avoid blaming himself, then his only recourse is to blame God, as he will do again at the conclusion of his monologue. For the moment, however, he answers his own question in the affirmative:

Certes oïl!

Car je me mis de richece en exil,

De sceürté en .i. mortel peril,

De joie en duel, par son regart subtil,

---

[33] 'For had she a hundred times less beauty, yet remained loyal, that great gift of loyalty would have brought her more honour and been more pleasing than if she'd been a hundred thousand times more beautiful. At any rate, she must have pleased more, for then there would have been nothing with which to reproach her', pp. 100-1.

[34] 'Therefore I believe that I should not hold Good Love, Fortune, or my lady responsible for my sorrows', pp. 100-1.

[35] 'Yet can I hold myself responsible?', pp. 100-1.

> Et de franchise
>
> En servitude, ou on n'aime ne prise
>
> Moy ne m'onnour, m'amour ne mon service,
>
> Ne ma vie vaillant une cerise (824-31).[36]

The reversals normally attributed to Fortune are here acknowledged to be the result of the victim's own actions, but when the knight says he has done all this to himself 'par son regart subtil', he seems to revert to denying responsibility, blaming the 'subtlety' – that is, the skilful deception – of his lady's sweet glance.

Yet since he does not exactly say *why* he should blame himself for what has happened, we could instead read this phrase as a tacit admission that it was the woman's 'regart' (and the pleasure to be had from 'regarding' her) rather than her virtue, that snared him, indeed that it was the very subtlety of this look that he found attractive.

The knight, in his search for someone to blame, eventually exhausts all possibilities, and proves unable to go through with his plan to hold God and Nature responsible for his problems, but not out of any pious sense that it would be sinful to deny his own free will and accuse his creator:

> Si me prendray a eulz .ii. de mes malx?
>
> Je non ferai, car il me sont trop haux;
>
> Ainz soufferrai, c'est mes meilleurs consaux,
>
> D'ore en avant (857-60).[37]

---

[36] 'Indeed yes! Because I have brought myself from riches to desolation, from security to mortal danger, from joy to grief, by her subtle glance, and from freedom into a servitude where no one loves or values in the least me or my honour, my love or my service, nor thinks my life worth a cherry', pp. 100-1.

[37] 'So shall I blame these two for my troubles? I'll not do it, for they are too exalted for me; instead, the best I can do is to suffer from this day forth', pp. 102-3.

The pitiful complaint, 'il me sont trop haux', still takes for granted that he is the victim of a higher power rather than being master of his own fate, in line with Schultz's view of the courtly lover's condition. The knight's point is that, although God and Nature are indeed responsible, his saying so would put him at risk of being victimised even more, so he has no choice but to endure the pain they inflict on him. That is his ostensible point, but what we actually conclude from this is that his continual suffering results from his continual denial of moral responsibility, here manifested as overt impiety. The irony is that, in identifying 'souffrance' as his 'meilleurs consaux', he has unwittingly hit upon the very form of consolation which a good Boethian will recognise as the remedy against Fortune: namely 'souffrance', fortitude, a virtue closely related to 'souffisance'.

Machaut's love poetry sets out to expose the fundamental inadequacy of its own doctrines, but so as to imply the validity of the same doctrines when they are applied within a Christian framework. Love, according to this argument, 'shadows' Boethian ideas about dealing with the blows of Fortune, and serves as a mediator between their transcendent austerity and us, Machaut's carnal readers. John Magee points out that, in the early stages of the *Consolatio*, Boethius 'has to confront two apparently oxymoronic claims the significance of which emerges only gradually: mutability *is* the constancy of Fortuna, and subjugation to her tyranny is a function of *free choice*'; later, the second claim is inverted, and we find that 'freedom from the changes of fortune and fate means *bondage* to the motionless stability of providence'.[38] In concluding this section, I will try to expand on these ideas to show how Machaut directs us away from *fin' amor* and towards an awareness of God.

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[38] John Magee, 'The Good and morality: *Consolatio* 2-4', in Marenbon (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, pp. 181-206 (185).

The quote from James Schultz, given at the start of this section, pictured a world in which love, far from being a matter of free choice emerging from within the courtly lover, was inflicted upon him from without. This amounts to a confirmation of the lover's claim that he is a victim of Fortune – or some other higher power – and that his fate is essentially random and undeserved. In the Boethian conception, however, what we perceive as Fortune's randomness is in fact stability, and once we have acknowledged (as Machaut's knight does) that it is in her nature to be changeable, that knowledge should bring with it the realisation that we can choose whether or not to enslave ourselves to Fortune's seemingly random turns. If this *is* a question of free choice, that implies that there is some alternative; and sure enough, the alternative is to affirm that we do have free will, that we are responsible for our actions, and that any suffering we encounter is either a consequence of some wrongdoing on our part, or a test of our fortitude. This alternative amounts to an affirmation of God's omnipotence and justice, and on this basis I argue that Machaut's exposure of the knight's moral responsibility implies that the remedy for his situation would be, as in the *Consolatio*, to put his trust in God. In the next part of this chapter, I will show, through a selective analysis of the remainder of the *Behaigne*, how Machaut develops this idea, and leads us to interpret the debate between the knight and the lady in the way I have suggested.

*Debate and Judgement*

The King of Bohemia presents the case to his advisers, addressing the most authoritative first: 'Dites, Raison, / Premier oïr voeil vostre entention' (1660-1).[39]

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[39] 'Speak, Reason, I wish to hear your opinion first', pp. 142-3.

Reason will remain the dominant figure throughout this debate, formulating its terms and expressing a judgement more clearly than the other three advisers, Love, Loyalty and Youth. All three of these will be taken into account in Reason's speech, showing her all-encompassing, all-comprehending role at this court. As she begins, stating that both lovers are in great pain but that a clear distinction must be drawn between them, it is immediately apparent that her defining characteristic is the capacity to take both points of view into account and moderate between them. 'Ce qui me muet / Vous voeil dire, puiz que faire l'estuet' (1672-3),[40] she says, wittily declaring the necessity of stating her reasons, given that she is Reason itself. Her importance will become clearer as we read on, but already we may be struck by the contrast between the knight, who was tormented by his inability to choose between different points of view or perceive the cause and reason for his situation, and this allegorical figure who steps in to settle all questions once and for all. In the *Roman de la rose*, Nature insists that if a man 'se mesconnoist comme nice, / Cist deffauz li vient de son vice' (*Rose* 17869-70),[41] and that 'il puet bien raison ensivre / Et puet de franc voloir user' (17872-3).[42] Machaut's Reason will argue very much along the same lines, inviting the knight to follow her, exercise his free will and leave behind the 'vice' which is inherent to his infatuation.

Reason begins with the bereaved lady, taking the very cause of her suffering and turning it into a form of consolation. Since she 'jamez veoir ne puet / Son ami vray' (*Jugement Behaigne* 1674-5),[43] Reason herself will 'ferai tant qu'elle

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[40] 'I want to tell you what sways me, since I must', pp. 144-5.
[41] 'If he is so foolish as not to know himself, this failing is the result of his wickedness' (Strubel, p. 1028; Horgan, p. 275).
[42] 'He is perfectly capable of following reason and of using his own free will' (Strubel, p. 1030; Horgan, p. 275).
[43] 'Can never again see her true love', pp. 144-5.

l'oublïera' (1678).[44] Reason explains that Youth will inevitably forget that which she does not see, and then brings in another of her fellow courtiers, Love:

> Amours n'a pas tant de pooir en li
>
> Que soustenir se peüst sanz ami
>
> L'eure d'un jour, ne sanz amie aussi.
>
>  Et se l'un faut
>
> Des .iii., les .ii. autres aront deffaut (1689-93).[45]

Youth is not only impatient, but also has to be able to see the beloved in order to go on loving, and now a similar limitation is being attributed to Love. It is precisely Love's inability to sustain itself – to be self-sufficient – even for a short time, without the physical presence of the beloved, which renders it impotent in this case. Effectively, Reason is explaining both why the lady will get over her pain in time, and why this poem has paid so little attention to her: she is beyond the reach of love and beyond the interest of love poetry, both of which operate strictly within the realm of ephemeral, material things. The consolatory 'trinity' spoken of in the *Confort* was intended to sustain love in the absence of the beloved, through the hope of seeing her again, but for the lady in the *Behaigne*, with both her actual beloved and all hope of seeing him definitively gone, she must now cease to be a lover, and find consolation through the annihilation of her affections.

Reason persists in expanding on her austere lesson, in one of the most crucial passages in the poem, which I will quote here at some length. Note the interplay, in this clinically reasonable definition of love, between the soul and the body:

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[44] 'Will cause her to forget him', pp. 144-5.
[45] 'Love is not powerful enough to sustain itself a single hour without a lover or lady. And if one of these three is missing, the other two are incomplete', pp. 144-5.

Car c'est tres bon de faire son devoir,

Si que l'ame s'en puist apparcevoir;

   Mais il n'est dame

Në homs vivant qui aime si sanz blame,

S'il est tapez de l'amoureuse flame,

Qu'il n'aime mieux assez le corps que l'ame.

   Pour quel raison?

Amours vient de charnel affection,

Et si desir et sa condiction

Sont tout enclin a delectation.

   Si ne se puet

Nulz ne nulle garder qui amer voelt

Qu'il n'y ait vice ou pechié; il l'estuet;

Et c'est contraire a l'ame qui s'en duelt (1702-15).[46]


This passage is mostly unproblematic, except for two moments at the beginning and end, which are the most telling with regard to Machaut's overall conception of love. Let us deal with the straightforward points first, which are interesting enough in themselves, constituting as they do an unequivocal statement of the inherent sinfulness of love. Earlier I went into some detail establishing the contrast between the physical, so to speak 'body-centred', love of the knight, and that of the lady, who seemed to have selected a partner more on the basis of his virtue, though it was also

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[46] 'For it is well and good to do one's duty, so that the soul can perceive it, but there is no woman or man alive whose love is so blameless, if he's caught by the amorous flame, who does not love the body much better than the soul. Why is this? Because Love comes from carnal affection, and its desires and essence all incline to pleasure. No man or woman who wishes to love can avoid all sin and impropriety; it cannot be otherwise; and it is contrary to the soul which sorrows over it', pp. 144-7.

said that 'nul meilleur ne nul plus bel ne fu' (1639),[47] so we are in no doubt that physical attraction played its part in her affair too. The dominance of this form of attraction, even in the most virtuous love, is here asserted by Reason, and because love is 'mondain' (1701) and 'charnel' (1709), concerned largely with the 'corps' (1707), 'enclin a delectation' (1711), it *necessarily* involves one in 'vice et pechié' (1714).

Those two earlier lines 'C'est assavoir, / Quant a l'amour, qui est mondain avoir' (1700-1), implicitly distinguish between the kind of love being debated now and a greater kind that is *not* of this world, and this combines with the subsequent reference to sin to direct us, without being too explicit about it, towards something which is still love, but operates on a different plane. With this in mind, we can turn to the two problematic elements in the long passage quoted above. When Reason, before condemning love as earthly and sinful, qualifies what is to come by saying, 'c'est tres bon de faire son devoir, / Si que l'ame s'en puist apparcevoir' (1702-3), she is making a wry comment on Bonne Amour's concern for virtue, though approving of it at the same time. There is something a little faint, even patronising, about the phrase 'tres bon', especially since the 'tres bon' thing is to 'faire son devoir', which in this context means 'do one's duty', or, to put it in the most cynical terms, 'go through the motions of right conduct'.

Going through the motions does seem to be what Reason is advocating here, since she will shortly point out that *all* such love is in essence sinful, so to 'faire son devoir' is the least one can do under the circumstances. One should do so, she says, in order that 'l'ame s'en puist apparcevoir': the soul itself does nothing but stand by and observe, a kind of stern super-ego figure whose potential disapproval one must take into account when conducting an affair; the 'one' here being the physical, carnal part

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[47] 'No better or more handsome knight ever lived', pp. 142-3.

of us that actually *does* all the loving, courting and so on. There is more to love, as Machaut presents it, than Reason is saying in these two lines, but they are absolutely crucial to our understanding of the moral plane on which Machaut's poems operate. As carnal beings afflicted with original sin, we can scarcely refrain from being 'tapez' (1706) – 'stricken' – by Love's arrows, by the desire, as it were, for delectable fruit. The emphasis on virtuous conduct in Machaut's *dits* is intended as a partial remedy for this condition, encouraging us to behave so as to avoid doing *too* much damage to our souls.

The problematic line at the end of the passage is far less easy to unravel. After saying that no one can guard against sinning in love, Reason adds, 'Et c'est contraire a l'ame qui s'en duelt' (1715). Wimsatt and Kibler's translation, 'and it is contrary to the soul which sorrows over it', is too literal to be of much help, although a textual note reveals that one manuscript reads 'a la dame' instead of 'a l'ame'.[48] This alternate reading might be taken as a self-contained statement about the lady's pain, with 'contraire' serving as a noun meaning 'damage' or 'harm', but as such it is still hard to decipher. Either way, since Reason has just been talking about the sin inherent in love, the 'ce' which is 'contraire' to the soul/lady, and because of which it/she 'se duelt', *must* be sin, so the line must be affirming the damage done to the soul by love, which is sinful. Reason's next claim may throw some light on her meaning: 'Et d'autre part, / Tout aussi com l'ame se depart / Du corps, l'amour s'en esloigne et espart' (1716-8).[49] The body disintegrates without the soul, and love disintegrates without the body, each thing taking its place in a hierarchy, with the soul at the top, love at the bottom, and the body in between. It is as if the body were torn between devotion to love and devotion to the soul, with the latter sorrowing over the body's tendency to choose love.

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[48] Wimsatt and Kibler (eds), *Jugement du roy*, p.146n.
[49] 'Furthermore, as soon as the soul leaves the body, love withdraws and sets off', pp. 146-7.

The importance of *choice* in this formulation is significant, for the doctrine being espoused here by Reason echoes a passage in the *Consolatio* where Boethius asks Lady Philosophy whether divine providence leaves man with any freedom of will, or even of thought. She replies that, of course, 'quod ratione uti naturaliter potest id habet iudicium quo quidque discernat' (*Consolatio* V.P2.7-8),[50] but this freedom to judge and choose is stronger in heavenly than in earthly beings. Souls are less free because of their imprisonment in earthly limbs, but 'Extrema vero est servitus, cum vitiis deditae rationis propriae possessione ceciderunt' (V.P2.20-1).[51] Again, we should recall Schultz's claim that courtly lovers are provoked to love, not by their own will or desire, but by external forces over which they have no control; and again, we can see that Schultz was in a sense right about this, because from a Boethian perspective the courtly lover's insistence that they are not responsible for what has happened to them indicates the extent to which they have abandoned reason, and thus enslaved themselves to the unstable, corporeal world.

William Calin's summary of the issue is helpfully balanced: according to Machaut, he argues,

> *fin' amor* is a lovely, ennobling, admirable way of life. But it is also based upon physical desire. Because love is a natural sentiment, derived from Nature, it is good in essence; therefore the physical must not be entirely suppressed. Machaut asks only that in erotic matters people avoid fanatical adherence to exaggerated or false principles.[52]

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[50] 'That which can by its nature use reason has the faculty of judgement, by which it determines everything', pp. 390-1.

[51] 'Their ultimate servitude is when, given over to vice, they have lapsed from the possession of the reason proper to them', pp. 392-3.

[52] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 46.

The 'exaggerated or false principle' Machaut questions here is, as we shall see, the very principle of *loyalty* to one's beloved, a central tenet of *fin' amor* doctrine, and one of the main qualities which supposedly renders this an 'ennobling' way of life. The idea that the physical must not be suppressed because it is a manifestation of Nature recalls the sentiments of Jean de Meun's Nature, quoted earlier: the *Behaigne*-knight's failure to adhere to reason is quite different from that of which Nature had complained, but in both cases the concern is mankind's misguided attitude towards erotic love. In Machaut's poem, the knight's fanatical loyalty to his faithless beloved stems, as we have seen, precisely from the *overly* physical character of his affection. The unspoken connection in the above quotation is between the dominance of sensuality and the adherence to exaggerated and false principles.

Wetherbee, in his discussion of Boethius' influence on medieval poets, talks about the 'ambiguous relation' between nature and humanity, and how on the one hand the universe is 'a paradigm of order and continuity which humanity must seek to comprehend', whereby we 'participate in the divine wisdom and become as gods', while on the other hand 'this cosmic machine is fuelled by an irresistible *amor*, the catalyst of those drives and appetites whereby humanity sustains and perpetuates its existence'.[53] The similarity between this and the passage from Calin should be obvious: the 'paradigm of order and continuity' which makes us 'as gods' is equivalent to the supposedly 'ennobling' *fin' amor* code, while the 'irresistible *amor*' is the physical desire at the heart of this code. The principles of the courtly lover become 'exaggerated and false' when he attempts to find the ennobling 'paradigm of order and continuity' in erotic love (rather than in the divine order of the universe), precisely because such love is fuelled by those instincts which enslave us and seem, as Wetherbee argues, to be irresistible and thus to compromise our reason and free

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[53] Winthrop Wetherbee, 'The *Consolation* and medieval literature', in Marenbon (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Boethius*, pp. 279-302 (284).

will. Machaut's Reason is arguing – and will develop this argument – that mankind should control their 'charnel affection' through reason and virtue, rejecting the oppressive codes of *fin' amor* by asserting their ability to resist these supposedly 'irresistible' instincts.

It is open to debate whether Machaut fully aligns himself with Reason's seemingly authoritative point of view in the *Behaigne*, just as it is open to debate whether Jean de Meun intends us to apply the lessons of Reason to what follows in his continuation of the *Roman de la rose*. What makes this open to debate is the fact that it *is* debated in this poem, and I will now turn to the part of Reason's discourse which proves contentious at the royal court, namely her assessment of the knight's situation. He suffers more, she says, because he 'folement s'est d'amer entremis / Sanz mon conseil' (1725-6),[54] which literally means that he 'put himself in love', conveying the sense that he is inextricably sunk in his condition, but also that he put himself there of his own free will. Much of the rest of Reason's speech is devoted to saying that the knight is 'En grant folie' (1736),[55] 'en peril de l'ame et de la vie' (1739),[56] and maintained 'Avec folour / En ce meschief, en celle fole errour; / Car il en pert le senz et la vigour' (1756-8)[57] through the actions of figures like Love, Beauty, Companionship, Youth and Loyalty. All three of Reason's fellow courtiers are thus indicted in her speech, especially Loyalty:

> Et Loyauté
>
> Si li deffent a faire fausseté;
>
> Mais s'il eüst par mon conseil ouvré,
>
> Quant sa dame ot nuef ami recouvré,

---

[54] 'Foolishly fell in love without my advice', pp. 146-7.
[55] 'In great folly', pp. 146-7.
[56] 'In danger of losing his soul and life', pp. 146-7.
[57] 'With folly in this mistake, this waywardness, for he is losing his strength and mind', pp. 148-9.

> Il n'eüst pas
>
> Continué l'amour; car en tel cas,
>
> Se la dame chante en haut ou en bas,
>
> On doit aler ou le trot ou le pas (1744-51).[58]

The metaphor at the end is interesting, literally meaning that one must alter one's dance according to whether the lady sings high or low. The 'high' and 'low' terms strengthen the parallel with Jean de Meun's Reason, who tries to instruct the lover in how to deal with the alternating peaks and troughs of Fortune, and the metaphor of the dance gives the instruction a nice courtly twist, emphasising the aristocratic nature of this game.

The knight's mistake, then, is to have consulted the wrong advisers, or followed the wrong masters. Had he given the helm to Reason, he would have abandoned Loyalty at the same time his lady did. Since Loyalty is undoubtedly a virtue, as has been affirmed earlier in the poem, are we supposed to see Reason as rather cold-blooded in recommending the abandonment of Loyalty? That is, is Machaut suggesting that Reason, like many other allegorical personifications, has a limited perspective on these matters? It seems to me that a definitively negative answer to this question is provided in what follows: Loyalty herself *agrees* with Reason that the knight would not have sinned had he abandoned his love, for:

> Il doit danser aussi comme elle danse,
>
>   Non pas qu'il face
>
> Chose de quoy il puist perdre ma grace,

---

[58] 'And Loyalty prevented his betraying her; but had he heeded my advice when his lady chose a new lover he would not have continued loving her. For in such a situation, the lady calls the tune and sets the pace', pp. 146-9.

Car s'il la laist, et ailleurs se pourchace,

Je ne tieng pas qu'envers moy se mefface.

    Et si m'accort

Du tout en tout de Raison a l'accort

(Car elle a fait bon et loyal rapport)

Que cils a droit, et ceste dame a tort (1839-47).[59]

We will have to come back to that last line, which seems to present Loyalty's final verdict on the argument between the knight and the lady, rather than a moral judgement of the knight in comparison to his faithless lover. What is clear from this passage is that Loyalty is completely in accord with Reason, since she says this explicitly in lines 1844-5, as well as implying it both through her use of a dancing metaphor similar to Reason's in line 1839, and through her compliment to Reason's 'loyal' judgement. For the knight to be disloyal would be entirely compatible with the principle of loyalty, whereas for him to remain loyal is in a very real sense *dis*loyal, since Loyalty does not approve of it; his enduring love, in short, is no longer virtuous.

In opposition to Reason and Loyalty are Love and Youth, who agree that the knight suffers more than the lady, but insist that it would be wrong for the knight to go back on his promises. Love is introduced as surpassingly 'gracïeux de maniere et de viz' (1787),[60] and in her speech she helps to expose further the physical nature of the sentiment she personifies. The knight, she says, should not despair 'se Plaisance / Qui faire fait mainte estrange muance / Li fait estre de sa dame en doubtance' (1800-

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[59] 'He must dance as she is dancing; this would not be anything that would put him out of my favour, for if he leaves her and pursues another, I don't claim he is wronging me. Thus I agree fully with Reason's decision (for she has given a good and faithful account) that he is right and that lady, wrong', pp. 152-3.
[60] 'Gracious in manner and countenance', pp. 150-1.

2).[61] By 'Plaisance', Love could mean the pleasure the knight takes in seeing and serving his lady, which prevents him from avoiding her company, or she could mean the lady's pleasure in taking a new lover, but either way it is erotic pleasure that is blamed for the 'estrange muance'. It is entirely to Love's satisfaction if this knight has fallen victim to the vicissitudes of sensuality, because this is what love necessarily involves.

Love finishes by complaining that the knight 'n'a mez fiance në espoir / En moy; c'est ce qui plus le fait doloir' (1810-1),[62] but the knight has lost faith in love because he has been betrayed and disillusioned, and Love can only have reinforced this disillusionment when she said that 'en mon service en a encor .c. mil / Qui aiment tuit prez aussi fort com il, / Et si n'en ont la monte d'un fuisil' (1805-7).[63] Love also wheels out the cliché that the knight could never deserve the least reward from such a beautiful lady, but Reason directly confronts this:

> Est ce donc de voz tours
>
> Qu'il amera, sanz avoir nul secours,
>
> Celle qui a donné son cuer aillours?
>
> Et qui vous serft,
>
> Qu'il n'a mie le loyer qu'il desserft?
>
> Certes, folz est qui a servir s'ahert
>
> Sifait meistre, quant son garredon pert (1813-9).[64]

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[61] 'If Pleasure, who is responsible for many a strange vicissitude, makes him unsure of his lady', pp. 150-1.

[62] 'He no longer has faith and hope in me, and this is what causes him the most suffering', pp. 150-1.

[63] 'There are in my service a hundred thousand more who love as deeply as he without a straw to show for it', pp. 150-1.

[64] 'Is he to love according to your ways, with no reciprocity, she who has given her heart to another? And is he who serves you not to have the remuneration he deserves? Indeed, one's a fool who strives to serve such a master, since he loses his reward', pp. 150-1.

Love, like Fortune, is governed by 'tours' or 'turns, tricks', and whoever serves such a master will get no 'secours', which commonly means 'relief' or 'comfort' rather than Wimsatt and Kibler's 'reciprocity'. Nonetheless their translation is accurate, since it *is* the lack of reciprocity Reason points to in the lover's experience, and this is what prompts Loyalty to say the knight would do no wrong if he were disloyal to his lady, on the basis that, as it were, one bad turn deserves another.

Youth, who is inherently 'gaie et plaine de leece' (1849),[65] also sets little store by reciprocity, for she 'n'acompte a don në a promesse, / Fors seulement que son voloir adrece' (1850-1).[66] She vehemently objects to what Reason and Loyalty have said, calling them fools, pointing out that 'on n'est pas amez, / Ne conjoïnz toudis, n'amis clamez' (1870-1),[67] and promising that Love, the lady 'Et moi qui sui encor atout ma flame, / En ceste amour le tenrons; car, par m'ame, / Il le couvient' (1886-8).[68] She adds that, if he does suffer from worse misfortunes than the bereaved lady, 'Fort est assez; bien les porte et soustient' (1891).[69] The allegorical point of all this is fairly clear: the continuation of the knight's love is partly due to his youth, which makes him impetuous and thoughtless, happy to endure a great deal of suffering because he is young and strong enough to do so.

This is how it must necessarily be, because Youth cannot do otherwise, as the good King of Bohemia recognises:

> onques mains pour ce ne l'en prisa,
>
>> Qu'elle faisoit
>
> Tout son devoir de ce qu'elle disoit,

---

[65] 'Cheerful and full of happiness', pp. 152-3.
[66] 'Holds to no pledge or promise unless it be in accord with her desires', pp. 152-3.
[67] 'One is not always loved and welcomed and called "beloved"', pp. 154-5.
[68] 'And I who am still here with all my passion, will hold him to this love; for, by my soul, it cannot be otherwise', pp. 154-5.
[69] 'He's strong enough to bear and endure them well', pp. 154-5.

> Et de son voeil plus chier denree avoit
>
> Que .x. livres de son proffit n'avoit (1895-9).[70]

Youth's persistence in maintaining the knight's affections is to be commended, for it is part of a natural process, and in a poetic sense too Youth has greater value than the more 'profitable' counsellors, as evidenced by the fact that the king 'bonnement ris' (1893)[71] at her lively and endearing speech. Yet the implication remains, in the above passage, that Youth's opinion is not really worth very much in itself, and indeed the king immediately asks her to moderate it, aligning his own view of the matter with that of Reason and Loyalty. The authority figure in this poem effectively contradicts Love and Youth; they are, in a sense, in the wrong. What, then, is their value? Machaut does not specify this, but from what he does say we may conclude that love is a fitting way for young people to occupy their time, but that ultimately it must be seen as a stage in one's development, to be superseded by a more mature understanding of the vanity of such pastimes. This would seem to be the implication of both denying and affirming the validity of Youth's opinion, as the text does at this point.

Ultimately, the king provides his judgement: 'cilz amans est plus loing de confort / Que la dame ne soit, que Dieux confort' (1934-5).[72] The knight gains the prize, so to speak, because he *wants* it more than the lady does. The lady can be comforted by God because she has lived only in accordance with virtue, whereas the knight has wilfully embroiled himself in an affair with a beautiful but faithless woman, failed to consult Reason, developed a distorted perspective on Loyalty, lived in servitude to the false mistress Love, and allowed himself to be governed by the

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[70] 'He did not esteem her any the less for this, because she spoke only as she ought; he placed more value in a pennyworth of her opinion than in ten pounds of profit', pp. 154-5.

[71] 'Laughed heartily', pp. 154-5.

[72] 'This lover is farther from consolation than this lady, whom God consoles', pp. 156-7.

thoughtless, egotistical impulses of Youth. He is 'loing de confort' in the same way Boethius was at the beginning of the *Consolatio*, because he has depended too much on the world and trusted in the gifts of Fortune, rather than seeking out the 'confort' that God provides.

It may be remembered that Loyalty's contribution to the preceding debate was largely concerned to point out that the knight would not be doing anything wrong in abandoning his lady as she had done him, implying that he *was* doing something wrong – something contrary to loyalty – by *persisting* in loving her. Yet Loyalty ended her speech by saying, 'cilz a droit, et ceste dame a tort' (1847), showing that in this case, the one who is most in the wrong is judged to be right, for he suffers more from the sin which troubles his soul than the lady does from the misfortune which has arbitrarily been visited upon her. Loyalty recommends disloyalty as the most virtuous option, and then declares that the less virtuous of the two disputants 'a droit', while the more virtuous 'a tort'. This is, after all, a love debate, and arguably what the knight and lady are really arguing over is which of them should be judged the best lover, on the assumption that the one who suffers more does so because they are more in love. One effect of diverting the argument to the subject of whether or not the knight *should* go on loving is to suggest a deeper moral dimension to this question: Machaut is saying that, since the knight will go on loving, he is technically the better lover and will suffer more; but at the same time, Machaut shows us that what the knight really exemplifies is a sinful dependence on earthly things, and that to be the better lover in this case means to be further from God.

None of the courtiers has objected to Reason's verdict on the case, but the king announces 'sa sentence / Dont par Raison fu faite l'ordennance' (1957-8).[73] In specifying that the king agrees with Reason, rather than with *all* his advisors,

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[73] 'His decision as Reason had prescribed it', pp. 158-9.

Machaut implies once again that the king sides with Reason on the question of whether or not the knight should go on loving, suggesting that, in a sense, the verdict applies to both the central debate (the knight does suffer more, on which there is unanimous agreement) and the sub-debate (Reason is correct, he should cease being a lover). The disputants' reaction is also very revealing:

> Li chevaliers illuec en sa presence
>
> L'en mercia,
>
> Et en pensant, la dame s'oublia
>
> Si durement que nul mot dit n'y a.
>
> Mais nonpourquant en la fin ottroia
>
> Qu'elle tenoit
>
> Le jugement que li roys fait avoit;
>
> Car si sages et si loyaux estoit
>
> Qu'envers nulluy fors raison ne feroit (1959-67).[74]

The knight seems happy to have been judged the more miserable, while the lady, who supposedly suffers less, seems mortified. Wimsatt and Kibler's translation renders 'pensant' as 'melancholy', which is an obvious possible meaning, but it could also mean that the lady is thinking very hard about the king's verdict, as we ourselves are being encouraged to do. Importantly, however, although her initial reaction seems to be one of sadness, she then immediately finds consolation in the thought that this verdict has been prescribed by Reason, proving through her reaction that the verdict

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[74] 'The knight in his presence rose and thanked him, while the lady became so deeply lost in her melancholy that she didn't say a word. Nonetheless, in the end she consented to respect the judgement handed down by the king, for he was so wise and true that he never treated anyone unreasonably', pp. 158-9.

is correct, and implying that the knight's initial happiness at his victory will also be succeeded by the contrary sentiment.

My conclusion here might seem off the mark in its 'anti-love' orientation, given the poem's decidedly 'pro-love' ending. In the final section of this chapter, I will try to determine the impact of this brief epilogue, in which the author-narrator, effectively absent since the beginning of the poem, focuses once more on his own condition as a lover.

*Machaut's Epilogue*

The narrator reveals that he who wants to discover the author's name will find it amid the letters of the poem's final verse, but whoever does find his name 'ja pour ce mieulz ne m'en prisera' (2066).[75] This is presumably a show of humility on Machaut's part, just to make it clear that he is not inscribing his name in the poem out of vanity, and that he acknowledges his poor abilities as a love poet, or perhaps just the minimal renown he enjoys at this early stage in his career. This reading makes sense of the following line, which leads into the poem's ending. I quote the last two sentences in full:

> Et nonpourquant ja pour ce ne sera
>
> > Que je ne soie
>
> Loyaus amis, jolis, et plains de joie;
>
> Car se rien plus en ce monde n'avoie
>
> Fors ce que j'aim ma dame simple et coie
>
> > Contre son gré,

---

[75] 'Will not think more of me because of this', pp. 164-5.

Si ai je assez, qu'Amours m'a honnouré

Et richement mon mal guerredonné,

Quant a ma dame ainsi mon cuer donné

   Ai a tous jours.

Et ce mon cuer conforte en ses dolours

Que, quant premiers senti les maulz d'Amours,

A gentil mal cuidë humble secours (2067-79).[76]


The 'ce' in the first line quoted, in despite of which Machaut says he will continue to love, must be his lack of ability or renown as a poet: he has just told us where to find the author's signature, highlighting both the *dit*'s status as a literary fabrication and his own literary ambition, but then admitted that his name is not very well known; after this moment of humility he boasts that he will keep trying nonetheless. What he *says* is that he will go on being a lover, but the preceding lines would lead us to think that he is speaking more of his vocation as a love *poet*. For Machaut, throughout his œuvre, being a lover means writing love poetry, in order to do which, as he would later write in his *Prologue*, one must be of a cheerful disposition, hence the promise here to be 'jolis, et plains de joie'. This phrase invites comparison between the narrator and Youth, and indeed his reference to the time 'quant premiers senti les maulz d'Amours' suggests very strongly that he is writing of a time when he was a young man, as he will do again in the *Remede de Fortune*.

    Such is implied also by his allusion to his own fledgling literary reputation a few lines earlier, and by the similarity between his cheerful attitude in the face of an

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[76] 'Despite this I'll not be any less a faithful, happy, joy-filled lover, for had I nothing in this world more than the fact that I love my innocent and lovely lady against her inclination, yet do I have enough, for Love has honoured me and richly rewarded my pain, since thus I've given my heart to my lady forever. And this consoles my heart in its tribulations that, when first I felt Love's sorrows, I hoped for humble relief for my sweet sorrow', pp. 164-5.

uncaring beloved and that of Youth, who had argued that the knight should adopt this very attitude so that 'chascun le clamera / Martyr d'Amours, et honneur li fera' (1918-9).[77] The narrator too claims that Love has honoured him greatly by allowing him to give – to sacrifice, as it were – his heart to the lady who does not return his affection. He says that even if he has nothing else 'en ce monde' (2070), still 'ai je assez' (2073): the second phrase suggests contentment and even, perhaps, the self-sufficiency that lovers are meant to seek, yet 'en ce monde' indicates the earthly nature of his joy, and makes the subsequent claim to be satisfied with this seem more like evidence of his limited understanding than anything else. When he says what 'conforte' his heart in its 'doulours' (2077), he reveals that his experience of love is not an entirely joyful one, but includes its fair share of sorrow; and what comforts him is a hope he conceived when he *first* felt the 'maulz d'Amours' (2078), implying that he may come to lose this hope at a later stage.

Indeed this reference to the beginning of his affair seems intended as an explanation of *why* he embarked on it at all, the reason being that he 'cuidë', believed or hoped, to get 'humble secours' for his 'gentil mal' (2079). 'Cuidë' certainly suggests a belief, hope or opinion, rather than a certain knowledge, and to say that he *began* the affair in the hope of receiving comfort for his pain means that he has not yet received this comfort; it also means there is a possibility that he will never receive it, perhaps a strong one given that he loves the lady 'Contre son gré' (2072); and it means that, since his comfort depends on this memory of his initial hope for comfort, then if he does not receive the 'secours' on which he has made himself dependent he will necessarily fall into despair. 'Secours', of course, is the word Reason used earlier to protest against the suggestion that the knight should go on loving 'sanz avoir nul secours' (1814): it is the reciprocity the knight had looked for, found, and then lost,

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[77] 'Everyone will call him "Love's Martyr" and it will be to his honour', pp. 156-7.

and Machaut's re-use of the term at the end of the poem may suggest that his lover-narrator is still at that early stage before the 'espoir' of 'secours' has become the 'desespoir' of his 'desir' ever being reciprocated.

Brownlee observes that the narrator is 'content, unlike the chevalier, with the condition of loving and nothing more', and that this represents 'a final distancing of the poet-narrator from his protagonist and of the poète from his matière, which is given a literary (rather than an "experiential") cast'.[78] As I have been suggesting, however, we may see the narrator's contentment as being a *symptom* of his lack of experience, and of the rarefied, literary mode in which his youthful love currently operates. If this does imply a gap between him and the knight, it may also foreshadow a 'closing' of this gap, and indeed some of Machaut's later poems will see his narrator's contentment overturned by bitter experience. In his discussion of the earlier part of the poem, Calin argues, as I have, that Machaut is modifying his 'ultra-orthodox exaltation of *Loiauté* in the *Dit du vergier*' and suggesting that 'everyday experience and the world of books are quite different entities. Lovers should maintain freedom of action and not, as in the romances, be slaves of passion unto death'.[79] With reference to the narrator's apparently happy state of enslavement to a woman who has yet to give him 'secours', we might build on Calin's remarks and posit that Machaut figures his narrator as a representative love-poet, immersed in the 'passion unto death' mentality of romance and blind to the implications of the story he has just told. When, at the end of the poem, the narrator reasserts his willingness to go on suffering for his unresponsive lady, the highly critical appraisal – by Reason and Loyalty, but significantly *not* by the narrator himself – of this same tendency in the knight may throw an ironic light on this cheerful declaration.

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[78] Brownlee, *Poetic Identity*, p. 171.
[79] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 43.

Paul Imbs, reading the narrator's contentment ironically, goes as far as to say that the narrator of the *Behaigne* 'a connu l'amour, mais ç'a été un échec...Prenant conscience de sa vocation de moraliste qui à la fois observe et enseigne, il va élever son cas personnel en problème universel: comment se comporter lorsque l'amour n'est pas réciproque ou cesse de l'être'.[80] This is quite a subtle reading of the poem's psychology, suggesting that the whole episode supposedly witnessed by the narrator is in fact a projection of his *own* failures in love. Although I agree that Machaut is engaging with the problems that arise when love ends or otherwise turns sour, I think the narrator's ignorance, innocence and detachment from the debate he describes are crucial to the poem's didactic effect. I have already argued that his apparent happiness implies something about the necessarily limited, biased and inexperienced perspective of the love poet – that is, of the poet who *celebrates* love, as Machaut was commanded to do in the *Prologue*. Imbs' reference to the poet's 'vocation de moraliste' introduces another layer of complexity to this self-portrait, since it alludes to Machaut's status as a 'clerk'.

The earliest examples of love debate poems – such as the *Altercatio Phyllidis et Florae* and the *Concile de Remiremont* – centred on the topic of whether clerks or knights make the best lovers. Earlier I suggested that all *jeux-partis* are about the conflict between idealism and pragmatism, and this conflict is, in a sense, embodied by the opposition of clerk and knight. On the clerk's side are wisdom and virtue; on the knight's are status and riches. As Wetherbee comments, *courtoisie* 'was an intellectual as well as a social ideal, and was treated with widely varying degrees of seriousness as the true property of the learned cleric in the Latin poetry of the

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[80] Imbs, *Le* Voir-Dit, p. 110. 'Has experienced love, but it has been a failure...Aware of his vocation as a moralist, whose job is both to observe and to teach, he will elevate his personal case into a universal problem: how to behave when love is not reciprocated or ceases to be reciprocated.'

period'.[81] Referring to vernacular French poetry, Huot cites the familiar argument that clerks are truly noble because they 'have transmitted the cultural values of courtliness...through their role in the literary tradition',[82] and indeed this is more or less the argument put forward by Nature in the *Rose*, when she says that the clerk 'voit en escripture / ... / Touz maus dont l'en se doit retraire / et touz les biens que l'en puet faire' (*Rose* 18644-8).[83] The clerk's learning not only authorises him as a participant in the 'refined' activities of the ruling classes, it also indicates his privileged capacity for both good and evil conduct.

Minnis refers to the idea that clerks were, from the woman's point of view, the most dangerous of lovers, because of their learning and subtlety';[84] these are fears about the clerk's moral authority, meaning in this context his power to tempt one into sin. The clerk's proper domain is a learned one concerned with issues of right and wrong. Palmer reads the *Behaigne* as being about the uncertainty of 'the position of a clerk assigned by literary tradition the lyric "I" but prevented from unproblematically assuming that assignment by the social necessities of his role as servant to the court'; the drama of love in the *Behaigne* is conceived 'in a rather clerkly fashion, as an issue, or rather series of issues, to be debated to a conclusion'.[85] What I have tried to signal in this chapter is the specifically moral character of these issues, and given Machaut's quasi-outsider status in the *Behaigne*, it is perhaps significant that his poem focuses on a knight – a fitting protagonist in a way that the clerkly narrator would not be – but uses the knight's story to facilitate an exploration of the morally problematic aspects of love.

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[81] Wetherbee, *Platonism and Poetry*, p. 225.
[82] Huot, *From Song to Book*, p. 63.
[83] 'Finds in books all the evils we should avoid and all the good we can do' (Strubel, p. 1070-2; Horgan, p. 287).
[84] Minnis, *Magister Amoris*, p. 191.
[85] Palmer, 'Metafictional Machaut', p. 30.

He figures himself as a mere humble servant in this courtly game, unable to participate fully yet content with his lot, but in the course of the poem we come to realise that this clerkly detachment is what has prevented the narrator from discovering the unhappy truth about love, as the knight has done. His social status relegates the narrator to the position of observer, and what he observes is, according to my reading, the moral corruption of the game his superiors are playing. This fleeting manifestation of social insecurity will shed yet further light on Machaut's critique of love in the *Remede de Fortune*, where another version of this clerkly narrator decides to try his hand at love, and discovers its vicissitudes for himself. In the *Behaigne*, there is a delicate – and diplomatic – mixture of self-abasing deference to and moralising assessment of what we might term 'the loving class', as well as a subtle message about the interdependence of the love poet's inexperience and his cheerful celebration of love.

This final intrusion of the narrator foreshadows the increasingly prominent role to be played by the author-persona in subsequent works, and it is clear from the extensive speech made by the betrayed knight that Machaut is beginning to learn the value of the first-person account as a method for exploring the issues that fascinate him. While the *Prologue* and *Vergier* seem, at least superficially, to be thoroughly ensconced in the courtly conventions they celebrate, the *Jugement Behaigne*, not unlike the *Confort d'ami*, leans more heavily towards austere moralism. In the *Remede de Fortune*, Machaut combines joyful lyricism with a moral and philosophical subtlety, delivering both an empathic description of the lover's experience and a searching critique of his dependence on worldly things. The latter aspect of Machaut's work is most readily visible in the *Jugement Behaigne*: now that we have seen this critique of love in its least 'veiled' state, it should be easier to discern its presence in the later, subtler *Remede*.

# Chapter 4

# Practising the Art in the *Remede de Fortune*

*Introduction and Overview*

The *Confort d'ami* addresses a distant patron who is distanced from his lover; in the *Prologue* and the *Dit du vergier*, love is considered as a theory or doctrine, experienced only in a hypothetical narrative; the *Jugement Behaigne* is concerned with the aftermath of two affairs that have already been played out to their conclusion. In the *Remede de Fortune* we see, for the first time, a protagonist who actually embarks upon a love affair, and indeed on the level of narrative the *Remede*'s central theme is the anxiety which accompanies a lover's first steps into the practice of his art. Near the start of my discussion of the *Jugement Behaigne*, I commented that it was no longer necessary to 'infer' the negative implications of Machaut's doctrine of love, since in that poem the implications had become a reality. Although the *Remede*'s take on the subject is nothing like as overtly pessimistic, it represents an even more potent 'dramatisation' of the ambiguities inherent to *fin' amor*, because its narrator is no longer a detached observer with a thinly-sketched and not especially active love affair of his own. This insecure, slightly inept character is now the centre of attention.

Froissart, in the *Joli Buisson de Jonece*, distances himself from his lover-protagonist by figuring the latter's exploits as a dream vision of his own distant youth. When the middle-aged narrator claims to be too old to write more love poetry, Philosophy orders him to say to himself, 'je m'acors / A estre jolis et chantans / Et

penser a mon jone temps, / Comment que la saison m'eslonge' (*Joli Buisson* 520-3).[1]

His younger self, within the dream, rejects the attempt (by Jonece) to give him a lesson in astronomy, explaining that 'Espoir, uns temps encor venra / Que plus penser m'i couvenra, / ...Car leurs saisons ont toutes coses' (1732-5),[2] but for now, 'je ne me voel arrester / A cose de si grant raison; / Je perderoie ma saison' (1747-9).[3] I will come back to this imperative to fulfil the requirements of one's 'season', which is a major concern of Machaut's poem. In the *Joli Buisson*, it is clear that the *author*'s detached perspective casts a gently ironic light over the *protagonist*'s love story, and over the love lyrics composed within the dream (as opposed to the religious lyric composed at the end by the waking, middle-aged narrator).

Although the *Remede de Fortune* may not seem as ironic, Machaut's treatment of his lover-poet-narrator is similarly detached. Catherine Attwood suggests that 'the dichotomous nature of the 'I' of later medieval lyrics...clearly distinguishes it from the more unified first-person speaker of the troubadours';[4] whereas for the earlier lyricists, 'verbal dexterity ensures the perfect accord of expression and sentiment', Machaut and his contemporaries placed more value in the 'ability to demonstrate detachment from the chosen subject-matter'.[5] I will not be studying all of the *Remede*-narrator's lyrics in detail, but one of the main contentions of this chapter is that this fictional poet comes to embody many of the limitations which, I have argued, shape and bias the love-poet's point of view. The sequence of lyrics in the *Remede*, and the way they interact with the surrounding narrative, amount to a

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[1] Jean Froissart, *Le Joli Buisson de Jonece*, ed. by Anthime Fourrier (Geneva: Droz, 1975), pp. 64-5. 'I agree to sing and be joyful, and to think of my younger days, however much the present season distances me from them.'

[2] Froissart, *Joli Buisson*, p. 106. 'Perhaps another time will come when it will suit me to think about this, for each thing has its season.'

[3] Froissart, *Joli Buisson*, p. 107. 'I do not want to be detained by such learned matters; I would lose my season.'

[4] Catherine Attwood, *Dynamic Dichotomy: The Poetic 'I' in Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century French Lyric Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodopoi, 1998), p. 8.

[5] Attwood, *Dynamic Dichotomy*, p. 9.

critique of the lyricist's art, and one which serves as a remedy, not only for Fortune, but also – by implication – for love and love poetry as well.

Kevin Brownlee has said that although the *Remede* presents itself as a poem about love, it is really about poetry, 'and it is only in the context of such a reading that the full significance of the didactic orientation of the Prologue [here referring to the opening lines of the *Remede*] becomes evident…just as the narrator-protagonist fails as lover but succeeds as poet, so the *Remede* fails as an ars amandi but succeeds as an ars poetica'.[6] No doubt the poem *is*, to a great extent, a mixture of both these things, but it is as much concerned with the failure of poetry as it is with the failure of love. Neither of these two discourses emerges uncompromised at the end of the poem, leaving us, I think, with a sense that Machaut's perspective encompasses more than is immediately apparent, and that his didacticism runs deeper than Brownlee's formulation would suggest.

The extent to which the *Remede* is a poem *about* education can be gauged from the fact that it is possible to summarise its narrative with reference only to the *lessons* received or dispensed by the protagonist. He begins, 'Cilz qui veult aucun art aprendre' (*Remede de Fortune* 1),[7] and for the next forty-three lines explains his theory about what sort of attitude one must adopt in order to learn 'Armes, amours, autre art, ou lettre' (40).[8] He embarks on his love affair as though embarking on a course of study, saying 'avoie bien mestier d'aprendre, / Quant tel fait vouloie entreprendre' (93-4),[9] with the beloved lady herself unwittingly taking on the role of his instructor: 'M'estoit mireoir et examplaire / De tous biens desirer et faire' (171-

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[6] Brownlee, *Poetic Identity*, p. 63

[7] 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). All line and page references to the *Remede de Fortune* refer to this edition, and all translations are Wimsatt and Kibler's, with occasional small alterations. For this primary text, page references will *follow*, rather than precede, the translations in the footnotes. 'He who wishes to learn any skill', pp. 168-9.

[8] 'Arms, love, other art or letter', pp. 170-1.

[9] 'I had much to learn if I wished to embark upon such a course', pp. 172-3.

2);[10] her conduct and her demeanour, says the narrator, 'com l'enfant le mestre / Aprent, m'aprenoient a estre' (202).[11]

His own feelings, meanwhile, instruct him in the art of writing love poetry. Since these feelings were not 'Tousdis en un point', he says, 'm'estudie / Mis en faire chansons et lays' (402-3)[12] and other types of song 'selonc mon sentement' (405).[13] These lyrics themselves often adopt a didactic tone. The first song, a *lai*, begins by declaring sententiously that one would be wrong to seek any pleasure in love 'Fors Doulz Penser / Et Souvenir / Aveuc l'Espoir de joïr' (433-5);[14] but having discovered his own inability to declare his love to the lady in person, the narrator says, 'pas n'avoie bien apris / Tous ses tours, quant l'amer empris' (867-8).[15] This hard lesson about the crippling pain of love prompts him to deliver a long *complainte* against Love and Fortune, in which he warns the reader not to trust in the latter's goods, for 'tu es trop foulz se tu tiens / Qu'il en y ait nul qui soit tiens' (1118-9).[16]

Hope then appears in order to remind the lover of the importance of self-sufficiency and virtuous conduct in love, asserting in her *chant roial* that, should any lover feel that Love is treating him harshly, 'Je ne puis ymaginer / Qu'il aiment sans decevance' (2016-7).[17] Jody Enders notes that Hope is 'obsessed with memory throughout her communication with the lover',[18] and in her *balladelle*, which the narrator memorises on the spot, Hope also sings of the need for understanding and knowledge, for 'En amer a douce vie / Et jolie, / Qui bien la scet maintenir' (2857-

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[10] 'She was my mirror and exemplar for desiring and doing all that is good', pp. 176-7.
[11] 'Taught me, as the master teaches the child, how to be', pp. 178-9.
[12] 'Always the same, I learned to compose chansons and lais', pp. 188-9.
[13] 'According to my feelings', pp. 188-9.
[14] 'Besides Sweet Thought and Memory, with the Hope of joy', pp. 190-1.
[15] 'I had not learned all Love's ways when I began to love her', pp. 216-7.
[16] 'You're a real fool if you believe that there's anything which is yours', pp. 230-1.
[17] 'I cannot conceive that they love without deceit', pp. 278-9.
[18] Jody Enders, 'Music, Delivery, and the Rhetoric of Memory in Guillaume de Machaut's *Remede de Fortune*', *PMLA*, 107 (1992), 450-64 (p.454).

9).[19] These principles, like most of Hope's lessons, originate in Boethius, and like the latter's allegorical tutor, Hope provides the narrator with a remedial course in self-sufficient philosophy, as well as acting as his 'phisicienne' (2175),[20] healing his wounds and teaching him how to heal them himself from now on.

In his subsequent *ballade* and *priere*, the narrator consolidates and affirms the confidence he has drawn from Hope, and goes to his lady, to whom he can now communicate his feelings with articulacy and elegance, as he does in private conversation, and then in an energetic *chanson balladee* and a serene *rondelet*. At the lady's extremely cultured and well-stocked household, the lover has abundant opportunities to learn about various courtly pursuits. Though unskilled in jousting and tourneying, he insists, 'il failloit que j'aprenisse, / Car qui n'aprent en sa jonnesse, / Il s'en repent en sa viellesse' (4130-2),[21] returning to a principle he had expounded at the start of the poem. Finally, when his despair is renewed by his lady's apparent standoffishness, the narrator learns from her that 'qui en amour ne scet faindre, / Il ne puet a grant joye ataindre' (4201-2)[22] – his final love lesson in the poem. Strictly speaking, we might include in this catalogue of educative passages Machaut's pedantically drawn-out instructions as to how we can decipher the anagram with which the poem concludes: 'cilz qui savoir le vourra / De legier savoir le porra' (4263-4),[23] he says, faintly echoing the wording of the poem's very first line.

To appreciate what makes the *Remede de Fortune* effective, we must experience it from moment to moment, as the narrator does, empathising with him and sharing his point of view at each stage of the affair. This chapter will explore the poem on a very detailed level, but like all of Machaut's narrative *dits* – and perhaps

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[19] 'To be in love is a sweet and happy life, if one knows how to live it', pp. 326-7.
[20] 'Physician', pp. 286-7.
[21] 'I needed to learn, for he who doesn't learn in his youth regrets it in his old age', pp. 400-1.
[22] 'A lover who does not know how to feign cannot attain great joy', pp. 404-5.
[23] 'He who wishes to know it can easily discover it', pp. 406-9.

more so than the others I have discussed so far – the *Remede* must also be looked at from a distance if its intent is to be understood, hence the preceding summary of its plot. The *Consolatio* traces a straight-line progression from a state of ignorance to one of knowledge. Boethius, like Dante in the *Commedia*, advances, slowly but surely, along successively higher planes of wisdom, until he is as close as a mortal man can be to perceiving the world 'in the round', as it were, from the mountain-top perspective of God himself. What should be apparent from the preceding summary of the *Remede*'s plot is that the process of education it depicts, however Boethian its content may sometimes be, is essentially different from that depicted in the *Consolatio*.

Machaut's narrator keeps learning new things, but each lesson contradicts, rather than merely superseding, the last one: his state of 'oyseuse' (48)[24] at the beginning is changed to one of diligent study when he falls in love, and he affirms that he can subsist on Sweet Thought, Memory and Hope; but then he finds that he cannot, and that he requires some form of reciprocal emotion from the lady herself; his wholly positive conception of love is reversed into a wholly negative one, until Hope arrives to reverse this point of view once again; left momentarily alone, the narrator *again* becomes paralysed and 'estahis' (3062)[25] by fear, and needs rescuing, again, by Hope; his positive attitude then dominates until the lady's feelings for him are once more called into doubt, and he again falls into a (by his own account) near-fatal despair ('je fu pres de morir, certes' (4150));[26] he is helped up again, not by Hope, who appears no more in the poem, but by the lady, who corrects his interpretation of her standoffishness; and at the end of the poem he comments that he subsequently had to endure:

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[24] 'Idleness', pp. 170-1.
[25] 'Dumbstruck', pp. 338-9.
[26] 'I was certainly about to die', pp. 400-1.

> mainte paour,
>
> Maint dur assaut, et maint estour,
>
> Maint dolour, mainte morsure,
>
> Et mainte soudaine pointure,
>
> Maint grief souspir, mainte haschie,
>
> Et mainte grant merencolie (4221-6).[27]

The cycle, in other words, will continue to repeat itself indefinitely. This student at the school of love travels upon a wheel rather than along a straight line, as one emotional state is replaced by its opposite, and vice versa, over and over again, with no end point in sight.

In the five sections of this chapter, I will look at the most important stages in the narrator's journey: first, his solitary education prior to the composition of his first lyric; then his *lai* and *complainte*, the two most important lyrics in the *Remede*; then his encounter with Hope; and finally, his exploits at the lady's court. In the first section I will show how the lover advances some universally valid educative principles, and how Machaut implies that these principles may become problematic in the context of a love affair. In the second section, I will show how these problems come to the fore in the composition and recitation of the *lai*, and are then dissected at length in the *complainte*. Hope will be dealt with in two sections: the first looks at her encouragement of the lover, and explores the implications of her pronouncements on the need for sincerity and spontaneity in love; the second analyses her comparison of Love and Fortune, and the way in which her statements about temporality implicitly throw Hope's own limitations into relief. The final section will focus on the sudden

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[27] 'Many fears, many harsh assaults and many attacks, many sorrows, many biting torments and many sudden pangs, many sorrowful sighs, much anguish, and much deep melancholy', pp. 404-7.

downturn in the lover's fortunes, and the pessimistic vision of love Machaut seems to present us with at the end of the poem.

*Learning the Art*

Youth, as presented in the *Jugement Behaigne*, was seen as a force of nature, lacking in judgement and wisdom, but nonetheless commendable insofar as it is an inevitable (and therefore natural) stage of life. In that poem, the allegorical figure's unrelenting championing of love, the fact that her viewpoint was allied with that of her fellow courtier, Love, and the two lovers' accounts of having embarked on love affairs in their youth, implied a kind of interdependence between these two ideas. Love, like youth, is an inevitable and natural fact of human existence, and therefore must not be dismissed or condemned outright; at the same time, both youth and love impose potentially crippling limitations on us, and must finally be overruled by the dictates of reason and virtue (if the figure of Loyalty may be taken to stand for this latter concept).

The beginning of the *Remede de Fortune* sees Machaut foregrounding and exploring more deeply the idea of love as an 'art' dictated by nature, and undertaken during youth. The first forty-four lines, which outline the necessary characteristics of 'Cilz qui veult aucun art aprendre' (1),[28] are divided into two equal halves, the first emphasising the importance of choosing an art for which one has a genuine (that is, natural) enthusiasm, the second emphasising the importance of beginning a course of study while young. At no point does Machaut specify which 'art' he is referring to, nor does the poem's title – *Remede de Fortune* – give any clue as to the amorous subject matter, indeed it rather seems to denote a moral or philosophical orientation.

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[28] 'He who wishes to learn any skill', pp. 168-9.

Attwood, expanding on her remarks about the 'detachment' of late medieval love poets from their own subject matter, suggests that 'the love which is to be celebrated has by this time been transcended by the poetry which celebrates it...in the later period it became increasingly possible to present the celebration of love in poetry as a matter of personal choice or literary convenience'.[29] Machaut's point in the *Remede* is somewhat more serious, I think. His narrator's opening didactic generalisations invite us to regard love as being, fundamentally, a learning process, and also to consider that it is just one of many 'professions' one could potentially commit to.

Here, in the second half of this passage, is what Machaut says about the necessity of beginning study during youth: 'Et l'entreprengne en joene aage, / Ains qu'en malice son courage / Mue par trop grant cognoissance' (23-5).[30] The point of these lines is, I think, that one should nurture one's understanding when young in order to *stave off* the corruption that might come with age, to prevent one's 'courage' being formed 'en malice'. However, this could also be read as a comment on the 'malice' that *inevitably* hardens in us as we attain greater 'cognoissance', and the last line quoted literally seems to be saying that learning too much – or, perhaps, learning the wrong things – can damage a person. It certainly implies that the initial stages in one's education are more innocent than the later ones, sketching a sort of moral learning curve which corresponds, in some respects, to that which the narrator follows in this poem.

The 'droit estat d'innocence', Machaut goes on, 'Ressamble proprement la table / Blanche' (26-7)[31] or 'la cire / Qui sueffre dedens li escrire' (31-2).[32] This emphasis on the malleability of the young mind suggests not only the ease with which

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[29] Attwood, *Dynamic Dichotomy*, p. 39.
[30] 'And he should undertake it at an early age, before his heart turns to wickedness through too much experience', pp. 168-9.
[31] 'The true state of innocence is like the white tablet', pp. 168-9.
[32] 'Wax that can be written upon', pp. 168-9.

youth can receive lessons, but also the danger that certain kinds of 'cognoissance' might shape its 'innocence' into 'malice'. The wax 'suffers' things to be written on it: it has no agency in the matter, but simply receives an impression. At the same time, it must be remembered, the heart will only receive the impression well if, like wax, it is warm; that is, warmed by a genuine desire to learn. Youth must follow its natural desires, but is also suggestible. It is both a free agent and a slave to tendencies imposed on it from without.

Once the love story proper is underway, and Machaut is describing the improving effects his lady had upon him in his youth, it becomes clear that she really is a paragon of virtue, unlike the knight's faithless lover in the *Behaigne*. The narrator sincerely, albeit naively, describes the moral benefits he has gained from loving this woman. From what he says, it is clear that this lover is as much in love with his lady's virtue as he is with her beauty, her laugh, and her sweet glances, as the description of her virtues – beginning with her 'humilité parfaite' (179)[33] – amply demonstrates. If some of these virtues, such as her 'Maintieng, maniere, et contenance' (204)[34] or her 'gracieuse parole' (217)[35] seem superficial, they are bolstered by uncomplicatedly improving lessons such as 'c'est chose moult honourable / D'estre en son parler veritable, / Et Verité ne quiert nulz angles' (235-7),[36] or 'cilz a l'onnour qui le fait, / Non pas cilz a qui on la fait' (243-4),[37] which promote inner, unseen virtue, rather than the outward show thereof. Machaut alludes to the so-called 'Golden Rule'[38] in the lines, 'nulz ne doit dire d'autrui / Ce qu'il ne veult oïr de lui' (229-30),[39] and follows this up with an explicit reference to a maxim,

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[33] 'Perfect humility', pp. 176-7.
[34] 'Comportment, manner and bearing', pp. 178-9.
[35] 'Gracious way of speaking', pp. 178-9.
[36] 'It's a very honourable thing to be truthful in speaking, and Truth seeks no angles', pp. 180-1.
[37] 'He has honour who acts honourably, not he to whom honour is paid', pp. 180-1.
[38] Matthew 7:12. Fleming, *Reason and the Lover*, p.16, finds a similar allusion in the *Rose* (5421-22, Lecoy edition; 5447-8, Strubel edition).
[39] 'One should never say of another what he does not want to hear about himself', pp. 180-1.

found in 'l'Evangille' (245),[40] that 'Humiliez est qui s'essausse, / Et qui s'umilie essauciés' (246-7).[41] As well as exemplifying such explicitly Christian precepts, the lady avoids both avarice and prodigality and, through her good influence on the narrator, ensures that 'en moy fer ne fust / Du dart d'avarice ne fust, / Qui tout autre bien fait perir' (273-5).[42]

As the narrator's love for his lady increases day by day, her beauty:

> m'aprenoit, par sa puissance,
>
> A congnoistre Douce Esperance
>
> Et a desirer la merci
>
> D'Amours, dont moult la remerci.
>
> Car certes, je ne congnoissoie
>
> Espoir ne Desir, quant en voie
>
> Me mist sa beauté du congnoistre,
>
> Pour m'amour et ma joie acroistre,
>
> Qu'Amours croist Desir et enorte,
>
> Et Esperance Joie apporte (307-16).[43]

While we read of all these lessons the lady is 'teaching' her admirer, we must bear in mind that, as the narrator says later on, 'de tout ce riens ne savoit, / Ne comment elle pris m'avoit' (361-2);[44] she remains unaware of the improving effect she has upon him. The lesson described in lines 307-16 is an effect of the 'puissance' of the lady's

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[40] 'The Gospel', pp. 180-1.
[41] 'He who exalts himself is humbled, and he who humbles himself is exalted', pp. 180-1.
[42] 'The head and shaft of the dart of avarice were not in me, which causes every other good to perish', pp. 182-3.
[43] 'Taught me, by its power, to know Sweet Hope and to desire Love's mercy, for which I thank her profoundly. For indeed I did not know Hope or Desire when her beauty put me on the path to meet them, in order to increase my love and my joy, for Love increases and prompts Desire, and Joy brings Hope', pp. 184-5.
[44] 'She knew nothing of any of this, nor of how she'd captured me', pp. 186-7.

beauty. It teaches the lover to 'congnoistre', or 'become aware of', hope, but Machaut does not explain how or why, and we must conclude that this lover sees his lady's beauty – both physical and moral – as constituting a promise that she will be merciful towards him in granting his desires.

Such is the case for Thibaut de Champagne, who tells his beloved, 'Les vos biautez et vostre fin senblant / me font avoir une bone esperance; / et si ne sai se je ai folié, / que mult redout de vous fausse senblance' ('Je ne puis pas bien metre en nonchaloir' 19-22).[45] Machaut's lover is not overtly conscious of this danger, but in essence his later fears over whether the lady will pity him *do* amount to a concern that her piteous 'senblant' might be false. Hope prompts him to 'desirer la merci d'Amours, dont moult la remerci': it is such hope which, according to him, assuages his desire, yet as he clearly says here the desire is for reciprocation of his feelings, the rhyming of 'merci' and 'remerci' cementing our impression of this exchange between the lover's service and desire, the object of that desire – the lady's (or Love's) mercy – and the lover's gratitude, which the 'dont' figures as being dependent on the receipt of 'merci'.

The picture of love as essentially unstable and ambiguous, also familiar from the other poems, is rehearsed at this point in the *Remede*. After a few lines of the usual 'Une heure doucez, l'autre sures' (388),[46] the narrator concludes:

> cuers qui sent d'Amours le point
>
> N'est mie tousdis en .i. point,
>
> N'asseür de joie ou de paine;
>
> Ainçoys couvient qu'il se demainne

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[45] Thibaut, *Lyrics*, pp. 18-9. 'Your beauty and your fair manner make me have good hope; and yet I know not whether I have committed great folly, for greatly do I fear false seeming in you.'

[46] 'At one moment sweet, at another bitter', pp. 188-9.

> Selonc la fortune d'Amours (391-5).[47]

The lady's virtue might lead us to think that the narrator's trust in her is not unwarranted, but by stepping back for a moment to comment on the nature of *all* erotic love affairs, Machaut reveals that, in fact, no lover is ever 'asseür'. The reference to 'fortune' in the last line quoted foreshadows the narrator's and Hope's reiterations of the very same sentiment – that all lovers are on the wheel of Fortune – later on.

The passage is important but unremarkable, until Machaut applies it to the art of composing songs. Repeating his own phrasing from the earlier lines, the narrator says:

> Et pour ce que n'estoie mie
>
> Tousdis en un point, m'estudie
>
> Mis en faire chansons et lays,
>
> Baladez, rondeaus, virelays,
>
> Et chans, selonc mon sentement,
>
> Amoureus et non autrement;
>
> Car qui de sentement ne fait,
>
> Son œuvre et son chant contrefait (401-8).[48]

Machaut's preoccupation with learning and study continues to shape the poem, with the narrator setting himself to study various lyrical forms, and sententiously

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[47] 'The heart that feels Love's wound is not always in one mood, nor sure of joy or tribulation; rather, it is subject to the whims of the fortune of Love', pp. 188-9.

[48] 'And since I was not always in one mood, I learned to compose chansons and lais, ballades, rondeaux, virelais, and songs, according to my feelings, about love and nothing else; because he who does not compose according to his feelings falsifies his work and his song', pp. 188-9.

pronouncing rules on how to compose good poetry. What interests me here is the implication that such composition – indeed, the variety, and therefore the *quality*, of such composition – emerges precisely from the instability of the lover's feelings. Just as the betrayed knight's confusion in the *Behaigne* enabled him to compose a long complaint, and enabled Machaut to write a whole poem about him, so here the narrator draws upon his variable feelings for poetic inspiration. As well as the echo between 'N'est mie tousdis en .i. point' (392) and 'n'estoie mie / Tousdis en un point' (401-2), there is another between the statement that a lover must 'se demainne', or govern himself, 'Selonc la fortune d'Amours' (394-5), and the narrator's claim that he wrote songs 'selonc mon sentement'. 'Poetry, then, depends on experiencing the vagaries of fortune, not on remedying them';[49] the work we are reading, like the lover's emotional state, is a symptom of, owes its existence to, and depends upon the turning of Fortune's wheel.

Machaut's narrator, still discussing the salutary effects his lady had upon him, touches on a theme that would later be developed in the *Prologue*:

> mes cuers moult s'i deduisoit
>
> Quant ma dame a ce me duisoit
>
> Qu'a sa löenge et a s'onnour
>
> Me faisoit chanter pour s'amour.
>
> Car chanters est nes de leesce
>
> De cuer, et plours vient de tristrece (419-24).[50]

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[49] Kay, 'Touching Singularity', p. 34.
[50] 'My heart took great pleasure when my lady led me to sing a song in her praise and honour, for love of her. For singing is born of a cheerful heart, and tears come from sadness', pp. 190-1.

The basic point here is simple – love makes the narrator happy and his happiness makes him sing – but its expression creates some confusion about the origin of the happiness being referred to. To say that singing makes one happy because songs originate in happiness bespeaks a naïve application of theory to practice: it is as though the narrator were saying, 'I was singing, so I must have been happy, because singing comes from happiness'. Parts of the *lai*, the whole of the *complainte*, and even a few lines in some of the subsequent songs (not to mention other lyrics in Machaut's œuvre, such as the *Lay de Plour*), demonstrate clearly that music *can* derive from, or involve, sadness as well as happiness. The narrator's declaration of the 'joyful poet' principle at this early stage is meant to indicate that he is well-educated but inexperienced, and such, in fact, is his own verdict on himself when he begins the *complainte*. Just as he has fulfilled all the requirements of a love affair except for actual communication with the woman, so he has all the love education he needs except for that which he can only gain from practical experience.

This first part of the *Remede*, leading up to the composition of the *lai*, covers similar ground to the *Prologue* and *Vergier*. Essentially, what I have tried to draw out is the way that this lover's description of his early experience illustrates the duality of love: it is at once transcendent – a spur to Christian virtue, free of villainous (that is, carnal) thoughts – and worldly – driven by desire, directed towards carnal 'joie'. In discussing the *Prologue* and *Vergier*, I emphasised that the 'bias' towards love as an improving, joyful experience was closely connected to the lover-poet's inexperience, and I made a similar point at the end of the last chapter, concerning the happy narrator of the *Behaigne*. The idea that such an idealised vision of love is intended to be read ironically, as evidence of naivety, is borne out by subsequent events in the *Remede*, as I will demonstrate in the rest of this chapter.

*The Lover's First Steps*

The *lai* (431-680) constitutes an attempt to communicate with the lady, and is also the first tangible product of the narrator's sentiments: it represents the moment when he begins to apply the theory of love to his real life. It was Machaut who established, in this poem and in his other *lais*, the twelve-part structure that would become standard,[51] and which dictates that each of the twelve parts should be written in a different verse form and set to a different melody, except for the twelfth, which reverts to the form and melody of the first. This is an aesthetically pleasing structure for a piece of music, but it is also a figure of circularity, a progression through various different moods which ultimately returns to its starting point. Especially in the case of the *lai* found in the *Remede*, this structure clearly evokes something of the nature of love, its tendency to be at once shifting and continuous, never in one place for long, but always ending up back where it started.

Below is a summary of the content of each of the *lai*'s twelve parts. The important thing to take note of here is the role played by desire:

1: A lover needs nothing more than memory, sweet thought and sweet looks.

2: Whoever wants more is not a true lover, for these things can heal all ills.

3: I have sweet thought, and am devoted to my lady; all depends on her.

4: When I see her, I am happy, and have had no pain since loving her.

5: Her beauty and fair welcome extinguish the pains of desire.

6: But I cannot tell my lady how much I love her, for I fear her response.

7: So I don't know how to tell her, for I should not request anything more.

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[51] Hoppin, *Medieval Music*, p. 403.

8: How will she know that I burn and shake with love for her?

9: Love could tell her but chooses not to, but I don't complain of this agony.

10: I wish only to endure this secretly, for Hope says it will be rewarded.

11: Sweet looks defeat desire, nourishing me completely.

12: Desire inspires me to greater love; I think of this and am comforted.

I have arranged the twelve parts of the lyric into three groups, and in the first place it should be evident that, insofar as the song expresses the lover's anxiety, it does so largely in the central parts 6-8. These are the only three sections of the *lai* where the narrator overtly contradicts his claim, made at several other points, that he feels no pain on account of his love. After one such claim, in part 4, the narrator introduces the concept of the 'grief' (516)[52] of desire in part 5, albeit in order to say that the lady's 'beauté sans orgueil' (523)[53] and 'Bel Accueil' (525)[54] extinguish such pain. After concluding part 5 by saying 'einssi vivre me sousfist, / Ne plus ne vueul' (529-30),[55] the lover begins the next section, 'Fors tant, qu'en aucune maniere / Ma dame chiere / …Sceüst qu'elle est m'amour premiere' (531-2, 535),[56] and spends the rest of this section and the following two agonising over the impossibility of communicating with his beloved. As I have already said, education and communication are closely associated in this poem, and both concepts relate to the need for a reciprocal dimension to the erotic relationship: the man's love necessarily requires that he learn from the woman, emulating her and improving himself for her sake, while at the same

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[52] 'Sorrow', pp. 196-7.
[53] 'Beauty without pride', pp. 196-7.
[54] 'Fair Welcome', pp. 196-7.
[55] 'To live thus is all I need and all I want', pp. 196-7.
[56] 'Except that, in no way does she know that she is my first love', pp. 196-7.

time his desire drives him to make contact with her, in order to elicit the desired tangible response.

By the ninth section, the lover is beginning to settle back into the state of serene self-sufficiency which characterised the first four sections, musing that even though Love has chosen not to give him a helping hand, he does not complain of the agony he feels as a result. However, the reason he gives for his serenity in part 10 is that 'Prochainement / S'Espoirs ne ment, / M'ert ma paine tres hautement / A .c. doubles merie' (635-8),[57] emphasising again that his philosophical attitude is dependent on the promise of a tangible, indeed in this case *quantifiable*, reward. The final two sections reiterate the sentiments of the first two, affirming the power of sweet thoughts and looks to nourish the good lover and heal his ills, only now desire is explicitly mentioned as the cause of the pains that need assuaging.

The *lai*'s structure creates the impression that we have learned something from the middle sections, which cast a different light on the lover's serenity. What we have learned is that he is in fact tormented by the desire for gratification of his feelings, but that what keeps him patient is the hope of being rewarded for such patience. To ask for more than the smallest favours in love is to show oneself up as immoral, since it implies that one is seeking gratification of one's carnal lusts; therefore virtuous conduct in love consists in patiently enduring the pains caused by desire, and not asking for any reward; and yet, as we can see, erotic love is still fundamentally driven by desire, and such virtuous conduct is practised only in the hope that it will eventually garner those rewards which a virtuous lover is not supposed to seek.

We now understand what Machaut's lover means when, at the end of the *lai*, he says that the force of his desire 'me fait par son ennort / Honnourer, / Servir, celer,

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[57] 'Very soon, if Hope does not lie, my suffering will be rewarded most generously a hundred times over', pp. 202-3.

/ Et obeïr / Ma dame' (667-71).[58] The claim seems paradoxical, since desire is normally associated with the more shameful aspect of erotic attraction, but now we know that it is precisely desire which drives all of the lover's actions. When desire torments him, 'Mais qu'a li vueulle penser / Qu'aim et desir / Sans partir / Ne repentir; / La me confort' (676-80).[59] The song closes on this elliptical and seemingly unexplained statement, but the point is that it is the thought of the person he loves, and of the fact that he will not stop loving her, which comforts the narrator. The woman he thinks of is the goal of his desires, and his constancy is the path by which he intends to win her love; hence his 'confort'.

Such a reading of the *lai* is borne out by the events that succeed its composition: the lady has the narrator read it out to her, then asks him who wrote it. He cannot tell her, because 'celer li vouloie / L'amoureus mal que je sentoie' (709-10),[60] and in admitting to having composed the *lai*, 'li eüsse ouvert / Comment je l'aim, et descouvert' (723-4).[61] He remains silent, then, 'Pour paour de perdre sa grace: / Non pas pour ce qu'elle fust moie, / Mes en esperance en estoie' (730-2).[62] The narrator departs from the lady without answering her, later musing that it would have been preferable if his heart had broken in her presence, 'puis que ce fust / Pour lui, et elle le sceüst' (849-50).[63] It is clear, then, that the cause of the agony which now overcomes the lover, and prompts him to compose the epic *complainte*, the lyrical centrepiece of the poem, is his failure to communicate with his lady and the consequent impossibility of ever fulfilling his hope that she might love him. The *lai* showcases his desire for amorous satisfaction, and to admit to having composed it

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[58] 'Inspires me [or 'makes me by its exhortation'] serve, protect, and obey my lady', pp. 204-5.

[59] 'I have only to think of her whom I love and desire forever without regret; from that my comfort comes', pp. 204-7.

[60] 'I wanted to hide from her the amorous malady I felt', pp. 206-7.

[61] 'I'd have revealed and shown her how much I love her', pp. 208-9.

[62] 'For fear of losing her favour: not because she was mine, but because I hoped she'd become mine', pp. 208-9.

[63] 'Because it would have been for her, and she'd have known it', pp. 214-5.

himself would amount to a request for the lady's 'grace', an admission of his own desires. Such requests and admissions are prohibited by the rule of love, and in any case might be refused, so a combination of shame and fear prevents the lover from identifying himself as such.

Like the knight in the *Behaigne*, the *Remede*-narrator now resorts to blaming Love for what has happened, and for being without 'compas, / Reigle, ordre, raison, ne mesure' (858-9).[64] He fully recognises the incongruity between his current position and the one he held in his *lai*, 'Car gaires n'a que je disoie / Qu'adez estoit amans en joie; / Or sent et voy tout le contraire / En moy' (863-6).[65] Personal experience has taught him that 'cuer d'amant qui aimme fort / Or a joie, or a desconfort' (875-6),[66] and he goes on for the next six lines in the same vein, listing opposed states of joy and happiness. His revelation about the 'cuer d'amant', effectively, is that:

> selonc ce qu'Amours le veult
>
> Deduire, il s'ejoïst ou duet,
>
> Et selonc l'estat de Fortune
>
> Qui les amans souvent fortune,
>
> L'un bien, l'un mal, l'autre a sa guise,
>
> Selonc ce qu'elle se deguise (883-8).[67]

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[64] 'Discipline, rules, order or moderation', pp. 214-5.

[65] 'For it was not long ago that I said that a lover was always happy; now I see and feel just the opposite in my own case', pp. 214-7.

[66] 'The heart of a lover who loves deeply is now joyful, now mournful', pp. 216-7.

[67] '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', pp. 216-7.

The proliferation of 'selconc's in this passage highlights the core lesson, which has to do with the *contingency* of worldly desire. One is happy or sad 'selonc' Love, or 'selonc' Fortune, and she dispenses goods 'Selonc ce qu'elle se deguise'.

As he leads into the *complainte*, the narrator indulges in some of the typical 'en li n'a estableté' (891)[68] commonplace generalisations about Fortune and, warming to his subject, he decides to make '.I. dit qu'on appelle complainte, / Ou il averoit rime mainte, / Qui seroit de tristre matiere' (901-3).[69] The transition from the subject of love to that of Fortune, and the signalling of the inclusion of 'tristre matiere', indicate that this love poet is widening his scope somewhat, since by writing of a sad subject, in a sad manner, he is contradicting one of the cardinal rules about love poetry stated in the *Prologue*. Objections that Machaut himself might be writing all this in a state of joy, aside from being pedantic, would miss the point, since the protagonist of the *Remede* is clearly figured as a representative 'love poet', and a more experienced one, by now, than that pictured in the *Prologue*. The *complainte* 'has virtually no history as a musical form',[70] and the one in the *Remede* is the only notated example,[71] so this appears to have been a solitary musical experiment on Machaut's part.

The lyric can be divided into two halves, each of which can be broken up into three subdivisions of equal length, though it must be admitted that in this respect the first half is the more easily subdivided. The rhyme scheme, aaabaaab/bbbabbba, invites the reader to divide each stanza into two halves. The reversal, or mirroring effect, which takes place within this rhyme scheme, is reflected in the two halves of the lyric, which treat the same subject from different angles: the first is about the operation of Fortune in the world at large, the second is about the lover's subjection

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[68] 'In her there is no stability', pp. 216-7.
[69] 'A piece called a complaint, in which there would be many rhymes and a sad subject', pp. 216-7.
[70] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, p. 29.
[71] Wimsatt, *Chaucer and His French Contemporaries*, p. 300 n.70.

to his own personal Fortune, as represented not only by the fickle goddess herself but also by Love, Desire and the object of the narrator's affection. Below is a brief summary of each of the *complainte*'s six parts, arranged so as to make the two-part structure clear:

**First Half: 'Fortune and Kings'**

**1**: Stanzas 1-6 (905-1000). Generalised outburst against Fortune's treacheries.

**2**: St. 7-12 (1001-96). Description of Nebuchadnezzar's statue, followed by an explanation of how it signifies Fortune.

**3**: St. 13-18 (1097-1192). Long passage on Fortune's 'doubleness', and the stupidity of those who trust her.

**Second Half: 'Love and Me'**

**4**: St. 19-24 (1193-1288). The lover focuses on himself again, particularly on how his lady's beauty vanquished him and made him commit the 'mesfait'.

**5**: St. 25-30 (1289-1384). He declares himself to be subordinate to Love and his lady, and stresses his dependence on them.

**6**: St. 31-36 (1385-1480). The lover concludes by describing the burning pain of Desire, with which he is now filled.

The narrator begins by generalising, 'Tieus rit au main qui au soir pleure' (905),[72] and although he mentions 'Amours' (906) in the next line to effect the transition from his own story to the *complainte*, the first half of the lyric is entirely taken up with sententious and highly conventional moralising about the nature of Fortune and her

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[72] 'He laughs in the morning who weeps in the evening', pp. 218-9.

power 'Sus empereurs, papes, et roys' (1179).[73] The lover is extrapolating a moral from his own situation, observing a process of alternating happiness and misery which governs the entire world, having learned all about this process from his own failure as a lover.

Yet he presents this lesson the other way around: first he describes the macrocosmic operation of Fortune, then he holds up his own story as evidence, from ground-level as it were, of Fortune's activity. This structure, along with the learned references to Boethius and the Old Testament within the lyric, suggest that the narrator is in fact appealing to something he has known for a long time, that he is recalling a lesson he once learned about Fortune, and applying it to his own situation. The impression we get is that, although he already knew of Fortune's treacherous nature, it is only since gaining personal experience of misfortune that he truly understands the significance of this allegorical figure, and can speak about her with passion and authority. The Boethian motif of needing to remember something one has forgotten is brought into play at this point, and like Boethius in the *Consolatio*, Machaut's protagonist tries to use what he already knows about Fortune in order to understand his own situation. When the *complainte* is over and Hope arrives, this theme will be developed further.

The first of the *complainte*'s six parts, though brilliantly written, is of limited interest to me here, since it says nothing remarkable or unexpected. It is in this first section that Boethius is mentioned, but the reference is strangely isolated and perfunctory: after saying that Fortune 'Tout orgueil amolie et donte' (981),[74] the narrator remarks, 'Mais Boeces si nous raconte / Qu'on ne doit mie faire conte / De ses anuis' (982-4).[75] Perhaps it is significant that these lines come immediately after

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[73] 'Over emperors, popes and kings', pp. 232-3.
[74] 'She weakens and overthrows all pride', pp. 222-3.
[75] 'But Boethius tells us that we must pay no heed to the pain she inflicts', pp. 222-3.

one of the few instances in the *complainte* where Fortune is given a more positive role as the scourge of 'orgueil', and certainly the Boethian doctrine referred to is meant to indicate that only sinful people need fear the losses Fortune can inflict upon them, a lesson Machaut would repeat at greater length in the *Confort d'ami*.

The main point of interest in this first half of the *complainte* is of course the simile about Nebuchadnezzar's statue in the second section. We have seen how, in the *Confort*, Machaut would later draw upon the book of Daniel for inspiration, and here too the example of Nebuchadnezzar indicates the lyricist's engagement with the subject of proud kings who have been humbled by God, through Fortune. To the *Remede*-narrator, the statue made of different metals, with feet of iron and clay, 'Estre ne me samble autre chose / Que Fortune' (1018-9).[76] It seems, 'aus musars qu'elle alose' (1023),[77] that Fortune's head is gold and contains all riches, but those who believe this 'en errour / Vivent telle qu'il n'est greigneur' (1024-5),[78] for Fortune can give nothing but 'painne et labour' (1027).[79] At this point the narrator becomes especially didactic: 'Retien et glose', he says, 'Car ses joies ne sont que plour' (1028-9),[80] before concluding 'cilz fait trop le millour / Qui s'i oppose' (1031-2).[81]

The statement that Fortune's joys are really 'plour' harks back once again to the beginning of the *complainte*, and the phrase 'retien et glose' invites us to apply, and perhaps adapt, this lesson to a particular situation later on. Although the following stanza, which describes the respective evils of excessive wealth and excessive poverty, would seem to apply only to avarice as such, it is clear that throughout this passage we are expected to understand that love is the subtext. This song about Fortune, as well as communicating the narrator's new understanding of

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[76] 'Seems to me to be none other than Fortune', pp. 224-5.
[77] 'To the fools she flatters', pp. 224-5.
[78] 'Live in the greatest of all possible error', pp. 222-3.
[79] 'Pain and strife', pp. 222-3.
[80] 'Remember this and gloss it properly, for her joys are nothing but tears', pp. 222-3.
[81] 'He who opposes her does the very best thing', pp. 222-3.

the nature of love, is supposed to be retained and interpreted by us, the readers, and applied to the wider context of the poem, just as the love-oriented passage had to be situated within the more philosophical content that dominated in the *Confort d'ami*.

The statue's – or rather, Fortune's – silver chest 'n'est que decevement' (1050),[82] for its brightness 'Les yeus esbloe / Et aveugle de mainte gent' (1052-3);[83] it signifies Fortune's deceptive favours. The bronze belly and thighs signify 'A tous ceaus qui li sont prochain / Qu'elle se change / En pis' (1067-9),[84] implying that when one is far away the statue appears beautiful all over, but that when one is 'prochain' the unstable nature of Fortune's beauty becomes apparent. The statue's 'jambes de fer' (1081)[85] symbolise, in their strength, the sense of security in which Fortune's followers dwell, 'Mais c'est couverteure et faintise, / Car les piés ha de terre glise / Gliant et mole' (1086-8).[86] The statue in its entirety is deceptive, for it appears huge and strong, but in fact stands on a brittle foundation; it is also deceptive in each of its parts, and as a whole represents all that appears good but is in fact worthless.

If we recall the line, 'ce n'est pas tout or canque reluist' (*Jugement Behaigne* 841), which the knight in the *Jugement Behaigne* applied to the beauty of his faithless beloved, we can see how this moral drawn from Nebuchadnezzar's statue might be applied to the subject of love. If love is like Fortune, and Fortune is like this statue, and if we retain and gloss all of this properly, we may very well conclude that to be in love is to be deceived by the appearance of beauty, which conceals the mutable and untrustworthy nature lurking underneath. Furthermore, when, in the first stanza of the *complainte*'s third section, the narrator describes the process whereby Fortune,

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[82] 'Is only an illusion', pp. 226-7.
[83] 'Startles and blinds the eyes of many people', pp. 226-7.
[84] 'To all those near her that her transformations are for the worse', pp. 226-7.
[85] 'Legs of iron', pp. 228-9.
[86] 'But it's a covering and deception, for her feet are of mud, slippery and soft', pp. 228-9.

'Quant elle a fait aucun ouvrage / Et on est en plus haut estage' (1106-7),[87] causes a storm to destroy the whole edifice 'D'un seul assaut' (1112),[88] he invites comparisons with his own situation. He has spent the first 700 lines of the poem getting an education in the art of love, building up to the moment when he finally comes into contact with the lady, and then in a moment, as it seems to him, all his hard work has been brought to nothing, not (according to him) by his own actions but by those of Love. The narrator's purpose in the *complainte* is to say that the commonplaces about Fortune's mutability and treachery, normally applied to stories of illustrious men such as Nebuchadnezzar, are also applicable to the situation of a lover.

The narrator makes this point by spending most of the third section listing oxymora – 'C'est souffisance couvoiteuse' (1146)[89] and so on – then concluding it with a stanza on Fortune's power over earthly rulers, and *then* beginning the fourth section by saying that Fortune has treated *him* in exactly this way, 'Or m'a d'un seul tour si bas mis / Qu'en grief plour est mué mon ris' (1197-8).[90] After describing the effect of Fortune upon kings, he begins the second half of the lyric by saying that his own inability to see or speak to his beloved is directly comparable to the fates of such illustrious men, and he explicitly states that it is Love, standing in for Fortune, who has done this to him: 'Amours, Amours, ce m'as tu fait, / Qui m'as fait faire le mesfait / Qui toute ma joye desfait!' (1209-11).[91] This melodramatic introduction of 'Amours' foregrounds the transition to this subject and the equation being drawn between Fortune and Love, as well as signalling the transition between the omniscient moral stance of the first half and the more personal 'love lament' of the second.

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[87] 'When she's built some structure and one is on the top storey', pp. 228-9.
[88] 'With a single blow', pp. 228-9.
[89] 'She's covetous plenty', pp. 230-1.
[90] 'Now with a single twist she's brought me so low that my laughter has turned to bitter tears', pp. 234-5.
[91] 'Love! Love! You've done this to me, you who made me commit the offence that is destroying all my joy', pp. 234-5.

Much of the rest of the *complainte* is taken up with the narrator's affirmations of his own subordination to and dependence on the will of Love and his lady: what becomes of him, he says, is up to them. In the first, Fortune-centred half of the lyric, he shows a certain sense of perspective on worldly vicissitudes, moralising, as though this were a historical chronicle, about the foolishness of trusting Fortune, making intelligent use of a biblical *exemplum*, and even mentioning Boethius. But when he turns to his own situation and finds himself occupying the role of one of Fortune's victims, he loses this sense of perspective and complains to Love, 'tous mes biens as destournés, / Ne sçay pourquoy' (1251-2).[92] The knowing, sententious air of the earlier sections is gone, to be replaced with a deep uncertainty. Machaut is saying that, although Boethian doctrines are easy to understand in the context of Fortune's treatment of proud kings, they are much harder to embrace when the subject is love: everyone can accept that worldly prosperity comes and goes, but for most of us our happiness depends on the belief that love will provide us with a permanent source of happiness and security. Thus we are invited to sympathise with the narrator's confusion at the same time as we stand back from it and recognise it *as* confusion, as *irrational* behaviour.

It must be remembered that this lover is not by any means in the same situation as the knight in the *Behaigne*, since his lady has not betrayed him, but we are well into the *complainte* now, and by this stage we, like him, may have lost sight of the fact that he is over-dramatising a small and relatively insignificant incident. The transition that has taken place is indeed a little like that between the *Vergier* and the *Behaigne*, the former being concerned with the education and preparation of a young man in the idealised art of love, the latter being a largely pessimistic treatise on what happens when love goes wrong. The *Remede*-narrator presents, in his

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[92] 'You've turned away all my happiness, I don't know why', pp. 236-7.

*complainte*, a wholly negative vision of love, in which even the virtues that have served him well until now turn against him and become enemies.

After lamenting his loss of hope and his relentless victimisation at the hands of Desire, the narrator asks, rhetorically, what Desire can do to him:


M'occira il? Il ne pourra,

Car ma loyauté m'aidera.

Qu'ai je dit? Einçoys me sera

Contraire, espoir;

Car puisqu'Amours me grevera

Et Fortune qui honni m'a,

Ma grant loyauté m'occirra,

Si com j'espoir (1425-32).[93]


This harks back to the redefinition of the concept of 'loyauté' in the *Jugement Behaigne*, where the personification Loyalty advised that disloyalty would actually be the most truly loyal, or rather virtuous, course of action for the knight to pursue. Here we see the lover coming to the realisation that, far from protecting him, his virtue will cause him to remain in love without ever receiving his reward. His hope, insofar as he had any, was for such a reward, but now, like the unfortunate lover briefly spoken of in the *Prologue*, he only uses the word 'espoir' to say that 'perhaps' (1428) his loyalty will turn against him, or that he 'expects' (1432) this virtue to kill him.

The four lines with which the lyric concludes re-figure it, not as a *complainte*, but as something similar, namely a prayer:

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[93] 'Will he kill me? He cannot, for my loyalty will save me. What did I say? Rather it will oppose me, perhaps; because, since Love will torment me, as well as Fortune who's shamed me, my great loyalty will slay me, just as I wish', pp. 246-7.

> Mais s'ainssi ma vie define,
>
> A ma dame qu'aim d'amour fine,
>
> Les mains jointes, la chiere encline,
>
> Vueil rendre l'ame (1477-80).[94]

It is no accident that the *priere* the narrator will later compose to atone for the *complainte* has a noticeably similar form, with the short disyllabic lines following on from five octosyllables, instead of three as in the earlier lyric.[95] By ending the *complainte* as he does, the lover makes it sound as though the entire lyric has been building up to the moment of his death – as though, indeed, the lyric itself has been gradually killing him – and this interpretation is reinforced by his statement that, by the time he finished the *complainte*, he had 'cheüs en transe / Aussi com cilz qui voit et pense / Sa mort devant li toute preste' (1493-5).[96] As Calin says, the delivery of the *complainte* 'may be considered an immediate cause for his trance…Without it, the narrator would hardly have needed consolation at all',[97] a slight overestimation perhaps, since the *complainte* itself is occasioned by something, but an astute comment in that it highlights the lyric's role as a driving force of the narrative.

The lover's final offer, or wish, to render up his soul to his lady, with his hands clasped in prayer, is a comic-pathetic illustration of the extent to which he has idolised this woman and invested his whole being, body and soul, physical and moral, in her. The tone of the *complainte* is insistently tragic: Calin, speaking in general terms, says that 'medieval Christian tragedy consists in man's placing faith in the

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[94] 'But if my life ends thus, I wish to render up my soul with clasped hands and head bowed to my lady whom I love with a pure heart', pp. 248-9.

[95] The *priere* also does not repeat the 'mirroring' effect of the *complainte*'s rhyme scheme, but the long line/short line pattern, as well as the penitential motive for the *priere*, nonetheless invite comparisons between the two pieces.

[96] 'Fallen into a trance, like someone who sees and senses his death fast upon him', pp. 250-1.

[97] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 71.

wrong values, then being overwhelmed by the disparity between expectation and reward';[98] or to put it another way, this time with reference to the protagonist of the *Voir-Dit*, 'l'erreur de l'homme est de se détourner de l'amour divin, infini, pour un amour humain, failli, de passer du "un" au "deux"'.[99] The legs and clay feet of Nebuchadnezzar's statue represent the deterioration consequent upon division or doubleness, and the *complainte* argues that this doubleness is somehow at the root of the lover's difficulties. His absorption in worldly values, and his expectation of a physical reward, are among those tendencies which Hope's intervention will try to correct.

So far, Machaut has given us a clear picture both of the lover's idealism and of the frustration of these ideals by experience – that is, by the duplicitous action of Fortune in the sublunary realm. In its second half, the *Remede* goes beyond the territory covered by the poems I looked at in earlier chapters, to show the next stage in the lover's journey: Hope will offer him a way of coming to terms with Fortune's attacks, and also of improving his fortunes in love. The question we need to bear in mind throughout the following discussion is whether there might be a contradiction between these two sides to Hope's consolation. Is it possible to be truly reconciled to the instability of worldly pleasures and yet remain dependent on the future attainment of those same pleasures? The answer to this rather 'leading' question might seem quite obviously to be 'no', but as we shall see, Machaut's treatment of this topic is more complex and sympathetic than that.

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[98] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 59.
[99] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, pp. 87-8. 'The man's mistake consists in turning away from infinite, divine love to an imperfect, human love, in going from "one" to "two".'

*The Promise of Success*

To save him from the death very nearly occasioned by his *complainte*, a beautiful woman appears at the narrator's side, and consoles him in a long passage consisting almost entirely of moral instruction. Although Boethius is not mentioned once in this passage, the correspondence between Hope and Boethius' Lady Philosophy is signalled in various ways: Hope berates the lover for composing the self-indulgently melancholy *complainte*, just as Philosophy chased away the Muses who had been helping Boethius to aestheticise and perpetuate his unhappiness (*Consolatio* I.P1); twice (*Remede* 1520-1 and 2115-8) the lover says that Hope's light chased away the dark clouds that had enshrouded him (cf. *Consolatio* I.M3); at times Hope facilitates her pupil's learning by engaging in a kind of Socratic dialogue with him; her list of the various 'forms' of happiness resembles Philosophy's (*Remede* 2787-91; cf. *Consolatio* III.M2); and in general, as we shall see, the doctrines she preaches have a lot in common with those of the *Consolatio*. Yet Hope is not Philosophy; she is merely Hope. There are weaknesses and a certain amount of incoherence in her teachings, with which we will have to come to terms, and more importantly there is the final quarter of the poem to get through once she has disappeared.

Her discourse treats four main subjects, which are not mutually exclusive and between which she meanders throughout this episode: first, the success of the lover's 'mesfait' in communicating his feelings to the lady; second, the qualities and behaviour required of a good lover; third, her own nature; and fourth, the nature of, and remedies against, Fortune. With certain allowances for the interdependence of these topics, I will discuss them in this order, paying special attention, in this section, to the first point and its implications for the way we read Hope in relation to Boethius.

The great irony about the lover's epic *complainte* is that it sprang from the supposed error he committed when he departed from his lady without answering her question, but that in fact this very mistake was the best possible way of telling her how he felt. Fortune, true to her nature, has defied expectations, and for all the narrator's talk about Fortune's wheel he has mistaken an upward for a downward turn. Like Philosophy, Hope asks her pupil to recall something he has forgotten: 'N'as tu mie dit en ton lay - / Si as, se bien retenu l'ay –' (1701-2)[100] she says, and goes on to recall the narrator's wish that Love would inform his lady about his feelings. Adam de la Halle expressed a similar wish when he ended one *chanson* with this brief stanza: 'Cançon, je t'envoieroie / u ma dame est, se j'osoie; / mais le cuer n'ai si hardi: / Amours, donnés li' ('Au repairier en la douce contrée').[101] Adam is here wittily playing on the idea that a lyric represents a spontaneous and sincere expression of love, and his request that Love deliver the poem (and the request for mercy) to his lady amounts to a request that things may turn out for him as they do for the *Remede*-narrator. The lyric also speaks of the increase in the lover's pain when he is close to the lady, as he is now, and perhaps Adam is hoping that love will be so manifest in his demeanour as to render the poem and its presentation unnecessary.

Adam's pleasing paradox is acted out in the life of the *Remede*-narrator, whose poem has proven less effective than the unaffected shyness which followed its performance. His wish that Love should intervene on his behalf has been granted, for the lady in question would have paid no heed to a lover 'qui s'amour rueve / Par mos polis, plains de contreuve' (*Remede* 1735-6).[102] Such lovers feel no shame in being refused, but cheerfully move on, and 'aillours merci rouver / Vont pour les dames

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[100] 'Didn't you say in your lai – you did, if I remember well.' pp. 260-1.

[101] Adam de la Halle, *The Lyrics and Melodies of Adam de la Halle*, ed. and trans. by Deborah Hubbard Nelson (New York: Garland, 1985), p. 59. 'Song, I would send you where my lady is, if I dared, but I do not have such a bold heart: Love, give it to her.'

[102] 'Who implores her love with polished, deceitful words', pp. 262-3.

esprouver' (1749-50).[103] There is not, Hope says, a man in existence 'qui sans mesfaire / Sceüst un amant contrefaire' (1777-8),[104] the word 'mesfaire' here recalling and redefining the word 'mesfait', used to describe the narrator's supposed 'mis-step'. The only way to err in love, Hope suggests, is to 'contrefaire', for sincerity is the lover's best ally. An insincere lover cannot alter his complexion at will, 'Mais Amours le fait a son vueul' (1785):[105] a true lover is one who subjects himself to the influence of this god-like 'Amours', and whose appearance will inevitably reflect the sentiments within him. The negative reading of what has happened here would be to say that being moral in amorous terms means acting on instinct and emotion, without reason and without the capacity for speech.

It is interesting that, in informing the lady of her admirer's feelings, Love 'li deïst / Sans ce que parole en feïst' (1719-20),[106] and that such value is placed on this non-verbal, non-rational form of communication, because one of the salutary effects that Hope has upon the lover is to restore to him his power of speech, of which his *complainte*, for all its verbosity, has deprived him. He remains in his melancholy trance until after she has sung her *chant roial*, during which 'un petitet m'i endormi' (1980),[107] and after which he cannot respond to Hope's questions, prompting her to say, 'Quant tu ne veus / Respondre, ne sçay se tu peus; / Mais je pense que tu te faignes / De parler, ou que tu ne daignes' (2049-52).[108] These last two lines are Hope's comic attempt to shame the lover into coming to his senses, akin to her accusation that, in doubting his lady's ability to perceive his sincerity, he is calling her a fool (a moment to which I will return later). Clearly, in that instance, he is calling her no such thing, nor is the narrator silent now because he does not 'deign' to

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[103] 'Go elsewhere, to test other ladies and beg their mercy', pp. 264-5.
[104] 'Who could pretend to be a lover without giving away his hand', pp. 264-5.
[105] 'But Love does it anytime she wishes', pp. 266-7.
[106] 'Told her this without uttering a word', pp. 262-3.
[107] 'Soon I fell asleep' [or: 'I dozed off a little'], pp. 276-7.
[108] 'Since you don't want to answer, I'm not sure if you can, but I think you're just hesitating to speak because you don't want to', pp. 280-1.

answer. As he says when he has been woken out of his trance by the cold ring Hope places on his finger, this and her sweet speech and singing 'Me remist ou cuer la parole / Dont cy presentement parole, / Car de tous poins perdu l'avoie' (2123-5).[109]

The *complainte* he has just sung, being a lyric – that is, a piece of music – was akin to the gesture whereby the lady was told of his feelings, in that it was a spontaneous and involuntary expression of 'sentement' which ultimately deprived him of the power of speech. This, remember, is an inherent characteristic of music, according to Machaut – that it should serve as a direct expression of sentiment. Now, however, the non-musical poetry we are reading ('la parole dont cy presentement parole') depends for its very existence on Hope's restoration of the lover's rational faculties. These faculties have been 'remist ou *cuer*', which superficially might be taken to indicate that it is the lover's 'sentement' (located in his heart), rather than his reason, which has been reinforced by Hope. This is not untrue, and certainly the ostensible 'cure' that Hope effects consists in giving the lover hope that his amorous feelings stand a chance of being rewarded.

However, the cure has a deeper, more philosophical dimension as well. The comical interrogation quoted above alludes to the *Consolatio*, in which, after singing her first song, Philosophy asks her pupil, 'Quid taces? Pudore an stupore siluisti? Mallem pudore, sed te, ut video, stupor oppressit', and the prisoner tells us that he was not merely 'tacitum' but completely 'elinguem' (*Consolatio* I.P2.7-10).[110] By repeating this scene in the *Remede*, Machaut is going out of his way to invite comparison between Philosophy's and Hope's restorative functions, but by casting his scene in somewhat more comical terms, he may also be suggesting that Hope does not operate on quite as high a plane as her illustrious predecessor. In other parts of her

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[109] 'Brought back to my heart speech, which I'm using even now, because I'd lost it entirely', pp. 284-5.

[110] 'Why do you say nothing? Were you silent because you were ashamed or stupefied? I should like to think that you were ashamed, but I can see that you are quite stupefied...silent...speechless', pp. 138-9.

discourse Hope also advocates the importance of reason, particularly as a 'remede de Fortune', and it is important to notice at this stage the conflict between her Lady Philosophy-like efforts to nurture her pupil's *reason* – that is, partly, his capacity to think, speak and act as a free agent – and her exaltation of sincere, un-reasoned and involuntary expressions of feeling as the best way to get ahead, to actually *succeed*, in the 'sentement'-oriented game of courtly love.

In Boethius' text, the prisoner's initial silence is figured by Philosophy as a direct result of the poetic complaint inspired in him by the muses, 'quae infructuosis affectuum spinis uberem fructibus rationis segetem necant' (I.P.1.32-3).[111] The *complainte* in the *Remede* clearly represents something like this enslavement to fruitless passion, and its composer, like Boethius at the start of the *Consolatio*, is caught up in his despair at Fortune's treachery, aware of Boethius' teaching on the subject but unable to put it into practice. I have shown how Machaut equates love with Fortune, suggesting that the Boethian principles which enjoin us to despise the fickle goddess' favours might, by the same token, dissuade us from loving, but that in the context of love it is hard to suppress our natural instincts and put these principles into practice. In other words, Machaut seems to imply that Boethius' austere doctrines about the relinquishment of worldly pleasures fail to engage with the realities of the human condition. Wetherbee puts it very well when, in his discussion of the more problematic elements of the *Consolatio* and its literary descendants, he argues that 'man's tenuous sense of his divine origins and destiny can seem little more than a fantasy, at the mercy of the disorienting power of appetite and random attraction…anxiety and doubt are an important part of the dialogue'.[112] With the *lai* and *complainte* in the *Remede de Fortune*, Machaut illustrates how the lover's efforts to be virtuous and self-sufficient come into conflict with the irresistible force of

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[111] 'Who choke the rich harvest of the fruits of reason with the barren thorns of passion', pp. 134-5.
[112] Winthrop Wetherbee, 'The *Consolation* and medieval literature', pp. 285-6.

desire, which renders all moral considerations irrelevant, and leaves him unable to think of anything except the lack of that which he desires.

John Marenbon's take on this issue is revealing: first he argues that, in the *Consolatio,* 'there is no indication of how the individual man, Boethius, is supposed to relate to true happiness, which is God';[113] later, repeating that Philosophy cannot supply 'a *way* for Boethius to grasp and gain the highest good to which she has led him', Marenbon suggests that, rather than directly addressing this 'gap', Boethius 'leaves the structure of his dialogue to make the point silently'.[114] What he means by this is, I think, revealed a few pages earlier when, having identified what he calls 'incoherences' in the text, he suggests as a possible solution that they 'are merely superficial, because they can be explained by the structure of the *Consolation*, in which Philosophy gradually leads her pupil to the truth', which is surely correct; but he rejects this solution on the basis that each stage of Philosophy's argument contradicts or diverges from the earlier stages.[115]

The problem here is that Marenbon does not define Philosophy's – or rather, Boethius' – didactic method with sufficient clarity, or take seriously enough the importance of the text's structure. Consider another of his objections, this time relating to the discussion of good and bad fortune in *Consolatio* IV.P7:

Presumably, wicked people who prosper materially and socially can be said to have bad fortune because – from the true, philosophical point of view – nothing is worse than to persevere in wickedness. But, on the previous formulation, Philosophy needs to be able to say that they have good fortune, because all fortune is good; if so, "good fortune" must be taken in the

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[113] John Marenbon, *Boethius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 112.
[114] Marenbon, *Boethius*, p. 163.
[115] Marenbon, *Boethius*, p. 159.

commonly accepted and misleading meaning of material and social success. At the same time, she needs to claim that the fortune of the wicked who are punished is good, even if not beneficial to the wicked themselves, because it is just.[116]

The first sentence refers to a point made explicitly at an earlier stage in the *Consolatio* (IV.P4.26-9). The subsequent objection does not follow logically: the wicked who prosper materially *do*, as it turns out, have good fortune, because their prosperity leads them further into wickedness, and wickedness – which is nothing other than a failure to perceive or strive for true happiness – is its own punishment. This is why, according to the common view of fortune, the wicked have bad fortune. Yet as the argument progresses we discover that, in being thus punished, the wicked enjoy very *good* fortune, because the wrong-doer's receipt of punishment is like the receipt of medicine by a sick person (IV.P4.66-70, 149-54). Such punishment therefore *is* beneficial to the wicked, precisely because it is just. To put it more simply: the wicked, whether prosperous or not, are unhappy; the good, whether prosperous or not, are happy; therefore, from God's all-knowing point of view, the world is ordered as it should be, and all fortune is good.

If we only compare one stage of the argument to the previous one, as though looking back on things we were taught as children, we will of course find 'incoherences'. But if we *progress* with Boethius from one level of understanding to the next, our conception of good and bad fortune will not simply *alter*, but *develop*. As Philosophy puts it, 'superior comprehendendi vis amplectitur inferiorem, inferior vero ad superiorem nullo modo consurgit' (V.P4.93-4);[117] retreating to a lower step in

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[116] Marenbon, *Boethius*, p. 121.
[117] 'The higher power for comprehension embraces the lower, while the lower in no way rises to the higher', pp. 410-1.

order to question a higher one will lead only to confusion. Marenbon's comments about the importance of structure in the *Consolatio* indicate that he knows all of this, and I am not suggesting that he has actually misunderstood Boethius' argument, but like many commentators he seems determined to problematise this most lucid of texts. Nonetheless his identification of a gap in Philosophy's argument is of central importance to our understanding of Machaut, who clearly, to some degree, *also* finds that argument problematic, and for the same reasons.

In the *Remede*, as I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, each stage of the lover's progress really does seem to nullify the previous one, and the problematic element in all of this has precisely to do with one's conception of good fortune. The protagonist is unable consistently to conceive of his fortune as being good in the Boethian sense, because he finds that this internal, self-sufficient 'good' has no connection with the human desires that motivate him. As Sarah Kay says of the *Consolatio*, 'it is hard to see a difference between the punishing correctives Philosophy prescribes for the wicked and the healing remedies she proposes to the protagonist',[118] and indeed there is essentially no difference between these two things: Philosophy's pupil is himself mired in a kind of wickedness as long as he regards himself as being unfortunate, for this signifies his absorption in a worldly conception of 'good fortune'. The prisoner, like any sinner, must re-define his notions about happiness and prosperity, and re-align his will with that of God. When considering the *Remede de Fortune* as a text based (however loosely) on the Boethian model, we need to ask whether any such re-alignment takes place in the soul of its protagonist, and indeed whether this text's 'Lady Philosophy' is trying to prompt any such re-alignment.

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[118] Kay, 'Touching Singularity', p. 24.

Hope, if she serves the same purpose as Philosophy, should lead Machaut's narrator away from the worldly joys he has been pursuing, and towards something more transcendent and enduring. Instead, the conflict I noted earlier – between *reason* as a sign of health and *unreasoned sentiment* as a guarantee of success in love – runs through all of Hope's teachings. She describes the true nature of love as if to warn the narrator away from it, but also offers him the prospect of success, sometimes of a spiritual and sometimes of a material kind. As we read this part of the *Remede*, we should bear in mind Philosophy's advice on how to remedy Fortune: 'Nec speres aliquid nec extimescas' (I.M4.13).[119] For Boethius, it is precisely the *hope* of better fortunes in this world that nurtures unhappiness, as, conversely, do the muses' sorrowing lyrics, by despairing over misfortune as though it were something other than an inevitable fact of existence.

Kay observes that 'whereas Philosophy exhorts the Boethius-figure to relinquish his former ambitions and attachments, *Esperance*, far from stripping the lover of his desire, enables him to live confidently with it'; whereas Philosophy 'directed her interlocutor towards a celestial One', Hope 'encourages the Machaut-figure to persist in pursuit of an individual lady'.[120] Huot seems to agree when she says that 'whereas Philosophy preaches a rejection of worldly goods in favour of the spiritual realm, Esperance never shifts the lover's focus away from the lady as love object'.[121] Earlier in the same article, however, Huot argues that 'Hope does not necessarily imply an expectation of actual contact with the lady as a person. Rather, Hope is intimately bound up with memory, thought, and the imagination'.[122] While it is true, as we shall see, that Hope offers the lover a way of sustaining himself without direct contact with his lady, I would argue that her emphasis falls less on the use of

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[119] 'Leave hope and fear aside.' pp. 144-5.
[120] Kay, 'Touching Singularity', p. 32.
[121] Huot, 'Consolation of Poetry', p. 176.
[122] Huot, 'Consolation of Poetry', p. 173.

memory, thought and imagination – which are the focus of the naïve *lai* – and more on the importance of virtuous conduct. As far as memory is concerned, Boethius famously says that 'in omni adversitate fortunae infelicissimum est genus infortunii fuisse felicem' (II.P4.4-6),[123] while with regard to 'images', Philosophy laments that the prisoner's sight is too much 'occupato ad imagines' (III.P1.19)[124] to be able to perceive the true good. I have argued several times in this thesis that the courtly lover's fixation on the 'figure' or 'image' of his lady is a flawed type of self-sufficiency, since the satisfaction derived from that image depends on previous physical contact (if only eye-contact) and on the potential for future contact.

Attwood raises an interesting point when, commenting on Machaut's emulation of Boethius, she says that in the *Remede* 'the therapeutic quality of poetry is seen in action: Esperance, the narrator's guide and teacher, relies almost entirely on song to soothe his grief at his lady's coldness, and to stimulate him to conquer his as yet unfulfilled desires'.[125] Three points need to be made here. Firstly, as I have been saying, Hope appears to promise a certain amount of success to the lover, even if her main lessons do tend towards the 'conquest' of desire, rather than its fulfilment. Secondly, Hope does not only – or even primarily – rely on song to comfort the narrator, but seems, like Philosophy, to use song to consolidate her teachings in a more easily digested form. Thirdly, it is not ostensibly the narrator's grief at 'the lady's coldness' which Hope is trying to soothe, but rather his despair of ever being able to advance his suit to her, because of his fear of refusal.

In a sense, however, Attwood is right on all three points. Hope's immediate task in the narrative *is* to offer the lover a hope of success, but in fact everything she says equips him to cope with the *lack* of success. The implication of her focus, in her

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[123] 'In all the adversities of fortune, the most unhappy kind of misfortune is to have known happiness', pp. 190-1.
[124] 'Occupied with images', pp. 230-1.
[125] Attwood, *Dynamic Dichotomy*, pp. 35-6.

songs, on the need to be happy with intangible pleasures and nothing more, may be that the narrator's fear of refusal was tied up with his shame at his own erotic desires, and that his best chance of success is to conquer these desires and find joy in those pleasures which he will be able to hold onto even if the lady is 'cold' towards him – as indeed she will be at the end of the poem. As Attwood says, the songs are the primary means by which Hope communicates this lesson to the lover, and Huot too seems to consider Hope's advice about subsisting on sweet thoughts (and so on) to be of central importance.

I wish to argue that what Hope says *outside* the songs – about love, Fortune and virtue – is concerned with the same kind of 'hope' as the prisoner finds in the *Consolatio*, namely the hope that one might attain happiness despite the outright failure of one's efforts to achieve it in this world. Attwood, in her discussion of the 'truthful' letters and potentially suspect surrounding narrative in the *Voir-Dit*, notes that 'according to medieval literary tradition, prose was regarded as the language of fact, poetry that of fiction'.[126] Perhaps, in the *Remede*, a similar kind of distinction is to be made between the content of the – at this point, somewhat prosaic – octosyllabic narrative and that of the beautiful, joyful lyrics. In her attempt to define the nature of the *dit* as a genre, Cerquiglini suggests that it is characterised by its 'opposition au chant', and expands on this idea, arguing that: 'le principe de composition est un principe extérieur, venant d'un ailleurs...On saisit alors le rapport privilégié du *dit* à la parodie, ou tout simplement à la traversée des modèles littéraires'.[127] The dependence of the *dit* on things exterior to it recalls Hugh of St. Victor's differentiation of

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[126] Attwood, *Dynamic Dichotomy*, pp. 49-50. She cites the *Bestiaire* of Pierre de Beauvais and *La Mort Aimeri de Narbonne* to support this claim.

[127] Jacqueline Cerquiglini, 'Le clerc et l'écriture: le *voir dit* de Guillaume de Machaut et la définition du *dit*', in *Grundriss der romanischen Literaturen des Mittelalters*, ed. by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1980), pp. 150-68 (159). 'Opposition to song...The principle of composition is an exterior principle, coming from another place...Thus one grasps the *dit*'s special relationship to parody, or more simply to the movement across literary models.'

'human' work from that of God and Nature: 'opus artificis est disgregata coniungere vel coniuncta segregare' (*Didascalicon* I.9).[128] Furthermore, the suggestion that the *dit* is defined as 'not a song' highlights the way in which inserted lyrics, such as those found in the *Remede*, are something to be observed and commented upon by the *dit* as such, while Cerquiglini's reference to parody hints at the potential for the dominant literary form to cast a critical or ironic light upon the 'exterior' element – songs, letters, or whatever – in relation to which it defines itself. As we examine Hope's advice in more detail, we should bear in mind that the *Remede*, like the *Voir-Dit*, is a poem that brings two modes of discourse, not only into harmony (to form a varied but unified text) but also into conflict. Such conflict is integral to courtly love poetry, and in the *Remede* as in the *jeux-partis*, it takes the form of the tension between transcendence (or idealism) and physicality (or pragmatism).

Glynnis Cropp, who refers to the lyrics in the *Remede* as 'pleasant diversion and consolation', argues that the purpose of the 'dialogue form' so popular among late medieval French poets is, as in the *Consolatio*, 'to turn negative thoughts into positive thinking, to remedy sickness of mind and spirit, and to establish a measure of control on life'.[129] Hugh of St. Victor sees a certain legitimacy in 'entertainments' because 'temperato motu naturalis calor nutritur in corpore, et laetitia animus reparatur' (*Didascalicon* II.27),[130] but later he classes songs, poems and other such things as inferior sub-species of the arts: 'appendentia artium sunt quae tantum ad philosophiam spectant'; they touch the profundities of the true arts only in a 'sparsim et confuse' manner, so that 'quicumque ad scientiam pertingere cupit, si relicta

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[128] Hugh of St. Victor, *Hugonis de Sancto Victore Didascalicon de Studio Legendi, a critical text*, ed. by Charles Henry Buttimer (*Stuides in Medieval and Renaissance Latin*, X) (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1939). Translations are taken from Hugh of St. Victor, *The Didascalicon*, ed. and trans. by Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961). 'The work of the artificer is to put together things disjoined or to disjoin those put together...For the earth cannot create the heaven', (Buttimer, p. 16; Taylor, p. 55).
[129] Cropp, 'Boethius and the *Consolatio*', p. 31.
[130] 'By temperate motion natural heat is stimulated in the body and by enjoyment the mind is refreshed', (Buttimer, p. 44; Taylor, p. 79).

veritate artium reliquis se implicare voluerit, materiam laboris...plurimam inveniat et fructum exiguum' (*Didascalicon* III.4).[131] The therapeutic effects of music should not be mistaken for a substitute for the actual, hard-to-swallow consolation contained in Philosophy's (and Hope's) more prosaic speeches.

In Boethius' dialogue, the aim of the songs is to 'establish a measure of control on life' in order, finally, to relinquish it, and to seek a very different form of happiness from the one sought at the outset of the dialogue. Marenbon believes that Lady Philosophy is 'unable to establish by reasoning a fully satisfactory position', and that she uses poetry 'as a way of adumbrating truths that she cannot capture through straightforward philosophical reasoning'; he points out, further, that 'her frame of reference in looking beyond philosophical reasoning [in the *metra*] remains resolutely pagan and Neoplatonic'.[132] It may be, however, that this 'pagan' orientation of the lyrics is intended to suggest their limitations, and to delimit their role as soothing 'entertainments': the identification between such entertainment and non-Christian motifs may well be a deliberate attempt to suggest that the 'aesthetic' mode is a distraction from the truth, and one which Boethius must gradually learn to put aside, until Philosophy is able to communicate her final and most difficult lessons in dense prose, to which the prisoner attends in silence.

The absence of a lyric at the end of the *Remede* gives us a hint that something similar is going on in this poem, but Machaut's technique differs from that of Boethius in several important ways. Primarily, it is less direct, and invests more empathically in the 'false' joys of love and aestheticism, in an attempt to communicate the Boethian lessons to a readership implicitly assumed to be (like the

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[131] 'The appendages of the arts, however, are only tangential to philosophy...Scattered and confused...The man wishing to attain knowledge, yet who willingly deserts truth in order to entangle himself in these mere by-products of the arts, will find...exceedingly great pains and meagre fruit', (Buttimer, pp. 54-5; Taylor, p. 88).
[132] Marenbon, *Boethius*, p. 162.

author himself, perhaps) less receptive to those lessons than was the prisoner in the *Consolatio*. In the next section, I will look at Hope's rehearsal of Boethian doctrines, and consider the ways in which Machaut re-casts these in order both to make them more accessible and to suggest certain subtle distinctions between Boethius' Philosophy and his own Hope.

*The Promise of Failure*

Hope's love lessons serve as the focal point of this tension, and this part of the *Remede* features some of Machaut's most interesting reflections on the theme of virtuous love comportment. In his *complainte*, the narrator protested to Love that she was destroying him 'pour ce que j'aim sans mesfaire' (1285),[133] a rather cryptic protest which I think was intended to imply that he *could* have succeeded in love if only he had been willing to do something morally wrong. The 'something' would presumably have been an act of calculated seduction, and we have already seen how Hope contradicts this by saying that such calculating lotharios always 'mesfaire', and are found out, sooner or later. Similarly, she tells him that 'c'est grant honte et grant desfaus' (1615)[134] to torture himself as he is doing, 'Puis que tu n'es mauvais ne faus / Envers ta dame que tu aimmes' (1616-7).[135] Her point is that a virtuous lover should never have any cause to be unhappy, and since this same point is reiterated in the two songs which frame her section of the poem, it comes across as the most notable and important thing she has to say.

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[133] 'Because I love without transgression', pp. 238-9.
[134] 'It's a great shame and a great mistake', pp. 256-7.
[135] 'Since you are neither cruel nor false to the lady you love', pp. 256-7.

Being virtuous in love consists, as we have seen, partly in being sincere when expressing one's feelings. Paradoxically, it consists even more in reining in those feelings to make sure they do not overstep the bounds of decency. To put it another way, it involves keeping one's feelings on the level of intangible virtue and goodness, rather than on that of physicality and desire. Hope tells the narrator that 'tout le mendre guerredon / De qu'elle te puist faire don, / Dont elle a sans fin et sans nombre' (1643-5)[136] would be worth more than he could deserve if he served her 'autant com la monarchie / De ce monde porra durer' (1650-1).[137] The rewards of love, according to these lines, are un-quantifiable because they are not of this world. They are also identified with the rewards of virtue: of the lady, Hope says further, 'biens en li tant s'abandonne / Que plus en a, quant plus en donne, / Mais que Bonne Amour s'i consente' (1657-9),[138] the last line quoted serving to reassure us that the lady's generosity must be of the sort approved of by *Good* Love, that is to say, she is not dispensing sexual favours. Rather, she is practising generosity. This virtue is the antithesis of avarice, which the narrator has already spoken of twice: first in his praise of the lady's largesse, then in the *complainte*, where this vice was equated with the golden head of the Fortune-statue. Later, speaking of Fortune's earthly riches, Hope says, 'Cilz qui plus en a, plus li faut' (2743),[139] and affirms that there are not enough riches in the world to satisfy a covetous person. In short, the lady, and the amorous gifts she dispenses, are forcefully distinguished from any sort of worldly 'goods', and are identified instead with transcendent Christian virtues, which provide inexhaustible moral wealth.

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[136] 'The very least reward she is able to give you, of which she has endless and numberless ones', pp. 258-9.

[137] 'As long as the kingdom of this world endures', pp. 258-9.

[138] 'Goodness so abounds in her that the more she gives, the more she has, as long as Good Love consents', pp. 258-9.

[139] 'The more one has of them, the more one needs', pp. 320-1.

Although ostensibly Hope comes to offer the narrator a promise of future good fortune, in her *chant roial* she makes it very clear that a lover should not desire anything beyond the familiar 'internal' joys of love. He who has these things:

> de tous biens a a comble mesure,
>
> Plus qu'autres cuers n'en saroit desirer;
>
> Ne d'autre merci rouver
>
> N'a desir, cuer, ne beance,
>
> Pour ce qu'il a Souffisance;
>
> Ne je ne sçay nommer cy
>
> Nulle autre merci (2005-11).[140]

There is a coyness about these lines. Other hearts, apparently, would not *know how*, or dare, to desire anything more than these gifts, and a good lover certainly should not even have the *longing* for anything more. Nor is Hope able to 'nommer cy nulle autre merci', a phrase which might simply mean that she cannot imagine a greater form of happiness than sufficiency – a sentiment she will express more clearly later on – but which in this context suggests a prudish inability, or unwillingness, to 'name' the 'other kinds' of happiness, which overstep the bounds of propriety.

Before leaving her pupil to his own devices, Hope sings a *balladelle* which reiterates many of the doctrines of the earlier song, insisting that to be in love is a sweet and happy life, 'Qui bien la scet maintenir' (2859),[141] the word 'maintenir' stressing the importance of *maintaining* oneself in a condition which 'norrie / Est en

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[140] 'Has all blessings in abundance, more than another heart would dare [or could] desire; nor does he have the heart, desire or longing to implore any other reward, because he has Sufficiency; nor can I name here any other reward to ask for', pp. 278-9.

[141] 'If one knows how to live it', pp. 326-7.

amoureus desir' (2861-2).[142] The heart thus forced, by Love, 'a souffrir' (2871)[143] and enriched by her 'De souffisance' (2890),[144] is also made 'saouls de merir, / Sans merir' (2878-9),[145] an ambiguous phrase which could mean 'fulfilled without fulfilment', which is effectively how Wimsatt and Kibler translate it, or 'fulfilled with a reward, without having deserved it'. The latter translation seems the more appropriate, but Machaut may also be suggesting something of the fundamental insatiability of desire, and of the self-defeating contradictions within the doctrine being preached by Hope. Love, she says, 'puet assevir / Chascun qui li rueve ou prïe / De s'aïe, / Sans son tresor amenrir'[146] (2883-6). The word 'assevir' is more likely to mean something like 'comfort' or, better still, 'satiate', than simply 'help', and it may be that such comfort satiates without depleting Love's treasure precisely because it gives the lover something without really giving him anything; it satiates without sating. This is exactly what Hope and the narrator have said about Fortune – that she gives without really giving, and without having anything to give – and indeed it is in this sense that the 'grace surpassing desert' moral must be understood once it has been transferred from a theological to an erotic setting.

What made sense in the mouth of Lady Philosophy when she was consoling a man who was about to go to his death does not necessarily retain its coherence when it is said by Hope to a sorrowing lover. Philosophy represented Boethius' own love of wisdom, the learning and the rational faculties that had served him so well throughout his life, and to which, naturally, he turned in the end for comfort. That Hope is also an *internal* characteristic of the *Remede*-narrator is implied many times, though quite subtly, in Machaut's poem. She sometimes identifies herself with the lover, telling

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[142] 'Is sustained by amorous desire', pp. 326-7.
[143] 'To suffer', pp. 328-9.
[144] 'With sufficiency', pp. 328-9.
[145] 'Fulfilled without fulfilment', pp. 328-9.
[146] 'Can help everyone who requests and invokes her aid without diminishing her treasure', pp. 328-9.

him, 'tes besoignes seront moies, / Car je t'aim et faire le doy' (2092-3),[147] and later, calling him 'Amis' (2148), she agrees to answer his request that she identify herself, 'Car ce qui te plait, il me plait' (2150).[148] The narrator's apparent ignorance of certain things, such as Hope's identity or the lady's reaction to his hasty departure, seems at first sight like evidence to the contrary: if Hope originates in his own mind, how can she know about the lady's reaction? In fact, however, the lover's ignorance on these subjects should be equated with his ignorance of the various moral precepts Hope recites to him, or to the lessons Philosophy teaches the initially ignorant Boethius. The lover's despair causes Hope to say, 'tu tiens ta dame pour fole' (1825),[149] and the 'news' she gives him about Love having informed the lady of his feelings is really just his own realisation that, since this lady is not a fool, and since (as he has already told us) she is filled with all virtues, she will know as well as he does that he has committed no 'mesfait', but has instead revealed his feelings in the most succinct and effective way possible. Hope says that it is 'Love' who has effected this realisation, which signifies that the narrator's love for the lady has provoked this revealing behaviour.

Similarly, his conversation with Hope represents the reawakening of his own sense of optimism, a process easily recognisable to anyone who has fallen into a state of despair and then calmly talked themselves out of it. Hope is the voice in his head that implores him to 'pais faces de ceste guerre / Qu'empris has contre toy meesmes' (2070-1),[150] and just as his sorrow at being victimised by Fortune is self-inflicted, so the cure of Hope is self-administered. When the lover says to Hope, 'je voy bien tout en apert / Que cilz qui vous pert, il se pert' (2345-6),[151] he recognises the 'apert'

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[147] 'Your concerns will be mine, because I should and do love you', pp. 282-3.
[148] 'For whatever pleases you, pleases me', pp. 286-7.
[149] 'You take your lady for a fool', pp. 268-9.
[150] 'Make peace in this war you're waging against yourself', pp. 282-3.
[151] 'I see clearly that he who loses you is lost himself', pp. 296-7.

manifestation of Hope as an aspect of his own being. His insistent repetition of 'pert' emphasises the dependence of this manifestation upon his state of mind. 'Je sui invisible', Hope had said earlier, 'Et quant je vueil, je sui visible' (2281-2),[152] meaning both that she alternates between existence and non-existence (for she features in the poem only when she *is* visible), and that her existence comes about as an act of 'vueil', will, namely that of the person whose hope she signifies.

To anticipate a later stage in this discussion, it is extremely telling that although Hope reappears to comfort the narrator on his journey back to the lady's household, and again during the exchange of rings (clearly a symbolic event, not a literal one), she does *not* reappear at the end of the poem, when the lover is once more thrown into despair by his lady's standoffishness. The personification, *Esperance*, is pointedly not mentioned at all in this last section of the poem, although the more impersonal 'espoirs' (4293) is said still to provide comfort to the lover when needed. When Machaut refers to *espoirs* in the final lines of the poem, the allegorical narrative has effectively been concluded, and given the prominence of *Esperance* in the *Remede*'s mid-section, her absence from the climax of that narrative – the protagonist's moment of greatest need – is conspicuous. Hope either comes from within the lover, or it does not come at all.

Kay acknowledges that 'although *Esperance* promises constancy she is not herself constant, and although she offers a consistent attitude to life it is not necessarily the one we would choose to inhabit'.[153] Although the 'we' here seems a little presumptuous, in fact Kay has encapsulated the sense of how difficult it is to accept – and, more importantly, live in accordance with – the 'consistent attitude to life' offered by the Boethian doctrines espoused in Hope's discourse. Kay further suggests that the coming and going of Hope in this poem signifies that the lover-poet-

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[152] 'I am invisible; yet when I want to be, I am visible', pp. 292-3.
[153] Kay, 'Touching Singularity', pp. 33-4.

narrator 'needs just enough hope to be able to articulate his feelings, but not so much as to impair the range and virtuosity of his poetry',[154] and this ties into Kay's belief that poets like Machaut were in fact re-writing, and in a sense rejecting, Boethius' *Consolatio*. They 'wanted a consolation that was more consoling, more physical, which made more concessions to the here and now of the embodied individual…that allowed them full rein to experience affliction, but not so much that it rendered them inarticulate'.[155]

In other words, Machaut incorporates as much of Boethian philosophy as he needs to in order to assuage the lover's despair and enable him to go on composing poetry, but stops short when this philosophy threatens to render such composition – that is, the expression of the embodied individual's affliction through varied and virtuosic poetry – immoral and redundant. The partial nature of Machaut's investment in the *Consolatio* is betrayed by the wavering presence and authority of Hope. This is a compelling reading, but one which openly privileges the tormenting vagaries of carnal desire, and the expression and perpetuation thereof in verse, over the disciplining of this desire by rational faculties which are figured, in this poem, as being guided by faith in the Christian God. I would argue that Machaut invests more completely in these Boethian principles than Kay gives him credit for, and that the occasional untrustworthiness of Hope must be understood in relation to her status as an *internal* characteristic of the lover himself. This lover is not as good a philosopher as Boethius, nor is he quite so carnal as the hero of the *Rose*, and the characterisation of Hope contributes to this overall impression of recognisably human ambivalence.

The more we learn about Hope, the more we sense the limitations of her power and perspective. In describing her own nature, Hope tells her patient that she is able to respond to lovers' *thoughts*, without their having to say anything, and that

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[154] Kay, 'Touching Singularity', p. 35.
[155] Kay, 'Touching Singularity', p. 36.

'aler ne me faut ne courir / Loing ne pres pour eulz secourir' (2189-90).[156] In itself this seems like another indication of her 'internal' character, but it is more than that as well, for Hope goes on to explain, in a long and dazzlingly effective passage, *why* she does not have to go far in order to comfort her friends. She begins with a forty-six line sentence (2195-2240) describing the process whereby the sun lights up the earth in springtime, in order finally to reach the conclusion that she herself resembles the sun in her ability to spread rays of hope into many different places at once.

For the sake of concision I will not analyse this passage in detail, but merely point out that its scale and elaborateness are intended to attract our attention: this comparison between the seasonal rejuvenation of living things and Hope's effect upon lovers is *very* important. Hope is insistent and repetitive in her focus on metaphors of germination and flowering. Of the lovers to whom she grants her light, she says, 'la racine qui entee / Est dedens leur cuer d'amours germe / Fleur, fueille, fruit, et nouvel germe' (2244-6);[157] she makes 'un cuer flourir / En toute joie, et fais mourir / En li doulour; car je l'esserbe, / Si que de mal n'i demeure herbe' (2265-8).[158] Hope's claim that there is no suffering in love is thus associated with her own role as the dispeller of sorrow and the bringer of joy. As she said in her *chant roial*, hope attracts 'Joie et Bonne Adventure' (1996), and now we learn that the joy and good fortune spoken of are comparable to those enjoyed by all living things when winter gives way to spring.

It is not hard to see that there is a flip-side to all this: if Hope is to be equated with spring, this means that the rejuvenation being described is merely a stage in a cycle, and one which will inevitably give way again to sorrow and decay. In a poetic *débat* with 'Phelipe', Thibaut de Champagne is challenged as to why he is not singing

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[156] 'I don't need to run or go far or near to help them', pp. 288-9.
[157] 'The shoot grafted onto their heart buds with flowers, leaves, fruit, and new seeds', pp. 288-9.
[158] 'A heart flower in complete joy and cause sorrow to die out; for I cultivate it until no weed of sorrow remains', pp. 288-9.

about love when 'Estez revient et la sesons florie, / que tous li monz doit estre bauz et liez' ('Par Dieu, sire de Champagne et de Brie' 6-7), and after ferociously denigrating love for being false and irrational, Thibaut concludes by warning, 'Phelipe, encor venra autre sesons' (58).[159] In the *Joli Buisson de Jonece*, Plaisence declares, 'Je souhede qu'il fust toutdis estés' (*Joli Buisson* 4639),[160] Desir begins his wish, 'Je souhede toutdis joie et lieche' (4691),[161] while Dous Semblant stipulates that such joy should continue, not just for a year, but 'jusqu'a dont que Diex pour nous jugier / Vorra cha jus ses signes envoiier' (4922-3).[162] This last wish spells out the concept of 'Judgement Day' more emphatically than one would expect from a mere throwaway reference, and indeed it would be hard, when reading this passage, not to think of the substantial passage near the start of the poem where Froissart, after saying that youth does not last and that 'Moult vaut une bonne saisons' (775),[163] warns us of God's coming, and 'la sentensce qu'il fera, / Quant cascune et cascuns vera / Son jugement cler et ouvert' (802-4);[164] and in case we have forgotten about this, Froissart repeats the warning in his concluding *lai*, saying, 'Que diras, / Quant veras / Ton Signour / Au darrain jour?' (5333-6).[165] These are commonplace ideas, but the way in which Machaut signals the temporality of Hope's spring-like powers evinces greater subtlety than the two other examples just cited.

In the *Remede*, Hope tells the lover of 'li homs sauvages' (*Remede* 2698)[166] who laughs and dances when he sees rain, because he hopes that good weather will succeed the storm. She invites her pupil to emulate such behaviour, but she also tells

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[159] Thibaut, *Lyrics*, pp. 216-221. 'Summer is coming, the season of flowers, when everyone ought to be glad and joyful...Philip, another season will yet come.'

[160] Froissart, *Joli Buisson*, p. 209. 'I wish it were always summer.'

[161] Froissart, *Joli Buisson*, p. 211. 'I wish for perpetual joy and mirth.'

[162] Froissart, *Joli Buisson*, p. 220. 'Until God wishes to manifest himself on Earth in order to judge us.'

[163] Froissart, *Joli Buisson*, p. 73. Literally: 'A good season is worth much.' The line conveys both the necessity of spending one's youth wisely, and the sense that youth is good in its 'proper season'.

[164] Froissart, *Joli Buisson*, p. 74. 'The sentence he will pass, when everyone will behold his clear and manifest judgement.'

[165] Froissart, *Joli Buisson*, p. 235. 'What will you say when you see your Lord on the last day?'

[166] 'The wild man', pp. 318-9.

him that 'proprement Fortune est moustre / De maleürté a venir' (2706-7).[167] Love, she says,

> qui maint cuer aveugle
>
> D'eus et de cuer te fist aveugle,
>
> Si que tu ne pensoies mie
>
> A mener Jamais autre vie,
>
> Qu'elle ne te faisoit present,
>
> Fors seulement du temps present (2711-6).[168]

This implicit warning that the narrator's imminent happiness will surely change back into misery is part of Hope's effort to instil prudence, a vital ally against Fortune, in the lover. The joys of love are limited by the same temporal cycles as the seasons and all other worldly things. Hope is counselling not just the narrator, but us as well, to think beyond the 'temps present', and to 'regarder la fin des choses' (2718),[169] with respect to the poem as much as to our own lives.

Prudence – considering both what has come before and what is yet to come – is vital, not only to the lover's success in his quest, but also to our success in reading the poem. Mary Carruthers notes that memory was considered, by medieval thinkers, to be 'an integral part of the virtue of prudence, that which makes moral judgement possible', and that memory – or the 'memorialising' of things – 'was what literature, in a fundamental sense, was for'.[170] The *Remede* must be read, not just as a sequence of discrete set-pieces, but in quite a subtle way as the story of a man who lacks

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[167] 'Good Fortune is properly the sign of bad to come', pp. 318-9.

[168] 'Who blinds many a heart, blinded your eyes and heart so that you never thought of leading any other kind of life that she might give you', pp. 318-9.

[169] 'Be aware of how things turn out', pp. 318-9.

[170] Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 9.

prudence. When Hope says that she is like spring, she embodies the temporal, spring-like optimism of the narrator, but her remarks about considering the 'fin des choses' throw into relief the narrator's pained awareness of his own failure to do so. We, as readers, are supposed to observe the lover's ambiguous progress with a certain detachment: we are invited to think beyond the ostensible, *present* meaning of the 'spring' simile, and recognise its darker implications, both at this point in the narrative, and especially later on when things go wrong.

As Fortune (impersonated by Philosophy) says in the *Consolatio*, 'Licet anno terrae vultum nunc floribus frugibusque redimire, nunc nimbis frigoribusque confundere...Nos ad constantiam nostris moribus alienam inexpleta hominum cupiditas alligabit?' (*Consolatio* II.P2.23-8).[171] By making Hope characterise herself in seasonal terms, Machaut is adding another layer of Boethian allusion: Hope is not only Lady Philosophy, she is also Fortune. If she does not explicitly warn the narrator of her temporality, as Boethius' Fortune does, this is because she represents only the *upward* turn of the wheel. I have spoken before of the lover's (and love poet's) limited, biased perspective, and Hope may be seen as the ultimate representation of this idea. As far as she is concerned, she represents spring and the promise of future happiness; but from our point of view, her descriptions of Fortune, coupled with her extensive reiteration of Boethian ideas, expose her limitations. Imbs expresses it very well when, having acknowledged the identification between Hope and Desire, he suggests that:

> le poète, qui en ressent vivement les impulsions, cherche à en freiner l'élan par la douce espérance, qui est, semble-t-il, la forme concrète et apaisée que

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[171] 'The year may weave a crown of flowers and fruits for the face of the earth, and then confuse and obscure her features with rain and frost...But I, shall I be bound by the insatiable desire of men to a constancy quite foreign to my nature?', pp. 182-3.

prend l'espoir quand son objet se rapproche. La question sera de savoir s'il réussira toujours à serrer le frein, puisque l'espérance elle-même peut faiblir avec l'éloignement temporel de son accomplissement.[172]

As with so many personifications, it is easy to forget that Hope is only a manifestation of a particular mood which depends for its existence on particular circumstances. Hope is, as it were, Desire in a good mood. As an emblem of temporality, she is well versed in the ways of Fortune, but focuses on the fickle goddess' more attractive, deceptive face.

When Lady Philosophy asks, 'quid est aliud fugax quam futurae quoddam calamitatis indicium?' (II.P1.44-5),[173] and counsels prudence and foresight just as Machaut's Hope does, she follows this up with the warning, 'Si ventis vela committeres, non quo voluntas peteret sed quo flatus impellerent, promoveres' (II.P1.55-6).[174] As we turn to that part of Hope's discourse which is most directly concerned with the topic of Fortune, we shall see that she dispenses this same piece of wisdom, but specifically with reference to *love* as the 'shifting sea' upon which the narrator has chosen to sail. Philosophy's point was that if you depend on Fortune's gifts, you must move in time with her wheel, and ultimately her intent was to recommend dependence on God as a more stable alternative. Hope will now say the same about love, and will even refer to the greater dependability of God as a protector of the virtuous, but will explicitly *not* discourage her pupil from loving. We will need to consider why she does not take this final step, which would seem the logical one to take after painting such a picture of love.

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[172] Imbs, *Le Voir-Dit*, p. 65. 'The poet, who feels very keenly the impulses [of hope and desire], seeks to rein them in through Sweet Hope, who seems to be the concrete, appeased form hope takes when its object draws near. The question will be whether he succeeds in keeping a tight control of the reins, given that hope itself can weaken as its satisfaction gets further away in time.'

[173] 'What is this fleeting goddess but a sure sign of misery to come?', pp. 182-3.

[174] 'If you spread your sails for the wind, you must go where the wind takes you, not where you wish to go', pp. 184-5.

The *Remede*-narrator, having listened patiently and uncritically, is lavish in his praise of Hope, and thanks her for the lessons she has taught him so far, which he briefly summarises. Then he politely alerts her to an omission: 'Mais riens n'avés dit de Fortune / Qui ainssi le monde fortune, / Qui n'est, n'onques ne fu seüre' (*Remede* 2379-81).[175] The narrator goes on for a few lines describing Fortune's treacherous behaviour towards lovers, and his own inability to defend himself against her. The most obvious purpose of this signalling of the absence of Fortune from Hope's philosophy is to occasion the 'remede de Fortune' section which follows, but it also casts a new light – or rather, a new darkness – on the things Hope has been saying until now. She has told the lover that his situation is improving, that love is an entirely happy experience, and that she herself is the force which rejuvenates happiness. The narrator's comment that Hope has not taken Fortune into account exposes the one-sidedness of these lessons: what will become of the promised security and happiness when Fortune destroys them, as she inevitably will?

Although his spirits are lifted, the narrator's main problem has not been addressed, for the good fortune which, as he now knows, he currently possesses, will not serve as a remedy for the misfortune which he knows (from experience) will come later. 'Je m'en sçay bien a quoy tenir' (2385),[176] he complains, for when he remembers the violence of Fortune's assault upon him, 'Ay tel paour que tuit mi membre / En fremissent quant il m'en membre' (2389-90).[177] Here we see memory ('souvenir' (2386)) playing the opposite role to that normally advocated by the code of *fin' amor*: just as the knight in the *Behaigne* knew he could never trust his lady again, so the *Remede*-narrator's memory of the past provokes fears about the future, which taint his present joy.

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[175] 'But you have said nothing about Fortune, who makes the world's fortune, who is not and never was constant', pp. 298-9.
[176] 'I know well what to expect', pp. 298-9.
[177] 'I am so afraid that all my limbs tremble just at the thought of it', pp. 298-9.

    Although Hope's response begins, 'Ne t'en saroie / Plus dire que tu en dit as / En ta complainte que ditas' (2404-6),[178] she in fact has a lot to say on this subject. What seems like a modest claim of ignorance is really just another indication that Hope can only tell the lover what he already knows, and indeed the essence of each of her lessons on Fortune can be found at some point in the *complainte*. What Hope will do now is to re-imagine that earlier portrait of the fickle goddess in more optimistic terms, but this section of the poem is important, not because it feeds into the characterisation of Hope as a force of optimism, but for the way in which it suggests a very different view of erotic love to the one Hope has expounded so far.

    Hope's teachings are modelled closely on those of Boethius, and Machaut signals this debt by casting the narrator's lessons in the form of a dialogue. Hope questions the narrator on which possessions are of more value, those that can be lost or those that can't. The answer to such a question is, as the narrator says, 'ligiere' (2453),[179] but Hope's phrasing of the Boethian principle – especially her references to Nature and Reason – casts an ambiguous light on the rest of the poem:

> La beneürté souveraine
>
> Et la felicité certaine
>
> Sont souverain bien de Nature,
>
> Qui use de Raison la pure;
>
> Et tels biens, on ne les puet perdre;
>
> Pour ce comparer ne aërdre
>
> Ne s'i puent cil de Fortune.
>
> Car on voit, et chose est commune,

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[178] 'I cannot tell you more about her [Fortune] than you said in the *complainte* you composed', pp. 300-1.

[179] 'Easy', pp. 302-3.

> Que qui plus en a, plus en pert.
>
> Si que je te moustre en appert
>
> Qu'en Fortune n'a riens seür (2467-77).[180]

The references in the last few lines to the 'commune' and 'appert' nature of Fortune – that is, to the fact that 'everybody knows' that Fortune is like this – should be noted. It may already be obvious that Hope is reiterating her earlier point about the ignorance of 'li mondes', but this is not the time to explore the point in depth. If we look back at the first four lines of the passage, we can see that they repeatedly assert that the 'goods' being spoken of are the 'souverain' and 'certain' ones, that is, they are above *all* other goods, and they possess *stability*. What I wish to suggest is that such goods cannot be identified with the rewards to be gained in an erotic love affair, and my strongest argument for this is that love is associated with Fortune and instability; therefore, logically, one might think that a cure for Fortune also constitutes a cure for love. The sovereign happiness referred to here is said to depend on 'Raison la pure', and we have seen before how Machaut characterises Reason as the ultimate cure for the instability of the lover's situation. That the *Remede*-narrator's affair is *defined*, from beginning to end, primarily by its instability, would suggest that it is very much an affair in thrall to Fortune's wheel.

The problem with this rather negative reading is that it contradicts what Hope actually says. In the passage quoted above, the sovereign and certain goods are 'de Nature', which 'use de Raison la pure', and Nature, of course, is one of the lover's closest allies. This conjunction of Nature and Reason captures very well the essence of this poem's lesson on what it takes to be a good lover: on the one hand, you do

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[180] 'Sovereign happiness and unfailing felicity are sovereign goods of Nature, who is governed by uncorrupted Reason; and such goods cannot be lost; therefore, Fortune's goods cannot be compared to them or preferred over them. For one sees, and it's well known, that he who has the most, loses the most. Therefore I show you clearly there is nothing certain in Fortune', pp. 304-5.

what comes naturally, but on the other, you must practise virtue, which involves the use of reason. In other words, your behaviour must be governed by Nature, but tempered with Reason. Hope continues to insist that the lover's way of life is, or at least should be, defined by the stability of virtue, and not by changeability. Yet the majority of this portion of Hope's discourse – the culmination of her teachings, indeed – directly associates love with Fortune. Hope tells the lover to despise Fortune's goods and 'aies de toy la seigneurie' (2485).[181] If 'Raisons te maistre' (2486)[182] and you have 'en toy pacïence / Et la vertu de souffisance' (2487-8),[183] you will thereby attain 'beneürtés' (2489).[184] To have 'seigneurie' over *oneself* is surely to deny the 'seigneurie' of the lady to whom one is supposed to have subjected oneself, while Hope's claim that there is no impatient man 'Qui ne vousist avoir fait change / De son estat a un estrange' (2493-40)[185] seems to describe quite accurately the lover's condition as depicted in this poem. The word 'estrange' is suggestive in this context, for shortly afterwards Hope will tell the narrator that Fortune has granted him 'assés grace' (2630),[186] 'Quant elle t'a – se bien le gloses – / Fait user des estranges choses' (2631-2).[187] The impatient man sounds like both a lover and a slave to the 'estranges choses' of Fortune.

The *Remede*-narrator is indeed a man who always wishes for something else, something he does not already possess, and which can therefore be taken away from him even if he does manage to attain it. It is tempting to read the phrase 'se bien le gloses' as serving a purpose other than facilitating the rhyme scheme. The meaning is innocent enough: Hope wishes the lover to understand that his fortunes in this world are 'estranges choses', that they are not *properly* his, and she wishes to make sure that

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[181] 'Be your own master', pp. 304-5.
[182] 'Reason rules you', pp. 306-7.
[183] 'Patience within you, and the virtue of self-sufficiency', pp. 306-7.
[184] 'Happiness', pp. 306-7.
[185] 'Who wouldn't want to trade his position for something unknown', pp. 306-7.
[186] 'Sufficient blessing', pp. 314-5.
[187] 'When she – if you understand me well – gave you gifts that were not yours', pp. 314-5.

he, and we, do not interpret her statement in a more worldly, prosaic sense. It must be remembered, however, that when the narrator says that Fortune has been unkind to him he is referring to his fortunes as a lover, and that Hope must logically be speaking of these fortunes when she uses the phrase 'estranges choses'. Is she delicately suggesting to him that he cannot rightfully expect to win any stable form of happiness as a lover, any more than he could as a glutton or a miser? This is certainly Philosophy's point when, in the *Consolatio*, she tells her pupil, 'Numquam tua faciet esse fortuna quae a te natura rerum fecit aliena' (*Consolatio* II.P5.39-40).[188]

Hope states explicitly, and at some length, that to be in love is to be in thrall to Fortune. In response to the lover's complaints, she tells him, 'quant tu enpreïs l'amer, / Tu te meïs enmi la mer / Entre les perilleuse ondes' (2563-5),[189] and he has thus put himself 'en servage / De Fortune' (2571-2),[190] whose court no one enters 'Qu'il ne couveingne brief et court / Qu'il face sa franchise en serve' (2574-5).[191] Now that he has enslaved himself to Fortune, 'Il couvient par force' (2586)[192] that, as Hope tells him, 'a ses meurs tu te conformes / En tous cas et en toutes formes, / Puis que tu yes de ses maignies' (2589-91).[193] So much for moral responsibility and 'being one's own master'. But in altering the lover's state, Hope says, Fortune merely 'fait ce qu'elle doit' (2529).[194] This is the nature of her wheel, which 'pour toy seul ne fu pas faite, / Ne pour toy ne sera deffaite' (2555-6).[195] This last statement emphasises that Hope is dispensing *commonplace* wisdom about Fortune, who 'se fait congnoistre / Entre les

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[188] 'Fortune will never make yours what nature has made otherwise', pp. 202-3.
[189] 'When you began to love, you set out to sea amongst perilous waves', pp. 310-1.
[190] 'In the service of Fortune', pp. 310-1.
[191] 'Unless he immediately enslaves his freedom', pp. 310-1.
[192] 'It is necessary that', pp. 310-1.
[193] 'You must conform in every shape and manner to her behaviour, since you are of her household', pp. 310-1.
[194] 'Does what she must', pp. 308-9.
[195] 'Was not built for you alone', pp. 310-1.

mondains et en cloistre' (2557-8);[196] that is to say, Fortune's nature is well known to all, irrespective of class or education.

I have been arguing, in this chapter, that Hope's perspective is biased, and that her values only hold good when she is present; they become meaningless in her absence. The same is true of Fortune: 'retien de m'escole', says Hope,

> Que la ou elle est, si bien sont;
>
> Et s'elle s'en part, il s'en vont,
>
> Et cui elle aide, il est aidiés,
>
> Qui elle laist, il est laissiés,
>
> Ce m'est avis; car par son cerne
>
> Au jour d'ui chascuns se gouverne (2646-52).[197]

Hope reverts from visibility to invisibility, from presence to absence, because she is merely a representation of the narrator's own emotional state; Fortune is a representation of the things of this world, whose existence is transient, and which, to put it in the terms Hope uses, are only with us for as long as they are with us, which is inevitably a finite amount of time. In the last two lines quoted above, Hope says that everybody lives within the circle of Fortune, which conjures up an image of the world, containing and revolving the entire human race. Again, the point is that our perspective on the world is determined by the mutability of Fortune and her upside-down values, which implies that it is possible to step *outside* this perspective and live according to a *different* set of values, one which transcends the 'cerne' in which we all live.

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[196] 'Who makes her power known to monk and layman alike', pp. 310-1.

[197] 'Remember from my teaching that there where she is are her blessings; and if she leaves, they go as well; and whoever she helps, is helped, and whoever she abandons is abandoned, I believe; because everybody today lives within her circle', pp. 314-7.

It is to this alternate value system that Hope refers shortly before her *balladelle* and departure. She introduces it when she describes perfect happiness as the:

> bien parfait et souverain
>
> Qui vient dou Maistre Premerain,
>
> Qui est fin et commencement,
>
> Trebles en un conjointement,
>
> Uns en .iii. et un tout seul bien,
>
> Ou il ne faille onques rien (2791-6).[198]

Hope has been telling the lover that he must spurn Fortune and try instead to attain goods which he cannot lose, which cannot be taken away from him. The last line of the passage just quoted states that the Christian God, who is 'un tout seul bien', is the source of such goods. God is 'fin et commencement', beginning and end at once, a plural within a singular, and vice versa. Fortune and Love are, as we have seen, characterised by oxymora and contradictions, their parodic reflections of the nature of God highlighting their status as 'false gods', 'false masters', who demand a service similar in appearance, but essentially different, to that of the true God.

This admonishment to seek happiness in Christian virtue – for that, clearly, is what the passage constitutes – is qualified by Hope's disorienting claim that:

> Je ne vueil mie que tu penses
>
> Que d'amer te face desfances;
>
> Ains vueil et te pri chierement

---

[198] 'The sovereign and perfect good that comes from the First Master, who is beginning and end, three united in one, one in three, and one single good, in whom nothing is lacking', pp. 322-3.

> Que tu aimmes tres loyaument;
>
> Qu'ami vray ne sont pas en compte
>
> Des biens Fortune, qui bien conte,
>
> Mes entre les biens de vertu (2797-2803).[199]

These lines would seem to contradict my central argument about the portrayal of love in the *Remede de Fortune*. Hope even appears to be going back on what she has said shortly before this: love is not really governed by Fortune, but is quite capable of granting the same kind of stability and happiness as does the service of God. Machaut is here alluding to the *Consolatio*, where Philosophy says, 'amicorum vero quod sanctissimum quidem genus est, non in fortuna sed in virtute numeratur, reliquum vero vel potentiae causa vel delectationis assumitur' (*Consolatio* III.P2.34-7).[200] Heinrichs dismisses Hope's claim in the *Remede* as 'simply a lie', because erotic love is clearly to be counted among those 'goods' Philosophy identifies as having *delectatio* as their goal.[201] This is close to the truth, but perhaps a little too harsh and un-nuanced. Although Hope might reasonably be figured as deceptive, it could also be argued that she is trying to coax the narrator towards a more transcendent and rewarding approach to love than he has so far been taking, just as Genius will do with his pupil in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. She is talking to him on his level, but in the hope of directing him to a higher one. Again we see the importance of the learning curve, the *way* by which the consolee is led to greater understanding. Machaut may be trying to suggest that Hope is not only a manifestation of 'Desire in a good mood', but also the impulse within the lover which shows his potential for finding a more

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[199] 'I don't want you to think I'm forbidding you to love; instead, I'm wanting and sincerely urging you to love loyally, for in proper reckoning true lovers are not counted among the goods of Fortune, but among the goods of virtue', pp. 322-5.

[200] 'The most sacred kind of good is that of friendship, a good reckoned not a matter of fortune but of virtue, while any other kind is chosen for the sake of power or delight', pp. 234-5.

[201] Heinrichs, 'Lovers' Consolations', p. 101.

stable form of hope – hope, that is, for the kind of happiness that results from inner virtue.

The key term here, of course, is 'vertu', for it is the practice of virtue within love, rather than any kind of erotic success, which, according to Hope, can garner the true happiness being sought. Rather than giving up on love, the narrator should love 'tres loyaument': again we come back to this concept, loyalty, which stood for virtue in general in the *Behaigne*, and which is here exalted as the key to a lover's success. If he lives virtuously because of the woman he loves, then the love which moves him to do so will be counted, by anyone who 'bien conte', among the stable and lasting goods of virtue, rather than those of Fortune. Of course, the 'if' at the start of that sentence is crucial. The sense in which Hope intends this promise to be understood is clarified in the following lines. Maintain a true heart all your life, she says:

> Car grant joie et gloire en aras.
>
> Et loyauté ja ne despite,
>
> Se ça jus n'en as la merite,
>
> Qu'elle ne puet estre perdue
>
> Qu'a .c. doubles ne soit rendue.
>
> Se cy ne l'est, c'est chose voire,
>
> Si l'iert elle en siege de gloire (2806-12).[202]

The word 'joie' in the first line might, at that point, be taken to refer to the erotic 'joie' sought by the courtly lover, but it is coupled with 'gloire' which, as we see from the last line quoted, Hope then identifies as the glory of heavenly salvation. The

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[202] 'For then you will have joy and glory. And never despise Loyalty, even if you gain nothing by it here below, for it can never be lost, but will be rewarded a hundred times over. If it's not repaid here, truly it will be in the seat of glory', pp. 324-5.

lines in between explicitly effect this transition. Loyalty is the good that cannot be lost, the 'remede de Fortune', and whereas the lover's service, his courtly 'virtue', may never be rewarded – indeed, *can* never be sufficiently rewarded – the true virtue of *loyalty* cannot fail to be rewarded a hundred times over, by God. In a sense, these few lines tell us all we need to know about Hope's teachings on love: it is a thing of this world, and therefore cannot provide any permanent satisfaction in this life, but if it is pursued virtuously, then the virtue thus attained will garner rewards far greater than any that are attainable within an amorous affair. Boiled down, the message has nothing to do with love. Whatever path we choose, we should live virtuously, because only thus can we attain fulfilment.

Attwood describes this poem as an '*ars poeticae* dont le titre rappelle le *Remedia Amoris* d'Ovide mais en transférant la prééminence à Fortune, où la sagesse de Boèce et l'éthique courtoise s'affrontent et se mêlent'.[203] This moment, when Hope seems to contradict her Boethian lessons with her insistence that she is not trying to discourage lovers, sees the conflict Attwood describes at its height, and also tellingly recalls Ovid's poem. The *Remedia Amoris* begins with Cupid's reaction to the title, 'Bella mihi, video, bella parantur' (*Remedia* 2),[204] after which Ovid reassures his master that he is not attacking love as such, but only providing remedies for those who suffer under the 'indignae regna puellae' (15).[205] Clearly, the lady in the *Remede de Fortune* is not 'indigna', but nor is Machaut's one of those happy lovers of whom Ovid says, 'feliciter ardens / Gaudeat, et vento naviget ille suo' (13-4).[206] As we have seen, Hope's re-appropriation of the nautical metaphor characterised love as an essentially unstable experience, entailing constant variation

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[203] Attwood, *Fortune la contrefaite*, p. 55. 'An art of poetry whose title recalls Ovid's *Remedia Amoris* while transferring precedence to Fortune, and in which Boethian wisdom mingles and comes into conflict with the courtly ethic.'

[204] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 178-9. 'Wars, wars are in store for me, I perceive.'

[205] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 178-9. 'Tyranny of an unworthy mistress.'

[206] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 178-9. 'Let him rejoice in his happy passion and sail on with favouring wind.'

between happiness and misery, and throughout this thesis I have argued that this is the defining feature of love, as depicted by Machaut.

When Hope says that she is not speaking against love as such, but rather in favour of a certain kind of *virtuous* love, we may be intended to recall Reason's similar attempt to woo Jean de Meun's lover into an alternative form of love , or – more interestingly – the ending of the *Consolatio*. After the prisoner's concerns about free will and predestination have called into question the necessity, or at least the efficacy, of doing good, and after Philosophy has carefully re-defined her pupil's understanding of God's foreknowledge, she unites these seemingly contradictory ideas in the beautiful concluding lines of the book: 'Magna vobis est, si dissimulare non vultis, necessitas indicta probitatis, cum ante oculos agitis iudicis cuncta cernentis' (*Consolatio* V.P6.174-6).[207] Just as Philosophy affirmed that nothing can happen without God having foreknown and fore-ordained it, so Hope affirms that misfortune and instability are inevitable in love; and just as Philosophy concluded that virtuous behaviour was necessary *because of* (rather than despite) God's all-seeing eye, so Hope concludes that one must love virtuously *because of* (rather than despite) all that she has said before. She, like Philosophy and Reason before her, may be suggesting to her pupil that he should practise a different kind of love to the one he has been governed by so far: one that is self-sufficient, that lives in harmony with desire rather than being helplessly driven by it, and that seeks no material reward.

Hope represents the positive side of love: she sings joyful songs, promises success, and promotes virtue. It would not have been uncharacteristic of Machaut to end the poem here, just as the lover is preparing to resume his pursuit of the lady, as he did in the *Vergier*. However, the scepticism hinted at in that poem, and observed at second hand, from a distance, in the *Behaigne*, is to be seen coming to fruition in the

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[207] 'A great necessity is solemnly ordained for you, if you do not want to deceive yourselves, to do good, when you act before the eyes of a judge who sees all things', pp. 434-5.

*Remede*'s final act. Machaut's conclusions on this subject will be far more ambiguous and pessimistic than those of the idealised allegorical figure I have focused on in the last two sections.

*The Lover's Disillusionment*

In the final part of the *Remede*'s narrative, after the intensive first 3000 lines, the didactic and emotive aspects of the text are relaxed somewhat. Whereas very little has actually *happened* up to this point, now Machaut largely concerns himself with advancing the story and consolidating what has gone before. In some respects, as well as being easier to read, this section of the poem is for the most part less 'interesting' from my point of view, although it contains some of the most beautiful passages – the description of the lady's household, for example, which I will not be looking at in any detail.

That the poem shifts into a lighter mode towards the end, as well as being a sign of Machaut's narrative skill, is also thematically significant, for what we are seeing now is a gradual upward turn of Fortune's wheel. The narrator has learned, from Hope, of the amorous success he is soon to enjoy, and as the poem draws to a close, the affair between the narrator and his lady is tentatively embarked upon, then developed. The wheel continues to favour the lover, raising him to a peak – represented by the couple's exchange of rings – just before the sudden, though quite small, downturn at the very end of the poem. Until the end, the tone of this episode seems uncomplicatedly positive. As we get to know the lady better, it becomes clear that she is as graceful, virtuous, and receptive to the narrator's pleas, as any courtly lover could wish. The lover falters on his way to the lady's court and has to be

assisted by Hope once more, but he does ultimately reach his destination and succeeds in establishing a relationship of apparently mutual love with the object of his affection.

In assessing the role of Hope in this budding relationship, we must give some thought to the scene just before the end where the narrator and his lady exchange rings. At this moment, the relationship reaches a kind of idealised peak, where Hope appears between the two characters 'Pour parfaire ceste aliance' (4082).[208] The narrator is giving the lady the ring given to him by Hope, in return for which she gives him her own ring. His gift to her is a gesture indicating the extent to which he has entrusted her with his own hopes, while her surrender to him of a personal and intimate possession is her way of both acknowledging the intimacy of their affair and entrusting him with her honour and reputation, as Toute-Belle does in the *Voir-Dit*, and by a similar method. Hope's presence at this quasi-betrothal is thus a sign of their mutual trust and their unity. As the lady says, Love has brought them together because 'faire vueut .i. de .ii.' (4043).[209] Their relationship must be on an equal footing, 'Qu'adés ha tençon et rumour / Entre seignourie et amour' (4051-2),[210] a statement which is intended to reveal the lady's mature understanding of relationships, and her recognition that her lover must not abase himself or adopt the role of her subject, as the traditional codes of *fin' amor* would encourage him to do. Indeed, when he does kneel before her, she is quick to raise him again (3849-54), preferring to be spoken to as an equal than to be worshipped at like an altar. As the two lovers become more intimate with each other 'in real life', as it were, so Machaut's conception of their affair seems to become more pragmatic and down-to-

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[208] 'To complete this alliance', pp. 398-9.
[209] 'She wishes to make two into one', pp. 394-5.
[210] 'For there are always quarrels and disputes between mastery and love', pp. 394-5.

earth, for the moment in the positive sense of figuring it as a relationship built on mutual respect.

The affair is brought down to earth in a different sense when, at the end of the poem, the lady's glance no longer falls upon her lover with the same affection. This ending is foreshadowed in the *priere*, when the narrator begs love to give him the 'sens ou art / Pour congnoistre de son espart / La difference, / S'il vient d'amours ou d'autre part' (3316-9),[211] and goes on to promise that, if the glance is not a loving one, 'en moy sera trop tart / Desesperance' (3323-4).[212] The isolation of 'desesperance' in a single short line, and the *priere*'s concern with the renewed hope now present 'en moy', highlights the verbal relation between 'esperance' and 'desesperance'; the one is the undoing of the other, occasioned by the 'difference' of the lady's glance, Fortune's alteration of something from one state to its opposite. Later, this verbal relation is made more explicit when the lover says that Hope promised him all the aid and consolation she could give, 'Se je la vouloie ensievir / Et desesperance fuïr' (3665-6),[213] just as she had also advised him that the best remedy for Fortune was to 'haïr, fuïr, desprisier' (2500)[214] her favours.

To flee from Fortune, as to flee from despair, is to avoid an extreme state, for as the lady wisely says to her suitor:

> on ne doit pas si haut monter
>
> Qu'on ait honte dou desvaler,
>
> Ains doit on le moyen eslire;
>
> Car meintes foys ai oÿ dire:

---

[211] 'Sense or skill to distinguish whether the sparkle in her eye comes from love or from elsewhere', pp. 352-3.
[212] 'Despair cannot come soon enough', pp. 354-5.
[213] 'If I would follow her and flee despair', pp. 372-3.
[214] 'Hate, flee, despise', pp. 306-7.

> Qui plus haut monte qu'il ne doit,
>
> De plus haut chiet qu'il ne voudroit (3787-92).[215]

The two lovers are discussing the difficulty of making requests, which is a consequence, partly of the danger of refusal – mentioned earlier by the lover – and partly of the shame of asking for more than is proper, or rising higher than one should, as the lady puts it. This relates back to the theme of sexual propriety, serving as a crucial indicator, at the moment when the erotic affair begins in earnest, of the virtuous and chaste level on which it is to remain. The lines quoted above are also profoundly connected to Hope's lesson on Fortune, specifically the part about not placing too much value in things which can be lost. It must be remembered that, at the very moment when she said that true love was not counted among the gifts of Fortune, Hope also affirmed the possibility that a lover might not get his reward in this world, and certainly the protagonist in this poem will not attain (or at least, by his own account, *has* not attained) the stable happiness which is one of the 'goods of virtue'. As he said himself, upon leaving Hesdin and noticing the birds, to whose singing his despair had previously made him oblivious, '.ii. choses font bestourner / Le sens et müer en folour: / Ce sont grant joye et grant doulour' (2994-6).[216] When this lover is not wallowing in despair, he is betting his free will and happiness on the chance of achieving transient amorous success; either way, a slave to Fortune, he is up or down but never in 'le moyen'.

At this late stage in the poem, the lover and his lady come to resemble Fortune in another respect. Immediately after the lady's initial acceptance of the narrator's

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[215] 'One should not climb so high that he is ashamed of coming back down, but rather he should choose the mean, for I've often heard it said that he who climbs higher than he ought falls from higher than he would like', pp. 380-1.

[216] 'There are two things that falsify the senses and cause them to react irrationally: these are great joy and great sadness', pp. 334-5.

suit, she pretends to have business with someone else 'pour ce que on n'aperceüst / Riens de nos amours, ou sceüst' (3873-4),[217] while the narrator discusses love with a group of ladies who ask him how he is, 'et je leur respondoie / Moult loing de ce que je sentoie, / Car tousdis leur fis dou blanc noir' (3883-5).[218] The progression I observed earlier, from sincere, even non-verbal, expressions of sentiment, to the more calculated use of reason and language in order to deceive others, has almost been completed at this point. Here, as elsewhere, Machaut purveys a subtler variation on Ovid's caustic, ironic advice to lovers. Near the beginning of the *Ars amatoria*, telling of the different places frequented by love, Ovid describes the law-courts, where the clever advocates are taken unawares: 'Illo saepe loco desunt sua verba diserto... / Hunc Venus e templis, quae sun confinia, ridet' (*Ars amatoria* I.85-7).[219] If this light-hearted jibe suggests that rhetorical skill is of little use in a love affair, Ovid later *recommends* learned eloquence, 'Sed lateant vires, nec sis in fronte disertus... / Sit tibi credibilis sermo consuetaque verba, / Blanda tamen' (I.463, 467-8).[220] The combination of studied simplicity and artless blandishment advocated here amounts to a highly calculated balancing act, and at the conclusion of his first book Ovid will say that a good lover must be like Proteus, for 'Qui sapit, innumeris moribus aptus erit' (I.760).[221]

Imbs sums up the *medieval* lover's more decorous balancing act when he says that 'trop de hardiesse chez l'amant demandant la *merci* (faveurs) attire les mépris d'une dame honnête, mais un minimum d'audace est nécessaire pour que Fortune

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[217] 'So that no one might perceive or learn anything of our love', pp. 384-5.

[218] 'My replies were very far from what I was thinking, for I constantly made white black for them', pp. 386-7.

[219] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 18-9. 'Often there does the glib speaker fail for words...Venus laughs at him from her neighbouring shrine.'

[220] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 44-5. 'But hide your powers, nor put on a learned brow...Your language should inspire trust and your words be familiar, yet coaxing too.'

[221] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 64-5. 'The wise man will suit himself to countless fashions.'

récompense l'amour'.[222] The irony of Hope's initial encouragement of Machaut's lover is that she berates him for not having been more self-aware about the effectiveness of his manifest shame: in Ovidian terms, he should *use* such spontaneous displays of feeling to advance his cause, but be ready to use eloquence when circumstances demand it. The lover in the *Remede* shows how much he has learned when he instinctively goes along with the lady in concealing their virtuous affair from the world in which it is being carried out, for reasons which will be clearer by the end of the poem. Practising deception in this way, like learning to speak well or compose poetry, is seen as an element in the process of 'civilisation', and from now on the narrator's main task, having informed the lady of his 'sentement' through his unregulated shyness, and then won her love through the more conscious exercise of Hope, is to become still more civilised, by participating in the aristocratic pastimes with which he remains unfamiliar (2129-34).

It is no accident that 'court life', or 'fashionable society', are often colloquially dubbed 'the world' or 'le monde', for the aristocratic court, with its insularity and its self-defined value system, is a potent emblem for worldliness. The lady's court is sophisticated to a superlative, almost archetypal degree, and it is this sophistication which will render the love affair problematic. As the clerkly narrator returns from the noble enterprise of learning, he receives an unpleasant shock upon finding his lady among her household:

> i vins a telle heure
>
> Que je cuidai, se Dieus m'onneure,
>
> Que li cuers me deüst partir;

---

[222] Imbs, *Le* Voir-Dit, pp. 81-2. 'Too much boldness on the part of the lover asking for *merci* (or favour) will earn him contempt from an honest lady, but a minimum of audacity is necessary if Fortune is to reward love.'

Car je vi de moy departir

Ses tres doulz yeus, et autre part

Traire et lancier leur doulz espart;

Et ne so se ce fu a certes,

Mais je fu pres de morir, certes;

Car de semblant et de maniere,

De cuer, de regart, et de chiere

Qu'amis doit recevoir d'amie,

Me fu vis qu'elle estoit changie,

Et pensai qu'elle le faisoit

Pour autre qui mieus li plaisoit.

Lors renouvella ma pesance (4143-57).[223]

The narrator's comment, at the start of this passage, that he came 'a telle heure', signals the temporal nature of the affair and its dependence on timing and circumstance. The *annominatio* on 'part' in lines 4145-8 foregrounds again the theme of division, with the phrase 'autre part' in line 4147 echoing the narrator's fear, expressed in the *rondelet*, that his lady's heart would be shared among others – 'en nulle autre amour parte' (4114). The lady, who as he said in the *rondelet* is in possession of his heart, breaks it by departing from him and sharing it with another. It is his dependence on the external force, the 'espart' or 'lightning flash' from her eye – that is, his lack of self-sufficiency – which causes his heart to break, and exposes his

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[223] 'I arrived there at such a time that I believed, as God is my witness, that my heart would break. For I saw her sweet eyes turn from me and cast their brightness elsewhere; I didn't know whether she did this deliberately, but I was certainly about to die, for I thought the appearance and demeanour, the affection, look and expression that a lover deserves from his lady had changed, and I imagined she did this because someone else pleased her more. I again became dispirited', pp. 400-3.

own divided, un-unified, as it were 'shared out', being. By changing, of course, the lady herself has become divided, and therefore an inadequate goddess.

Even the narrator's own uncertainty ('ne so se ce fu a certes', 'me fu vis') is a form of division against himself, a tension between his *idea* of the lady and what appears before him now, between his sense that he ought to trust her (and resort to Hope, who is absent) and his trust in the evidence of his own five senses. He describes himself as 'Comme cilz qui pense et colie, / Contrepense, estudie, et muse' (4164-5),[224] the juxtaposition of 'pense' and 'contrepense' highlighting again his division against himself. Indeed, when he eventually persuades himself to believe in and trust his lady, he says, 'cilz qui encontre lui pense / A par li se riote et tence' (4231-2),[225] and also that a lover 'doit croire sa dame, / Ainssi comme il vuet c'on le croie' (4246-7),[226] extolling this familiar doctrine whereby sufficiency is achieved through mutual respect and sacrifice. One could also quote Ovid's cynical maxim, 'Prona venit cupidis in sua vota fides' (*Ars amatoria* III.674),[227] perhaps more appropriate in this case given that Machaut's young lover is consistently characterised as being in thrall to his 'cupidis'. The internal battle we see before the reconciliation is the inevitable result of depending on something and then finding reason to doubt its dependability, while the reconciliation itself may be seen as the inevitable recourse of the desperate love-addict.

The lady's standoffishness is hard to read, for 'si tres aviseement / Le faisoit et si soutivement, / Que je ne pos onques le voir / De la mensonge concevoir' (4169-72).[228] We must remember that to act advisedly and subtly is what has lately been required of this lover, and that such action has already been established as inherent to

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[224] 'Like one who ponders and is tormented, who weighs possibilities, reflects, and muses', pp. 402-3.
[225] 'He who distrusts his lady fights and quarrels with himself', pp. 406-7.
[226] 'Must believe his lady, as he himself wishes to be believed', pp. 406-7.
[227] Ovid, *Art of Love*, pp. 164-5. 'Swift comes belief to those whose desires are keen.'
[228] 'She did it so very circumspectly and so subtly that I could never distinguish the true from the false', pp. 402-3.

the art of love. Now it is this very subtlety and guile in his lady – her capacity to appear other than she is or, like Fortune, to *be* other than she *was* – which makes it impossible for her lover to trust her, for he can never be certain of the truth from one moment to the next. As he says to her a few lines later, 'sui en vostre dous dangier' (4186),[229] an acknowledgement that his whole being is at the mercy of her capacity to change. In saying this to her in the course of his plea, he is requesting that she not be 'dangereuse', but instead give him reason to think that their relationship is self-sufficient and not contingent.

Huot argues that 'the lover's salvation lies in his ability to find the lady within himself, as a mental image through which he makes contact with the absolute as the source of life and salvation', and that 'what is ultimately important here is less the lady as an individual person than the lady as an almost arbitrary sign of transcendence'.[230] The woman in question 'can never be sufficient in and of herself to staunch the wound of desire',[231] and Huot suggests (in terms too complex to do justice to here) that 'the poetry proposed by Machaut' offers 'the possibility of glimpsing the absolute through fixation on the image of the beloved'.[232] Huot's attribution of healing and consoling powers to poetry seems to me to take too little account of the *Remede*'s ending, in which the lover is shown to be as dependent as ever upon the external object of desire, in which he does not resort to music or poetry for consolation but rather to the woman herself, and in which the integrity of the very setting of lyric verse – the court that nurtures and, in a sense, engenders this conception of love and this form of poetry – is called into question.

The lady's self-justification, though not quite the ending of the poem, effectively concludes it, for it is the last piece of intercourse that we see taking place

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[229] 'I am in your sweet power', pp. 402-3.
[230] Huot, 'Consolation of Poetry', p. 177.
[231] Huot , 'Consolation of Poetry', p. 194.
[232] Huot , 'Consolation of Poetry', p. 195.

between her and the protagonist. The lady has feigned disinterest, she says, with good

intentions:

> Car qui en amour ne scet faindre,
>
> Il ne puet a grant joye ataindre,
>
> N'il n'a pouoir de bien celer
>
> Ce qu'il ne vorroit reveler;
>
> Car li mondes est si divers,
>
> Si mesdisans, et si pervers
>
> Et plains de si fausse contrueve
>
> Qu'au jour d'ui on dit et contrueve
>
> Ce qui onques ne fu pensé (4201-9).[233]

Again and again we have noted this term, 'joye', as the usual designation of the

lover's end goal, and we have also heard, in this poem and elsewhere, of lovers who

succeed in fulfilling their lust through immorality and guile. Recall, for instance, the

*Remede*-narrator's hint that he could have got what he wanted had he been willing to

compromise his principles, or Hope's insistence on the impossibility of an insincere

suitor making any headway with a prudent woman such as the one in the *Remede*.

Now this lady herself hands the young man a new and disillusioning love lesson: that

the 'grant joye' of *fin' amor* can *only* be attained through dishonesty. Here, Machaut

discreetly returns to the sexual component of such love for, as I have suggested

before, the concern to 'celer ce qu'il ne vorroit reveler' must have to do with the less

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[233] 'A lover who does not know how to feign cannot attain great joy, if he does not have the strength tho hide well what he doesn't want to reveal; for society is so inconstant, so slanderous, and so perverse and full of such false deceit that today people say and imagine things that were never before conceived', pp. 404-5.

socially acceptable, more 'shameful', physically intimate relations which, it is assumed, are inherent to an erotic love affair.

That this is the lady's meaning is confirmed, albeit with the same discretion, in the next few lines, where she identifies the 'divers', 'pervers' and 'mesdisans' world as the true cause of this need to keep the affair private. She is not saying anything so romantic as that their love is too sacred and pure to be sullied by contact with the rest of the world, which would be another way of expressing the same thing. Rather, she is being exceedingly pragmatic in suggesting that, were the rest of the court to find out about the affair, they would 'dit et contrueve ce qui onques ne fu pensé', which I take to mean that she and her lover would be said to have done things which in fact they had never even thought about. The world is 'divers', a word suggestive of division, of *turning* something singular and unified into something divided and plural, and this malicious turning action inflicted upon them by the world is analogous to that of Fortune, who also doubles, divides, and makes things other than they were. The legs and feet of Nebuchadnezzar's statue are one symbol by which such division is emblematised; Fortune's ever-turning wheel is an even better one, for it better expresses the universality of the worldly process of change and corruption being described.

I have suggested at various points throughout this thesis that Machaut uses music to stand for a limited, biased, worldly form of art, and that the narrative *dit* in which he sets the lyrical pieces exposes their mutability: as Cerquiglini puts it, the narrative effects 'une mise en espace et une mise en temporalité du lyrisme'.[234] It is clear how the progression from one lyric to another in the *Remede* shows the cyclical, unstable nature of sentiment-driven lyrical expression, which is itself associated with the equally cyclical, unstable 'sentement' of love. The poem both *is* mutable and *is*

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[234] Cerquiglini, *'Un engin si soutil'*, p. 33. 'A spatial and temporal setting for lyricism.'

*about* mutability: it both reveals and emblematises love's (and poetry's) transience. As the lady's self-justification shows, this transience remains inherent even in the most virtuous affair, for however loyal and discreet the two lovers may be, they remain mutable beings experiencing mutable sentiments in a world which is both populated by other mutable beings and governed entirely by mutability. One way or another, their love will be turned and twisted by 'li mondes', and all either of them will be left with is their self. We see now the full significance of Hope's warning that virtue might not be rewarded on earth, but will certainly be in Heaven, and of the poem's opening, in which it was implied that love could be mastered by the same methods as any other art. In love, as in other walks of life, indeed as in life generally, the only path to happiness is self-sufficiency. The lover must continue to nurture his *internal* hope, despite the adverse circumstances thrown at him by the *external* world.

Success in love, then, is only possible if one abandons the other person, if one ceases to be dependent on them or the 'espart' from their eye, that is, their supposed reciprocation of one's feelings. Such abandonment takes one back into oneself, and a lover who subsists only on their own virtue has ceased to be a lover at all. Like Boethius, if the *Remede*-narrator ever attains real self-sufficiency then, having made that 'return' to the essence of his God-given nature, he will be in a relationship only with God. This is, of course, not the condition of the *Remede*-narrator at the end of the poem, for as he says to 'Bonne Amour' in the closing lines:

> [Je] met cuer, corps, ame, et vigour,
>
> Desir, penser, plaisance, honnour
>
> Du tout en toy avec mon vivre,
>
> Com cilz qui voeut morir et vivre

<div align="center">En ton service, sans retraire (4281-5).[235]</div>

In my conclusion, I will address the question of *why* Machaut leaves his hero in this state if, as I have been arguing, he wishes to direct us towards a system of values *beyond* the dominion of 'Bonne Amour'.

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[235] 'I place my heart, body, soul, strength, desire, thought, happiness, and honour completely in you along with my life, as one who wishes to live and die in your service, forever', pp. 408-9.

# Conclusion

*Fortune and Desire*

This thesis, according to its title, centres around Fortune and desire. To begin with the first term: early in my doctoral studies, I was struck by the resemblance between this infamous figure of mutability and certain other medieval favourites: *faux-semblant*, Fauvel and the *mesdisants* (whom we have just encountered in the *Remede*) in particular. These figures all have in common their tendency to represent things as other than they are, and to do so successfully – that is, to make people *believe* their lies. Lechat, having noted the connection between fiction and *faux-semblant*, cites a line from the *Dit de la Queue de Renard* in which 'renardie' and 'fictïon' are equated,[1] Renard being another classic emblem of the liar who is an expert at winning people's trust. The link between such figures and the fiction-generating poet himself is obvious, in that poetry's essential task is to lie convincingly, but like *Faux-Semblant* in the *Rose*, the poet foregrounds the lie in order to reveal something true.

Commenting on the observable fact that high office and riches, though considered valuable, do not in fact bestow value on those who possess them, Lady Philosophy explains, 'Gaudetis enim res sese aliter habentes falsis compellare nominibus quae facile ipsarum rerum redarguuntur effectu' (*Consolatio* II.P6.62-4).[2] One reason that Fortune's falsity is so monotonously insisted upon in medieval writings is that this falsity is (presumably) not in fact manifest to the worldly, acquisitive, amorous people who make up the writer's audience, and the writer sees it as their job to *make* it manifest by representing it allegorically. In such poetry,

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[1] Lechat, *'Dire par Fiction'*, p. 25.
[2] 'For you delight to give to things which are really otherwise names they should not bear and which are easily shown to be false by the effects of the things themselves', pp. 212-3.

hypocrites and slanderers have their true natures inscribed in their very names – *faux-semblant*, *mes*disants – and Fauvel is manifestly an ass, Renard a fox. Fortune, of course, is always turning her wheel, or showing her 'other' face, and the intent behind these motifs is to expose various forms of insidious mutability, to which we, the readers, might otherwise be blind.

Love, too, is a lie widely invested in – perhaps universally, if it is true that 'love conquers all'. Far outstripping the popularity of those personifications mentioned above, Love's deceptions and self-contradictions provide even more matter for the poet than does Fortune, but unlike Fortune, love cannot be treated solely with satirical vituperation. Love taxes the poet's skill by demanding a thorough exploration of its highs and lows: in attempting to say something meaningful about it, the author can afford neither to be mindlessly positive nor to be puritanically hostile. I agree with Heinrichs that poems such as the *Rose*, the *Remede* and the *Joli Buisson* 'parody' Boethius, constructing a 'learned joke on the lover and love-service'[3] by underlining the irrational behaviour of their protagonists. She also claims, referring to these poets' influence on Chaucer, that 'none of Chaucer's sources, which have been repeatedly characterised as "idealistic" and "didactic" works inculcating the principles of courtly love, really seeks to praise or redeem love *par amours*; instead, they do quite the opposite'.[4] This is indeed very close to the argument I have been advancing in this thesis, but it needs moderating. In the *Remede de Fortune*, as in all of Machaut's writing, the overall portrait of love is neither wholly negative nor wholly positive, but seeks rather to explore the dangers and limitations of the lover's way of life, while also acknowledging the attractiveness and possible benefits – to the soul as well as to the body – of such a life.

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[3] Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, p. 184.
[4] Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, p. 224.

Boethius, for his part, affirms the necessity of love as an ordering force in the universe (*Consolatio* II.M8), and observes that 'ipsum bonum esse quod desideretur ab omnibus' (III.P11.111-2),[5] but insists also that 'Ita vero bonum esse deum ratio demonstrat, ut perfectum quoque in eo bonum esse convincat' (III.P10.27-8).[6] Love, in other words, must be directed towards God, otherwise it is a distraction from this one and only true good. Philosophy's brief and dismissive comments on sexual love (*Consolatio* III.P7) class this category of love among the distractions, and it is perhaps the very brevity of these comments that has prompted some critics to seek in medieval love poetry an 'anti-Boethian' stance on erotic passion, one that formulates a principle of transcendent love which surpasses the merely physical impulses Boethius referred to. Calin argues, apparently without irony, that *fin' amor* is 'not subject to Fortune, not of the same essence as Boethius' *luxuria*',[7] and that in the *Remede*, 'Fortune is transcended, not by God, but by Love'.[8] Although he shows an awareness of the more ambiguous and pessimistic elements in the text, he sees it as essentially optimistic, and asserts that despite the occasional undermining of the lovers' affair, 'Machaut's distortion does not destroy the courtly vision'.[9] Heinrichs, dismissing this and other optimistic readings of the *Remede*, insists that 'the patience recommended by Boethius – a branch of the cardinal virtue of Fortitude – does not consist in unremitting service to a lady; lovers of ladies are, by definition, under the dominion of Fortune'.[10]

I have rehearsed this idea many times in the course of the thesis, figuring the courtly lover's devotion to and dependence on his lady as a parody of religious devotion, the lady herself an inadequate substitute for God, and the whole of the

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[5] 'The good is that which is desired by all things', pp. 294-5.
[6] 'Reason so much shows that God is good that it proves clearly that perfect good also is in him', pp. 276-7.
[7] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 61.
[8] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 62.
[9] Calin, *Poet at the Fountain*, p. 74.
[10] Heinrichs, *Myths of Love*, p. 223.

lover's way of life a frantic journey upon Fortune's wheel. Desire, which drives the lover helplessly towards his beloved, represents a worldly perversion of the desire which, in the Boethian conception, drives each soul helplessly towards God. The extent to which Lady Philosophy sees God as occupying the all-powerful, all-desirable position typically occupied by love in poems such as Machaut's is indicated, I think, when she says, 'Est igitur summum...bonum quod regit cuncta fortiter suaviterque disponit' (*Consolatio* III.P12.63-4).[11] This famous line delights the prisoner, perhaps because it echoes the Bible (Wisdom 8.1), but it is also suggestive of the way in which love is characterised in erotic poetry, as the implacable force which firmly yet sweetly disposes men's fates.

Perhaps Boethius' delight stems also from his recognition that Philosophy has identified the highest good as that which sweetly overpowers all mankind, after identifying the source of unhappiness as the tendency to succumb to those sweetly overpowering *worldly* desires which dispose the majority of mankind to seek fulfilment in the wrong places. In other words, this encapsulation of the 'summum bonum' is effective because it not only describes very well the function of God in relation to the world, but also indicates the identity between His function and the operation of those forces which drive us *away* from Him. The interdependence of the disease and the cure, the *ars* and the *remedium*, is a central principle of Machaut's poetry: it explains why love and poetry can at once be celebrated and exposed as corrupt. We should note, also, the proximity of Philosophy's rhetorical question (concerning Orpheus' fateful backward glance), 'Quis legem det amantibus? / Maior lex amor est sibi' (III.M12.47-8)[12] to her defence of her circular argument about the non-existence of evil: 'Ea est enim divinae forma substantiae ut neque in externa

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[11] 'It is therefore the highest good which rules all things firmly, and sweetly disposes them', pp. 302-3.
[12] 'Who can give lovers laws? Love is a greater law unto itself', pp. 310-1.

dilabatur nec in se externum aliquid ipsa suscipiat' (III.P12.102-4).[13] Again, the 'law' of love seems to emulate that of God Himself, but is in fact the negation of God. The lover, in being a law unto himself, and in his refusal to be governed by anything but his own desires, becomes an emblem of man's turning away from the divine towards the earthly, his self-sufficiency a parody of God's.

As John Magee puts it, since God is 'the Good', and since 'everything spontaneously hastens towards the Good, there is a complete convergence of aims between ruler and ruled: submission to the Good is both compulsory *and* voluntary (*fortiter suaviterque*), a thought the biblical resonance of which pleases "Boethius"'.[14] This 'complete convergence of aims' is echoed by the lover's subjection to − and indeed quasi-identification with, since it is a quality *within* him − love, but also by the *Remede*-narrator's relationship with Hope who, as we have seen, identifies her wishes and desires with those of the lover. The temporality of Hope indicates the difference between these two mastering impulses, God and Love: since love is subject to time and change, it cannot satisfy the desire it provokes, so that the lover's hope of success will come and go in a cyclical manner; both the 'strength' and 'sweetness' of Love's government are undermined by mutability.

In response to Boethius' argument that all creatures seek to return to their origin in God but are distracted by false goods (*Consolatio* III.3), Wetherbee says that 'man's tenuous sense of his divine origins and destiny can seem little more than a fantasy, at the mercy of the disorienting power of appetite and random attraction'.[15] This amounts to nothing less than a suspicion that God does not exist, so it seems, at first sight, to have missed the point somewhat. I quoted it earlier, though, to support my reading of the *Remede*-narrator's difficulty in applying the Boethian worldview to

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[13] 'For such is the form of the divine substance that it does not slip away into external things, nor does it receive anything external into itself', pp. 306-7.
[14] Magee, 'The Good and morality', p. 197.
[15] Wetherbee, 'The *Consolation* and medieval literature', pp. 285-6.

his own situation, and in fact it is precisely this sort of doubt which motivates Boethius himself to question Philosophy. In the strict Boethian conception, erotic love is, like riches or high office, just one of many paths by which 'the Good' is misguidedly sought – it is, to reiterate, an inadequate substitute for God – but if the prisoner in the *Consolatio* found this mental adjustment difficult, the courtly lover's sense of his divine origins is yet more tenuous, his enslavement to appetite and random attraction yet more complete; indeed, virtually irreversible.

However, this austere account of the human condition will not suffice for most people as a solution to this problem of 'appetite and random attraction'. The courtly exaltation of love – that is, the overt celebration of love *as* a transcendent experience – is, in some contexts, an attempt to deal with the problem of love more sympathetically. A comparison with the non-amorous content of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* will help to explain this point. Gawain's trials echo those of Job and of Christ in the desert, but the medieval hero's faith in God does not stand up to temptation as well as theirs did, and he cheats in the hope of avoiding death. Still, the Green Knight comforts Gawain with the observation that he fell short 'for ye lufed your lyf – the lasse I yow blame' (*Gawain* 2368),[16] and when Gawain returns home his adventure, and his fault, are actively celebrated by Arthur's court. The poem, I would suggest, treats its hero sympathetically not because it regards his sin as unimportant, but on the principle that acknowledging the difficulty of maintaining faith is an essential first step towards *strengthening* faith. Imbs points to the 'expérimentale et personnalisée' character of Machaut's didacticism, and compares him to 'le médecin qui ne se contente pas de connaître théoriquement les remèdes...mais les éprouve d'abord sur lui-même'.[17] In the context of my own

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[16] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, ed. by J.J. Anderson (London: J.M. Dent, 1996), p. 270.
[17] Imbs, *Le* Voir-Dit, p. 215. 'Experimental and personalised... The doctor who does not content himself with understanding the theory of remedies...but who tries them first on himself.'

discussion, it is not so much the remedies as the illnesses of which Machaut has first-hand experience, but Imbs states very clearly the principle of empathy which is so integral to so many didactic texts.

Just as Gawain does not emerge untainted from his Christ-like struggle, so the protagonist of the *Remede* is a figure suited to poetry because he lacks Boethius' wisdom – or rather, knows the *Consolatio* well, but does not possess the philosopher's love of wisdom, his philosophy. Hugh of St. Victor, discussing Pythagoras' coining of the word 'philosopher', says:

pulchre quidem inquisitores veritatis non sapientes sed amatores sapientiae vocat, quia nimirum adeo latet omne verum, ut eius amore quantumlibet mens ardeat, quantumlibet ad eius inquisitionem assurgat, difficile tamen ipsam ut est veritatem comprehendere queat (*Didascalicon* I.2).[18]

Boethius himself only *looks forward* to his final possession of wisdom and atonement with God, and so accords well with this description of one who 'yearns towards' the truth. The courtly lover is a still more recognisably human character, aware that he ought to yearn towards wisdom, yet lacking the strength to resist those urges which drive him instead towards the object of his sensual desires.

Boethius has been characterised as a 'fundamentally private' writer, concerned for the 'preservation of divine truth from the common or uninitiated', writing 'primarily for the inner pleasure of discovery'.[19] In an obvious sense, the *Consolatio* is a text addressed by its author to himself, a cathartic account of the

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[18] 'Fitly indeed did he call the seekers of truth not wise men but lovers of Wisdom, for certainly the whole truth lies so deeply hidden that the mind, however much it may ardently yearn towards it or however much it may struggle to acquire it, can nonetheless comprehend only with difficulty the truth as it is', (Buttimer, p. 6; Taylor, p. 48).
[19] Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue*, p. 80.

internal process we see the *Remede*-narrator go through with Hope, but in more extreme circumstances which end with an ascent, not into an amorous court, but into the next world. Machaut's poem is similar in that it is also addressed to people in the same situation as the protagonist – in this case, lovers – but, to state the obvious, it is not addressed to the protagonist himself. Clearly, this 'other' that is the text's audience, and these different circumstances, require a different approach, one which, as Heinrichs puts it, has more respect (and empathy) for the passions and impulses of the protagonist, but which by the same token analyses those passions from a distance. What I am suggesting is that love poems such as Machaut's engage more intimately with falsity – in this case the erotic desire which distracts from the true good – in order to appeal to a certain audience, while at the same time maintaining a very keen awareness of the falsity of their subject matter. Fiction may reveal something true by lying, but it is still lying, still limited by the bounds of this world.

The objection that, if Machaut had intended this to be the moral of his poem, he would have made it more explicit, is a reasonable one. However, a final, authoritative affirmation of Christian morality on the part of the profane narrator of this profane text would require the use of a framing device – as in the *De amore*, the *Joli Buisson*, *Troilus and Criseyde* or the *Confessio Amantis* – in which the narrator was forcibly detached from Fortune's wheel and given the vision of life 'in the round' which he would need in order to perceive the truth. Machaut's approach throws more responsibility onto the readers, leaving us to come to a conclusion ourselves *after* the poem has finished. There are analogues to this technique in the works just mentioned: in the presumed repentance and turning towards God of the text's hero/author/addressee, or in Troilus' unknowable fate after his ascent into the eighth sphere.

Machaut does not take us so far along this path towards God (for want of a better phrase), yet his poems work to expose mutability in much the same manner as these other texts. His identification with the desiring subject persists until, and presumably beyond, the narrative's conclusion, and we have far less of a sense that this slave to Fortune 'stands back' and attains any stable or consistent perspective on his condition. To conclude a narrative in this way sacrifices the sense of closure Gower achieved through the final disillusionment of his Amans, but it also allows for a more thorough and empathic account of the state of mind, and way of life, being described. The lover may be disillusioned, may perceive the brittleness of his joy, and may waver in his trust of his lady, even to the point of falling out with her – as Machaut's protagonist does in the *Voir-Dit* – but he will go on loving nevertheless.

Rather than simply telling us that we should repent of love and seek spiritual goods, Machaut explores, and accepts, the difficulty of the doubtful lover's condition. Charles of Navarre *should* seek the more transcendent form of consolation Machaut offers, but in the *Confort* there is an awareness that Charles will be more receptive to worldly comforts and offers of hope; and more importantly, there is sympathy for this way of thinking. Much of what we learn about love and love poetry in the *Prologue* and the *Vergier* suggests that they possess an ambivalent, unstable value, and yet these works herald the beginning of Machaut's œuvre, which is dedicated to the celebration of love through poetry. The knight in the *Jugement Behaigne* is told to cease loving and draw closer to God, but he wins the debate (and provides matter for the poem) by *not* having done this, implying that even the good King of Bohemia has some sympathy with the perspectives of Love and Youth, and for their occupations and pastimes. The king's (and, by association, Reason's) final counsels almost seem not to belong in the text, hinting as they do at a reality quite distinct from the ludic realm of *jeux-partis* and lamenting lovers inhabited by the poem's characters.

At the end of the *Consolatio,* 'there is no final poem because further reading is unnecessary...Words, and especially poetry, are useless at this point, as Philosophy offers now another, higher form of discourse which is neither vocalised nor transcribed: prayer'.[20] At the end of the *Remede de Fortune*, too, the final lyric is conspicuous by its absence, and I have noted in other chapters Machaut's tendency to leave the endings of his poems 'open' – contingent upon future events. These texts are intended to capture the essence of these two closely linked forces, Fortune and desire. The *Remede de Fortune* claims to offer a cure (or cures) for Fortune, but it also states categorically – in Hope's teaching – and illustrates dramatically – in the development of the protagonist's affair – that the lover is necessarily a slave to Fortune. The lover in this poem has transparently *not* found a cure for Fortune at the end, but instead looks forward to yet more instability and torment. The title, as much as that of the *Voir-Dit*, is designed to perplex us: we need to ask in what sense this poem offers a 'cure for Fortune'. I have tried to suggest that the only cure presented by this text is a form of love which eschews the demands of Fortune and desire, finding consolation only in virtue and the self-sufficiency that comes with it.

However, the genius of the poem lies (at least partly) in its refusal to conclude with simple moralism. This lover should stop caring about his lady's sweet glance, but it seems inevitable that he will remain dependent on it: despite his opening lecture on education, he shows little sign of having learnt anything in the course of the poem, and still suffers from his enslavement to the world, to materialism, to carnality – in short, to Fortune and desire. We are free to make of this what we will. One way or another, as readers inclined to read love poems, it may be assumed that we identify with this protagonist, and our response to the poem may stop there: we may simply enjoy the thorough and beautiful description of the love affair, delight in the lyrical

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[20] Lerer, *Boethius and Dialogue*, p. 232.

expressions of joy, and suffer along with the lover in his moments of doubt and despair. This is the most obvious level on which the poem operates. But we may go further, 'joining the dots' (so to speak) in Machaut's subtle exposé, interpreting the narrative in the light of the Boethian doctrines alluded to, and perceive that the cure for Fortune is also the cure for love. Like Boethius, Machaut thus allows for the ascent to a higher, more spiritual, form of discourse after his text has concluded; but unlike Boethius, he also allows for the persistence, beyond the text, of his readers' worldly desires.

*Remedies for Love, Fortune and Poetry: Gower, Lydgate and Chaucer*

This thesis grew out of my work on the three authors named above, and specifically my research into their use of the goddess Fortune as a symbol of cupidity and mutability. In this final section, I will briefly suggest some ways in which my comments on Machaut might be applied to these three English authors. First, I will discuss Gower's *Confessio Amantis* as a work which, like the *Remede de Fortune*, offers a critique of erotic love through an empathic depiction of the lover's situation, and which also forces the burden of interpretation onto the reader. I will then suggest how Lydgate uses similar methods to refute the very concept of Fortune in the *Fall of Princes*, and to replace it with faith in divine providence and a sense of personal moral responsibility. I will then turn to the *House of Fame*, in which the sceptical, ironic reflections on poetry we find in Machaut's work are taken, by Chaucer, to an extreme, through an elaborate parody of Dante's *Commedia*. Chaucer is greatly in Machaut's debt for the bumbling narrators of his dream visions, but also, I will argue, for his self-awareness (and perhaps insecurity) about his own creative processes.

In Chapter 3 I argued that medieval *jeux-partis* pitted the idealistic against the pragmatic view of love, and in the *Confessio Amantis*, the predominant perspective seems to be that of the idealist. For most of the poem's length, it is taken for granted that true love demands, and thrives upon, virtuous conduct. Whereas the narrator of the *Rose* was advised to jettison his scruples in order to achieve erotic success, Gower's protagonist, Amans, must be shriven of the seven deadly sins before he can be deemed worthy of being loved by his mistress. Denise Baker has suggested that by casting Genius as the lover's confessor, Gower is rehabilitating him after his stint as a 'false priest' in the *Rose*, restoring 'to this figure the moral authority exercised by Alain's true priest' in the *De planctu*; Genius is now an enemy, rather than a facilitator, of immoral love.[21] Of course, his status as a false priest in the *Rose* is notoriously complicated, and he is no less complex a figure in the *Confessio*: for one thing, his employment by Venus immediately compromises his moral authority. Minnis argues that, 'to those medieval readers who believed that Ovid had taught about just love and had reprehended love which was foolish or wicked', there would not have been anything 'incongruous about a priest of Venus extolling the virtue of chastity and attacking the sin of incest',[22] but Gower himself acknowledges this incongruity, through the discourse of Genius himself.

When Amans berates his confessor for not having mentioned Venus and Cupid in his account of false gods, Genius says he has 'left it for schame, / Because I am here oghne Prest' (*Confessio Amantis* 5.1382-3).[23] Nevertheless, Genius tells Amans 'the sothe' (1386) about his master and mistress, 'for thei stonden nyh thi brest / Upon the schrifte of thi matiere' (1384-5), and later he admits that he has

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[21] Denise Baker, 'The Priesthood of Genius: A Study of the Medieval Tradition' (1976) in *Gower's* Confessio Amantis*: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Peter Nicholson (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 143-58 (156).
[22] Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship*, p. 185.
[23] John Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, 3 vols., ed. by Russell A. Peck (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2003-6). All quotations are from this edition.

hesitated to speak of his mistress, Venus, because 'Sche was the ferste also which tolde / That wommen scholde here bodi selle' (5.1430-1). This irony, that the lover's confessor is employed by the archetypal emblem of unprincipled lust, is not incidental, but crucial to the poem's meaning. In support of her claim that 'Gower's ambivalence about the nature of sin and loss of self-control', and his desire 'to acknowledge that it is our capacity to err, our fallen state, that makes us human', Diane Watt argues that 'Genius, as Gower's spokesperson, does not invariably condemn sin per se, and especially not sexual desire and transgression'.[24] The confessor's embarrassed confession in Book 5, however, indicates that he is less a spokesperson for Gower than an avowedly biased and imperfect pseudo-confessor, a very fallen and indeed very human figure.

Watt's point is still valid, though, in that it encapsulates the gentle, gradual character of the interrogation to which Genius submits Amans. In the course of 30,000 lines of verse, it transpires that there is not very much for Genius to condemn: Amans has not really committed any noteworthy sins, certainly nothing that would disqualify him as a deserving recipient of his lady's affection. The confession over, Genius advises Amans to abandon love for some more stable pursuit, to 'set thin herte under that lawe, / The which of reson is governed / And noght of will' (8.2134-5). As in the *Rose*-narrator's encounter with Reason, Amans hears and accepts this advice, but cannot act upon it: 'Mi resoun understod him wel, / And knew it was soth everydel / That he hath seid, bot noght forthi / Mi will hath nothing set therby' (2191-4). Genius has told him not to be governed by his 'will' any longer, but by his 'reson', yet these two forces are seen working independently of each other in the lover's mind.

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[24] Diane Watt, *Amoral Gower* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), pp. 102-3.

This is not, however, the scathing satire of the *Rose*, and Gower does not toy with his foolish protagonist as Jean de Meun did. Venus' injunction – Amans' final verbal warning – to 'Remembre wel hou thou art old' (8.2439) also has little positive effect upon the aged lover, so she anoints his eyes with a healing salve and then shows him a mirror, in which he perceives his physical age: 'My will was tho to se nomore / Outwith, for ther was no plesance' (2832-3), he says. Reflecting on the image, he 'made a liknesse of miselve / Unto the sondri Monthes twelve' (2837-8), thus seeing how the ebb and flow of worldly cares has afflicted his own body. Then, 'whan Resoun it herde sein / That loves rage was aweie, / He cam to me the rihte weie' (2862-4), and Amans finds that he has forgotten what love is. 'So goth the fortune of my whiel', laughs Venus, 'Forthi mi conseil is thou leve' (2880-1) – and off he goes, 'Homward a softe pas' (2967), thinking 'only that y hadde lore / My time, and was sori ther fore' (2953-4).

The image in the mirror 'comes as a shock because it does not conform to the image Amans seemed to have had of himself...although the mirror appears to be a simple reflecting surface, in fact it offers a view of self-concealing depths'.[25] Butterfield describes how Gower takes Machaut's model of the ageing lover-poet from the *Voir-Dit*, which 'pushes the analogy between lover and author to new limits', but rather than maintaining the lover in his amorous endeavours, allows him 'to fail and fade', just as Froissart did in the *Joli Buisson*.[26] Both the lover and the poet are thus figured as helplessly mutable beings, and Gower's poem suggests, far more bluntly than any of Machaut's had done, the extent to which the passage of time can render both the love affair and the poem completely redundant: Amans himself seems to consider both his own expenditure of emotion and the preceding 30,000

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[25] Ardis Butterfield, '*Confessio Amantis* and the French Tradition' in *A Companion to Gower*, ed. by Siân Echard (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), pp. 165-80 (171).
[26] Butterfield, 'French Tradition', p. 180.

lines to have been a waste of time. It is an astonishingly bold downbeat ending but, as I will argue shortly, not a surprising one.

Peter Nicholson identifies the 'final argument' of Machaut's poetry as 'that the virtues demanded by love are identical to those that are demanded by God', and goes on to argue that Machaut has hereby 'provided the essential model both for the form and for the ethical purpose of the *Confessio Amantis*'; love virtues and Christian virtues are, in this poem, essentially the same.[27] I find this interpretation problematic when applied to Machaut, and even more so when applied to Gower. Morally speaking, there is nothing very wrong with Amans, so if 'love virtues' are the same as Christian virtues, he ought to enjoy success at the end of the poem. Like the betrayed knight in the *Jugement Behaigne*, he both wins and loses at the end, emerging from his confession unscathed but still incapable of fulfilling his desires. In contrast to Machaut's knight, however, Amans' desolation is a consequence of his physical, rather than moral, failings: his lack of virility is enough to disqualify him, proving definitively that virtue – in the sense of moral goodness – plays no *necessary* role in an erotic love affair. Despite his apparent idealism for the majority of the text, Gower turns out to be one of the pragmatists: a good lover, he tells us, is young, strong, and unscrupulous enough not to let himself grow old and wise before seizing his opportunity, which is effectively what Amans has done.

J. Allan Mitchell says that the *Confessio*'s ending 'did not have to happen the way it did', and that the lover's fate is only 'one among a set of possibilities...furnishing probable rather than necessary truth'.[28] There is not space here to do justice to Mitchell's excellent study, but as to this specific claim I think he is simply wrong: Amans' growing old is absolutely a necessary process, and did

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[27] Peter Nicholson, *Love and Ethics in Gower's* Confessio Amantis (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).
[28] J. Allan Mitchell, *Ethics and Exemplary Narrative in Chaucer and Gower* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2004), p. 50.

indeed 'have to happen'; if only at the very moment of death, his earthly love affair was doomed by the very fact of his mortality. Moreover, the poem's conclusion is anticipated at a number of points throughout the long confession that precedes it. Genius repeatedly drops hints that Amans' love for this woman may never be reciprocated, however virtuous he is; I will cite only the most telling example for now. Genius says that there is no greater enemy to love than the sin of 'unkindeschipe', and therefore, 'to kepe thi worschipe' (*Confessio* 5.5226) he will tell Amans the story of Theseus and Ariadne. However, Amans is clearly not guilty of this sin, and indeed just before this tale he has complained that his lady gives nothing 'In rewardinge of mi servise' (5195); 'for to sai sche is unkinde, / That dar I noght' (5198-9), he mutters, but perhaps Genius thinks it is time for him to acknowledge the lady's 'unkindeschipe', and put himself at a safe distance from her.

Theseus, the Fortune-follower, the consummate seducer of women, is so unlike Amans that he serves no useful exemplary purpose here. Amans could only possibly identify with Ariadne, the faithful lover who gets nothing in return, and who is ruined because she is insufficiently aware of love's vicissitudes to know not to entrust it with her life. Genius' promise, just prior to the tale, to give Amans advice that will enable him to 'kepe his worschip', seems at first to be a warning not to be like Theseus, whose behaviour works to the 'hindringe of his name' (5458). However, it also refers to Ariadne, who trusted in Theseus' promise 'That he myn honour scholde kepe' (5461), and is thus dishonoured in being abandoned. Amans' fruitless pursuit of an unresponsive woman denigrates both his virtue and his dignity, and leaves him as vulnerable to the assaults of Fortune as was the otherwise reasonable Ariadne, once she had surrendered herself and her agency to Theseus.

Nicholson admits that, in defending Amans' lady from 'unkindeschipe', Genius pictures love as being 'a matter of destiny, not of justice...and the normal rules of fairness thus do not apply'; but he goes on,

> Genius does not simply encourage Amans to continue pursuing a vain goal...in place of love as desire, he urges the notion of love as service... Love demands such service but holds out no promise...commitment and the virtues that spring from love can be considered worthy of pursuit in themselves and are thus their own reward.[29]

Theseus prays Ariadne for love but gives none back; he 'demands service but holds out no promise'. Ariadne is a committed, virtuous lover, but does not seem to consider these virtues to be their own reward when she has been abandoned. In Nicholson's reading the tale serves as 'a timeless image of the nature of the crime',[30] but the terms in which this crime is condemned belie the moral Nicholson has attributed to the tale. Genius could hardly have chosen a less effective story with which to encourage Amans to serve love without hope of reward, and indeed, far from encouraging him to pursue a vain goal, the tale of Theseus and Ariadne shows him the brutal playing out of Genius' more gentle formulation of love's unreliability.

Again, like Machaut's Hope, Gower's Genius is a compromised substitute for Lady Philosophy, ostensibly holding out a hope of worldly success to his pupil in his capacity as Venus' priest, but ultimately leading him towards a more spiritual conception of good fortune. Lydgate accomplishes something similar, and through similarly indirect methods, in the *Fall of Princes*, a mammoth catalogue of illustrious men and women who were toppled by Fortune. Lydgate's primary didactic purpose in

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[29] Nicholson, *Love and Ethics*, p. 279.
[30] Nicholson, *Love and Ethics*, p. 288.

this poem is to show us that Fortune – meaning both the goddess and the philosophical concept – does not exist. Once we understand this, the poem's length, monotony, and apparent inconsistencies can all be seen as contributing to a moral message which is stated explicitly more than once, but which is only truly expressed, in a cumulative fashion, by the poem in its entirety. Derek Pearsall has argued that it is only by taking an 'aerial view' of the *Fall of Princes* that we can hope to glimpse any kind of pattern in it, but that 'it is difficult to distance oneself enough from the poem to get this perspective...and in the process of reading it, it is impossible', hence his feeling that, ultimately, 'there is in the *Fall* neither onward movement nor design'.[31]

Now is not the time to dispute this claim exhaustively, but I will suggest some ways in which the *Fall*'s more problematic qualities might be resolved and rationalised. As regards the 'aerial view', this is certainly the author's own perspective on his work: as well as approaching the author and asking him to tell their stories, as happens in the *De casibus virorum illustrium*, in Lydgate's version the fallen princes are sometimes described as appearing on a ring: 'Next on the ryng now kometh Pollicrate' (4.957), 'next folwyng on the ryng / Cam yong Pirrus' (3745-6), 'Helmus Pertynax cam next on the ryng' (8.253), 'Next cam Gisulphus to Bochas on the ryng' (9.652).[32] The stories are told in roughly chronological order, and the impression given is that the poet has attained a perspective which allows him, and therefore us, to see history as a rotating wheel (Fortune's, effectively) upon which illustrious men rise and fall, one after another. Maura Nolan argues that 'the image of Fortune's turning wheel insists on human helplessness in a world of chance and change', and that this conflicts with the Boethian moral about the importance of

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[31] Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970), p. 250.
[32] John Lydgate, *The Fall of Princes*, ed. by Henry Bergen (London: OUP, 1924-7). All quotations are from this edition.

moral agency which Lydgate is at pains to expound,[33] but I would argue that what seems like incoherence in Lydgate's moral outlook in fact indicates a sophisticated didactic strategy.

There seems, for example, to be some confusion over exactly what Fortune is and is not responsible for. Lydgate 'is anxious to show the hand of God at work in human history, but persists in retaining the figure of Fortune, which has really become superfluous'; he thus 'fails to extricate himself from the toils of this contradiction'.[34] It is easy to see why some critics take this view. Against Nimrod, Lydgate tells us, 'Froward Fortune gan hir cours to varie, / And God also was in maner wroth' (1.1248-9), which strictly speaking means that it was Fortune who brought about the man's downfall, while God was merely 'wroth'. Elsewhere Lydgate complains that 'Fortune is to blame, / ...To sette a boy, unknowe of birthe and fame, / Bi fals errour upon a roial stage' (5.2341-4), before telling the story of such a boy, Andriscus, 'Whom to chastise Fortune brouht lowe, / Because he list nat hymselven for to knowe' (2402-3) – Fortune, not Andriscus, is blamed for bringing the boy to the throne in the first place, but she also punishes Andriscus for his pride. 'Thus', Lydgate observes, 'kan this ladi pleyen hir paient / Bi a maner of deynous mokerie' (2404-5); humans, it seems, are little more than the playthings of a capricious god in a universe which apparently lacks any stable moral structure.

Nigel Mortimer complains that 'the significance of human behaviour in the workings of Lydgate's tragic falls has yet to be examined';[35] he calls the subject 'uncharted territory' in which 'neat formulations are inadvisable', and sums up the issues at stake when he says that the 'interplay between the forces of deliberate vice,

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[33] Maura Nolan, *John Lydgate and the Making of Public Culture* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 224.

[34] Walter F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century* (1952), trans. by Ann E. Keep (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 213.

[35] Nigel Mortimer, *John Lydgate's* Fall of Princes*: Narrative Tragedy in its Literary and Political Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 177.

unintentional failing, innocent victimisation, just retribution of an outraged deity (Christian or pagan), malicious caprice of hostile Fortune, and the straightforward inevitability of a fixed destiny or stellar influence is a complex and daunting one'.[36] Mortimer attempts to explain away the inconsistencies by blaming them on circumstances of the poem's production. For instance, Book 2 of the *Fall* begins with a prologue denying the power of Fortune over the virtuous, before seemingly contradicting itself by detailing the 'tragedies of innocence' of Lucrece and Dido.[37] The ideological consistency of Lydgate's work is, in Mortimer's view, scuppered by the 'demands of theological orthodoxy and…the expectations of his patron'.[38]

Maura Nolan has the same difficulty resolving the moral problems produced by the active but inconsistent role Fortune seems to play in Lydgate's poetry, finding in his work 'the refusal of certain unspeakable problems to recede behind a veil of moralisation'.[39] Lydgate, she says, presents 'fundamentally incompatible visions of historical causation and human agency in history' by suggesting that wise rulers must accept the inevitability of Fortune's vicissitudes 'while simultaneously behaving as if such change could be prudently foreseen and prevented',[40] and by engendering uncomfortable moral paradoxes, such as that 'if virtue enables resistance to Fortune, then surely Fortune's victims share in the blame for their downfalls'.[41] Nolan touches reluctantly upon what I believe to be the solution to the problem when she describes, in reference to another writer's work, the Boethian idea that 'both human success and human failure may be ascribed to Fortune and must ultimately be understood providentially, as experiences of the world that will fall away, discarded when the

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[36] Mortimer, *Narrative Tragedy*, p. 155.
[37] Mortimer, *Narrative Tragedy*, p. 186.
[38] Mortimer, *Narrative Tragedy*, p. 216.
[39] Nolan, *Making of Public Culture*, p. 142.
[40] Nolan, *Making of Public Culture*, p. 63.
[41] Nolan, *Making of Public Culture*, p. 153.

soul achieves salvation'.[42] Just so our perception of Fortune's operation in the world should fall away as we attain a greater sense of perspective during the course of Lydgate's poem.

The victims in the *Fall of Princes* may indeed be seen as morally complicit in their own downfalls, just as Boethius is held responsible for his own unhappiness: a person is only unfortunate insofar as they attach themselves too much to the vicissitudes of this world; as long as they focus on spiritual goods, no material pains or pleasures can have any effect upon them. This, I believe, is the perspective we are meant to have attained by the end of Lydgate's poem, and the way in which he leads us towards this perspective recalls the practice of Machaut's Hope and Gower's Genius. More particularly, it is reminiscent of the *Confort d'ami*, which was similarly addressed to an aristocratic patron, and which took a similarly complex approach to the fallen prince's responsibility for his own fate.

For now, I will briefly cite just two problematic episodes from Lydgate's poem, and show how we might make sense of their contradictory statements about Fortune and God. The first is the story of Oedipus, and it is as well to state now that the features I comment upon in Lydgate's rendition are not present either in Boccaccio's or Laurent de Premierfait's prior versions of the text.[43] The baby Oedipus is said to have been saved from death 'thoruh Fortune, ay double in hir werkyng' (*Fall* 1.3281); then Lydgate says that it is *God* who 'Hath maad this child now so fortunat' (3290); then he attributes Oedipus' adoption to 'Fortune' (3293); and finally he says that 'such as can pacientli endure, /...God out of mischeeff can sodenli hem bryng' (3295-7). Perhaps these last lines, with their reference to those

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[42] Nolan, *Making of Public Culture*, p. 214.
[43] Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Fates of Illustrious Men*, trans. by Louis Brewer Hall (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing), pp. 11-5. Laurent de Premierfait, *Des cas des nobles hommes et femmes: Book I*, trans. by Patricia May Gathercole (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), pp. 133-7.

who can 'pacientli endure', explain the inconsistency: Oedipus' later fall is due, as in Sophocles' play, to his *hamartia*, his own impatient nature, which makes him turn to Apollo (a false god) in search of his real parents, and which makes him kill Laius in anger. The riddle of the Sphinx (whom Lydgate calls a 'serpent' (3460)), which, along with its solution, Lydgate describes in detail, illustrates the workings of earthly fortune, as is pointed out to us in a lengthy digression (3431-65). Oedipus solves the riddle easily because he himself has chosen to journey upon Fortune's wheel. It is therefore not God's fault when tragedy strikes, but Fortune's – or rather, Oedipus'.

Something very similar happens to Alcibiades: when traps are set for him, 'God provydeth off his magnyficence / Ageyn such malice to saven innocence' (3.3422-3); later his people fatally 'with ther goddis...maden hym egall / Bi unkouth praisyng of paganysme rihtis' (3564-5); then he is killed by 'fals conspiratours' (3633), God having apparently done nothing to save him this time; and Lydgate cries out to the 'fatal sustren' (3655) to ask why they killed Alicibiades, lamenting 'that evere he fill in your daungeer' (3661). Alicbiades fell 'in the danger' of the Fates and out of the grace of God when his power became dependent on his and his people's reverence of pagan gods. In cases like these, 'the pride which leads to a protagonist's downfall is nearly indistinguishable from the self-assertion that constitutes his heroism'; Lydgate's favourable treatment of such figures at the beginning of their stories eventually makes their violation of 'some unarticulated boundary…seem inevitable'.[44] Scanlon intends this as a comment on the excessively schematic nature of Lydgate's narrative techniques, but I think we are intended to pick up on this repetitious scheme. The poet's initial favour parallels that of God, and the 'unarticulated boundary' is the one that divides self-assertion from blasphemous pride. A clear pattern thus emerges, in which the grace of God is replaced by the

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[44] Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 346.

unpredictable favours of Fortune when men's pride becomes too great, or when they put too much trust in the wrong deities (as Oedipus does in Apollo).

In Scanlon's helpful formulation, during his discussion of Boethius, 'to the extent philosophy cannot make the Divine Good intelligible in its own terms, it is thrown back on stopgaps like the figure of Fortune and her wheel'.[45] This principle is well illustrated in the *Fall of Princes*, which, like Machaut's *Confort d'ami*, frequently demands the interpretative participation of the reader: the worldly language of Fortune, and of aristocratic privilege, is employed extensively and without obvious irony, but also in such a way that its incompatibility with the fact of divine providence is subtly highlighted. As we read on, the moral that 'The fall of pryncis, the cause weel out souht, / Cam off themsilff and off Fortune nouht' (3.174-5), is brought home to us again and again, both through explicit authorial statements like the one just quoted, and more subtly through the details of Lydgate's storytelling. Eventually, as we attain a fuller appreciation of the operation of divine providence, Fortune will fly from us, as she does from 'Bochas', enlightening us only by her absence: 'lich an aungel briht / At hir partyng she shewed a gret liht' (6.984-5), whereas in Boccaccio she merely 'vanished into thin air'.[46]

Chaucer's *House of Fame*, whose subject is Fortune's sister-goddess, exposes the vanity of this widely venerated figure with less rhetorical subtlety but more humour, and it would not be hard to show how this poem pictures fame as something which only enlightens us by its absence. In these final pages of the thesis, I will show how the scepticism about poetic discourse which I saw as being central to Machaut's work operates in Chaucer as well, and how he uses empathy, irony and misdirection to situate himself in relation to his revered predecessor, Dante. Howard Schless, who is more sceptical than most about the extent of Chaucer's borrowings from Dante in

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[45] Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, p. 124.
[46] Boccaccio, *Fates of Illustrious Men*, p. 143.

*Fame*, argues that the *Commedia*'s 'unique complexity...is enough to set the work in a class by itself, completely apart from anything Chaucer ever attempted',[47] and in the critical imagination, as Steve Ellis points out, Chaucer has often been 'regarded as Dante's English reflex'.[48] Piero Boitani, in comparing him to Petrarch, describes Chaucer as 'more limited, more insular, less extreme, yet probably more representative of the average culture of his time' – that is, more representative of a limited, insular culture.[49]

The narrator's transportation into a higher realm by an eagle is the most famous point of contact between *Fame* and the *Commedia*: in Dante, the eagle is 'the "bird of God", which represents the glory of an empire foreordained by God Himself',[50] and in the episode from the *Paradiso* to which Boitani refers, this bird of God is described as having flown a course 'dietro all'antico che Lavina tolse' (*Paradiso* 6.3);[51] Aeneas, that is. Chaucer begins his dream vision by reading about the founder of the Roman empire in a temple consecrated to Aeneas' mother, and the story he reads makes frequent reference to the hero's goal, 'Itayle' (*House of Fame* 147, 187, 298, 430, 433, 452). Chaucer then steps out into an infertile desert without knowing 'where I am, ne in what contree' (475) – that is, he is a foreigner there – before being swept away by an eagle, which, at least on one level, might be taken to symbolise the power of the Roman Empire. His walking out into a 'felde' (482), which he compares to 'the desert of Lybye' (488), in order to find out 'yf I kan / See owghwhere any stiryng man' (477-8), parallels Aeneas's initial exploration of Libya's shores: having arrived there, he decides to 'exire locosque / explorare novos'

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[47] Howard H. Schless, *Chaucer and Dante: A Revaluation* (Norman: Pilgrim Books, 1984), p. 20.
[48] Steve Ellis, *Chaucer at Large: The Poet in the Modern Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 83.
[49] Piero Boitani, *Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1984), p. 205.
[50] Boitani, *Imaginary World of Fame*, p. 83.
[51] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Paradiso*, ed. and trans. by John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961). All quotations and translations of the Paradiso are from this edition. 'Behind him of old that took Lavinia to wife', pp. 86-7.

to find out 'qui teneant (nam inculta videt)' (*Aeneid* 1.306-8).[52] Aeneas, of course, is destined to leave Libya, partly against his will, and travel to Italy, and Geffrey too will be rescued from this desert waste land, but his destiny will not be quite so prestigious. Chaucer's appeal to the audience at the start of his eagle-borne journey – 'herkeneth, every maner man / That Englissh understonde kan' (*Fame* 509-10) – sounds rueful when set beside Ovid's boast, at the end of *Metamorphoses*, that 'quaque patet domitis Romana potentia terris, / ore legar populi, perque omnia saecula fama, / siquid habent veri vatum praesagia, vivam' (*Metamorphoses* 15.877-9),[53] or Virgil's promise to Nisus and Euryalus that 'si quid mea carmina possunt, / nulla dies umquam memori vos eximet aevo, / dum domus Aeneae Capitoli immobile saxum / accolet imperiumque pater Romanus habebit' (*Aeneid* 9.446-9).[54]

The sequence of events through which Chaucer gets his poem underway may be read as a dramatisation of his sense of insignificance in the face of the poetic and imperial tradition by which Dante and his fellow countrymen were backed up. Glenn Steinberg interprets Chaucer's use of Dante as an attempt 'to broaden the horizons and increase the prestige of his dangerously provincial English poetry',[55] and one of Chaucer's methods for achieving this is to illustrate the contrast between his provincialism and Dante's imperialism in anarchic, degrading, and comical terms. Having immersed himself in continental literature, the English poet is aware of the

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[52] Virgil, *The Aeneid*, 2 volumes, ed. by R.D. Williams (London: Macmillan, 1972). All quotations are from this edition. Translations are from Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. by David West (London: Penguin, 1990). 'Go out and explore this new land...if there were any men, for he saw no signs of cultivation' (Williams, vol.1, p. 10; West, p. 13).

[53] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916). 'Wherever Rome's power extends over the conquered world, I shall have mention on men's lips, and, if the prophecies of the bards have any truth, through all the ages shall I live in fame', pp. 426-7.

[54] 'If there is any power in my poetry, the day will never come when time will erase you from the memory of man, while the house of Aeneas remains by the immovable rock of the Capitol and the Father of the Romans still keeps his empire' (Williams, vol. 2, p.64; West, pp. 228-9).

[55] Glenn Steinberg, 'Chaucer in the Field of Cultural Production: Humanism, Dante, and the *House of Fame*', *Chaucer Review*, 35 (2000), 182-203 (p. 186).

'comparative shallowness of his own native tradition'[56] and 'cannot yet take himself seriously as a poet', at least not while reading Dante, in comparison to whose 'magisterial *terzine'* Chaucer's couplets have been described by one critic as amounting 'to little more than a nervous squeak'.[57]

However, the humility implied by this 'squeak' may in part be a strategy on the author's part to critique the more lofty intentions of his predecessor: Chaucer may not have an illustrious vernacular like Dante's, but he has the self-knowledge to recognise the emptiness of a poet's glory. Such, I would suggest, is one of the points he makes in the *House of Fame*, and it is in this sense that I concur with the view, which has become axiomatic in Chaucer-Dante criticism, that 'what Chaucer first saw in Dante was the hope or dream of raising his own humble English "makinge" to the level of poetry'.[58] That level was, for Chaucer, a good deal nearer the ground than it was for Dante – in the valley rather than on the mountain, as it were – but by attaining it with the right measure of realism about his own worth, he strove after a dignity equal, or even superior, to Dante's. Machaut does not signal his own humility by situating it in relation to another poet's grandeur, but in poems like the *Prologue*, the *Jugement Behaigne* and the *Remede*, he pictures himself as pursuing his art with a naivety very similar to that of Chaucer's dreaming narrator. His humble acceptance of the vocation imposed on him by Nature and Love in the *Prologue*, and his subsequent efforts to fulfil their commands by recording a love debate, or composing lyrics for his aristocratic beloved, find echoes in Geffrey's meandering quest for 'tidings', and his sense of bemusement in the face of a world – the gaudy, ostentatious world of

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[56] David Wallace, 'Chaucer's Continental Inheritance: the Early Poems and *Troilus and Criseyde'* in *The Cambridge Chaucer Companion*, ed. by Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 19-37 (19).
[57] Wallace, 'Continental Inheritance', p. 23.
[58] Wallace, 'Continental Inheritance', p. 22.

Fame – which he can never really be a part of. His sense of exclusion, like Machaut's, is both rueful and judgemental.

It is no doubt true, to an extent, that in the *House of Fame*, 'Chaucer registers the extraordinary claims of Dantean poetics even as, by way of recognising the limitations of his own vernacular tradition, he retreats into extremes of self-parody',[59] but his parody extends further than himself, and is too aggressive to be called a 'retreat'. Chaucer is also not as incoherent or confused as Wallace suggests; rather, as Sheila Delany puts it, the *House of Fame* constitutes 'a coherent effort to portray a subject whose salient trait is ambiguity',[60] a 'literary statement about the unreliability of literary statements'.[61] One of the most fundamental contrasts to be made between Chaucer's approach to poetry and Dante's is that 'while Dante's work consistently systematises the universe...*The House of Fame* just as consistently works to undermine the authority of the body of literature through proliferation and juxtaposition...of voices, tidings, authors, actions, and objects'.[62] By setting up this contrast, Chaucer makes confident use of his own insecurities to undermine Dante's presumption and self-assurance, recognising 'the inescapable condition of secular knowledge...instead of hiding behind the false absolute of *auctoritas*'[63] and adopting as his guide, not Virgil, but by a comical amalgam of Dante's Virgil and the eagle (or St. Lucy) of *Purgatorio*, Canto 9.

To illustrate this, I will refer to Chaucer's well known adaptation of Dante's appeal to the Muses at the start of the *Inferno*: 'O muse, o alto ingegno, or m'aiutate; /

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[59] David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity: Absolutist Lineages and Associational Forms in England and Italy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 228.
[60] Sheila Delany, *Chaucer's* House of Fame*: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 5.
[61] Delany, *Skeptical Fideism*, p. 108.
[62] Lara Ruffalo, 'Literary Authority and the Lists of Chaucer's *House of Fame*: Destruction and Definition Through Proliferation', *Chaucer Review*, 27 (1993), 325-41 (p. 337).
[63] Brownlee et al, 'Vernacular literary consciousness', p. 428.

o mente che scrivesti ciò ch'io vidi, / qui si parrà la tua nobilitate' (*Inferno* 2.7-9)[64]

becomes

> O Thought, that wrot al that I mette,
>
> And in the tresorye hyt shette
>
> Of my brayn, now shal men se
>
> Yf any vertu in the be
>
> To tellen al my drem aryght.
>
> Now kythe thyn engyn and myght! (*Fame* 523-8)

It has been suggested that the 'rendering of "mente" as "thought" may have been due to an imperfect grasp of the Italian', or that it was 'intended to circumvent the limiting associations that "memory", like imagination, had acquired in faculty psychology'.[65] Helen Cooper makes a similar point, arguing that Chaucer's 'Thought' 'is almost exactly the opposite…to [Dante's] memory, "mente"',[66] but in Italian the word 'mente' often means something closer to 'mind' than 'memory': 'la mente ch'è da sè perfetta' (*Paradiso* 8.101),[67] to give just one example, is none other than that of God, the ultimate creator, echoing the 'mens' (*Aeneid* 6.727)[68] which, according to Anchises, set in motion the matter of the Universe, while 'memoria' seems a much

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[64] Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy: Inferno*, ed. by Robert M. Durling and Ronald L. Martinez, trans. by Robert M. Durling (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 40-1. All quotations and translations from the *Inferno* are from this edition. 'O muses, O high wit, now help me; O memory that wrote down what I saw, here will your nobility appear.'

[65] Robert B. Burlin, *Chaucerian Fiction* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 52.

[66] Helen Cooper, 'The Four Last Things in Dante and Chaucer: Ugolino in the House of Rumour', *New Medieval Literatures*, 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 39-66 (p. 56).

[67] 'The mind which has perfection in itself', pp. 120-1.

[68] 'Mind' (Williams, vol. 1, p. 147; West, p. 155).

more common word for 'memory', occurring five times in the *Inferno*, eight in the *Purgatorio*, and eight again in the *Paradiso*.[69]

A better understanding of 'mente' strengthens Cooper's argument that Chaucer's translation constitutes a 'redefinition of authority'.[70] The reduction of 'mente' to 'memory' by translators seems to be influenced by Dante's use of it just a few lines earlier, when he prepares to recount the journey 'che ritrarrà la mente che non erra' (*Inferno* 2.6),[71] and by his claim that this 'mente' 'wrote down what he saw'. The inference commonly drawn seems to be that Dante's mind retrieves the memory of something that really happened, and which it wrote down and stored, so 'mente' can most conveniently be translated as 'memory'. But Dante clearly equates his memory with his creative powers, and uses the same word when referring to the mind of God: he considers his vision to be an expression of *truth*, regardless of whether it actually happened to him. The 'mind that wrote down what I saw' also *produced* the vision in the first place, hence its 'nobility' will appear in the *re*production of that same vision. We may recall the way in which Machaut's lovers are enjoined to subsist on an image of their beloved constructed from memory, and the concerns in his poems about whether or not this image corresponds to the real person. These concerns apply also to the fictional products of the poetic imagination, which may or may not communicate truths to the reader.

Cooper refers to 'Dante's further prayer to the Muses in *Inferno* XXXII, that his telling might conform to the fact, "dal fatto il dir non sia diverso" (l.12); but again, Chaucer insists that there is no fact'.[72] Chaucer's 'Thought' simply 'wrot al that I mette' (*Fame* 522), the word 'mette' specifying that Chaucer's vision was a

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[69] I am indebted to the website www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/Dante/DivComm for its searchable online version of the *Commedia*.
[70] Cooper, 'Four Last Things', p. 56.
[71] 'Which memory, unerring, will depict', pp. 40-1.
[72] Cooper, 'Four Last Things', p. 56.

dream. That this vision is fundamentally fictional seems even more likely in the light of James Winny's observation that 'the verb "wrot" is from *werchen*, not from wryten'.[73] Perhaps this translation is Chaucer's playful way of hinting that the product of a poet's 'mente' does not necessarily constitute a 'truthful' vision. Chaucer, who knows that Dante's mind did not just 'write down' his vision, but that it 'wrought' it as well, is unable to grant an invention of the mind the same authority as an actual 'witnessed' event. His reference to the 'tresorye' (*Fame* 524) of his brain, which has sometimes been read as an allusion to Dante's lines, 'quant' io del regno santo / nella mia mente potei far tesoro, / sarà ora matera del mio canto' (*Paradiso* 1.10-12),[74] can be read as *ironic* in its self-aggrandisement, given that Geffrey's poems are hardly spoken of as treasures in the *House of Fame*. 'Now kythe thyn engyne and myght!' (*Fame* 528) has the same effect, with 'engyne' representing a somewhat deflated version of Dante's 'alto ingegno'.

Such deflations, which re-cast Dantean terms in a more worldly setting, 'may not be a mark of secularity so much as a committed belief that he [Chaucer] cannot and should not arrogate God's judgements to himself'.[75] The traditional claim that Chaucer 'is the first Englishman to share Dante's sense of the worth of poetry',[76] is perhaps in need of modification, for his intention in the *House of Fame* is, I would argue, to expose the fundamental *worthlessness* of poetry, and its unfitness as a context in which to discuss eternal verities. Nevertheless, his approach to his task is no less serious than Dante's to his, though his message is necessarily couched in humorous terms. Chaucer, as a 'poet of the secular world in a narrower sense – possibly a stricter sense – than Dante was', would never venture upon a poetic

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[73] James Winny, *Chaucer's Dream Poems* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), p. 34.
[74] 'So much of the holy kingdom as I was able to treasure in my mind shall now be matter of my song', pp. 18-9.
[75] Cooper, 'Four Last Things', p. 45.
[76] J.A.W. Bennett, *Chaucer's Book of Fame* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 101.

description of actual salvation: 'that greater eschatological vision which Dante wrote about must be implied or understood in [Chaucer], for it was prominent enough in people's thoughts; but it is not expressed'.[77] Crucial (according to some critics) to an understanding of Chaucer's poetry is the supposition that 'unlike Dante he believed truth to be beyond the range of poetry', so that 'unmasking human falsehood, rather than revealing divine verities, would thus turn out to be the didactic burden'.[78] In Chaucer, the transcendent world 'is not described in conventional religious lyricism…but as a sceptical view of this world, a satiric showing of human failing', which is itself indicative of 'a deep religiosity'.[79]

The extent to which such a reading can be supported through close comparison of the *Commedia* and the *House of Fame* has, I think, not yet been acknowledged, despite the large amount of scholarship devoted to exploring the relationship between the two texts. Chaucer's allusions to Dante manifest the same kind of 'deep religiosity' to be found in Machaut, Gower and Lydgate: their poems are moralistic, but the defining characteristic of their didactic method is empathy. Machaut and Gower inhabit the role of the lover, Lydgate that of the 'early Boethius' who marvels at the operations of Fortune, and Chaucer that of the poet in search of subject matter. All of them (sincerely or not) convey the impression of a deep personal investment in these points of view, and so effectively present themselves – or at least their authorial *personae* – to the moral judgement of the reader who, by implication, is therefore asked to situate themselves in relation to these *personae*. This is why the interpretative effort of the reader is so crucial to the production of these texts' meaning, and why it is so important to consider these texts, not in a narrowly 'integumental' sense, but as works which are pervaded by irony and

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[77] Donald R. Howard, qtd Schless, *Chaucer and Dante*, p. 23.

[78] William Franke, '"Enditynges of Worldly Vanitees": Truth and Poetry in Chaucer as Compared With Dante', *Chaucer Review*, 34 (1999), 88-106 (p. 88).

[79] Muriel Spark, qtd Ellis, *Chaucer at Large*, pp. 96-7.

misdirection. My contention is that these authors are all depicting the workings of Fortune – whether in the context of love, history or poetry itself – in such a way as to suggest her non-existence, and that they intend us to derive an orthodox Christian moral after we have left behind the worldly milieu of the poem. There are other ways to read and interpret, but I hope I have shown that the 'moral reading', if it engages sympathetically with the detail of a text, can also do justice to that text's richness and complexity.

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