Texts and the Self in the Twelfth Century analyses key twelfth-century Latin and vernacular texts which articulate a subjective, often autobiographical stance. The contention is that the self forged in medieval literature could not have come into existence without both the gap between Latinity and the vernacular and a shift in perspective towards a visual and spatial orientation. This results in a self which is not an agent that will act on the outside world like the Renaissance self, but, rather, one which inhabits a potential, middle ground, or "space of agency," explained here partly in terms of object relations theory.

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Texts and the Self in the Twelfth Century

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To my parents, with love and thanks

Harum quoque duarum nobilior est vulgaris: tum quia prima fuit humano generi usitata; tum quia totus orbis ipsa perfruitur ...; tum quia naturalis est nobis, cum illa potius artificialis existat.
Et de hac nobiliori nostra est intentio pertractare.

(And of the two the vernacular is the nobler: since it was the first employed by man; since the whole world uses it ... since it is natural to us while the other involves more artifice.
And I intend to deal with this nobler one.)

Dante, *De vulgari eloquentia* I.i.4

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I

Corpus, body, text (and self)

The letters inscribed on Dante's forehead at the entrance to Purgatory draw on a tradition that reaches back at least as far as Augustine, a tradition which asserts an alliance between body and text as well as between sin and the wounded, naked body:

> Sette P ne la fronte mi descrisse
> col punton della spada, et "Fa che lavi,
> quando se'dentro, queste piaghe" disse.
>
> (Purg. IX: 112–14)
>
> (He inscribed seven "P"s on my forehead with the point of his sword, and said "Wash these wounds off when you have entered inside.")[1]

For both Dante and Augustine the link between body and text derives from a belief that reading correctly is a key to living correctly; the semiotics of the flesh that fascinates each author lies at the heart of both their text and their theology.[2]

In Latin the word *corpus*, meaning both body and body of writing or text, points to this intersection, a nuance which, as

[1] *La Commedia secondo l'antica vulgata*, ed. G. Petrocchi, 4 vols. (Milan: Mondadori, 1966–67), vol. 2. Translation is mine.

[2] Useful here is the work by Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion: Studies in Logology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), and commentary on that work by John Freccero, "Logology: Burke on Saint Augustine," *Representing Kenneth Burke*, ed. Hayden White and Margaret Brose (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), pp. 52–67.

Beryl Smalley makes clear, the early Fathers were well aware of.[3] To a certain extent, Dante and Augustine delimit the span of the Middle Ages, and while it is interesting that they both ground their understanding of textuality in the body, it is perhaps not surprising given the dual nature of the Christian logos, the word made flesh. Of more interest is how the details of this metaphor shifted through the course of the Middle Ages; how, in short, the interrelationship of text and body changed in the intervening 800 years.

The governing argument of this book is that there exists a direct correlation not only between text and body but also between language and self: not linguistic affinities, *per se*, but conceptual possibilities offered by – and between – Latin and the vernacular. My goal is to sustain the hypothesis that the vernacular develops in part as a literary language of self-expression by defining itself in terms of the Latin tradition of letters in the same way that the self develops out of a mutual recognition and distancing from the body. In each instance, the *point de départ*, the Latin tradition or the body, is and remains an essential element in defining what follows, and the space that is opened up becomes the space of agency in which the self and the vernacular text develop.

As the notion of a space of agency suggests, it is the construction of a self with a consciousness of space that is central to my argument. As Michael Holly has noted, "we possess a philosophical view of the world, of which our rectilinear, spatial system is part and parcel."[4] All of the texts analysed here posit not only a self but a self understood as functioning in space, and in particular, taking the body as frame of reference. At the core of this study, then, lie two assumptions: the fact that space and the body had come to assume a preeminence denied them in the early Middle Ages and the assertion that space is a crucial and defining aspect of selfhood.

[3] *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1964), chap. 1.

[4] Michael Ann Holly, *Panofsky and the Foundations of Art History* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 135.

While it has long been recognized that the courtly literature of the twelfth century seems to articulate a stance of individuality, it has not been accepted generally as that of the self.[5] In "The Performing Self in Twelfth-Century Culture," Martin Stevens uses a telling metaphor to discuss the voice in twelfth-century autobiography as he asserts that the persona articulated there is "a *step removed* from the full emergence of the performing self."[6] (Other historians of the self would put it even further away.)[7] Recent work in two very different fields, however, has suggested that the nature of this preliminary, pre-performing self of the twelfth-century has much to do with our understanding of the self today. First, the postmodern assertion that the self did not exist led, both in its own defense and in the backlash that resisted such a notion, to a full disclosure of what is perhaps best called the anatomy of the modern self. In these definitions and glosses we find the self portrayed not as "something autonomous

[5] Cf. the range of arguments made by: Mariann Sanders Regan, *Love Words: Self and Text in Medieval and Renaissance Poetry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1982), esp. chap. 1, "Literary Text as Self"; Georg Misch, *Geschichte der Autobiographie*, 4 vols. (Frankfurt: Schulte Bunke, 1949–69), vols. 2 and 3; John F. Benton, "Consciousness of Self and Perceptions of Individuality," *Renaissance and Renewal in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Robert L. Benson and Giles Constable (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), pp. 263–95; Philippe Ariès and Georges Duby, *Histoire de la vie privée*, 5 vols. (Paris: Seuil, 1985), vol. 2, 372–81; Charles Radding, *A World Made by Men: Cognition and Society, 400–1200* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); and Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1982), chap. 3, esp. pp. 85–90. See also Marie-Dominique Chenu, *L'éveil de la conscience dans la civilisation médiévale* (Montréal: Institut d'études médiévales, 1969); Walter Ullmann, *The Individual and Society in the Middle Ages* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966), esp. Lecture III. H. Marshall Leicester, Jr., *The Disenchanted Self: Representing the Subject in the Canterbury Tales* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: California University Press, 1990), while a study of Chaucer and therefore concerned with different texts, takes a compatible approach to that taken here.

[6] Stevens, "The Performing Self in Twelfth-Century Culture," *Viator* 9 (1978), 199; emphasis mine.

[7] So Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (Chicago University Press, 1980): "[I]n the sixteenth century there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process. Such self-consciousness had been wide-spread among the elite in the classical world, but Christianity brought a growing suspicion of man's power to shape identity"(p. 2). See also Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1989) and Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, vol. 3 of *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, 3 vols. (New York: Pantheon, 1986), esp. Introduction, pt. 3.

and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else,"[8] but as a process, a fluidity, a tension, even, between the subjective and objective realms. Second, psychological investigation of the self has yielded new insight into its origins; Lacan's positing of the self at the rupture of the subjective and objective worlds is now seen against a backdrop of earlier processes engaged in asserting and marking difference. Both object-relations theorists and feminist rethinkers of psychological theory point to the existence of a self in earlier stages of child development than was posited previously.

A recent study points out how

> [s]patial concepts are a significant aspect of present-day psychoanalytic thinking, even though they are not often thought of as spatial constructs per se ... [and even though] there has often been a taboo in considering the mind in spatial terms ... What stands out ... [is] how necessary the concept of spatial distance is."[9]

I would argue that indeed we can now call what we find in twelfth-century literature a self as long as we are willing to define that self in precisely these spatial terms. We can even, I would argue, assert that the twelfth century was witness to the origin of the self as we define it today. But we can do this only if we understand the self not as an autonomous unit but as a complex interaction of body, language, and space, a phenomenon that owes its existence, ironically, to the seemingly self-denying language of Early Christianity, and defines itself as much by a distancing from, rather than an assimilation of the classical Latin tradition. It is, in short, my thesis that the self appears first in conjunction with the vernacular text, that is, with the organization and isolation of the language of thought in an enclosed and visible space, be it the written page or the

[8] Sigmund Freud, quoted in Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 46.

[9] Polly Crisp, "Temporal and Spatial Constructs in Projective Processes," *American Journal of Psychoanalysis* 49 (1989), 159, 165. From the examples Crisp provides it is clear that she is talking primarily about object-relations approaches.

performer's body.[10] The two – self and vernacular text – while not the same, are structurally and conceptually similar, and the history of the one, perforce, entails the history of the other. The self, so defined and understood, is not a universal but, rather, is, initially, a construct of the twelfth century which is directly connected to the shift from Romanesque to Gothic sensibilities.[11]

Romanesque assumptions are rooted in the ideas of Augustine and it is in the *De doctrina christiana* that Augustine is clearest about his understanding of the connection between body and text: "Non autem praecipit scriptura nisi caritatem nec culpat nisi cupiditatem" (For scripture teaches nothing except charity, nor faults anything except cupidity).[12] He clarifies this by saying that "Caritatem voco motum animi ad fruendum deo propter ipsum et se atque proximo propter deum; cupiditatem autem motum animi ad fruendum se et proximo et quolibet corpore non propter deum" (I call charity the movement of the soul for enjoying God on His own terms, and for enjoying one's self and one's neighbor on God's terms; cupidity, however, is the movement of the soul for enjoying one's self, one's neighbor, or any corporeal thing on other than God's terms).[13]

Since it is scripture that teaches charity, reading correctly, charitably, becomes, in Augustine's hands, not only *a* virtuous

[10] While this text soon becomes associated with the written page, it need not be limited to that at its inception. Rather, as Paul Zumthor has argued, the distinction between oral and written in the twelfth century in particular is very different from our own. See his *Introduction à la poésie orale* (Paris: Seuil, 1983). The significant point is that the text becomes perceived as a space of transformation between two and three dimensions.

[11] Although concerned with somewhat later works than those under consideration here, Paul Zumthor's argument about the distinction between Romanesque and Gothic is still largely appplicable. In the Romanesque, he argues, subject tends to fuse with object and the speaking subject is ahistorical. Gothic, by contrast, breaks this unity open and the subject finds itself exterior to its object which leads, ultimately to a separation of poet and poem. Paul Zumthor, "'Roman' et 'gothique': deux aspects de la poésie médiévale," *Studi in onore di Italo Siciliano*, 2 vols. (Firenze: Olschki, 1966), vol. 2, 1223–34.

[12] *De doctrina christiana* III.x.15. The text used here is that edited by Joseph Martin, *Aurelii Augustini opera: pars 4*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, 32 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1962). On the relationship of text and body in the *De doctrina*, see Mark D. Jordan, "Words and Word: Incarnation and Signification in Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*," *Augustinian Studies* 11 (1980), 177–96.

[13] *De doctrina christiana* III.x.16.

activity but *the* most virtuous one.[14] The very process of charitable interpretation is the model on which virtuous activity is patterned. Moreover, this charitable activity is, elsewhere in the same text, specifically related to the act of healing:

> Et quemadmodum medici cum alligant vulnera, non incomposite, sed apte id faciunt ... sic medicina sapientiae ... est accommodata vulneribus de quibusdam contrariis curans et de quibusdam similibus ... Ad eadem contraria pertinet, quod etiam exemplo virtutum eius vitia nostra curantur. Iam vero similia quasi ligamenta membris et vulneribus nostris adhibita illa sunt, quod per feminam deceptos per feminam natus ... liberavit.
>
> (And even as doctors when they dress wounds do so not sloppily but appropriately, ... so the medicine of Wisdom ... is suited to our wounds, curing some by opposites and some by comparables ... the fact that our vices are cured by the example of His virtues applies to the category of opposites. For comparables, like bandages applied to our wounds and members are shown in the fact that born of a woman he freed those deceived by a woman.)[15]

It is the bandaging of a wound that constitutes this virtuous activity; the very process of reading and interpreting is virtue, charity, itself, while its opposite, cupidity, is the action of focusing on the unglossed text as it is; and that unglossed object, which is called by Augustine "quolibet corpore" (any corporal thing), is also perceived as a body that is wounded.

What these passages from Augustine hand down to the medieval tradition is, first, an association between the body and the text and, second, the idea that the text is two very different things, given that charity is a reading that bandages: it is both the wounded body and, in the glossing, it is the concealment of that body.[16] As paradoxical as this sounds, it nonetheless is what is

[14] On reading as process in the *De doctrina christiana*, see Brenda Deen Schildgen, "Augustine's Answer to Jacques Derrida in the *De Doctrina Christiana*," *New Literary History* 25(1994), 383–97; her notes and bibliography are also very useful.

[15] *De doctrina christiana* I.XIV.13.

[16] Here I would have to disagree with Beryl Smalley, *Study of the Bible*, who argues that body is likened to text because it veils meaning.

supported by Augustine's language. Troublesome text – that which does not of itself offer a charitable reading – is like a naked, wounded body; the charitable act of glossing both sees the body in its wounded state and seeks to cover it up, to conceal it. Text serves to correct and to heal by glossing, covering and revising. Text as a concept, then, is both wounded body and its dressing, while glossing provides the paradigm for dealing with the corporeal, material world.

Dante's understanding of the relationship between body and text is quite different. While the seven "P"s function much as the wounded text does for Augustine, requiring a charitable treatment, the goal of this reading is entirely different. The wounds are to be "washed away" when Dante enters "inside" Purgatory. The gradual acquisition of virtue and therefore charity serves to erase the marks from the body, not to cover them over, and so to return the body to its initially pure state; to reveal, in fine, not to suppress. The way the "P"s are addressed is, as in Augustine, through interpretation, yet it is an interpretation that, as the process suggests, turns towards, not away from the body.

Virtuous reading is taught to Dante on the first terrace of Purgatory in Canto x, immediately following the inscription of the seven "P"s, through the bas-reliefs depicting humility. Here the model is that of the Annunciation where the words of the archangel Gabriel are heard and accepted by Mary and, as a result, produce Christ, the word made flesh. Here then we have a second instance of the intersection of text and body, or, as Dante himself refers to it, *visibile parlare* (*Purg.* x.95), visible speech, the word that becomes visible in the taking on of flesh. But even as Mary incorporates and makes visible the words of Gabriel, so Dante incorporates and embodies the true meaning of the art as the characters speak to and through him.

For Dante, in short, the good reading is one that turns his very body into a part of the text in its engaged interaction with the work. Where Augustine moves beyond the body as he reads, Dante incorporates it into his hermeneutics; even the seven "P"s which are the universal text of vice, will in their

erasure reveal his body when he moves further inside Purgatory.[17] The body in Dante is thus not hidden but foregrounded, and that body does not belong to someone else but is, instead, his own.

Moreover, the type of interpretation being proposed is one that depends upon a simultaneous appreciation of two opposed things: what we might call the internal and the external or the subjective and the objective. The annunciatory hermeneutics represented by Dante's progress through Purgatory foregrounds the body. Yet what becomes clear in a careful reading of *Purgatorio* is that what Dante is proposing is not the creation of an internal subjective landscape through a recognition of the wholly externalized quality of the world, a recognition that ultimately leads to a sense of isolation and alienation (if also autonomy). Rather, what the embodiment of the word demands is the subjectification of the objective world, that is, the creation of an interior landscape which defines the subjective as the mark of objective difference.[18]

Here again a comparison with Augustine is instructive. While he, too, aims ostensibly to turn inward, his methods, as the examples from the *De doctrina christiana* make clear, consist of a progressive externalization. More and more layers of reading and glossing are added to the text as bandages to the body, and meaning and interpretation reside on the outside, not the inside (even though the metaphor would suggest the opposite).

The foregrounding of that point where internal and external meet would suggest that, at best, we are in what psychoanalysis would term a pre-Oedipal understanding of the subject/object relationship, the period covered extensively in the writings of

[17] On the universality of this text, and the seven "P"s in general, see Peter Armour, *The Door of Purgatory: A Study of Multiple Symbolism in Dante's* Purgatorio (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), chap. 5, esp. p. 64.

[18] As Domenico Pietropaolo has recently written, in *Purg.* X "[t]he creation of meaning is clearly a collaborative effort involving and affecting both sides of the relation. For in the reading process the text changes the reader's state of consciousness while the reader transforms the state of the text in his consciousness ... This means that reading cannot be regarded as a mere coming into possession of a textual object *but the subjectification of that object into a dialogue partner*" (p. 206; emphasis mine). "Dante's Paradigms of Humility and the Structure of Reading," *Quaderni d'Italianistica* 10 (1989), 199–211.

object-relations theorists.[19] Moreover, Madelon Sprengnether's rereading of psychological development opens the door for a reformulation that is useful to us here. To call Dante's hermeneutics pre-anything is to treat it anachronistically. Rather, following Sprengnether, I would suggest that Dante's formulation represents the construction of an early self from the subjectification of the objective world. In other words, Dante's treatment of body suggests that he is trying to articulate the formulation of an early self created out of the intersection of subject and object through text. This construction, however, is not the result of an epistemological rupture and the mediation of that rupture through language. Rather, we should be looking for a particular treatment of body which accentuates its role as signifier. The association of text and body, in other words, does not, at least at first, result in a conflation of text and speaking subject in the Lacanian sense; language does not for Dante in Purgatory serve to mediate between inner and outer (although it will at a later point in the *Divine Comedy*). Rather, inner appropriates outer as it feeds on, and introjects, the external world.

The perspective Dante has on the objective and the subjective is clarified further in the *De vulgari eloquentia*. Here he speaks of the vernacular as "natural" and literary languages as "the product of art." This distinction between external and internal grammar is made on the basis of the interaction of language with the objective and subjective worlds. The literary languages are

[19] Most useful among the object-relations writings for these purposes are those by D. W. Winnicott (esp. *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971), chap. 1: "Of every individual who has reached to the stage of being a unit with ... an outside and and inside, it can be said that there is an *inner reality* to that individual ... My claim is that if there is a need for this double statement, there is also need for a triple one: the third part of the life of a human being ... is an intermediate area of *experiencing*, to which inner reality and external life both contribute. It is an area that is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet interrelated" (p. 2)). Slightly less accessible for the layman are the works of Melanie Klein and Joan Riviere, such as their joint *Love, Hate and Reparation* (New York: Norton, 1964). For an insightful overview of the strengths and weaknesses of object-relations theory, especially to feminist thought, see Cynthia Burack, "A House Divided: Feminism and Object Relations Theory," *Women's Studies International Forum* 15 (1992), 499–506.

presented as wholly objective, while the vernacular is both internal and external, the object which becomes subjectified.

According to child development theory, this earlier self is preverbal.[20] When repeated, either later in life or in the larger ideological framework I am considering here, neither stage is without its language. Rather, language is shown to function in two entirely different ways, both of which relate to the body: first as an object that can be appropriated and internalized, then as a source of mediation which *precisely because of its earlier introjection* is able to bridge the gap between subject and world while belonging wholly to neither. The later mediating power of language – of text – is derived from its earlier ability to be embodied and internalized.[21] A language's ability to be introjected comes from the perception that it belongs first to the world; that it is already an object in the world just like the body that it is about to join, even though it remains distinct from that bodily object. The very fact that the Latin tradition of letters had for so long been associated with both the body and its suppression certainly established a context which linked text and body in the cultural mind. Yet Latin for a medieval audience was not an ambivalent body, a subjectifiable object. Rather, it remained wholly external, an image of the undifferentiated signified from which difference must be marked. The body which could be internalized was one which was like Latin, yet could also be subjectified. In this it was like the body but different from it. It is the vernacular, but more, it is the vernacular text as the desirable female, sometimes maternal, body that allows for the development of subjective space.

For the vernacular is characterized even further, both in the

[20] See D. W. Winnicott, "String: A Technique of Communication," *The Maturational Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies in the Theory of Emotional Development* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965), esp. pp. 156–57. In this piece Winnicott points out how a child's abnormal use of string signals not so much a joining as a "denial of separation." In this it seems very close indeed to the use of the vernacular in the early twelfth century.

[21] Though, as James Grotstein notes, "Interpersonal objects (external objects) are not taken into the psyche via introjection until the self projectively identifies aspects of itself into or onto the first." *Splitting and Projective Identification* (New York: Aronson, 1981), p. 86.

De vulgari eloquentia and in the *Purgatorio*, in that it is associated with the feminine. In the *Purgatorio* Arnaut Daniel is addressed as the "miglior fabbro del parlar materno" (better maker of the mother tongue).[22] Occitan may be the mother tongue because it was the first self-consciously literary vernacular of the Middle Ages; it is also the mother tongue because, as Dante argues in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, like all vernaculars, it is associated with the maternal: "quod vulgarem locutionem appellamus eam qua infantes assuefiunt ab assistentibus, cum primitus distinguere voces incipiunt; vel, quod brevius dici potest, vulgarem locutionem asserimus, quam sine omni regula nutricem imitantes accipimus" (the vernacular (is) the language which children gather from those around them when they first begin to articulate words; or more briefly, that which we learn without any rules at all *by imitating our nurses*) [emphasis mine].[23] That is, the type of reading Dante is proposing may be associated both with the vernacular and the maternal because it speaks to a certain relationship to the body best characterized by the maternal.

The initial role of the vernacular text, then, is not mediating but differentiating, as female from male, as not-body from body, as an object that is like the other objects in the world yet also different enough, ambiguous enough to be internalized.[24] It provides a space of agency, a further dimension, not the unifying power of a free agent – that will be fashioned further down the road.[25] Because the feminine and the vernacular are powerless wounded bodies on their own, once symbolized and subjectified they grant power to the males who perceive them.

The development of the self in twelfth-century France that

[22] *Purg.* XXVI.117.

[23] *De vulgari eloquentia* I.I., ed. Aristide Marigo (Florence; Le Monnier: 1938), p. 6. Translation is by Marianne Shapiro, *Dante's Book of Exile* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), p. 47. Linking of mothers and nurses is not uncommon: see Augustine, *Confessions* I.6.7, "nec mater mea vel nutrices meae ..." (ed. James J. O'Donnell, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992); hereafter cited as *Confessions*).

[24] Here see Paul Zumthor, "Birth of a Language and Birth of a Literature," *Mosaic* 8 (1975), 195–206, esp. pp. 196–97, 201.

[25] It is this aspect of the self that Stephen Greenblatt addresses in *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*.

arises in conjunction with – and at least partially as a result of – the development of the written vernacular text is, in other words, one concerned with appropriation and internalization, the subjectified object which later can be reobjectified and reintroduced into the world.[26]

An argument could be raised here that texts exist in the vernacular which predate the twelfth century and that the Latin tradition continues on beyond the beginnings of vernacular fiction. Yet it is my contention that texts of the self – that is, texts whose primary purpose is to articulate a subjective stance which hovers between the subjective and objective worlds – do not exist in either Latin or the vernacular before the troubadours. The origin of the vernacular lyric that the troubadour tradition represents marks one beginning of this voice.[27] Clearly Dante (and later Pound) believed that troubadour lyric empowered the vernacular. Its status as mother tongue became an asset rather than a liability; precisely because it is like Latin, while not being Latin, the vernacular is able to articulate a strategic position that is lodged both within and outside of the world. The textual space that opens up, in other words, is not, initially, a space for Latin, even though it defines itself in terms of the Latin literary tradition. Latin had become, ironically perhaps, the language for that which could not be spoken; it represents what had been the inaccessible other in both its positive and negative form.[28] But the appropriation of literary language by the vernacular could indeed serve to articulate this differentiation.

[26] Not, in other words, a self that develops first in response to a proto-Cartesian awareness of the subject/object split between self and world – that moment when the subjective becomes alienated from the objective and is potentially reallied to it through the mediation of language. Such an argument speaks not necessarily of the origins of self but of masculine efficacy in the world: the Oedipal stage, after all, doubles the male, not the female figure and is concerned with power, alienation, and externalization. "The Oedipus complex ... both explains and sustains patriarchy." Madelon Sprengnether, *The Spectral Mother: Freud, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 243.

[27] On the rise of vernacular literature in relation to the Latin traditions see, e.g., *Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages*, ed. Lois Ebin, Studies in Medieval Culture, 16 (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1984) and *On the Rise of the Vernacular Literatures in the Middle Ages*, ed. R.G. Collins and J. Wortley, *Mosaic* 8.4 (1975).

[28] Foucault's comments on censorship are pertinent here; see *Introduction*, vol. 1 of *History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Allen Lane, 1978), p. 84.

And it did so by creating through this language a new perception, the subjectivity representative of the self.

It is important to realize that at this early stage there is no economy, only ambivalence and slippage. Differentiation is marked through the lack of exchange; the text is not a third party; rather, the text marks difference by its ability to be both subject and object, internal and external. It is only when the text turns to objectifying the subjective will of the poet to an audience that it becomes associated with the mediation of self and world. The text then becomes localized in an object and fixed in the external world.

Here is where discussion of the self usually starts; here is where I intend to end, for the objectified subject is but the last of a series of selves, as post-structuralist denial of the self has made clear. The self that is fashioned in the Renaissance is a self that is derived from an earlier, more open, more ambivalent stage. The certainty of the Cartesian subject is built on very uncertain, shifting grounds, grounds that nonetheless carry within them the seeds of subjectivity. Subjectivity is indeed created out of the world, and it is created out of an awareness of difference. But it is neither dependent nor is it founded on alienation or rupture. Text is essential to subjectivity, not because of its ability to belong fully nowhere, to mediate only, but rather because it belongs initially everywhere and transforms fluidly. Self, and the vernacular language that creates it is, at least in twelfth-century France, considered maternal and feminine, and part of an enclosed and appealing awareness of the world, the body and difference.

My approach here is thus necessarily dual. I intend to pursue both the relationship of the developing vernacular literature to the ongoing and continuous Latin tradition and the articulation of a self in relation to a similarly ever-present body. In both cases, I would argue, the new voice arises first from an acknowledgment of the continuous ground, be it Latin or the body, which results in the creation of distance from that ground. The focus on the body found in twelfth-century literature is, in other words, not an embracing of that body but rather an internalization of the

world which takes the body as its point of departure. So, too, the appearance of the vernacular text represents a simultaneous acceptance and denial of the Latin tradition.

It is in the growing exploration of this alternative space that the self first arises. As long as one is trying to fit a scriptural mold, to strive toward the transcendent one, the self cannot exist. It is, by contrast, when one starts to recognize and incorporate sin and transgression – to reify such characteristics – that the room for the self is opened up.

The crucial issue of the literature of twelfth-century France becomes, in a sense, then, granting this internal transgressive space a voice. But this, in turn, depends upon aligning the voice with a spatial perspective as objects of the external world are permitted to inform the subjective point of view. Two recent works on subjectivity in twelfth-century France, Michel Zink's *La subjectivité littéraire autour du siècle de Saint Louis* and Sarah Kay's *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* make this point in slightly different ways.[29] Zink argues that:

> L'apparition de la littérature française se trouve donc coincider avec le moment où l'art doit reconnaître qu'il n'a d'autre vérité que celle de la subjectivité qui s'incarne en lui.[30]
>
> (The emergence of French literature happens to coincide with the moment when art comes to the realization that there is no other truth than that of subjectivity which is realized through art.)

Kay, similarly, states that "textual effects are organized around the first-person position and that subjectivity is inseparable from rhetorical complexity."[31]

In the third chapter of his work, Zink proposes that twelfth-century narrative is not yet a literature of the self since it is still a literature of the indeterminate past. Zink concludes that it is not until the *thirteenth* century, when the present irrupts through

[29] Michel Zink, *La subjectivité littéraire autour du siècle de Saint Louis* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985); Sarah Kay, *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry* (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[30] Zink, *La subjectivité*, pp. 16–17.

[31] Kay, *Subjectivity*, p. 49.

subjective allegory, that an interiority central to the subjectivity of the self become possible, "l'époque où toute chose, en littérature, se mesure au temps de la vie" (the era when all things, in literature, are measured in terms of the span of life).[32]

It is my argument, rather, that the irruption of the subjective present is possible as soon as space has become the predominant paradigm.[33] Focusing as Zink does on the importance of the present to subjectivity he occludes a transition which occurs prior to that. The present, in other words, could not support the emphasis he discovers in thirteenth-century works if the shift from a temporal to spatial perspective had not occurred before that. It is only because time becomes measured in spatial terms by the twelfth century that the present can take on the dimension necessary for its subjective literary development.

Sarah Kay's work, which is ultimately more concerned with works of the twelfth century, alludes to just such a preliminary change of perspective from temporal to spatial as her work focuses often on the importance of space to twelfth-century

32 Zink, *La subjectivité*, p. 264.

33 The alignment of text and self with spatial differentiation is accepted by Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structualism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1975); J. Derrida, "Living On. Borderlines," *Deconstruction and Criticism*, trans. James Hulbert (New York: Seabury, 1979), pp. 75–176; and, by negation, by William V. Spanos, "Breaking the Circle: Hermeneutics as Dis-Closure," *Boundary 2* 5 (1977), 421–57. On the interconnection between self and text, see S. Corngold, *The Fate of the Self: German Writers and French Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) who draws on the fact that both Freud and Lacan encourage us to "attain ... that ... which creates our being," (p. 3) and then posits that literature opens the way into being: "poetic activity ... is privileged evidence of the self." (p. 3) and J. Mehlman who claims that "fiction ... figures as constituting – rather than constituted by – the self,"(cited by Corngold, *Fate of Self*, p. 226). In this context it is also worth noting the striking similarity that exists between definitions of the self and those of the fictional text, e.g. Wolfgang Iser who speaks of fiction as a "virtual space," (*The Implied Reader* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). In a lecture presented at the University of Georgia in April 1990, Iser spoke of fiction as "defamiliarized reality ... overstepped ... not discarded." He also noted that fiction is "incontestable ... inaccessible ... cannot be reified," and emphasized its visible/invisible qualities, as well as its ability to conceal and reveal at the same time: "simultaneity of what is mutually exclusive." In addition, both Brian Stock, *Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton University Press, 1982), and Paul Ricoeur, "The Hermeneutical Function of Distanciation," *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (Cambridge University Press, 1981) speak of similarities between human relationships and texts.

literature. "Troubadour psychological allegory," for instance, "is based ... on the idea of interaction within an indeterminate space," even as it "introduces and problematizes a space assigned to the individual self."[34] Her emphasis on the spatial orientation of twelfth-century literature serves as a useful corrective to Michel Zink's focus on the present.

The textual focus on these shifting parameters is represented first as fragmentation and disorientation *in Latin*: so in both Abbot Suger's writings and the *Historia calamitatum* of Abelard we find example after example of things falling apart, the center that will no longer hold. Suger tries to gather the pieces together in his texts, to pretend to a unity that is no longer there. Yet his presentation of ideal unity is grounded in transgressive space: the locus of transcendence is what he sees via his body and what he presents in his written, visual text.[35]

Abelard makes no such attempt to gather the fragments into a single space. The thematic strain that runs throughout the *Historia calamitatum* is that of the loss of unity, a terror of detachment symbolized by his castration, but evident in the account of his career as well. For him, the allegorical impetus is gone, as is the dream of any sort of unity. His stance seems to suggest that his autobiographical work represents the disintegration of the Latin tradition. The veil has been lifted; the mysteries are no longer ineffable; the texts he uses are used literally and Latin is only the language of the mutilated, mortal body.

Abelard blames his despair on *invidia*, envy. But envy, created as it is by difference, will also provide the source of strength for the vernacular authors who follow him. While for Abelard envy marks the difference that he thinks makes him powerless, for the vernacular author that difference becomes a source of strength. To mark difference for Abelard is to suggest a loss of power; to mark difference in the vernacular is to gain it.

In this context it is important to note that while the spatialized body was crucial to Suger's vision of himself, its gender remained

[34] Kay, *Subjectivity*, pp. 49, 57.

[35] Francis Jacques, *Différence et Subjectivité: Anthropologie d'un point de vue relationnel* (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1982), chap. 6, esp. pp. 194–200; 342–45.

secondary. For Abelard, the interest in difference leads him to an awareness of gender difference, exemplified thematically by his castration and his relationship with Heloise. Abelard presents his body as wounded and imperfect and as different from both male and female. As a body marked by difference it is, he suggests, the worst of both worlds.

For the first troubadour, Guilhem IX, the text is likewise a body that is also differentiated, but this time that difference results in strength. The troubadour tradition, as a whole, can be seen as an attempt to foreground this early self, either through a descriptive emphasis on the tangible, visible world or through the capacity of the language to adapt to intricate forms and rhymes. The rhymes serve another crucial purpose as well in that they establish affinities within the text that may not – probably do not – exist in the outside world. In the hands of the troubadours, the vernacular text becomes, in short, a space of mediation which shares with the external world an emphasis on the visual and the tangible but escapes from the physical and social restrictions that world imposes.

The twelfth-century vernacular text also witnesses a parallel development in the increased emphasis it places on puns – the slippage between signifiers – which, like rhymes, suggest the possible creation of new systems of thought. In a striking and suggestive way punning comes to compete with allegory as an interpretive strategy. Nowhere is this clearer than in the *Lais* of Marie de France where the self, like the many verbal and visual puns in the work, is reified and introduced back into the world as a mediator.

What the twelfth-century vernacular text makes possible, then, is the creation of a self that is defined through a complex process of identity and difference. It takes on a role which is reflected in, and to a certain extent created by, the relationship of Latin to the vernacular. Developing a transgressive, marginal stance all their own, the self and the vernacular serve to redefine forever the relationship between text and body.

2

Writing out the body: Abbot Suger, De administratione

Chrétien de Troyes' romance, *Le Conte du Graal*, introduces its hero, Perceval, in the following scene:

> Por la dolçor del tans serain
> osta au chaceor son frain,
> si le leissa aler peissant
> par l'erbe fresche verdeant;
> et cil qui bien lancier savoit
> des javeloz que il avoit
> aloit anviron lui lançant,
> une ore arriere et altre avant,
> une ore an bas et altre an haut,
> tant qu'il oï par mi le gaut
> venir .v. chevaliers armez,
> de totes armes acesmez
>
> (lines 91–102)

> (Because of the sweetness of the clear season he lifted the reins from the horse and let him wander in the green fresh meadow; and the one who knew how to throw the javelin went tossing it now behind, now before, now low, now high, until he heard among the brambles five armed knights arrive, bristling with all kinds of armor)[1]

The text identifies Perceval through the phrase "cil qui bien lancier savoit"; he is "the one who knew how to throw [the

[1] Ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: CFMA, 1979). Translation is mine.

javelin]." Yet this activity is modified by the word *ore*, which helps to mark the area the javelin circumscribes, to outline the edge of the hero's extended body. *Ore* is admirably suited to this task of definition. While the primary meaning is indeed "now," the fact that the word is linked so closely with spatial markers (behind, before, low, high) suggests that it also functions in spatial terms. *Ore* would appear, in fact, to be as much associated with the spatial placement of the javelin as with its temporal function. Perceval's identity is thus established in both spatial and temporal terms.

The association of *ore* with the concept of an identity that is grounded in space and time both acknowledges and denies the Latin etymology of this word since it derives from two very different Latin words, *ora* and *hora*, limit and hour. Entirely separate concepts initially, *ora* and *hora* come to be conflated and in that fusion point toward a redefinition of essential "mental structures" of the time.[2]

Isidore, echoing a long tradition in which the two words shared no common meaning, is very careful to separate *ora* from its near-doublet, *hora* (hour): "Hora cum h littera, dierum, sine h regionum, vel finium ..." (*Hora* with the letter "h" [refers to] the day; without an "h", to regions, or boundaries).[3] But this distinction does not remain intact. For Bede, as for many who follow in his wake, the difference between *hora* and *ora* is already less clear. In the *De temporibus liber*, *hora* is first mentioned as one of seven divisions of time, then defined as follows: "hora enim finis est temporis ... horae sunt fines maris, fluviorum, vestimentorum" (*hora* (singular) is the edge of time. *horae* (plural) are the edges of the sea, rivers, garments).[4] Bede reiterates the similarity between the meanings of these two words in the *De temporum ratione* when he says *hora* is "temporis ora, i.e., terminus sit" (*hora* is the edge of time, that is, its end).[5]

[2] Jacques Le Goff, *Time, Work, and Culture in the Middle Ages*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago University Press, 1980), p. 48.

[3] *Differentiae*, PL 83, col.39. See also Patrologia Latina (hereafter PL) 82, cols. 214–15. Translation is mine.

[4] *De temporibus liber*, PL 90, col. 279.

[5] *De temporum ratione*, PL 90, col. 304.

The two words are here conflated. Such an error would be of little significance except that the equation of hour and margin appears to make sense to Bede and, more importantly, it remains an accepted part of the definition of the word *hora*. While it is perhaps not surprising to find that Rabanus Maurus echoes Bede,[6] defining hour as "certus terminus temporis" in the *Liber de computo*, the fact that a twelfth-century anonymous tract (PL 129) includes an expanded version of Bede's definition is striking indeed:

> hora est finis temporis. Sic horae sunt fines maris, fluviorum, vestimentorumque, sed hora finium per o, hora dierum per h scribendum.[7]
>
> (*Hora* is the edge of time. So *horae* are the edges of the sea, rivers, garments, but *hora* (sic) as in edge is written with an o, *hora* as in hour of the day is written with an h.)

As much as this passage tries to separate out the two words, it clearly fails to do so.[8] This treatise suggests that *hora dierum* is a subspecies of *ora finium*, separated only by the way they are written. Conceptually intersecting, then, if not identical, the hour is, by this time, accepted as one particular type of limit, set apart only by its initial letter, *h*.

The degree to which this conflation is embedded is perhaps best indicated by the definition of Honorius Augustodudensis who, in his treatise, rewords Bede's definition while retaining its meaning. Far from being merely a scribal error or an unthinking replication of a former mistake, this definition of hour is, for Honorius, the meaningful one. As he says:

> Cap x: De Horis:
> Hora est terminus cujusque rei ... Et dicitur ab horologio, id est certus limes in horologiis temporis.[9]
>
> (*Hora* is the end of anything whatsoever ... And it is called

6 PL 107, col. 678. 7 PL 129, col. 1319.

8 It is perhaps fair to assume that the additional "h" in the second line is Migne's confusion, not that of the author of the treatise.

9 PL 172, col. 147.

this from *horologium*, that is, it is the definite boundary of time on the clock.)

Echoing Bede's definition, Honorius has rephrased the concept of *hora* as a "definite boundary," a *certus limes*. This definition corresponds conceptually to that of Bede; it suggests the depth of its acceptance through the degree to which it has been reworded, a fact corroborated by a contemporary, William of Conches, who writes that, for him, "tempus est spatium."[10]

Definitions of time are useful, as Lakoff and Johnson have shown, for indicating the way we think about things.[11] The conflation of hour and edge – and the resistance to such a conflation – suggests that time was in the process of being redefined and reconceived; by conflating *hora* with *ora* the treatises suggest that time has been spatialized.[12] *Hora* becomes perceived as an edge or limit, a physical threshold that must be passed over or through.[13] The very physicality of this description opens up possibilities for seeing beyond this one example to a larger redefinition of the twelfth-century conceptual landscape.

A comparison with Augustine's discussions of time in the *Confessions* makes the novelty of this approach all the more apparent.[14] In Book 11 Augustine asserts that there are three tenses: past, present and future, and that they are continuous: "et eius enim si primus agitur mensis, futuri sunt ceteri, si secundus, iam et primus praeteriit et reliqui nondum sunt" (and if the first

[10] J. M. Parent, *La doctrine de la création dans l'école de Chartres* (Paris: Vrin, 1938), pp. 125–26.

[11] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago University Press, 1980), pp. 7–9, 41–45.

[12] See also Brian Stock, *Implications*; Jesse Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages: Language Theory, Mythology and Fiction* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1985), chap. 2.

[13] It is striking that Rabelais sees time as physically restrictive. At Thélème no clock or dial will be tolerated, even as no walls will be allowed, (*Gargantua et Pantagruel*, Bk. 1, chap. 52).

[14] Augustine's theories of time are much discussed; see the bibliography in my *Rhetorics of Reason and Desire: Vergil, Augustine and the Troubadours* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1988), chap. 3. In addition, see John L. Morrison, "Augustine's Two Theories of Time," *New Scholasticism* 45 (1971), 600–10; and Anne Higgins, "Medieval Notions of the Structure of Time," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 19 (1989), 227–50. Finally, see O'Donnell's references in *Confessions*, vol. 3, p. 278.

month is taking place, the others are future, if the second, already the first has passed and the others are not yet)[15] and, again, "si ergo praesens, ut tempus sit, ideo fit, quia in praeteritum transit" (if, then, the present exists as time it is so because it passes over into the past).[16]

But while Augustine indeed speaks of time in terms of three tenses he suggests that those three tenses are not of equal weight or value. Instead, they are perceived in terms of only two modes: "quisnam est qui dicat mihi non esse tria tempora, sicut pueri didicimus puerosque docuimus, praeteritum, praesens, et futurum, sed tantum praesens, quoniam illa duo non sunt? an et ipsa sunt, sed ex aliquo procedit occulto cum ex futuro fit praesens, et in aliquod recedit occultum cum ex praesenti fit praeteritum?" (for who is it who will tell me that there are not three tenses, as we were taught as boys and as we taught our boys, past, present and future, but only present since those two do not exist? Or perhaps they do exist but the present comes forth from some hidden place when it comes from the future and the past recedes into some hidden spot when it comes from the present.)[17] In his discussion of the length and measurement of time Augustine points out that while the past can be long, the present cannot, since it, unlike both the past and the future, can be whittled down to nothing: "nam si extenditur, dividitur in praeteritum et futurum; praesens autem nullum habet spatium" (for if it is extended, it is divided into past and future; the present, however, has no duration).[18]

These two temporal models allow Augustine to focus on the curious nature of the present which he sees as both ever-present and non-existent. By reducing the three tenses to two modes (now and then), by describing the present tense in terms of its paradoxical nature, and by distinguishing the present from the past and future in terms of their incompatible measurability, Augustine implies that time offers him a paradigm for apprehending his relationship with God.

[15] *Confessions* XI.15(19), vol. 1, p. 155. [16] *Confessions* XI.14(17), vol. 1., p. 154.
[17] Ibid. XI.17(22), vol. 1, p. 156. [18] Ibid. XI.15 (20), vol. 1, p.155.

The very fact that Augustine discusses his relationship with God in terms of a temporal model suggests that, for him, space is less important – even less real – than time which, by virtue of its very lack of tangibility, is closer to the truth of God. For Augustine, significantly, creation is a time-based issue; in both *The Literal Meaning of Genesis* and the final books of the *Confessions* Augustine's insistence that creation occurred outside of time demonstrates the degree to which it was, for him, time-related. The very universe in which he finds himself is temporally oriented.

Underlying this view, however, lies a particular conviction about the intrinsic relationship of time and space. One of the effects of the Incarnation in making the word flesh is to make the invisible visible. Augustine's way of comprehending this is in terms of the interplay of time and space. Time for him is the model of wholeness, of fulfillment, of pure presence; space, by contrast, is the imperfect fragmentation of such a whole.[19] By associating creation with time he is indicating a particular understanding of Christian history: that the Incarnation, which made the completeness of God imperfect, which brought time in conjunction with space, is to be rounded out, corrected by the Second Coming in which the flesh will once again be made whole and in which space will be subsumed by time.

Such a view necessitates the subjugation of space to time, as temporal perfection is posited above spatial fragmentation and impurity. Space exists, in other words, only as metaphoric evidence of time for Augustine; the Christian paradox of existence for him is likewise perceived in temporal terms.

That Augustine suggests a relationship between the present and the nature of man is noteworthy. That he defines that point as unmeasurable and other-than-physical underscores the radical nature of the change that surfaces in the twelfth century. The hour, in becoming a conceptual margin, becomes as well the threshold between the past and the future, the means of exchange

[19] See, for example, Ibid. VII.1 for a discussion of the spatial organization of classical thought.

between the two. It, like the hem of the garment, becomes a positive, tangible presence that, nonetheless, serves to transform.

This new, spatial understanding of *hora* suggests that the Augustinian view has been replaced. The dichotomy the Augustinian model relies upon – the difference between now and then, here and there, world and God – has been undone, as has the assumption of wholeness or fulfillment that such a biaxial model presumes. While man still stands at the crossroads of the model, as he did for Augustine, he no longer mediates between two opposing poles. Neither is he defined by negation. Rather he belongs to both axes as the hem belongs to and yet is separate from the garment; and he, like the hour, serves as the medium of exchange between the two. Focusing on the tangibility and presence of the hour, that point of transition develops into an entity in its own right; a hinge, rather than a gap.

In the opening essay to *Marges de la Philosophie* Derrida approaches a definition of philosophy by defining the tympanum in many of its forms.[20] In the course of this argument he describes the "logic of the margin," the concept of an edge that is also that which is most central to the argument and he associates the concepts of margin, hinge and being. For each he suggests that their existence occurs through a dialectic of negation, exclusion and reappropriation; for each the concept of limit or *limen* is the same: a threshold that is defined yet has no definition, an edge without edges. Such, I would suggest, is the logic that comes to apply to *hora* in the twelfth century. *Hora* as *ora* is perceived as the edge of time that had its own definition and yet, like the hem, could be reappropriated by that which it was defining.

What the shift in definition of *hora* suggests, in short, is a shift in perspective. The focus on *hora* as *limen*, as a physical presence and edge, suggests the development of a spatial perspective which allows for a subjective stance that can define itself positively and distinctly from both God and the world while still serving to connect the two. The redefinition suggests that by the

[20] Jacques Derrida, *Marges de la Philosophie* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972). See especially pp. xvi, xvii, xix, xxiii, xxiv, and xxviii.

twelfth century man exists in the intersection of time and space, at the point where the profane meets the sacred.[21]

The inherited ideal of unity that one finds articulated in Augustine and which is in place, more or less, through the Romanesque era, is no longer found to be viable as the changing connotations and redefinition of the Latin words *hora/ora* make clear. Rather, a focus on differentiation surfaces. And this emphasis on difference and fragmentation necessitates the creation of a new understanding of text. Often echoing Augustine, Stephen Nichols argues persuasively in *Romanesque Signs* that Romanesque *historia* as it first appears was frequently a fiction that adapted present circumstance and location through writing to match past scriptural realities.[22] Writing exists primarily to mirror and reproduce true writing, scriptural writing, which, for the Christian West was in Latin. Yet such replication is also a process of erasure, a means to transparency.[23] Text refers to Text and, as a result, the new text becomes largely invisible.[24]

Such text served, Nichols goes on to argue, to distort in order to conform. The role of *historia* is to adapt the facts to fit a pattern, adapt the characters to match their models, line up events to coincide with scriptural text. But it is precisely the replication of type and text that allows for the opportunity out

[21] The existence of such a meeting place is explicitly denied by many medievalists. Even Leo Spitzer speaks of the distinction made between sacred and profane as one made "nettement" (in a clear-cut fashion.) ("L'amour lointain de Jaufre Rudel," *Romanische Literaturstudien*, 1936–1956 (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1959), pp. 363–417.

[22] *Romanesque Signs: Early Medieval Narrative and Iconography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 9: "In other words, *historia* did not seek to describe events as they *were*, but to transform them into texts paralleling those of Scripture."

[23] "[There is a] confidence in the possibility of bridging the gap between history and Scripture, time and eternity, man and God, [which] derives from the specular confrontation in which humans become a microcosm of the universe ... It is a containing image, a specular reflection of humanity situated, in perspective, within the larger order of the universe" (Nichols, *Romanesque Signs*, p. 12).

[24] The process of allegory as a whole is founded on a similar transparency. The assertion that the literal can be taken figuratively, that one thing is always potentially something else, establishes a negating continuity between the literal and the figurative, between the articulated profane and the unspoken sacred. Yet this does not erase the fact that that continuity also always has two poles; Augustine (and later Dante) make it clear that allegorical interpretation always entails two levels. As long as these levels are connected through allegorical interpretation, the literal, profane meaning is suppressed. Once that connection is questioned, however, the original literal meaning gains tremendous power.

of which the new text is created. The secular metaphor Nichols uses speaks of a changing perspective towards the world. History, he argues, is made present and thus visible; it exists for the pilgrim because it is tangible. The reification of truth in the world is repeated on the level of text: growing literacy causes the text to become increasingly visual and, consequently, increasingly tangible.[25]

In other words, what occurs in Romanesque texts, to paraphrase Nichols, is the growing acceptance of the tangible and the visible. This in turn, however, leads slowly to the recognition that the point from which the vision occurs is separate from – while also being comparable to – the vision itself.[26]

However, recognition and acceptance of a spatial perspective is an essential step in the construction of the self if only because of the emphasis it places on the body. The body is the space in which the self is grounded, to which the self by leaving belongs.[27] For the body to be the ground from which identity springs one must be willing to grant priority to the visible and spatial world; one must also be able to grant autonomous power to the literal. Such would seem to run counter to the example of Augustine whose life effort was to supplement the literal with other meaning, to suggest that the literal only has power because of higher meaning. In the Romanesque era the visual and spatial, it would appear, gain power for two sciences, *historia* and *theologia*; nonetheless, both are still dependent on a higher truth without which they would not exist. In order for the body to become the visible sign – not the evidence of some other truth but the basis for that very truth – one must be willing to grant it

[25] So also Brian Stock, *Implications*; as well as his "History, Literature and Medieval Textuality", *Yale French Studies* 70 (1986), 7–17, where he states that while twelfth-century texts were not always written they were "invariably understood as if they were" (p. 10).

[26] While the association of text and self with a visual orientation becomes, as Luce Irigaray has so forcefully argued, a vehicle for logocentrism, at this early stage, when sight serves to mark transgression it seemes to me to be less gender-specific. See Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme* (Paris: Minuit, 1974).

[27] My reading of the interrelationship of self and body is made in the context of Martin Heidegger's understanding of identity. *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); see esp. the discussion of belonging, pp. 30–33.

primary existence and pride of place. And in order to grant the body pride of place one must be willing to grant its coordinates – space – primacy.

The autonomous signifier

For Suger (1081–1151), Abbot of Saint-Denis, the growing importance of the physical world clearly poses a delicate problem.[28] The efforts he recounts in his works all provide evidence of an awareness of a need for change and renovation; equally evident in this writing is a nostalgia for the past, together with a hearty attempt to deny the changes of the present. This denial focuses largely on an ambivalence apparent in the association of both texts and building with his body. While he tries to suggest that both building and text atone for his body, for the body of a "bloody man" as he says, it becomes evident that they serve rather to celebrate if not body then a body-based perception of the world. While the framework in which he writes inhibits him from discovering a language which can fully express this space, errors in his text point to places where his inherited systems of thought clearly failed him.

As abbot of Saint-Denis during a period of major renovation and change, Suger identifies with his building. In addition to inscribing his own verses – and name – on the building itself, he left to posterity three texts which describe the changes he made to the church, the *Ordinatio* (between July 15, 1140 and January 21, 1142), the *De consecratione* (after June 11, 1144), and the *De administratione* (January-September 1150).[29] The *De administratione*, "On the administration," is called in the twelfth-century manuscript *Gesta sugerii abbis*, "The acts, or deeds, of the Abbot Suger" (Bibliothèque Nationale, MS Lat. 13835),

[28] So Robert W. Hanning, "Suger's Literary Style and Vision", in *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis: A Symposium*, ed. Paula Lieber Gerson (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1986), pp. 145–50. Hanning's essay emphasizes as well "Suger's desire to convert time into space" (p. 145).

[29] I follow here the recent dating of Conrad Rudolph, *Artistic Change at St.-Denis: Abbot Suger's Program and the Early Twelfth-Century Controversy over Art* (Princeton University Press, 1990).

which links the work with the literary genre of historical narrative, like the *Gesta francorum* or the even more autobiographical *Res gestae* of Augustus.

Suger's stated purpose for writing the *De administratione* is:

> ... ea quae larga Dei omnipotentis munificentia contulerat huic ecclesiae ... incrementa ... calamo et atramento posteritatis memoriae reservare ... ne post decessum nostrum ... quacumque aut cujuscumque defraudatione redditibus ecclesia minuatur ... [et] silentio malis successoribus depereant incrementa.[30]
>
> (to preserve, in pen and ink, those improvements which the grand munificence of the all-powerful God had accomplished for this church for the memory of posterity, ... lest, after I have died, the church be reduced by whatever or whomever's corruption of its treasures ... and the improvements be lost through silence of malicious successors.)

In this short text of only sixty-six folios Suger proceeds to outline, first, how he was able to raise the funds necessary for the renovations and, second, what he was able to do with those funds.

Although the church underwent some very rough times between then and now – most notably during the French Revolution – it nonetheless still stands, albeit somewhat made over.[31] And the story it tells is in some ways very different from the version Suger set down "in pen and ink." Suger's stated approach to renovation is explicitly focused on reform; the text

[30] The translations are mine, with frequent consultation of the translation and notes contained in *Abbot Suger: On the Abbey Church of St.-Denis and its Art Treasures*, ed. and trans. Erwin Panofsky (Princeton University Press, 1946); second edition, ed. Gerda Panofsky-Soergel (Princeton University Press, 1979). The text is that of Panofsky which, in turn, is an edited version of the text found in A. Lecoy de la Marche, *Oeuvres complètes de Suger* (Paris: Jules Renouard, 1867), with one exception: I have retained Lecoy de la Marche's reading of *posteritatis* in the fourth line of this text instead of Panofsky's emendation to *posteritati.* See also E. Panofsky, "Postlogium Sugerianum," *Art Bulletin* 29 (1947), 119–21 for further emendations to Lecoy de la Marche's texts.

[31] See François Auguste René Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outretombe*, Bk. 13, chap. 3: "Saint-Denis était découvert, les fenêtres en étaient brisées; la pluie pénétrait dans ses nefs verdies, et il n'avait plus de tombeaux" (Gallimard, 1951), vol. 1, 438. Jules Formigé, *L'Abbaye Royale de St.-Denis* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960) includes pictures of the Abbey before major restoration work was done on it.

confirms over and over that his changes were intended to return the church to an aesthetically purer state. Yet, mixed in with these affirmations are confusing sets of assertions and errors that undermine such a conservative goal, that undo precisely the novelty of the renovations the text lays claim to.

One such error is evident in a verse that Suger composed and had inscribed on an altar panel in his renovated church:

> Magne Dionysi, portas aperi Paradisi,
> Suggeriumque piis protege praesidiis
> Quique novam cameram per nos tibi constituisti
> In camera coeli nos facias recipi,
> Et pro praesenti coeli mensa satiari
> Significata magis significante placent.[32]

> (Great Dionysius, open the gates of Paradise / And protect Suger through devout guardianship. /You who have built a new room for yourself through us / Make us received in the room of heaven, / and fed at the table of heaven rather than here. / Those things which are signified are more pleasing than that which signifies).

The ambiguity of the last line is striking: "Significata magis significante placent," which I have translated as "*Those* which *are* signified please more than *that* which signifies," Erwin Panofsky translates as "That which is signified pleases more than that which signifies."[33] Panofsky's translation suppresses the plural.[34] What is interesting about this suppression is that it, in turn, conceals a confusion in Suger's own text. There is not one binary pair alluded to here but two: the signified and the signifier, and the Many and the One. Yet the way in which Suger

[32] Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, p. 54. [33] Ibid, p. 55.

[34] Why Panofsky's translation suppresses the plural is a different issue. Space limits my exploration of it here; suffice it to say that Panofsky focuses on the skills of Suger as a mediator and ambassador. In an often-quoted passage Panofsky speaks of Suger as "asserting his personality centrifugally" (*Abbot Suger*, p. 30); as someone who fused his "personal aspirations with the interests of the 'mother church' [and] gratified his ego by renouncing his identity: he expanded himself until he had become identical with the Abbey ... self-affirmation through self-effacement" (*Abbot Suger*, p. 31). Panofsky focuses on dematerialization, on the erasure of the individual, and on the Gothic as a style which was interested in the material solely as a means to an end, a path to the true light. It seems plausible to hypothesize that this reading of Suger was affected, at least in part, by Panofsky's own historical situation.

aligns the pairs is not traditional. While establishing the expected relationship between the signifier and signified in terms of relative value – the signified is indeed traditionally considered more pleasing, more worthy of enjoyment, than the signifier – Suger, in mentioning plural signifieds but only a single signifier, reverses the expected ranking of the Many and the One; he allies the Many with the signifieds and the One with the signifier, a reversal which Panofsky's translation does not communicate.

In referring to his work in terms of the signified and the signifier, Suger is making reference to a well-established Christian Platonic tradition which presented the complex relationship of man to God in terms of the linguistic sign. In *Artistic Change at St.-Denis*, Conrad Rudolph makes the powerful argument that, in contrast to the emphasis customarily placed on Suger's interest in the symbolic language of Pseudo-Dionysius, the true influence which emerges through the course of Suger's writings is fundamentally Augustinian, ideas Suger would have encountered through the writings of his contemporary, Hugh of St. Victor.[35] It is in an Augustinian context, then, that we must set Suger's use of the terms signified and signifier. And it is within this context as well that we must understand his "error."

In his rhetorical treatise, *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine explains what he understands by the term sign:

> ... de signis disserens hoc dico, ne quis in eis adtendat, quod sunt, sed potius, quod signa sunt, id est, quod significant. Signum est enim res praeter speciem, quam ingerit sensibus, aliud aliquid ex se faciens in cogitationem venire ...[36]

[35] Conrad Rudolph, *Artistic Change at Saint-Denis*. Rudolph's argument is made against the reading proposed by Panofsky that it was the *Celestial Hierarchies* of pseudo-Dionysius that most influenced Suger. Suger's use of this text is discussed in detail in Grover A. Zinn, Jr., "Suger, Theology, and the Pseudo-Dionysian Tradition," in *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis*, ed. Gerson, pp. 33–40. On this text of pseudo-Dionysius, see Ernst H. Gombrich, "Icones Symbolicae," *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance II* (London: Phaidon; New York: Praeger, 1972), pp. 123–91. For the text itself, see the useful work by John Parker, *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Merrick, NY: Richwood Publishing Co., 1976) as well as the translation provided in *The Mystical Theology and the Celestial Hierarchies of Dionysius the Areopagite*, trans. Editors of the Shrine of Wisdom (Surrey: Fintrey, 1949).

[36] Augustine, *De doctrina christiana*, Bk. II.II.1.

> (speaking about signs I say that no one should understand them as what they are but rather as what they are as signs, that is, what they signify. For a sign is a thing beyond the appearance which strikes the senses, [a thing] that makes something other than itself come into our thinking...)

Augustine is clear here and elsewhere that the level of the "something else," what we call the signified, is the superior level. Appropriate reading involves moving toward the signified by means of charity, which he defines, as we have seen, as "the movement of the soul for enjoying God on His own terms."[37] But this motion also entails a simplification, a move from the plural to the singular, from the Many to the One. Hugh of St. Victor and John Scot, in their readings of the *Celestial Hierarchies*, make it clear that for them the higher level, the realm of the signified, is likewise the domain of the One: "Et una lux est, et bonum unum est; et plurima sunt lucentia, et participantia bonum unum, et lucem unam." (And there is one light and there is one good; and there are many illuminated things, participants in the one good and the one light.)[38] For Hugh of St. Victor the highest good, while remaining whole, is shared among those who participate in it. In Suger's text, however, which of the two is the highest good is not as certain, since the One is associated not with the signified but with the signifier. It remains unclear whether Suger conceives of the higher plane as that of the signifier or the signified.

Through its use of semiotic terminology Suger's text refers to the tradition of which it claims to be part. The uncertain rendering, however, provides an opening in this system, as it suggests that the alignment between the signifier and the world, the signified and the One, is not, for Suger, absolute. The text reflects an inherited system in which there existed a clear relationship between the signified and the signifier – it is this distinction that he is referring to, after all – yet it represents it

[37] *De doctrina christiana* III.x.16.
[38] Hugh of St. Victor, *Expositio in hierarchiam coelestem S. Dionysii Areopagitae* (Bk.I, chap. 2), PL 175, cols. 929–30.

ambiguously and, as such, suggests a change in emphasis toward the signifier.

The crown of light

That Suger's interest lies more with the signifier than the signified is indicated in numerous metaphorical ways throughout the text. Primary among them is his treatment of the body, both in its role as vehicle for aesthetic appreciation and in its function as metaphor for the building itself.

Another point of contradiction in the *De administratione* relates to the choir Suger had built in 1144, the structure considered by many to be the first real example of Gothic architecture. This choir consists of a series of radiating chapels surmounting the older crypt and surrounding the three main altars. The building of the choir was Suger's last and most important architectural accomplishment, one which was completed in three years and three days and which he felt made the church a masterpiece. The problem of the choir becomes apparent when looked at in plan: the chapels are neither equal to each other nor are they symmetrically arranged.[39] The structure is set at a strange angle to the rest of the church and the question thus arises as to why such an important area would be set up in such an odd way.

The archeologist Sumner McKnight Crosby in his monumental work, *The Royal Abbey of Saint-Denis*, offers the following observation: "A temporary small altar had been placed in the choir for the daily performances of the liturgy. The celebrant, when facing east in front of the altar, stood directly under the convergence, or keystone, of the ribs of the vault over the hemicycle. When he looked to the east and rotated his head from one side to the other, the columns of the hemicycle and of the ambulatory would line up with the masonry between the radiating chapels, so that one could see only the windows – in actuality, a "crown of light". At this place, where Suger must

[39] The clearest plan available is that found in Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, n.p. [288].

have stood many times, one is immersed in light,"[40] the chapels line up in such a way that the columns cancel each other out and cause that spot – and that spot alone – to be bathed in light.

In an article published in *Annales*, Radding and Clark expand upon Crosby's observations to make a broader point about Gothic sensibility.[41] They contrast the choir with the earlier façade and conclude that in order for the chapels to produce their effect they must have been planned "en même temps" while the façade, by contrast, could have been developed as it was built without any sort of overall plan.[42] In this, they echo, strikingly, the sentiments of Geoffroi de Vinsauf who, in his *Poetria nova* of the early thirteenth century, will write:

> Si quis habet fundare domum, non currit ad actum
> Impetuosa manus: intrinseca linea cordis
> Praemetitur opus, seriemque sub ordine certo
> Interior praescribit homo, totamque figurat
> Ante manus cordis quam corporis; et status ejus
> Est prius archetypus quam sensilis.[43]

[40] Sumner McKnight Crosby, *The Royal Abbey of St.-Denis from its Beginnings to the Death of Suger, 475–1151* ed. and completed by Pamela Z. Blum (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), see esp. pp. 237–8. I would like to thank Ms. Blum for clarifying this passage for me.

[41] C. Radding and W. Clark, "Abélard et le bâtisseur de Saint-Denis," *Annales: Economies, sociétés, civilisations* 43,6 (1988), 1263–90. Other important readings of the Gothic include Barbara Nolan, *The Gothic Visionary Perspective* (Princeton University Press, 1977), esp. pp. 40 and 45–49; P. Frankl, *The Gothic: Literary Sources and Interpretations through Eight Centuries* (Princeton University Press, 1959); and J. Bony, "La genèse de gothique: accident ou necessité?," *Australian Journal of Art* 2 (1980), 17–31. A useful sourcebook is T. Frisch, *Gothic Art 1140–c.1450: Sources and Documents* (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1971; rpt. Toronto University Press, 1987). See also E. Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the Thirteenth Century*, trans. Dora Nussey (New York: Harper, 1958) and M. F. Hearn, *Romanesque Sculpture: The Revival of Monumental Stone Sculpture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1981).

[42] More traditional discussions of the West Portal include W. Stoddard, *The West Portals of Saint-Denis and Chartres: Sculpture in the Ile de France from 1140–1190, Theory of Origins* (Cambridge University Press, 1952); S. McKnight Crosby, "The West Portals of St.-Denis and the St.-Denis Style," *Gesta* 9 (1970), 1–11; and Stephen Gardner, "Two Campaigns in Suger's Western Block at St.-Denis," *Art Bulletin* 66 (1984), 574–87. Most recently, see Pamela Z. Blum, *Early Gothic Saint-Denis: Restorations and Survivals* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992).

[43] Geoffroi de Vinsauf, *Poetria nova*, in Edmond Faral, *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle* (Paris: Champion, 1971), p. 198.

> (If anyone is going to dig the foundation of a house, his hurried hand does not rush to action: the inner outline of the heart premeasures the work, and the inner man prescribes the logic in a certain order, the hand of the heart, rather than the hand of the body, figures out all beforehand; and its status is archetypal before it is tangible.)

That such premeditation was involved in the renovation of Saint-Denis is supported both by the building and, tacitly, by the texts as well. The spot which Crosby discussed, the place which makes sense of the organization of the chapels is, presumably, where the daily altar would have stood, the one of the three where Mass was regularly held. But it is also the one of the three about which Suger is strikingly silent – the other two he discusses in detail. The foremost altar, the Grand Autel of 754, was refurbished by him, covered entirely in inscribed gold; the one furthest back, the altar of the martyrs, was an enlarged reliquary in which bones and fragments of the three patron saints, Saints Denis, Rusticus, and Eleutherius, were embedded. Each of these altars, though renovated by Suger, serves to honor somebody else: the main altar was preserved by Suger to honor the memory of Charlemagne, the back altar keeps the relics which make the church sacred in plain view. Yet the altar about which he is silent is the altar where he would have officiated in his role as priest; it is, in short, the spot in the church most his and, consequently, the point most directly connected to him.[44]

For Suger to arrange to have the chapels line up in relation to this spot suggests that his body, when it occupies a certain space, becomes the defining and organizing principle of the choir. But this fact is neither mentioned in his texts nor commented on by Panofsky, perhaps because it places too much emphasis on the role of the body and its perception. While it is not until later that the elevation of the host – the showing of the *sacred* body to the public at large – was deemed an appropriate part of the

[44] The placement of the altars is confirmed by Jacques Doublet, *Histoire de l'abbaye de Saint-Denys en France* (Paris: 1625), pp. 246–8. See also Léon Levillain, *Les plus anciennes églises abbatiales de Saint-Denis* (Nogent-le-Rotrou, 1909), pp. 57–60.

Mass,[45] the official sanction was clearly born out of preexisting practice. Cabrol and LeClercq note that it was not so much the act of elevation that was finally sanctioned – other parts of the mystery had been revealed before – it was specifically the showing of the symbolic body at the words "hoc est corpus meum" which were at issue.[46] I introduce this fact because I think it coincides with the interest Suger demonstrates in the organization of the chapels, but hides in his text of the renovation. Even as the body becomes more important to the Mass – one could even say its visible and organizing principle – so Suger's body, standing in a certain spot, becomes the defining and organizing principle of the choir.

The arrangement of the chapels in relation to his altar is, therefore, significant. Not only does it pretty handily destroy Panofsky's image of Suger as a centrifugal personality; on the contrary, one would have to argue that the spot where he would have stood is the spot where all the natural forces convene centripetally.[47] But, also, the organization of the choir suggests that it is Suger's body, when it occupies a certain space, that serves as focus. And it is his perception of the light which convinces him of the sanctity of that spot: "Claret enim claris quod clare concopulatur, / Et quod perfundit lux nova, claret opus / Nobile" (For that which is linked up clearly clarifies with the clear, / And that which the new light pours through clarifies the lofty work).[48] While the light of divine illumination is at least partially out of one's control, part of a sacred dialogue, experiencing this light is, for Suger, repeatable and voluntary. All he needs to do is stand at the right point and he is bathed in this light.[49] Suger's spiritual experience is focused primarily on the body, on his corporeal reaction to the actual light. It is the light itself which

[45] This decision was made as part of the Synodal Statutes at the Parisian synod of 1205–08 by Eudes de Sully (d. 1208); it referred to the eucharistic host only.

[46] F. Cabrol and H. LeClercq, *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, 15 vols. (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1921), vol. 4, pt. 2, 2667–68.

[47] See above, note 34.

[48] *De administratione*, chap. 28.

[49] Cf. Millard Meiss, "Light as Form and Symbol in Some Fifteenth-Century Paintings," in *Renaissance Art*, ed. Creighton Gilbert (New York: Harper, 1970), pp. 43–68, who mentions St. Bernard and the image of the Annunciation as that of light passing through a window.

will lead him from the physical to the spiritual realms; it is his own experience, his own perception that comes first.

Moreover, the light itself can be a cause of substantiality. Radding and Clark offer a further comparison between the role of light in Romanesque and Gothic architecture:

> Car, d'une part l'architecture romane n'attachait pas moins d'importance à la lumière et à la mesure que l'architecture gothique, et, d'autre part le style roman (défini largement) aurait pu être adapté de diverses manières pour accroître la lumière à l'intérieur de l'édifice, et, plus généralement, aurait pu être modifié sans qu'il y ait eu une réorganisation aussi complète des bâtiments par les constructeurs gothiques.[50]
>
> (For Romanesque architecture did not attach any less importance to light and grandeur, and, by the same token, Romanesque style, broadly defined, could have been adapted in various ways to increase the amount of light admitted into the building, and more generally, could have been modified without such a complete reorganization of the structures by the Gothic builders.)

Light need not destroy surface. If anything, the multi-colored paintings within Romanesque churches broke down the solidity of the wall to a greater extent than the luminescent color produced by Gothic stained glass and Gothic vaulting.[51] Light, especially the colored light that comes through stained glass does not necessarily dematerialize, it can also accentuate the material with a density all its own. As Luigi Moretti has argued, "internal volumes have a concrete presence on their own account, independently of the figure and corposity of the material embracing them ... they have ... qualities of their own [including] density, depending on the quantity and distribution of permeating light."[52] This reading of the interior of architectural forms as

[50] Radding and Clark, "Abélard", p. 1286.

[51] Such an interpretation runs counter to most readings of the difference between Romanesque and Gothic. See, for example, Hans Jantzen, *High Gothic: The Classic Cathedrals of Chartres, Reims, Amiens*, trans. James Palmes (Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 67–70.

[52] Luigi Moretti, "Structures and Sequences of Spaces", trans. Thomas Stevens, *Oppositions* 4 (1974), 123–39.

negative space is very useful here. The colored light that plays across the massive columns at Saint-Denis makes its presence felt as if it were itself tangible.

In addition, since luminosity and color are determined by the changing natural light, they not only add density, they charge that density with a palpable energy. As the hours pass at Saint-Denis the experience of the interior space changes, moves, reorganizes itself. The light, in short, makes the building more like an organic entity, more like a body than like the erasure of body.

Suger's use of the philosophies of Dionysius the Areopagite demonstrates a comparable attitude toward light. In several of the verses Suger has inscribed upon the building the use of *lux* clearly echoes the writings of the Areopagite. Yet Suger, as Panofsky mentions, would not necessarily have read Pseudo-Dionysius in the original; rather, he probably would have known him through the translation and commentary of John Scot and Hugh of St. Victor.[53] Even a brief look at this commentary suggests differences that are significant. Where Pseudo-Dionysius is largely neo-Platonic, John Scot is certainly more Aristotelian as he argues, for instance, that:

> omnino creaturam visibilem et invisibilem lumen esse conditum a Patre luminum ... Lapis iste vel hoc lignum mihi lumen est ... Eum quippe animadverto subsistere bonum et pulchrum, secundum propriam analogiam esse, genere specieque per differentiam a ceteris rerum generibus et speciebus segregari, numero suo, quo unum aliquid fit, contineri, ordinem suum non excedere, locum suum juxta sui ponderis qualitatem petere. Haec horumque similia dum in hoc lapide cerno, lumina mihi fiunt, hoc est, me illuminant.
>
> (Every creature, visible or invisible, is a light brought into being by the Father of the lights ... This stone or that piece of wood is a light to me ... For I perceive that it is good and beautiful; that it exists according to its proper rules of proportion; that it differs in kind and species; that it is defined by its number, by virtue of which it is 'one' thing; that it does not

[53] So Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, pp. 164–65.

> transgress its order; that it seeks its place according to its specific gravity. As I perceive such and similar things in this stone they become lights to me, that is to say, they enlighten me.)[54]

While the emphasis of Pseudo-Dionysius is indeed on the discovery of *lux* (light, truth), John Scot, by insisting on the presence of *lux* in material objects, grants to Suger the *auctoritas* to dwell on the material world and allow his writing to become a form of reverence and worship.

The gender of transgression

In *Bearers of Meaning* John Onians pointed out that architecture was a tainted profession in the biblical context.[55] Citing the Tower of Babel as the prime example, Onians remarks that Suger's decision to renovate and enlarge the Abbey of Saint-Denis was already a potentially transgressive gesture. That Suger was aware of the transgressive nature of his actions is clear throughout his texts. How we are to read this guilt and his own attitude toward that overstepping of boundaries is, however, complex.

The argument Stephen Nichols has made that Romanesque *historia* adapted historical truth to match and fit biblical description suggests a possible approach.[56] The examples Nichols offers are of heroes, such as Charlemagne, whose story was adapted to invoke the story of Christ. From evidence both within the text and the building of Saint-Denis itself, Suger clearly saw himself as a Romanesque figure: he had the walls repainted in the fashion of a Romanesque church; the story conforms in many details to *historia* of the earlier periods. But the characters he models himself on are strikingly negative and, while he, in good Romanesque fashion, adapts the facts to fit the story, he differs

[54] John Scot, *Expositiones super Ierarchiam Caelestem S. Dionysii*, PL 122, col. 129. Translation is that of Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, p. 20.

[55] John Onians, *Bearers of Meaning: The Classical Orders in Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 112–13.

[56] Nichols, *Romanesque Signs*, chap. 1.

from the standard pattern by modeling himself and his church on transgressive, not idealized figures.

Suger's own identification is primarily with David, referring to himself as a "virum sanguinum" (bloody man).[57] There are two possible readings of this identification. The first is that Suger identifies with David for the same reason that Augustine identifies with Adam: as a way of articulating his humility which, in turn, lauds God's superiority. The mark of transgression and contrition such an identification provides would thus be seen against a backdrop of wished-for redemption.

The guilt would thus seem to run even deeper, or the model of David be somehow less negative. This suggests the following second reading: that Suger's identification with David is an assertive, perhaps even a positive, one. Suger's story is the story of transgressive man, but that transgression has been identified and reified. It is not, in other words, to be read against a backdrop of nostalgic wholeness. It is itself, in its differentiation, complete.

Such a reading is supported by another prevalent yet ambiguous image of transgression, that of the unrenovated church as fallen woman. The *De vita sua* of Guibert de Nogent, written in 1115, and considered by many to be the first autobiography, concludes with the following revealing description of the Abbey of Saint Denis:

> Rex Anglorum senior Guillemus turrim in ecclesia magnifici Dionysii – cujus quam futura plurima, si perficeretur ac persisteret, fuerat magnitudo! – ex suis strui fecerat. Quod opus quoniam ab artificibus minus erat ordinate contextum, videbatur in dies sui parturire ruinam. Cumque plurimum ab Ivone, tunc temporis abbate, et a monachis timeretur, ne veteri damnum basilicae novi operis ruina infligeret, – erat autem ibi beati Eadmundi altare, et quorum nescio aliorum, – talis visio solicito abbati se intulit. Honestae multum habitudinis dominam in medio beati Dionysii ecclesiae stantem videbat, quae sacerdotali more exorcismum aquae faciebat. Cumque

[57] *De administratione*, chap. 25; Panofsky, *Abbot Suger* p. 44, n. 5 notes the source as II Kings XVI.

abba foeminae autoritatem miraretur, quae insolita faceret, contemplabatur quod, post aquae benedictionem, eam hac illacque dispergeret postque dispersionem, qua disperserat, circumquaque signum crucis exprimeret.

Nec mora temporis turris ruit, sed nullam ecclesiae partem dum rueret laesit. Illa enim benedicta inter mulieres, cujus ventris benedictus est fructus, sua eam benedictione juxta abbatis visa munierat. Alias ergo ruens hominem subter ambulantem operuit. Cum itaque compertum esset omnibus virum lapidibus adopertum, humanitatis causa congeriem ab eo dimovere coeperunt. Tandem exhaustis cementi et saxorum montibus, pervenitur ad illum quem, mirum dictu, sospitem alacremque reperiunt, acsi domi desedisset. Quadri nempe, e regione alter alteri sese compaginantes, ipsi aediculam confecerunt. Non ergo ei, sub diutina nescio quot dierum inibi mora, fames, non metus, non insolentissimus excluso homini calcis odor offecit.[58]

(King William I of England had built at his own expense a tower for the church of the beneficent Dionysius, the height of which would have been great if it had been finished and had lasted. But since the work had been built by workmen in a less-than-regular fashion, it seemed in the days that followed to give birth to its own collapse. When it was greatly feared by Ivo, abbot at that time, and his monks that the collapse of the new work would inflict damage to the old basilica – there was there the altar of the blessed Edmund and I know not who else – this vision appeared to the worried abbot. He saw a woman of saintly demeanor standing in the middle of the church of the blessed Dionysius who was performing a blessing of the water in the manner of a priest. When the abbot wondered what power the woman, who was doing unusual things, held, he saw that, after the benediction of the water, she scattered it here and there, and after the dispersion, wherever she had scattered it, she made the sign of the cross.

Not long after, the tower fell, but no part of the church was hurt when it fell. For she, blessed among women, the

[58] Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. and trans., Edmond-René Labande (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1981), pp. 466 and 468. Translation is mine. On this text see also Zink, *La subjectivité*, pp. 179–99.

> fruit of whose womb is blessed, had fortified the church with her benediction in accordance with the abbot's vision. Elsewhere the ruin covered a man walking beneath. And when it was understood by all that a man was covered with rocks, out of concern for his well-being, they began to remove the mass from him. Finally, when the mountain of mortar and rocks had been moved aside, it revealed one who, miraculously, they found safe and alert, as if he had stayed at home. For the cut stones, joining themselves one to the other tightly, had made a little niche for him. Therefore, although he was there for a long delay of countless days, the isolated man was not bothered by hunger, fear, or the insufferable odor of lime.)

Read as an exemplum of Guibert's view of man this passage is fairly compelling: man's structures, like all of man's efforts, come to naught, like the Tower of Babel, unless protected by the deity, represented here by several women. In addition, male structures (the tower) are replaced by female ones (the womb-like room in which the man is protected). The gendering of the building which suggests that a female rather than a male structure is appropriate, would seem to apply to Guibert's textual image of the self as well, given that it provides the last word in this autobiography. As such, Guibert would seem to be suggesting that man's efforts to construct a simulacrum of himself, be it building or text, should be defined in terms of female, rather than male images precisely because by returning to the womb one can recover the lost wholeness that marks man's fallen state here on earth.

While Guibert seems clear, at least in the passage cited, about the alignment of male and female, transgression and blessing, Suger's text is much less certain. In the introduction to his edition of the *De administratione*, Panofsky notes:

> It was the Abbey of St.-Denis which had "cherished and exalted him"; which had "most tenderly fostered him from mother's milk to old age" which "with maternal affection had suckled him as a child, had held him upright as a stumbling youth, had mightily strengthened him as a mature man and

> had solemnly set him among the princes of the Church and realm."[59]

The association of church with mother that Panofsky finds in Suger's writings is, as Caroline Bynum has shown, a theme one finds in other twelfth-century works, particularly, though not exclusively, in the writings of Cistercians.[60] Perhaps the most famous and illustrative example is from Saint Bernard's sermon on the Song of Songs in which he presents Christ the bridegroom as a nursing mother.[61] Bynum comes to the conclusion that the theme of Jesus as mother is a reflection of "affective spirituality,"[62] which corresponds especially well to the goals and priorities of the Cistercian community and enables them to emphasize "compassion, nurturing, and union"[63] in their male authority figures, thus making them more accessible, more humanized, and more in line with the Cistercian notion of the divine.

Yet Suger's rapport with Cistercians in particular and authority figures in general is fairly complex, thus making a female description of the church somewhat suspect. His *Vita* of Louis le Gros and his documented relationship with Saint Bernard suggest an attitude on his part that ultimately runs counter to the Cistercian model. Bynum points out that the female qualities granted Cistercian authority figures come about in part from the isolated nature of the Cistercian community, separated as it is from the world at large. Whatever else he may have been, Suger was never separated from the world at large. Highly ambitious, he saw in his political leader Louis a man who bore God's image in his person" and "brought it to life."[64]

It is, however, Suger's relationship with Bernard in particular that makes the female description of the church most unsettling. Upon being named Abbot of Saint-Denis in 1122, the very Abbey Bernard had denounced as the "synagogue of Satan,"

59 Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, pp. 30–31.
60 Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, chap. 4, esp. p. 112.
61 Bynum, *Jesus as Mother*, p. 117. 62 Ibid., p. 129. 63 Ibid., p. 151.
64 So Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, p. 2. For Suger's talents as diplomatic historian, see Gabrielle Spiegel, *The Chronicle Tradition of Saint-Denis* (Brookline, MA: Classical Folia Editions, 1978), pp. 44–52.

Suger set out to reorganize and reform the church, thus quickly earning Bernard's praise and admiration.[65] Suger remained in the Cistercian's good graces by carrying out various highly questionable requests for him. Yet it is clear that Suger's actual goals for his Abbey were far from Bernard's own. Rather than stressing the distance from the world, and emphasizing obedience and asceticism, Suger seems rather to have allowed his role as mediator to color his rule. He encouraged communication between the secular and the sacred. He invited the world into his church; in a passage that sounds like a medieval precursor to *Goldilocks*, his biographer notes that Suger liked his food, his bed, and his clothes to be neither too extreme nor too spare.[66]

Given such a sharp break between Bernard and Suger in terms of their understanding of the role of the church in the world – precisely one of the areas Bynum cites as crucial to its feminization by the Cistercians – it seems surprising that Suger would continue to view the church in a manner that is arguably Cistercian. I would suggest rather that the view Suger presents of his relation with his church is diplomatically complex and ambivalent in a way that Panofsky and his translation, particularly as quoted in the Introduction, do not make sufficently clear. For although the church was indeed overtly referred to in such terms by Suger, in context each of these descriptions takes on a very different tone and flavor.

> a corpore ecclesiae beatissimorum martyrum Dionysii, Rustici et Eleutherii, quae nos quam dulcissime a mamilla usque in senectam fovit ... loco suo incipere dignum duximus ...
>
> (we decided it was right to begin with the place itself, from the body of the most blessed martyrs Dionysius', Rusticus', and Eleutherius' church which has nurtured us from the breast to old age ...[67]

At the least, this reference to the gender of the church is ambivalent. While certainly part of the passage alludes to the

[65] Letter 80 from Bernard to Suger, in *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, trans. Bruno Scott James (Chicago: Regnery, 1953), p. 113.

[66] Lecoy de la Marche, *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 388–89.

[67] Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, p. 40.

church as feminine, other references suggest that it is decidedly male. Most striking perhaps is the fact, indicated by the use of the past tense, rather than the imperfect, that the feminine role of the church is a thing of the past. The nurturing job is done. The church of which Suger now writes – the one he is now engaged in renovating and that will stand, like his text, as monument of himself in the future – is allied rather with the body of the blessed (male) saints, Denis, Rusticus, and Eleutherius. If renovation causes change, it is a change from female to male.

The second quotation works in a similar way. Nestled between two passages which speak of Suger's own work, the allusion to the institution of the church as mother is allied with the church building that is no more, the church he felt a need to renovate:

> Promptus igitur urgere successus meos, cum nihil mallem sub coelo quam prosequi matris ecclesiae honorem, quae puerum materno affectu lactaverat, juvenem offendentem sustinuerat, aetate integrum potenter roboraverat, inter Ecclesiae et regni principes solemniter locaverat, ad executionem operis nos ipsos contulimus, et cruces collaterales ecclesiae ad formam prioris et posterioris operis conjungendi attolli et accumulari decertavimus.[68]

> (Ready, then, to pursue my success, since I wished nothing beneath heaven other than to seek the honor of mother church which with maternal care had suckled the boy, had sustained the wayward youth, had powerfully steadied the full-grown man, and had duly established [me] among the rulers of the Church and kingdom, we dedicated ourselves to carrying out the project and struggled to elevate and enlarge the transept of the church [to match] the shape of the earlier and later work that was to be joined.)

Perhaps the best example, however, comes from an image which, so far, has received relatively little comment. In not one but all three of his reports Suger justifies the need to "enlarge and amplify the noble church" because:

[68] Ibid., p. 50.

> propter eam quam saepe diebus festis ... et videbamus et sentiebamus importunitatem (exigebat enim loci angustia ut mulieres super capita virorum tanquam super pavimentum, ad altare dolore multo et clamoso tumultu currerent).[69]

> (for the sake of that unfortunate situation which we often saw and experienced on feast days ... (for the narrowness of the spot required that the women run toward the altar with much sorrow and clamorous tumult on the heads of men as if upon a pavement).)

This bizarre image, of the men passing the women up to the altar over their head, has received surprisingly little comment. It is, however, one that Suger must have been particularly taken with, as it is repeated, almost verbatim, from the *De consecratione*:

> nullus pedem movere valeret, nullus aliud ... quam sicut statua marmorea stare, stupere, quod unum supererat, vociferare ... Mulierum autem tanta et tam intolerabilis erat angustia, ut ... more parturientium terribiliter conclamare, plures earum miserabiliter decalcatas, pio virorum suffragio super capita hominum exaltatas, tanquam pavimento abhorreres incedere.[70]

> (nobody ... was able to move [even] a foot ... nobody ... was able to do anything but stand like a marble statue, stare and, finally, scream. The anguish of the women, however, was so great and so unbearable that ... they screamed terribly, in the manner of ones in labor; several of them, pitifully trodden down, [were then] lifted, by the devout aid of men, above the heads of the men, [and those same] downtrodden ones strode forward as if on pavement.)

And again in the *Ordinatio* he says:

> Videres ... et, quod multi discrederent, promtas mulierculas, super capita virorum tanquam super pavimentum incedendo, niti ad altare concurrere ... [71]

> (You could see ... (and, what many people would not believe) ready little women struggled to run to the altar by striding on the heads of men as if upon a pavement.)

[69] Ibid., p. 42. [70] Ibid., p. 88. [71] Ibid., p. 134.

This description resonates with biblical reference, primarily to Eve, who was cursed with pain in labor and caused to tread on the head of the serpent as here women walk on the heads of men.[72] Taken in the context of other imagery associated with the building it seems possible to read these passages as referring to the gender of the church, before and after renovation. While aligned with fallen woman before, renovation will cause the building to be associated predominantly with the masculine.

Suger's style speaks to his message. In many passages the rhetoric, both implicit and explicit, is that of *amplificatio*. It is the explicit purpose of the text to set down the increments, acquisitions, multiplication, construction, and accumulations that occurred during Suger's reign, gifts which he refers to more often than not through long lists illustrative of precisely the amplifying character of his rule. The work stands enlarged (*auctum*) in his time. The process of renovating is that of increasing and amplifying; surely this imagery is more phallic than feminine.

The building inscribed

Suger offers many examples of his interest in the physical, material, and tangible aspects of his church. The first twenty-three chapters of the *De administratione*, which (except for the opening lines of chapter 1) are not translated by Panofsky, speak to the material and financial needs of the abbey. These chapters set out in great detail the source of the monies Suger raised, itemizing each with descriptions of the towns that contributed. Through this the Abbey gains a real presence in the temporal world. It is an entity built with money and tangible materials provided by specific, neighboring villages and people.

In addition, Suger's primary focus lies in rebuilding the nave of the church; it is, in other words, the body of the church that he sets out to enlarge and amplify. Once again, his textual revisions, like his architectural renovations, are telling.

[72] I owe this observation to St. John Flynn, Ph.D. student in Comparative Literature at the University of Georgia.

> tam in capitulo nostro quam in ecclesia divinae supplicans pietati, ut qui *initium est et finis, id est Alpha et Omega*, bono initio bonum finem salvo medio concopularet ...[73]
>
> (in our chapter as well as in church I asked of divine mercy that He Who is *the beginning and the end, that is, the Alpha and the Omega*, might link a good ending to a good beginning by means of a safe middle ...)

The difference between the biblical phrase, "Alpha et Omega" and Suger's gloss is indeed striking. While the Bible speaks of Christ as the Beginning and the Ending, an image that deliberately defies the rational as it denies the possibility of linear depiction, Suger supplies the middle which will link the beginning to the ending, the front to the back, the old with the new. He will, in short, provide a tangible link which, like his text, will bridge the past with the future.

This act of bridging, of linking through rewriting, of connecting the Alpha to the Omega through both his church and his words is an instance of trying to grant to the one the power of its other. Saying that Christ is the beginning and the end gains its strength from Christ's ability both to sustain and annul the difference between the two: that even as the two are as different as earth and heaven, body and soul, that difference is denied through the miracle of the embodiment of opposites that Christ represents. Yet, from a mortal perspective, Alpha and Omega remain absolutely opposed, separate, with a necessary and defining gap between.

Suger is aided in his renovating by the process of writing itself. Not only is he writing a text about his monument, but his monument is inscribed as well, and, as we have seen, inscribed with his own verses: "opus / Nobile, quod constat auctum sub tempore nostro, / Qui Suggerus eram, me duce dum fieret" (the lofty work, which stands enlarged in our time, I who am Suger, who was leader while it was being done).[74] Suger clearly identifies his renovations with his writing and his name.[75] What

[73] Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, p. 44. [74] Ibid., p. 50.

[75] The presence of these inscriptions is indicated in Suger's text and witnessed by the earliest descriptions of the church, including Doublet, *Histoire*; Michel Félibien,

Suger provides, both in his essay on his administration and in the verses he inscribes on the building, is not only spatialized time but the monumentalized present: again, the filling of what had been perceived as a necessary gap between the past and the future, the visible and the invisible, the articulable and the ineffable. "Praeteritorum enim recordatio," he argues, "futurorum est exhibitio" (Memory of the past is proof of the future).[76]

There is, however, an important distinction to be made at this point between the renovation of the church and the writing of the text. If one were to view the inscribed building as text and then compare it with the actual text of *De administratione*, one would find the following: the two coincide in the text of Suger's own verses. But the text of *De administratione* is written in the margins of the building; where the building is blank stone surrounding the inscribed verses, the text is words surrounding verses quoted from the building. The text, in short, is a gloss on the incised verses, and a gloss written in the margins of the text of the building. But that gloss, unlike Augustine's charitable reading, focuses attention even more on the world and the author. Far from covering over or concealing identity, the gloss that is the text of the *De administratione* reveals more and more of Suger's aesthetic, body-centered responses; the breakdown of

Histoire de l'abbaye royale de Saint-Denys en France (Paris: Léonard, 1706). According to Ferdinand François le Baron de Guilhermy, *Vingt-huit notes historiques* (Bibliothèque Nationale, MS nouv. acq. fr. 6121) and Pierre Ferdinand Albert Gauthier, *Recueil d'anecdotes sur l'abbaye de St.-Denis* (Bibliothèque Nationale, MS fr. 11681) (organist at St.-Denis during the first renovations following the revolution) the inscriptions over the front (western) portal were reengraved in 1840 and gilded in 1841. Many of the moveable objects, such as the cross (of which the Cabinet des Médailles may or may not have a fragment today) were also inscribed, as were the corbels in the choir. Many of these inscriptions were lost during the 16th–19th centuries; many have been renovated by the series of architects who worked on the church, including François Debret and Viollet-le-Duc. Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française* (XIe–XVIe siècles), 10 vols. (Paris: Librairies-imprimeries réunies, 1858–68), while not wholly accurate, is the most accessible description of the items found during the period of major restoration. Above all, Viollet-le-Duc's writings include a description of the gold, engraved front of Charlemagne's altar now lost. The cross was lost, however, even to Viollet-le-Duc, known only through a painting by Van Eyck and an 18th century engraving by Félibien.

[76] Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, p. 52. In this vein, see also Suger's repeated remarks on the importance of linking the old and the new: Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, pp. 50, 90, and 94.

inherited systems is nowhere more evident than in the attitude assumed by Suger in the process of glossing. Moreover, the text serves as gloss to Suger as himself a former text; it is him at two different stages, past and present, preparing for the future. Finally, whereas the inscribed verses in their original form are specifically golden, the marginal text and the quoted verses are in black (*atramento*). Given the attention paid to light and gold, the difference is striking. The text as artifact is not pseudo-Dionysian. There is no light embedded in stone here, there is no implicit hierarchy. Rather, all is dark, all is uniform, all is text.

The text of the *De administratione* not only shares with the building it describes aspects of monumentality and spatialization, it underscores them. While Suger would like the building to have been remembered as a structure of difference that Bernard of Clairvaux or Guibert de Nogent might well applaud, in which light opposes dark, text opposes stone, mortal gloss opposes divine truth, male opposes female, the text fills in the gap of difference, undermining these distinctions. Written with a *calamus*, reed pen, that has a secondary meaning of fig and so is clearly phallic in connotation, it is also procreative in its quotation of Suger's own text and so is at once both male and female. But unlike Cistercian imagery which feminizes the masculine, Suger's text masculinizes the feminine. In its gloss of the building, the *De administratione* is a rewriting which rearranges the signified and the signifier.

Conclusion

All of these examples point, I think in a similar direction. No longer need the sign only point to a signified which lies beyond reach. Rather, the signified for Suger is anchored in a signifier which is itself an object in this world. Suger's renovations, together with his text, propose annulling difference through himself and his writing, an annulment which will grant to him and his writing all the power associated with God in the presence granted the world. He aims, in short, to propose a semiotics in which the signifier is more tangibly linked to its signified, a

signifier which has, in a sense, internalized the signified. Suger's confusion of the Many and the One seems to have arisen from just such a reconceptualization of the sign.

Suger's renovations, as explained in his *De administratione*, involve the transformation of the church from an image that was predominantly female to one that becomes increasingly male. While the feminine imagery is indeed there, explicitly so, it is often accompanied by competing masculine imagery, and ultimately, involves a shift in gender. That this may be the case becomes important if one then moves to view the document as a form of autobiography, for it suggests that the self, as well as the architecture, is being redefined. For a male to move from a feminine to a masculine model of the self is to move from a model of deferred wholeness to one of accepted and actualized differentiation.

Conrad Rudolph refers to Suger's as a middle-ground solution; I am merely suggesting perhaps that this may apply more widely to Suger's writings than Rudolph is aware. The middle ground is precisely the area which Suger and his church (especially the linking nave) create, inhabit, and deny. That third axis which extends from the crossing of the first two, filling and making continuous that point of juncture, like Suger's new nave, also creates, as it continues outward, the edge which defines the three-dimensionality, the spatiality.[77]

But this also defines Suger himself. In filling in the margins of his own architectural text he creates a text that, even more than his building, will outlast the ravages of time. The undoing of hierarchy in the text suggests a similar process in the definition of the emerging self which that text represents, the written text in which Suger glosses his own writings and which opens the way toward an identification between self and text. Whereas, formerly, man's contribution had been largely in the form of marginal annotation and gloss on central scriptural text – where text is as different from gloss as neo-Platonic signified from signifier – Suger's renovative efforts are comments on himself as

[77] Rudolph, *Artistic Change*, p. 75.

text as they gloss texts he himself wrote. Not only is there less difference between margin and center: he is, in the present, looking in and back at himself as represented by the inscribed verses. There is, in short, a continuity of person, or at least of body, and that body is identified with the textualized word.

What Suger is able to isolate in his autobiographical work is a transitional space, a middle ground that justifies an elevation of direct aesthetic and sensual appreciation. As Suger himself puts it:

> Unde, cum ex dilectione decoris domus Dei aliquando multicolor gemmarum speciositas ab exintrinsecis me curis devocaret, sanctarum etiam diversitatem virtutum, de materialibus ad immaterialia transferendo, honesta meditatio insistere persuaderet, videor videre me quasi sub aliqua extranea orbis terrarum plaga, quae nec tota sit in terrarum faece nec tota in coeli puritate, demorari, ab hac etiam inferiori ad illam superiorem anagogica more Deo donante posse transferri.[78]

> (So when, sometimes, from my adoration of the beauty of the house of God, the multi-colored magnificence of the gems has caused me to withdraw from material cares, and suitable meditation has persuaded me to pause and consider (progressing from the material to the immaterial) the diversity of holy virtues, I seem to see myself dwelling as if in some foreign territory of the universe, which is neither lodged wholly in the muck of the earth nor completely in the purity of heaven, and that with God's help I can be carried over from this inferior realm to that superior one in the anagogical way.)

That "foreign territory" is arguably the space both of text and self; as Peter Kidson has argued, this passage is not neo-Platonic, but rather, "vivid and autobiographical, grounded in physical beauty."[79] Suger's description of the process of attaining truth via the visible is both new and crucial to what becomes the Gothic perspective even as it is distinctly and specifically opposed not only to Bernard but also to Augustine. Through

[78] Panofsky, *Abbot Suger*, pp. 62 and 64.
[79] Peter Kidson, "Panofsky, Suger and St.-Denis," *Journal of the Warburg and Cortauld Institute* 50 (1987), 1–17.

questioning inherited hierarchies, Suger creates a situation which places man at the juncture between the visible and the invisible, and suggests that his unique qualities are his abilities to mediate positively between the two.

The very fact that Suger frames his argument and his selfhood in architectural terms suggests that his model is spatial, not temporal, as it is based on a shift in paradigm from one based primarily on deferral to one based on aesthetic appreciation. The hermeneutic space – which Gadamer aptly and evocatively defines as that area between strangeness and familiarity – Suger describes as a three-dimensional space in which the seeing body serves as the intersection of the axes of world and word.[80] His experiments with inherited forms such as text and gloss, and his telling errors, point to the breakdown of inherited systems of thought. His is thus ultimately a text that defines him by negation as it portrays the author through what it cannot or he should not do.

[80] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury, 1975).

3

Text of the body: Abelard and Guibert de Nogent

Peter Abelard's associations with the Abbey of Saint-Denis are well-documented; his philosophical differences with Suger well known.[1] Yet in the *Historia calamitatum* Abelard demonstrates a textual position similar to that of Suger in the *De administratione*.[2] If Suger's writings are remarkable for their ability to

[1] For this see Louis Grodecki, "Abélard et Suger," in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénérable: Les courants philosophiques, littéraires et artistiques en occident au milieu du XIIe siècle* (Paris: CNRS 1975), pp. 279–86; Edouard Jeauneau, "Pierre Abélard à Saint-Denis," in *Abélard en son temps*, ed. Jean Jolivet (Paris: CNRS/Les Belles Lettres, 1981), pp. 161–73.

[2] The degree to which this text is "true" hinges at least in part on the factuality of all of the letters between Heloise and Abelard, a debate which still rages. See John F. Benton, "Fraud, Fiction and Borrowing in the Correspondence of Abelard and Heloise," in *Pierre Abélard, Pierre le Vénérable* (Paris: CNRS, 1975), pp. 469–511; John F. Benton and Fiorella Prosperetti Ercoli, "The Style of the *Historia Calamitatum*: A Preliminary Test of the Authenticity of the Correspondence attributed to Abelard and Heloise," *Viator* 6 (1975), 59–86; Peter Dronke, *Abelard and Heloise in Medieval Testimonies* (Glasgow University Press, 1976). On the history of the debate, see Piero Zerbi, "Abelardo ed Eloisa: il problema di un amore e di una corrispondenza," in *Love and Marriage in the Twelfth Century*, ed. Willy van Hoecke and Andries Welkenhuysen (Leuven University Press, 1981), pp. 130–61. Such an approach has been supported by those who read the text as pure autobiography such as Georg Misch, *Geschichte*, and Régine Pernoud, *Heloise and Abelard* (New York: Stein and Day, 1973). See also Javier Faci, "Una autobiografia medieval: la *Historia Calamitatum* de Pedro Abelardo," *Revista de Occidente* 74–75 (1987), 34–43. In addition, there are those who treat the text as I have here, as a cultural rather than a personal artifact including, above all, Evelyn Birge Vitz, in "Type et individu dans l'autobiographie médiévale," *Poétique* 6 (1975), 426–45. See also Chris D. Ferguson, "Autobiography as Therapy: Guibert de Nogent, Peter Abelard, and the Making of Medieval Autobiography," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 13 (1983), 187–212 and Derk Visser, "Reality and Rhetoric in Abelard's *Story of My Calamities*," *Proceedings of the Patristic Medieval and Renaissance Conference* 3

reveal and conceal the body at the same time – to proselytize a line of nostalgic purity while undermining that purity by grounding it in the body – then Abelard's writings are striking for their utter lack of nostalgia coupled with their assurance that man's relative ineffectuality is not shared by his text. For in Abelard's autobiographical work, the *Historia calamitatum*, the text comes close to enabling the body to transcend its *quidditas*; as the text becomes identified with the frailties and limitations of the body, it comes to represent a potential and new-found strength.

The autobiographical context: Abelard, Augustine, and Guibert de Nogent

Establishing the genre of the *Historia calamitatum* is not quite as straightforward as it might first appear. Called a *historia*, written as a letter, yet clearly intended as autobiography, the work is in every way anomalous.[3] The entire epistolary exchange between Abelard and Heloise, of which the *Historia* is the first letter, is often cited as evidence of the Renaissance of the twelfth century. Indeed, the pair of lovers show themselves to be extremely well-read in both ancient and medieval texts and to command an extraordinary grasp of concepts foreign to the early medieval mind, such as the genre of epistle, the ancient ethos of *amicitia*, the use of intertextual allusion.[4] In this context it is important to

(1978), 143–55; for a broader yet similar approach, Jacques Verger, "Abélard et les milieux sociaux de son temps," in *Abelard en son temps*, ed. Jolivet, esp. 115–116; N. A. Sidorova, "Abélard et son époque," *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale* 4 (1958), 541–52; J. Jolivet, "Abélard entre chien et loup," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 20 (1977), 307–22. See, finally, D. W. Robertson, *Abelard and Heloise* (New York: Dial Press, 1972), esp. chaps. 4–6. For further bibliography see Brian Stock, *Implications*, p. 362. The most interesting recent bibliography on this topic has arisen in feminist rereadings of the letters. See, especially, Barbara Newman, "Authority, Authenticity and the Repression of Heloise," *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 22 (1992), 121–57; Nancy F. Partner, "No Sex, No Gender," *Speculum* 68 (1993), 419–43; and Linda S. Kauffman, *Discourses of Desire: Gender, Genre, and Epistolary Fictions* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp. 63–89.

[3] Text from Peter Abelard, *Historia calamitatum: texte critique avec une introduction*, ed. J. Monfrin (Paris: Vrin, 1962), hereafter cited as *Historia*. The introduction to this edition includes a useful classification of known manuscripts.

[4] For a ground-breaking study of medieval use of allusion, see Joseph Pucci, *The Full-Knowing Reader: Tradition of Allusion in Western Literature*, forthcoming.

note that the first letter, Abelard's autobiography, is specifically classified as *historia*, not *epistola*: he refers to the work at its end as "calamitatum mearum hystoria."[5] As we have seen, Romanesque *historia* as genre mutes the subjective, individualized voice. Abelard's choice of this genre for an autobiographical text suggests his own ambivalence toward the purpose and voice of the work. By casting his autobiography as *historia* Abelard thwarts his audience's expectations of the genre; while he may want to suggest that his story is to be understood against a scriptural background, as with other Romanesque *historiae*, he soon loses that thread as the story of his particular trials takes over and the text becomes solely and explicitly a space for articulating his own troubles.

Yet even as autobiography the *Historia* is in a class by itself. Abelard begins the story of his adversities with his birth, gives a brief sketch of his upbringing, and then jumps right to his move to Paris and his subsequent, troubled career as an iconoclastic academic. It is this story that frames, and to a certain extent is seen to cause, his affair with Heloise; tales of his position as a brilliant, yet envied, intellectual occur both before and after the brief amatory interlude. The story ends more as a letter than a life history, by telling of his latest mistreatment at the hands of his envious peers.

While Abelard may have intended to evoke Augustine, focusing as he does on adversities and errors, the thrust of the story is entirely different. The primary emphases of Abelard's book are on his castration and role as object of envy. Although he says that he is "confessing" his misfortunes to his friend so that his friend will feel stronger, it is clear from the tone that he actually believes that few, if any, of these misfortunes are due to his own failings.

Abelard's unique autobiographical position can be clarified further when compared in detail to that of Augustine and Guibert de Nogent, Abelard's near-contemporary. Even as the final paragraphs of Guibert's autobiographical work, *De vita*

[5] *Historia*, p. 107.

sua, examined above in Chapter 2 help elucidate Suger's reading of the church of Saint Denis, so other sections and themes of Guibert's text can be taken as evidence of how Abelard stands apart from the tradition of Latin prose autobiography that begins with Augustine's *Confessions*.[6]

That Guibert draws on the *Confessions* as his primary source is evident from the opening word of *De vita sua*, "confiteor."[7] The image of Saint Denis as protectress is likewise drawn, to a certain extent, from Augustine. If taken as a metaphoric return to origin, especially, an Augustinian source can be posited. In the *Confessions*, following his neo-Platonic bent, Augustine makes it clear that his journey out to God is also, always, a journey back to his origins. Perhaps most striking in this regard is the fact that the description of himself alone prior to the conversion is very similar to his description of himself as an infant: in both instances he portrays himself as being out of control in relation to his body.[8] Furthermore, if the first six books of the *Confessions* take him through the stages of creation, the post-conversion books take him back to the origin of the world in Genesis 1.[9] The silence at the end of the text is made to parallel the silence at the start of both the book and Creation as a whole.[10]

Yet Augustine's version of a return to wholeness is quite clearly progressive rather than regressive. His ability to transcend

[6] Seth Lerer, in "'Transgressio Studii': Writing and Sexuality in Guibert of Nogent," *Stanford French Review* 14 (1990), 243–66 refers to Guibert's work as a "remarkable assemblage of personal reminiscence, local history, and ecclesiastical chronicle" (p. 243).

[7] For more on this see Lerer, "'Transgressio Studii,'" p. 246, n. 2; Ferguson, "Autobiography," pp. 197–98; Mary M. McLaughlin, "Abelard as Autobiographer: The Motives and Meaning of his 'Story of Calamities,'" *Speculum* 42 (1967), 486–87; F. Amory, "The Confessional Superstructure of Guibert of Nogent's *Vita*," *Classica et Mediaevalia* 25 (1964), 224–40.

[8] Compare *Confessiones* I.6.8 with VIII.8.20. I would like to thank Geoffrey F. Compton, a recent graduate student in Classics at the University of Georgia, for this observation.

[9] See *Confessions*, vol. 2, pp. 52–56. However, I disagree emphatically with O'Donnell's programmatic application here; Augustine is, as usual, engaged in a much more literary, metaphoric process. It is not so much the development of Augustine that should be thought of in terms of the days of creation, but the development of his own creation, the text of *Confessions*.

[10] See Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 420–21.

this world and its relentless forward progress is enabled not by his conversion alone but also by the death of his mother, Monica. Her memory is evoked not only at her death (*Confessiones* IX.13.37: "ut quotquot haec legerint, meminerint ad altare tuum Monnicae ... meminerint cum affectu pio parentum meorum" (so that whoever reads this [book] would remember Monica at your altar ... with pious affection let them remember my parents) but also through the meditation on memory that occupies all of Book 10. Her death, like that of Beatrice for Dante in the *Vita nuova*, enables Augustine to transcend the transitory world and keep her alive through incorporating her in his memory. He escapes his body because she escapes hers; while she is, therefore, the means for his rebirth, as she was the means for his birth, (see again *Confessions* IX.13.37) he does not ever suggest that the return to wholeness and origin is a return to the womb. She does not, like the building in Guibert's anecdote, protect him. Rather, she enables him to escape the prison that both body and world represent.

Moreover, in the *Confessions* it is Augustine's mother, Monica, who teaches him to sublimate his fleshly desires and thus enables him to convert. Just before his conversion Augustine sees the figure of Continentia who, while beckoning him to her, is described as "serena et non dissolute hilaris," (calm and not lasciviously joyful) while also being "nequaquam sterilis, sed fecunda mater" (in no way sterile, but a fertile mother) (VIII.11.27). Guibert's mother is equally central to his autobiography; her story takes up a large part of *De vita sua*. Yet for Guibert, as can be seen from the following passage, the mother serves to erase desire as she does away with the difference the phallus represents:

> Cum ergo, paulatim succrescente corpusculo, etiam animam in concupiscentiis pro suo modulo et cupiditatibus prurientem saecularis vita titillaret ... statum illum, quem modo patior, totiens tot significatum aenigmatibus ipsa mihi enunciavit, et quod in primo statu aut gestum aut gerendum putaverat.
>
> (When, therefore, with my youthful body developing little by

> little, earthly life pricked my itching heart with desire and fantasy according to its type, ... she often spoke to me in enigmas about the meaning of that state I now suffer and what she believed in that earlier state had been done or ought to be done.)[11]

While Augustine's mother is affiliated, at least in part, with the expression of desire, Guibert's is associated largely with its repression.[12]

Nonetheless, it does seem plausible to suggest that Guibert's mother plays as large a role as she does because of Guibert's reliance on Augustine's *Confessions* as source. Taking these two texts together one might be tempted to argue that Christian prose autobiography must include, almost as icon, a strong and powerful mother through whom the main male character defines himself. What one notices right away in looking at Abelard's *Historia calamitatum* is that his mother plays a minuscule role.[13] Abelard's father figures prominently, as do Heloise's uncle, various male teachers and students, but no mothers. One does not want to push this sort of thing too far, but given that both Augustine and Guibert seem to feel that mothers are an important part of the confessional autobiography, their lack in Abelard is telling, particularly when one considers, as we shall shortly, the significant role allotted to desire.

The differences among the roles played by the mothers, too, is significant. What becomes clear about Guibert is that as important as his mother is to the tale, it is primarily in her maternal role that she functions. That is, the secondary valence Augustine grants Monica as object of desire is suppressed throughout the text.[14] To put it another way, Augustine's mother is important

11 Guibert de Nogent, *Autobiographie*, ed. and trans. Labande, sect. I.XVI, pp. 122–24.

12 Her role is part of a larger theme of sexual repression that runs throughout the work. See John F. Benton, *Self and Society in Medieval France*, Medieval Academy Reprints for Teaching, 15 (University of Toronto Press, 1984), Introduction; James A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe* (University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 187. For a very different understanding of the relationship between Guibert and his mother, see Stock, *Implications*, pp. 499–507.

13 She is mentioned, briefly, towards the beginning (*Historia*, p. 67).

14 But here, again, see Stock, *Implications*, pp. 499–507, whose reading is quite the opposite.

to him because she is both maternal and desirable. Guibert's mother is important because she erases desire. In each text the role played by the author's mother can be taken as a sort of "hermeneutic key" which, in the case of Augustine, indicates the type of double, allegorical reading he expects from his audience and, in the case of Guibert and Abelard, denies the possibility and validity of just such an approach.

Such a reading is supported by another passage from *De vita sua*, recently commented on by Seth Lerer. In it, Guibert describes at length a castration brought about because of illicit desire:

> Juvenis ... qui foeminae cuidam non uxorio, [...] sed usurario ... ad sanctum Jacobum Galiciae orationis gratia meditatur abire. Sed in ipsa piae intentionis massa quiddam fermenti inseritur, nam cingulum mulieris secum in illa peregrinatione asportans, eo pro ejus recordatione abutitur, et recta ejus oblatio non jam recte dividitur.[15]
>
> (There was a youth ... who [had affiliated himself] to a woman [with love] not conjugal but borrowed ... with the help of prayer he decided to depart on a pilgrimage to Santiago. But into that same mass of pious intention was sowed a certain yeast, for carrying the belt of the woman with him on that pilgrimage, he abused it for purposes of remembering her, and his righteous penance was not rightfully directed.)

The devil appears to the pilgrim in the guise of St. James, orders him to "membrum illud unde peccasti, veretrum scilicet, ... abscinde, et postmodum ipsam vitam ... tibi pariter desecto gutture, adime" (cut off that member with which you have sinned, that is, your penis, and afterward also take your very life ... by cutting your throat).[16] Having followed these instructions, the man is brought back to life, with a scar on his throat, and where his penis had been cut off there was a hole (*pertusulum*).

Lerer's recent reading of this passage, suggesting that the

[15] Guibert de Nogent, *De vita sua*, III.19; Labande, *Autobiographie*, p. 444.
[16] Labande, *Autobiographie*, pp. 444 and 446.

pilgrim be seen as an "allegory of [Guibert's] own authorial development"[17] in which both author and pilgrim are trying "to find a language adequate to their language of transgression,"[18] speaks to Guibert's "own commitment of the tale to writing ... [as it] becomes a way of trying to find signs for almost unspeakable things."[19]

As marvelous a reading of Guibert as this is, I feel it omits one salient element of this passage in the context of the autobiography as a whole, namely the role of the maternal and the feminine. For not only does this castration leave its mark it also feminizes its victim, and, by extension, the author of the text as a whole. For the castration is made specifically feminine through the editorial aside Guibert makes, "et abrasa tentigo pertusulum, ut sic dicam, ad urinas residuum habuisset" (and his removed penis had left a residual hole, so to speak, for urination). *Pertusulum*, meaning, literally, that little thing which has been punched through, evokes an image not only of the female urethra but, even more, of female genitalia.[20] By omitting this from his reading, Lerer also omits the mention of the feminine from the text as a whole, an aspect that, I believe, is central to understanding Guibert's work and, as a consequence, Abelard's.

That the feminine plays a complex and definitive role in Guibert's work can be seen from the two scenes discussed already. It is both protective, as in the final scene, and it is a figure of erasure or transformation, as in the scene discussed above. When the pilgrim castrates himself and becomes feminized he would seem to be involved in an act of contrition. In

17 Seth Lerer, "'Transgressio Studii,'" p. 262.

18 Lerer, "'Transgressio Studii,'" p. 261. 19 Ibid., p. 263.

20 Such an assertion is attested to in classical Latin, e.g. Catullus' use of the active form in clearly a sexual context: "Nam pransus jaceo, et satur supinus / Pertundo tunicamque palliumque" (*Carmen* 32.10–11). Also, according to J. N. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1982), p. 148: "there are indications that [pertundo] would have been capable of sexual undertones in a suggestive context. A goddess *Pertunda* allegedly played a part in the deflowering of the bride." Adams here refers to Augustine, *De civitate dei* 6.9: "what is the function of the goddess Pertunda? She should blush for shame and take herself off ... It would be most improper for anyone but the husband to do what her name implies." (Augustine, *Concerning the City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. Henry Bettenson (New York: Penguin, 1984), p. 246). Arguably, too, the diminutive suggests an additional feminization.

confessing publicly to his sin, wrongfully because provoked by the devil, he pays for his sin by erasing the signs of his gender. The loss of penis marks him as someone who has sinned; the feminization which that comes to entail marks him as someone who is trying to lose his gender identity, his difference, who is trying through this act of contrition to come closer to God.[21] The feminization this castration represents serves to erase differentiation and gender specificity.

The suppression of desire that the mother-figure seems to entail in Guibert's work thus exposes its prominence in Abelard's *Historia*. The double valence granted Monica in the *Confessions*, of being both desirable and maternal, is as if split and shared by Abelard and Guibert, Guibert emphasizing the mother, Abelard the figure of desire. As a result, her function as hermeneutic symbol becomes completely transformed. Where Augustine's emphasis on the need for interpretation becomes embodied in the doubleness his mother represents, Guibert (and Abelard) indicates a change in interpretive strategy through the representation of the feminine.[22] But where Guibert's text uses the feminine to deny difference, Abelard's uses it to accentuate it.

Text and Body

Perhaps most telling in the comparison with Guibert is the thematic function served by Abelard's own castration which is caused by his love for Heloise:

> Sub occasione itaque discipline, amori penitus vaccabamus, et secretos recessus, quos amor optabat, studium lectionis offerebat. Apertis itaque libris, plura de amore quam de lectione verba se ingerebant, plura erant oscula quam sententie; sepius

[21] In this Guibert comes strikingly close to Augustine's view of the body after the Last Judgment which will be lacking if not external signs of gender then the difference (and lust) those signs usually provoke. See *The City of God*, trans. Bettenson, pp. 1057–58.

[22] Here I would disagree somewhat with Lerer's conclusions about Guibert. If *De vita sua* is trying to voice transgression it is doing it in a much less apparent way than Abelard.

> ad sinus quam ad libros reducebantur manus, crebrius oculos amor in se reflectebat quam lectio in scripturam dirigebat.[23]
>
> (With the opportunity offered by study, we gave ourselves over entirely to love, and the discipline of teaching granted the hidden sanctuary which love desired. When our books were open more words of love than of teaching proffered themselves; hands found their way more into laps than books, love bent our eyes more in its direction than reading directed them to the text.)

Abelard tells us that text and body are to be associated. He falls in love with Heloise while reading her; subsequently, his castration is specifically paralleled by the public humiliation of having his book burnt.[24]

In many ways Abelard's work echoes Augustine's in its association of text and body, and in its demonstration of how that body, when not suppressed, is dependent, imperfect, wounded and powerless. What is missing from Abelard, however, is the interpretative motion, the process of turning body into not-body, the hermeneutic act.

Yet Brian Stock has described Abelard's "view of language" as "in part conceptual, in part pragmatic" in which meaning becomes a compromise between intention and interpretation; language is viewed as both object and subject. The middle road Stock outlines he ascribes to a major shift in societal models dating from around the year 1050. Before that watershed time, he argues, a limited number of models existed for an immense range of phenomena; after that time, an increasing number of models were created to account, in a more flexible way, for the events. Following this argument, text becomes an "autonomous vehicle of exchange" on which human relations were modeled, and in the twelfth century text comes to play a "mediating role" as it "carries on a conversation with its own past, and as subjectivity becomes implicated in the world of text."[25]

This observation becomes important when taken in the

[23] *Historia*, pp. 79 and 87–88. [24] *Ibid.*, pp. 79 and 87–88.

[25] Brian Stock, "Medieval Literacy, Linguistic Theory, and Social Organization," *New Literary History* 16 (1984–85), 13–29.

context of some of Abelard's other works since, as Jolivet points out, Abelard's logic is defined throughout as an art of language.[26] In the *Ethics* Abelard makes it clear that the body is distinct from the soul for the soul alone is capable of intention.[27] The best example here is that it was the soul, not the body, that was responsible for the fall.[28] Abelard adopts a dualistic model which excludes "any conception of the moral that might be founded on the body" because the body can only suffer accidental, not essential, difference.[29] In this way the body becomes placed in the same category as the universal. Abelard's rejection of the universal, discussed at length in the *Sic et non* and *Glossae in categoriaes*, is thus corroborated in the *Ethics* by a rejection of the body and acceptance of a fairly radical dualism between body and soul.[30]

But this is specifically not what the *Historia* shows us. Again, a comparison with Guibert is instructive. Guibert's transgressive voice is, via the allegory of the castrated pilgrim, portrayed as trapped in the feminized body, the body that denies the expression of difference. This is what we might expect Abelard to say since a true expression of difference and the peculiarity of the subject places that subject, for Abelard, "beyond ... [or] before the body."[31] However, his castration, the *Historia* suggests, marks him not as feminine but as different from other men:

> ... et plus erubescentiam quam plagam sentirem, et pudore magis quam dolore affligerer. Occurrebat animo quanta modo gloria pollebam, quam facili et turpi casu hec humiliata, immo penitus esset extincta ... quanta dilatatione hec singularis infamia universum mundum esset occupatura. Qua mihi ulterius via pateret! qua fronte in publicum prodirem, omnium

[26] Jean Jolivet, *Arts du langage et théologie chez Abélard* (Paris: Vrin, 1969), p. 104.
[27] See the very illuminating article by Graham McAleer, "Old and New: The Body, Subjectivity and Ethics," *Philosophy Today* 38 (1994), 259–67.
[28] *Peter Abelard's Ethics*, ed. and trans., D. E. Luscombe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 14.
[29] McAleer, "Old and New," p. 261.
[30] Jolivet, *Arts du langage*, is very useful in clarifying the concept of the universal; see esp. pp. 104–15.
[31] McAleer, "Old and New," p. 262.

> digitis demonstrandus, omnium linquis corrodendus, omnibus monstruosum spectaculum futurus.[32]
>
> (... and I felt the humiliation more than the wound, and I was afflicted with shame more than hurt. I realized with what great glory I was recently strong, and how, in such a simple and low way, I had been brought down and completely destroyed ... with what great wake this singular infamy would fill the world. What path was open to me! What face could I put on in public, only to be pointed at by every finger, lashed out at by every tongue, to become a freak example to all.)

The body in the text, in other words, serves to mark difference, not deny it. What this suggests is that if, as Abelard says, body and text are one, then that body has been revised to articulate his unique and differentiating qualities. The body as portrayed in the text thereby escapes from the category of the universal.

Role of invidia

If the castration provides the mark of difference for Abelard, envy provides its source. The text Abelard writes about his life, the text that could in fact gloss and conceal, instead, specifically reveals, and it is the difference between himself and his peers that he dwells upon. His opening remarks make this clear:

> ... de ipsis calamitatum mearum experimentis consolatoriam ad absentem scribere decrevi, ut in comparatione mearum tuas aut nullas aut modicas temptationes recognoscas et tolerabilius feras.[33]
>
> (... I decided to write by way of consolation to you, absent, about these experiences of my calamities, so that by comparing yours with mine you might understand them as small or trivial trials and might bear them better.)

Abelard ascribes his differences and troubles to one cause: envy.

[32] *Historia*, p. 80. [33] Ibid., p. 63.

> Hinc calamitatum mearum, que nunc usque perseverant, ceperunt exordia, et quo amplius fama extendebatur nostra, aliena in me succensa est invidia.[34]
>
> (From here the beginnings of my calamities which have followed me up to now, commenced, and the more my fame grew, the more adverse envy has burned against me.)

It is in fact the "burning" of *invidia*, envy, that causes Abelard to be hounded from place to place.[35] Envy has a complicated history, both in medieval versions of the seven deadly sins and in more recent revisionist discussions of those same cultural markers.[36] As Wenzel has demonstrated with *acedia*, the seven deadly sins are not a stable taxonomy.[37] They change in number and relationship depending on the needs of the culture. Moreover, their relation to the virtues changes as well. In each version of the taxonomy, however, there is a root virtue and vice. For Augustine, as Robertson has shown so clearly, the root virtue is *caritas*, its complement, *cupiditas*.[38] *Caritas* remains, for the most part, the primary virtue – selfless love being the defining characteristic of Christianity. Yet the vice with which *caritas* is paired does not remain constant. While there is evidence that the *caritas/cupiditas* pair remains throughout the Middle Ages, there is a second tradition which arises with the root pair of *caritas/invidia*.

[34] Ibid., p. 64.

[35] Visser, "Reality and Rhetoric," mentions *invidia* in Abelard, but in the context of "a recurring theme in the life of all academics," (p. 153, n. 35); he does also suggest that Abelard may have been aware of *invidia* as a rhetorical color. What is striking about envy – and what separates it from its near-neighbor jealousy – is that it involves only two parties, the envious and their prey. It does not allow room for a third mediating force as jealousy does; rather, it requires that the world be presented in polarized terms, consisting of only two opposed elements which are not yet capable of being mediated. This would suggest that we are confronting a social situation that reflects an early, pre-Oedipal psychological stage, one in which the main goal is to create subjectivity out of a perceived objective world. On the difference between envy and jealousy, see Helmut Schoeck, *Envy: A Theory of Social Behaviour*, trans. Michael Glenny and Betty Ross (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1969), pp. 71–72.

[36] See the useful, recent book by Richard Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices and Virtues in Latin and the Vernacular* (Turnholt: Brepols, 1993).

[37] Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967).

[38] D. W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives* (Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 295.

The choice of *invidia* is related to two things: the culture's growing interest in the visual and a need to locate a new reading strategy, an answer, perhaps, to Augustine. The early Fathers are clear about the vice of envy: it has no place in the Christian mindset. Basil writes: "How might we avoid becoming affected by this disease [of envy] and how, after we have contracted it, might we be cured? First, by not regarding the good of this world – human prosperity, renown, which fades like a flower, health of body, as either great or admirable. We do not define our highest good in terms of these transitory things, but we are called to share possessions that are real and eternal."[39] Augustine, in Sermo XVIII, "Ad Fratres in Eremo," counsels his audience to avoid *invidia* since it "omnes virtutes concremat, omnia bona dissipat, omnia mala generat" (burns up all virtues, dissipates all good, generates all evil).[40] In the lines that follow, Augustine establishes the argument that *invidia* is – at least in certain contexts – the sin of sins:

> Sed tu ipsa invidia nequissima pestis, tormentum sine refugio, morbum sine remedio, laborem sine respiratione, poenam sine intermissione, famem sine saturitate semper habere videris. O invide vermis mortifere ... O igneus serpens.
>
> (But you envy, most wicked of creatures, you always seem to have torment without refuge, illness without remedy, labor without break, punishment without end, hunger without satisfaction. O hateful, deathbearing worm ... O fiery serpent.)

Isidore picks up the animal imagery of the fathers, particularly but not exclusively imagery that likens *invidia* to the serpent, when he says.

> invidia cuncta virtutum germina concremat, invidia cuncta bona ardore pestifero devorat ... Invidia est animi tinea, sensum comedit, pectus urit, mentem afficit, cor hominis, quasi quaedam pestis, depascit.

39 Saint Basil, "Concerning Envy," in *Ascetical Works*, trans. Sr. M. Monica Wagner, The Fathers of the Church (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), p. 471.

40 PL 40, col. 1264.

(*Invidia* burns up all seeds of virtue, devours all good with a pestiferous zeal. *Invidia* is the worm of the soul which eats up common sense, burns the understanding, afflicts the mind, feeds on the heart of man as if it were some vermin.)[41]

Invidia feeds on the body as it feeds, animal-like, on others. It is quite clearly for the fathers and Isidore one of the worst vices because it is centered on the body and makes one more aware of the needs and drives of the body. Like Augustine, Isidore argues that it was *invidia* that led to the fall, not *cupiditas*; in support of the notion that *invidia* is the primary vice, the antidote Isidore recommends is *caritas*, the primary virtue: "adversus invidiam charitas praeparetur" (against *invidia* let *caritas* be prepared).[42]

Invidia remains paired with the fall and the serpent into the twelfth century. Alain de Lille speaks of it as a "vermis";[43] St. Bernard refers to it as an "immanis bestia" whose fiery breath kills anything it touches.[44] But St. Bernard alludes as well to another aspect of the vice, an aspect the ancients made much of but the early Christian accounts did not: the fact that envy is a vice of vision. In the same sermon Bernard refers to the basilisk, the fictitious animal reputed to stun with its glance:

> At basiliscus, ut aiunt, venenum in oculo gerit, pessimum animal, et prae omnibus exsecrabile. Nosse cupis oculum venenatum ... oculum fascinantem? Invidiam cogitato. Quid vero invidere, nisi malum videre est?
>
> (The basilisk, they say, carries poison in [his] eye, lowest of animals and execrable before all others. Do you wish to know about the venomous eye, the bewitching eye? Think about *invidia* (envy), for what does it mean to envy (*invidere*) if not to see evilly (*malum videre*)?)

In this Bernard alludes to the etymology of *invidere* in a way that Augustine and Isidore did not.[45]

[41] *Synonymorum*, Bk. 2, pt. 506; PL 83, cols. 853–54.

[42] Ibid., col. 854.

[43] *De Planctu Naturae*, 310; *The Plaint of Nature*, ed. James Sheridan (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1980), pp. 188–89.

[44] PL 183, cols. 235–38.

[45] Classical sources for an etymology of *invidia* and *invidere* deriving from *videre* are plentiful. Plutarch, *Symposium* v, 7; Pliny, *Natural History*, Bk. 7, 17–18, among others, speak of the fact that envy is caused by seeing, and that the envious can cause

For the church writers of the twelfth century, *invidia* has become more than the sin of the body, the primary bestial drive. For them it is clearly and specifically related to seeing. It is the vice of vision. Bernard's allusion to this connection suggests that the increasing emphasis on the visual involves, as well, an increasingly secular, even pagan perspective. Envy "does not exist" in Basil's world. Envy clearly exists in Bernard's, and it exists in ways that are strikingly similar to those of Pliny and Plutarch. The privileging of sight in the definitions of envy speak, I would argue, to the privileging of sight in the twelfth century as it was in the world of Pliny. *Invidia* becomes the vice of vision because, of a sudden, vision offers the greatest temptation.[46]

While vision is clearly key to *invidia*, it is not vision alone that causes envy to gain power. Basil's insistence that a good Christian will not be taken in by *invidia* suggests that there must be credit given to the power of vision, and to the visual object, precisely the power that Basil and Augustine are consistently denying. The Bible, Old and New Testaments alike, is full of warnings against *invidia*. The fact that *invidia* has gained power by Abelard's time supports what we saw with Suger: for *invidia* depends upon a world view that grants power to the visual and admits of a spatial perspective and sense of closure.

However, Alan Dundes has argued, with Richard Onians, that the closed system of such a culture is based on the closed system

harm merely by looking. See Robert Maltby, *A Lexicon of Ancient Latin Etymologies*, ARCA Classical and Medieval Texts, Papers and Monographs, 25 (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 1991), q.v.

[46] A brief account of the physics of vision is necessary for a full understanding of the kind of harm invidia could cause – and the elements necessary to its cure. See David Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from al-Kindi to Kepler* (University of Chicago Press, 1976). Via the Chalcidius translation of Plato's Timaeus the medieval world gained a full description of Plato's account of vision. "Plato taught," Lindberg says, "that from our eyes flows a light similar to the light of the sun. An exterior light is united with the inner light flowing from the eyes, strengthening it and making it capable of drawing from visible objects their colors" (p. 89). Into this theory Chalcidius incorporates elements of Galenic theory which "adds the anatomical findings of the physicians." Chalcidius' translation of the Timaeus provided the basis for further deliberation on vision that occurred in the twelfth century by scholars such as William of Conches and Adelard of Bath. While each made revisions to the Galenic Platonic theory of Chalcidius, each clung consistently to the basic extramission theory; each insisted that vision was the result of an emanation from the eye of the beholder.

of the body.[47] Again, this fits comfortably with what we observed in Suger: not only are the visual and the spatial granted preeminence but the body becomes the organizing principle, the system from which all other systems are derived.

The reemergence of *invidia* in texts of the twelfth century, such as Abelard's, is significant because it would seem to suggest, as we have seen with Suger, that the taxonomy is changing. The reacceptance of the visual brings with it, a series of problems, some of them very old, of which *invidia* serves as touchstone.

But even as the sign progresses from object toward subject in the years following 1050, from a matter wholly of interpretation to one consisting of a combination of interpretation and intention, so envy shifts from being a problem of the sinner to a problem for the one being sinned against. It is, in other words, Abelard the envied who laments the vice. As such he inhabits a strange, new category. He is neither saint nor sinner, neither actively engaged in the vice, nor totally free from it. His situation is one of enforced dependence and his professed goal is to find a cure. Although the system of vices and virtues provides a clear antidote for envy as for every vice it does nothing for the person who is envied. For while envy is unequivocally a vice, being envied carries with it a valence of virtue. More than that, it speaks to a subjectification of the system of vices and virtues, as well as a complex network of projected intentions. For what is clear with Abelard is that the victimized label of the envied one that he applies to himself is his badge of honor, as his assimilation to the wounded and crucified Christ makes clear.

Recent work on this category of vice's victim proves illuminating. The one who complains of being victimized is usually expressing a repressed wish for the opposite.[48] That is, if envy is desire for the visual and the external, to complain of being

[47] Alan Dundes, "Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye," in his *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 93–133; R. B. Onians, *The Origins of European Thought: About the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time and Fate* (Cambridge University Press, 1951; rpt. 1988).

[48] See Klein and Riviere, *Love, Hate and Reparation*, chap. 1, esp. p. 34.

envied is to indicate a suppressed desire for the internal, the invisible. In other words, to take the stance Abelard takes – and Marie de France after him, as we shall see, – is to articulate an acknowledgement of the power of the visual while, at the same time, acknowledging the need for something beyond the visual. As with his semiotics, however, this stance of Abelard's does not admit to a break or rupture between subjective and objective worlds. On the contrary, it speaks to a wish to create a subjective world out of – without losing touch with – the objective one.

It is, perhaps, for this reason that the external world plays such an enormous role in the *Historia*; through a reading of the geographical organization of the text one is granted insight into the psychological organization of its author.

Mapping the self

Following the brief preface in which he explains the reason for writing his work, Abelard then says:

> Ego igitur, oppido quodam oriundus quod in ingressu minoris Britannie constructum, ab urbe Namnetica versus orientem octo credo miliariis remotum, proprio vocabulo Palatium appellatur.[49]
>
> (To begin, then, I was born in a certain town called Le Pallet which is at the edge of Brittany, about eight miles, I think, east of Nantes, properly called Palatium.)

The geographic organization of the text continues as he relates each event of his sad life in terms of where it happened or failed to happen, and of the people with whom he interacted. His life is measured, it would appear, in almost cartographic terms; it could be charted solely in terms of the location and names of the towns he visited and the names of the people he studied or fought with. More visual a life than Augustine's it is also more textualized. Abelard's entire career can be mapped on a page.

Furthermore, although Abelard presents his life chronologically, he clearly perceives it, at least at the time he is writing, in

[49] *Historia*, p. 63.

terms of a single pattern, the pattern of his calamities.[50] It is this fact, I think, that has led several critics to comment on the psychological dimension of the text and the catharsis its writing provided Abelard. This patterning also, however, adds to the spatial, monumental quality of the text as it undermines any sense of temporal development.

One effect of such spatialization is to create a story without a center, without a core, without a true focus. Born in Brittany, where he is first initiated into letters, Abelard tries repeatedly to become known in Paris with fairly limited success. Paris is presented as the true center of the intellectual and conceptual world, in which Abelard, nonetheless, is never fully at home. Brittany, by contrast, while clearly provincial, is his true *patria*. The intellectual center is thus not, for him, the center of his being. Neither place is truly home for him and a tension is created between the two; alienated from both he desires both as home. This dichotomy intensifies as the book progresses. While at the start he gets sick in Paris and returns to Brittany to recover his health, at the end even Brittany is, strikingly, no longer healing for him.

Abelard's alienation helps establish a textual decentering that is crucial to his presentation of who he is. The fact that he does not exist fully anywhere makes him more conscious of the inability to exist fully at all, and of the Protean nature of individual difference. Every space he occupies is a space of transgression and he comes to define himself solely in terms of that transgression. While the text sets up what at first appears to be a system with a center and an edge, Paris and Nantes, it becomes clear that neither is the true center, neither the firm edge.

Decentering is not just a geographic fact for Abelard. Rather, it marks practically every move described in the *Historia calamitatum*. For example, the first choice he describes, between war

[50] So McLaughlin, "Abelard as Autobiographer," pp. 463–88; Karl Joachim Weintraub, in *The Value of the Individual: Self and Circumstance in Autobiography* (University of Chicago Press, 1978), however, disagrees with McLaughlin's emphasis on the autonomous individual.

and letters, or Mars and Minerva, is resolved, at first, specifically in favor of Minerva:

> Ego vero quanto amplius et facilius in studio litterarum profeci tanto ardentius eis inhesi ... Martis curie penitus abdicarem ut Minerve gremio educarer.[51]
>
> (The more in depth and the more easily I progressed in my literary studies, the more ardently I stuck to them ... I forswore entirely the "field of Mars" in order to be brought up in the lap of Minerva.)

And yet, as soon as Abelard moves to Paris he describes his Minerva-related exploits in martial terms. His encounters with "Master William" are described in terms of winning and losing; when he returns to Paris after being exiled by William,

> extra civitatem in monte Sancte Genovefe scolarum nostrarum castra posui, quasi eum obsessurus qui locum occupaverat nostrum.[52]
>
> (outside of the city on Mount Genevieve I pitched the camp of our school as if to besiege the one who occupied our spot.)

The choice he set up, the either/or situation, has become less clear; now he pursues Mars and Minerva at the same time.

This choice is further complicated later in the text. After having met Heloise, he describes their love nest in terms of the mythological tryst between Venus and Mars: "Actum itaque in nobis est quod in Marte et Venere deprehensis poetica narrat fabula" (And so what happened to us is what the poetic story tells us about Mars and Venus having been apprehended).[53] Not only has he here chosen Mars full out, but Mars has now shifted from a fighter to a lover. Clear differences are thus clouded; definitions change.

Inside and outside, too, though initially separated, become conjoined: while his public lectures are distinct from his private tutoring of Heloise (*secretos recessus*),[54] his private room becomes eventually the site of his public humiliation as the locus of his castration:

[51] *Historia*, p. 63. [52] Ibid., pp. 66–67. [53] Ibid., p. 74. [54] Ibid., p. 72.

> Unde vehementer indignati et adversum me conjurati, nocte quadam quiescentem me atque dormientem in secreta hospicii mei camera ... Mane autem facto, tota ad me civitas congregata.[55]
>
> (Because of which they became enraged and conspired against me; on a certain night I was sleeping quietly in the inner room of my domicile ... When morning came, the whole city gathered around me.)

Such textual decentering helps underscore the main theme of the text: detachment. The terror of detachment represented by the act of castration is felt throughout the text and speaks to a metaphoric castration Abelard feels thoughout his life. The story of his calamities is indeed the story of the impotence he feels, both literally and metaphorically.

Detachment thus serves as a leitmotif throughout the work as Abelard offers us, in his *Historia calamitatum*, his understanding of the new spatial view and the terror it evokes in himself and others. In this way it responds nicely to Suger's text. What Abelard does, in his *Historia calamitatum*, and elsewhere, is to show the ramifications of such a new view. As we have seen, Suger offers up the possibility for the self to exist apart from both the word and world – on an axis of its own – in that "foreign territory" of the universe. By isolating the body he is able to suggest a valorization of the visible, spatial world and then to establish his body as its organizing principle. Abelard, too, suggests that the spatial dimension of the world defines who he is; he, too, valorizes the visual and, even more than Suger, the textual. Yet he is painfully aware of the downside of this new view. As long as man existed in a specular relation to God there was no need to question the nature of his existence. Abelard, in suggesting that man's duality is made up not of specular but adjacent realities, opens up the possibility for just such questioning.

To a certain extent, then, the story of Abelard's calamities is

[55] Ibid., pp. 79 and 80.

the story of the breakdown of categories.[56] Throughout the text he attempts to line things up, as a good dialectician would, in opposing pairs; almost without fail those pairs come undone for one reason or another. Yet the specific blurring of clear lines of demarcation works in the same way and with many of the same metaphors as in Suger. Abelard's point is ultimately that there are no absolutes, that everything is defined through relative comparisons, and that the terms of those comparisons depend on context. In this sliding scale, however, in which things are not opposed but compared, and in which the mark of difference becomes the focus, the space of writing and reading emerges as the possible space of action. Writing for Abelard, as for Derrida, is the arena in which difference is central; writing cannot exist without difference. (This was true of Suger as well but he tried to suppress it). But in Abelard this equation between writing and difference – and of writing as a mark of difference – is foregrounded and made explicit.

For what Abelard offers us in the *Historia calamitatum* is a body that is and is not in the world, much as Stock has proposed he viewed the sign. Whereas the *Ethics* posits a radical dualism between body and soul, the *Historia calamitatum* suggests otherwise, and offers a reassessment of the textualized body. As the body becomes textualized it offers up a way for the soul to interact in the world. The only body, in other words, that can bear the essential part of the soul – that can escape from its undifferentiated universality – is one that emphasizes difference. The body alone may not be efficacious in the world, even as it alone may not be capable of sin. But the text may be, as it stands half-way between body and soul, enabling the differentiating qualities of the soul to function in the world, and meaning and value to move from the soul to the world. If the body as body cannot escape the fate of the universal, the body as differentiated in the text can. Likewise, if the soul cannot escape its peculiarity and differentiation, the self as the body in the text can. Lerer noted how the castration in Guibert left a mark on the pilgrim's

[56] So Mark Amsler, "Genre and Code in Abelard's *Historia Calamitatum*," *Assays* 1 (1981), 35–50.

throat that served as a trace of both loss and contrition, of difference erased. For Abelard, the castration serves as a mark of differentiation, not erasure. Guibert's body, feminized as it is over and over again, asserts its universality, its sameness, as it emphasizes wholeness as a body without gender marks. But Abelard's body marks difference.

Text of desire

As support of this one need only realize that the misfortunes to which Abelard refers are not the ones for which he is remembered. His ostensible purpose for writing to Walther is to lament his mistreatment in the hands of the envious. His purpose is to suggest an affinity between himself and Christ in that both were wrongfully persecuted. Yet Abelard's text offers us a very different story. For while the explicit theme of Abelard's *historia* is conservative, the effect of the text is wholly radical. Part of his orthodoxy asserts a link between his body and his text. Yet, as we have seen with Augustine, the purpose of this metaphoric assimilation is to cover over the body through glossing. Abelard's treatment of the metaphor does precisely the opposite. His identification of text and body, perhaps unconsciously, serves to foreground rather than suppress his body. Even as Abelard's nominalist argument is grounded in the rejection of the common existence of universals, so his understanding of reading and text precisely rejects the suppression of the body. Text for him is not both body and the suppression of body. It is, instead, the marked and differentiated body.

In denying the interpretive turn Abelard acknowledges the growing emphasis on the visual and the spatial. The identification of text with body, and of reading with looking at that body, is ultimately frustrating. Given the identification of text with body (and its concealment) removing the veil of hermeneutic gloss can only reveal a taboo, physical, "corporeal thing," to use Augustine's phrase. In the context this thing is always perceived as partial and imperfect. What is needed is a way to present that

"corporeal thing" as an entity of its own, a body that, while not obscured is also not destroyed.

Toward the end of the text Abelard alludes, twice, to what he suggests is a common proverb. The first allusion occurs in a setting which is strongly reminiscent of the beginning of the text. Having been assigned to a monastery on the Brittany coast, Abelard leaves Paris:

> Sicut ergo ille, qui imminente sibi gladio perterritus in precipitium se collidit et ut puncto temporis mortem unam differat aliam incurrit, sic ego ab uno periculo in aliud scienter me contuli.[57]
>
> (And so just as that man, who, terrified by a sword hanging over him, hurls himself over a precipice so that, in an instant, by avoiding one death he runs smack into another, so I consciously took myself from one danger into another.)

Likening his situation to that of a proverbial figure caught between the cliff and the sword Abelard transforms the landscape of France into a text which, retroactively, charges much of the work. For the choice alluded to sounds like a literary one, either a proverb or text. In the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, for example, one finds the same choice of deaths presented in identical terms, as the speaker refers to having to choose between a sword (*gladium*) and a precipice (*praecipitium*):

> Em nunc certe, nunc maxime funditus perii, nunc spei salutiferae renuntiavi: laqueus aut gladius aut certe praecipitium procul dubio capessendum est.
>
> (Alas! now I am utterly undone, now I am out of all hope. O, give me a knife to kill me or a halter to hang me, or a precipice that I may throw me down therefrom.)[58]

In this passage a choice of suicides is being discussed. In the same way, Abelard transforms the landscape of France into a

[57] *Historia*, p. 98.

[58] Text and trans., W. Adlington and S. Gaselee (Cambridge: Heinemann, 1915), pp. 180–81.

space of self-annihilation (rather than self-realization) and suggests that it provides no further escape.

This suggestion is reinforced when, on returning to Paris, Abelard makes it clear that he is still living the proverb:

> In quo adhuc etiam laboro periculo, et cotidie quasi cervici mee gladium imminentem suspitio, ut inter epulas vix respirem, sicut de illo legitur qui cum Dyonisii tiranni potentiam atque opes conquisitas maxime imputaret beatitudini, filo latenter apensum super se gladium suspitiens ...[59]
>
> (In which danger I still labor and daily it is as if I see a sword hanging over my neck so that I hardly dare breathe at meals, just like that man about whom we read who thought the power and acquired riches of Dionysius the Tyrant to be happiness but, looking up, saw a sword hanging secretly over him by a thread ...)

For Apuleius, the choice of suicides is deferred and ultimately diverted by the intrusion of a long narrative tale, the story of Cupid and Psyche.[60] It is the process of tale-telling, of fictionalizing, of troping the real that is, ultimately, self-affirming for Apuleius. Yet it is not so for Abelard. The sword that hangs over his head at the end of the work, clearly related to some extent to his castration, is not the means to his reintegration, though, as we will see with Guilhem IX, it might well have been. Yet the impossible choice remains unresolved as the disembodied fragment – be it sword or phallus – fails to become a metonymic representation reintegrated through the constitution of a self in the act of writing.

The story of Damocles' sword is that of the tyrant Dionysius who demonstrates to one of his flatterers, Damocles, the ambivalence of power by setting him in the midst of a sumptuous banquet while hanging a sword (*fulgentem gladium*) by a horsehair above his neck. Damocles found he could not begin to enjoy the banquet because of the menace of the sword.[61]

59 *Historia*, p. 107.
60 Whether or not Abelard knew the text of Apuleius is not relevant here. My argument is coldly comparative: what happens in Apuleius' text does not happen in Abelard's.
61 Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* v, 21.61–62.

The context in which Abelard sets his version is similarly materialistic. Because he is abbot he is envied and therefore constantly threatened (poison in chalice, etc.). The sword that hangs over his head at the end of the text is thus, to a certain extent, the personification of the slanderous tongue.

Abelard's version of the proverb also makes clear the impossible situation he feels he occupies: his retelling of it sets up a number of binary opposites which he cannot easily mediate. By suggesting that the sword in the proverb is the sword of Damocles which hangs over the dining table, and by opposing that sword to the cliff, he opposes inner to outer as well. Likewise, the dangers are opposed in a telling way: running toward the cliff is a horizontal act, while the sword hangs vertically. Abstracting from this one can see a prototype of his situation in the text: caught as he is between the horizontal and the vertical, between his talents and his ability in the world and the spiritual realizing of such talents – a trap which he labels as the result of envy.

What Abelard is unable to realize fully is that these crushing forces can be brought to the aid of his situation. It is, I think, no accident that he chooses the exemplum he does. The *Historia calamitatum* is etymologically both the story of his calamities and, somewhat indirectly, the story of his writing, the near-pun *calamus* being the Latin for reed-pen. And even as the sword that threatens becomes potentially the pen that enables, so the cliff which marks the edge and defines the place of difference becomes the margin or page on which his text and himself are written. It is indeed in writing and reading that the horizontal and vertical forces can be allowed to coexist, that the pen and the page, the phallic and the gynistic can interact.

Yet it is the next step that is the crucial one. Abelard does not reject either the feminine or the body. Rather, as his romance with Heloise makes clear, he tries to recuperate both and it is this effort that provides the motivating force of the *Historia*. Within Abelard's despair lie the seeds for dealing with the new rift; the *Historia*, written to Walther as consolation, or, as Evelyn Birge Vitz has argued, sermon, offers potentially a way

out of his troubles.[62] The dead ends that become increasingly prevalent in this text, and the impotence which they imply, are temporarily undone by the process of writing about love. Abelard presents himself explicitly as the impotent victim of envy yet his text proffers him as, potentially, the powerful author of love. Had the space of difference been accepted and the power of desire allowed to energize that space, the choice need not have been perceived in such negative terms. What we find in the troubadours, starting with Guilhem IX is that the choice between sword and cliff is valorized as the sword becomes, quite explicitly, not only the pen but also the phallus, and the cliff becomes both the edge or margin of the page and the mark of difference that makes love possible. What is transgressive becomes the focus and as such opens up a space of action.

The question that remains, however, is why Abelard never found such a strategy. He had all the right elements, it would seem, he was just not able to valorize them. Although not acknowledged explicitly in his text, it is clear that his love for Heloise is an answer to envy, even as his writing creates a textual self which can escape from the traps set by his detractors, the prototypical *lauzengiers*. But not only had semiotics been seen as an objectified science, the very language involved, Latin, had acquired for Abelard an entirely objective set of associations. As we have seen, text, Latin text, for Suger, as for Augustine before him, had been associated with the body and its suppression. That body resists suppression in Suger; its presence remains consonant with earlier associations, it merely refuses to stay hidden. Body retains this visibility with Abelard, yet there is a difference: Abelard's textual body, like everything else in his text, is marked by powerlessness. This fact has less to do with Abelard's actual castration than it does with his understanding of the inherited associations of text and body, where that body

[62] That Abelard's writings contained within them intimations of the vernacular romance has been argued by Tony Hunt in two essays: "The Dialectic of Yvain," *Modern Language Review* 72 (1977), 285–99 and "Abelardian Ethics and Béroul's *Tristran*," *Romania* 98 (1977), 501–40. See also D. W. Robertson, Jr., "Idea of Fame in Chrétien's *Cligès*," *Studies in Philology* 69 (1972), 414–33.

was wounded and imperfect. While (literally) glossed over by Augustine and Suger, Abelard makes an explicit connection between the differentiated body and the thwarted text.

What Abelard makes clear, in short, is the implication of Suger's work. Where Suger isolates a transitional space that allows him to reorder his understanding of both persona and work, he is unable, finally, to articulate the nature of this self; for him it remains merely a potential. The despair that marks Abelard's tone in the *Historia calamitatum* suggests a similar lack. While Abelard's text is less politically subtle than that of Suger, it, too, describes a transitional space that, nonetheless, does not adequately capture its author's voice. Neither author, it would appear, finds a means to inhabit that space; neither finds the medium for transporting the external world within. For this one needs an object that exists both in the real world and, in altered form, in the subjective mind of the observer.[63] What Suger and Abelard are trying to import is the world, or at least the body. Yet that body must be one which can function as both signifier and signified; it must be a body that is, ultimately, not a body. While neither Suger nor Abelard finds either this object or the appropriate medium, Abelard, at least, comes closer. Abelard paves the way for a reinterpretation of textual space as an arena whose defining characteristic is difference. In order to achieve this vantage point fully – something he fails to do – he would have needed to discover a neutral language that would allow him to treat the text as differentiated body. Such, I would argue, is the role Occitan plays in the lyrics of the first troubadours.

The text for Abelard, in other words, remains conceptually associated with a body which can only be concealed or revealed. The vernacular text, by contrast, will carve out a new space of poetic action that is more independent, more powerful, and which belongs, as Dante will make clear in the *De vulgari eloquentia*, to both the subjective and objective realms. Moreover,

[63] For transitional object see D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock, 1971), chap. 1; Christopher Bollas, *The Shadow of the Object: Psychoanalysis of the Unthought Known* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 14. A more familiar example of the same phenomenon can be found in the American cartoon of Calvin and Hobbes.

the field of desire is better mapped, at least at first, in lyric than in romance. For Abelard the visual only serves to verify imperfection. For the troubadours writing in Occitan it becomes the means to mediation and love.

4

Text of the Self: Guilhem IX and Jaufre Rudel, Bernart de Ventadorn and Raimbaut d'Aurenga

The purpose of both this chapter and the next is to suggest that vernacular literature of the twelfth century provides a literary arena that is comparable to the space inhabited by the self. Abelard and Suger each acknowledge the centrality of the body to the self but each demurs, as well. By contrast, the troubadours and Marie de France acknowledge the importance of the body and the world and, by composing in the vernacular, confront it. Because the vernacular is rooted in the body, it is a language that can address, by its very use, issues that arose in the margins of Suger and Abelard.

It is in vernacular literature, starting with that of the troubadours, that the space of agency first opens up. Aware of the distance between literature in Latin and speech in the vernacular, troubadour poets are always crossing a line, creating a hybrid form that elevates their mother tongue even as it measures itself against the Latin literary tradition.[1] What surfaces again and again in this first vernacular poetry is an ambivalent focus on the body of the poet and his lady: that body both is and is not present in the poetry. The presence of this thematic suggests that even as the self is created by a recognition of and distancing from

[1] On this point, see Laura Kendrick, in *The Game of Love: Troubadour Wordplay*. (Los Angeles and Berkeley: California University Press, 1988), p. 186. See also David Rollo who asserts that the "present self requires dimensionality of a past avatar" ("Sexual Escapades and Poetic Process: Three Poems by William IXth of Aquitaine," *Romanic Review* 81 (1990), 311).

the body, so the vernacular tradition is created from the Latin precisely because the vernacular can be differentiated from Latin of the twelfth century by its being rooted in the body of the speaker.

Critical Reception of Troubadour Poetry

There are few other literatures that have suffered as schizophrenic a reception as the lyrics of the troubadours. They were long taken as proponents of a Platonic courtly love, the lady of troubadour lyric becoming iconic in her position of remove as an object of desire. More recently, these same lyrics have been shown to speak directly to erotic and scatological themes: the best example is provided by the lyrics of Guilhem IX.[2] As often focused on the body and the erotic as on the spiritual, the lyrics of Guilhem have provided fodder for both approaches to troubadour song.[3] It is my contention that these two readings are not as polarized as they might first appear; and that while the methodologies, and even the texts, have indeed changed, the basic position of troubadour lyric in the developing literary tradition can be explained in a way that incorporates these seemingly opposed approaches.

To see troubadour lyric in general, and the poetry of Guilhem IX in particular, as either about the body or not is, I would submit, not useful; neither statement is entirely true, neither wholly false.

In the same way, to contrast the poetry of Guilhem IX with that of Jaufre Rudel in terms of the body is to set up a false, anachronistic dichotomy. Even though Jaufre sounded what has

[2] On the difficulty the critical tradition has had in categorizing Guilhem's lyrics see the wonderful examples provided by Rollo, "Sexual Escapades", p. 294, nn. 5 and 6. For a good example of the most recent approaches to Guilhem, see Caroline Jewers, "The Poetics of (S) Cat-Ology in Guilhem VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine's *Canso* V," *Tenso* 11.1 (1995), 38–63. The most thorough and thought-provoking study to date, however, remains that of Kendrick, *Game of Love*. My understanding of Guilhem's poetry is heavily endebted to this work.

[3] Kendrick notes how modern criticism presents Guilhem as "two-faced" (*Game of Love*, p. 133 and see 133, n. 22). See also Rouben C. Cholakian, *The Troubadour Lyric: A Psychocritical Reading* (Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 12–14, 35–36.

been taken as the theme for troubadour lyric through his lyrics on "amor de lonh," which quickly became almost a methodology for opposing his works to those of the "crasser" Guilhem, the two poets are not that far apart.

For there is a third term that surfaces in the lyrics of both of these troubadours, one that hovers between body and soul, between corporeal and spiritual, a concept that is defined ambiguously as being both body and separate from the body.[4] There can be little argument that all of the troubadours are, in fact, focused on a visual and hence spatial perception of the world.[5] All of the troubadours as well, I would submit, posit the body in the world even as they acknowledge its ability to separate itself from the restrictions imposed by the physical world. Even the most graphic of Guilhem's poetry, with its tendency to exaggerate, suggests movement beyond the merely physical into the realm of sexual fantasy, and as such suggests that the poem resides in a realm that is at once in, yet not of, this world. Troubadour lyric, in short, is a lyric that is at once of the body and not of the body. Both the most obviously erotic and scatological and the most apparently transcendent are mapping out an area that foregrounds the body; both are representing desire in spatial terms. The poetry is always transgressive because its starting point is always if not the body then a body-centered perception of the world, and that transgression can be measured either as irony or delight.

As the first troubadour, Guilhem IX experiences a unique freedom. Text for him is, as it was for Abelard, a body, but it is a body that is whole and intact, not imperfect and mutilated, even

[4] Or, as Rollo puts it, the lyrics of Guilhem allow for the "possibility of self-figuration within lyric discourse itself" ("Sexual Escapades," p. 311).

[5] There has, in fact, been much argument about just this point. However, readers have suggested again and again the importance of the visual and spatial to troubadour lyric. See, for example, Roger Dragonetti, "*Aizi* et *aizimen* chez les plus anciens troubadours," *Mélanges de linguistique romane et de philologie médiévale offerts à Maurice Delbouille*, ed. J. Renson and M. Tyssens, 2 vols. (Liège: Duculot, 1964), vol. 2, pp. 127–53 and works cited in n. 42. One small but perhaps telling further example: the *Natureingang* with which so many of these lyrics begin can be seen as a way to celebrate the "fleshing-out" of nature that occurs as winter becomes spring. The density offered by flowers and leaves turns the two-dimensional winter landscape into a three-dimensional spring one.

as it is a body that can and does exist equally well in both the world and his mind. With the troubadours who follow Guilhem, one becomes aware of a rift between subjective and objective worlds, between the inner world of the poet and his efficacy in the world without. At first this is a cause of concern, as a poet such as Bernart de Ventadorn makes clear; later, it allows room for the text to develop as a surrogate, able to bridge the gap between the two realms. The poets who follow in this tradition cannot make easy equivalencies between body and text since, as part of a tradition, albeit new, their text is always to a certain extent partial and dependent. What one finds instead in the lyrics of the troubadours who follow Guilhem IX is the expression of a self that begins with an acceptance of the body but moves on to an understanding of self as mediated body.

The Lyrics of Guilhem IX

Guilhem IX and Abelard are almost exact contemporaries: Abelard's dates are 1079–1142, Guilhem IX, 1071–1126; their attitude toward the world, though, and their treatment of the literary text could not be more different. Where Abelard is despairing, Guilhem is joyful; where Abelard's theme is envy, Guilhem's is love; and where Abelard writes in Latin, Guilhem composes in his native Occitan. If Abelard's text served as a mirror of his imperfections, Guilhem's lyrics open up an arena for human – even superhuman – activity as they revel in their capacity to be both at once in and out of reality and the literary tradition. The shift from Latin to his native vernacular seems to have provided exactly the flexibility that Abelard appeared to be yearning for, in that it enabled the textual space to become a means for importing the world. What Abelard could not escape, writing as he was in the Latin tradition, Guilhem can.[6] And

[6] It should be reiterated that I am speaking here about the relationship of traditions first, languages second. Much work remains to be done on the precise changes entailed by the shift from Latin to the vernaculars. For a wonderful, if early, discussion, see Joan M. Ferrante, "Was Vernacular Poetic Practice a Response to Latin Language Theory?," *Romance Philology* 35 (1982), 586–600.

while the troubadours who follow Guilhem are able, to a certain extent, to retain some of the freedom he articulates, he is in a unique position as the first poet in the vernacular: his lyrics are capable of a neutrality experienced neither by Latin writers nor by the Occitan poets who follow in his footsteps. He is, I would suggest, the only medieval poet for whom the text is primarily an expression of freedom, and his textual experiments pave the way for the tradition that develops which perceives the vernacular text as a means to subjectifying the world.

That it is the space of transgression which fascinates Guilhem is evident from the very first of his poems, "Companho, farai un vers tot covinen," in which the two women who serve as focus of the lyric are as different as the sword and the cliff to Abelard, and to a certain extent analogous. One is associated with lofty, ethereal – vertical – things, the other with the quotidian – horizontal – plane. Even as the sword and cliff are paradigmatic for Abelard, so the two women are paradigmatic for Guilhem. But where Abelard found it important to choose, Guilhem explicitly and deliberately does not make a choice. He offers the poem as a choice [strophe 3: "no.ls puesc tener amdos que l'uns l'autre no consen" (I cannot keep them both, because the one does not tolerate the other) (lines 8–9)], but ends it by denying the possibility of choosing:

> Cavalier, datz mi conseill d'un pensamen;
> Anc mais no fui eisarratz de cauzimen
> E no sai ab cal me tenha,
>   de n'Ancnes ho de n'Arsen.
> De Gimel ai lo castel e·l mandamen,
> E per Niol fauc erqueill a tota gen;
> C'ambedui me son jurat
>   e plevit per sagramen.

> (Knights, give me advice about a problem;
> Never was I more uncertain about a choice
> And I don't know with which I should remain,
>   Lady Agnes or Lady Arsen.
> I own the castle of Gimel and its command
> And because of Niol I act proud toward everyone;

For both are sworn
and pledged to me by sacred oath.)
(lines 22–27[7])

Such a decentering prevails in several of Guilhem's lyrics, most notably in "Compaigno, non pus mudar qu'eu no m'effrei" and "Farai un vers de dreyt nien," in which a lack of center becomes the very focus of the poem. Yet in this void, one senses, nonetheless, a strong presence: rejecting the past, standard categories and explanations, the poem's persona unhitches itself from everything. In this unhitching comes the fear witnessed in Abelard; in this unhitching as well comes the playfulness that marks this poem of Guilhem. Yet out of this denial a single state prevails – love – and love is frequently associated, as at the end of "Farai un vers de dreit nien" with both the song and its physical presence

Fait ai lo vers, no sai de cui;
Et trametra lo a celui
Que lo·m trametrai per autrui
Enves Anjau,
Que·m tramezes del sieu estui
La contraclau.

(I've done the song, about whom I don't know;
And I'll send it over to the one
Who will send it for me through another
Toward Anjou,
So that [she] might send me a copy of the key
To her coffer.)
(lines 43–48[8])

Like love, the transmitted song is able to mediate absence and presence. The strong poetic presence suggested by the opening line of this poem is associated by the end with love and the song itself. Together they represent the interweaving of absence with

[7] Because the edition to a certain extent determines the translation, and vice versa, I have used both text and translation from William VII, Count of Poitiers, *Poetry*, ed. G. A. Bond, Garland Library of Medieval Literature 4, A (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1982), pp. 4–5, hereafter referred to as Bond.
[8] Ibid., pp. 16–17.

presence, visible with invisible, space with time. Together they create the constellation of the emerging self.

While the actual lady plays a small role in the love described in this poem, her presence is more crucial in several other lyrics by Guilhem, and a look at these may help elucidate Guilhem's agenda. In "Mout jauzens me prenc en amar" one finds the most striking example.[9] On one level it seems clear that the lady is here presented as a Christ figure (lines 4 and 5) who can mediate, a suggestion supported by the clear biblical allusion in lines 31–32: "Pus hom gensor non pot trobar / Ni heulhs vezer ni boca dir" (Since one cannot find a more gracious lady / Nor the eye see nor the mouth describe).[10]

But unlike the biblical parallels, the focus here is on the appearance of the lady, specifically her body. It is thus her physical presence which provokes the love of the persona and that love is similarly reified:

> Si·m vol midons s'amor donar,
> Pres suy del penr' e del grazir
> E del celar e del blandir
>
> (If milady wants to grant me her love,
> I am ready to take it and be grateful for it
> And to conceal it and to speak sweetly of it ...)
> (lines 37–39.[11])

The lady is thus important as mediator but her mediation is primarily physical. In the absence of one or the other of the lovers, it is necessary to create a simulacrum which is clearly the song itself. The text, in other words, appears to be for Guilhem the physical space in which love can flourish and survive given that it, like love, is primarily spatial.

For the most part, then, one finds in Guilhem what was incipient in Abelard – a deliberate unhitching from the inherited cosmic order, the fear and joy such a disruption creates, and the attempt to be anchored in a decentered universe. Guilhem is not

[9] Here see L. T. Topsfield, "Three Levels of Love in the Poetry of the Earliest Troubadours: Guilhem IX, Marcabru and Jaufré Rudel," *Mélanges de philologie romane dédiés à la mémoire de Jean Boutière* (Liège: Soledi, 1971), pp. 571–87.

[10] Bond, pp. 34–35. [11] Idem.

as committed to writing as Bernart de Ventadorn and Raimbaut d'Aurenga will be, or even as Abelard was, but, rather, he insists that the performance of the word – whether by joglar or in a text – be a representation of love itself, that it be provoked by a visual stimulus, that it have a marked spatial dimension, through rhyme scheme, through its emphasis on beginning, middle, and end. The space opened up by decentering becomes the arena for both love and text. And the male, most often, becomes the creator of that text itself. Abelard is not alone in reading Heloise; Guilhem also inscribes women into his text as he makes texts and women one, so that reading and writing or performing to a specific male audience, as in the *companho* poems, becomes an erotic act.

As a final example, Guilhem's poem "Ab la dolchor del temps novel" concludes with the much discussed line "Nos n'avem la pessa e·l coutel," usually translated as "We have the bread and the knife for it."[12] While there is indeed evidence of similar expressions "pan e coutel" (bread and knife) and "char e coutel" (meat and knife), in which *pessa* has been suppressed, these expressions all date from later and suggest instead a revisionary rewriting of the original phrase.[13] While *pan* can indeed imply *pessa*, *pessa* alone need not imply *pan*. Rather, *pessa*, derived from the Latin *petia*, is a word which denotes first a measure of land, then a mark of the division of land.[14] It is thus a term which indicates edge or division and is arguably comparable to

[12] Paul Spillenger, "Memory and Distance in Dante and Jaufre Rudel," *Tenso* 5.1 (1989), 11–32 argues for a "poetics of proximity" in this lyric of Guilhem and contrasts it to the emphasis on distance in the lyrics of Jaufre Rudel. See also Rita Lejeune, "La part des sentiments personnels dans l'oeuvre du troubadour Guillaume IX d'Aquitaine: A propos de la poésie 'Ab la dolchor del temps novel,' " *Orbis medievalis: Mélanges Reto Bezzola* (Berne: Francke, 1978), pp. 241–52.

[13] Jacques Monfrin, "Notes lexicographiques: Nos n'avem la pessa e.l coutel," in *Mélanges de linguistique française et de philologie et littérature médiévales offerts à Paul Imbs*, ed. Robert Martin et Georges Straka, Travaux de linguistique et de littérature XI (Strasbourg: Klincksieck, 1973), p. 155.

[14] Nicolò Pasero, in "La pessa e.l coutel: Postille interpretative a un passo di Guglielmo IX," in *Studia in honorem prof. Martin de Riquer*, 2 vols. (Barcelona: Quaderns Crema, 1987), vol. 2, 584. Pasero cites DuCange, s.v. PECIA/PETIA (VI, 234–235) and PECOLIA (VI, 236). See also Frede Jensen, *Provençal Philology and the Poetry of Guillaume of Poitiers* (Odense University Press, 1983), pp. 296–97; Nicolò Pasero, ed. *Guglielmo IX d'Aquitania, Poesie* (Modena: STEM-Mucchi, 1973), p. 266.

Abelard's *praecipitium*. *Coutel*, while indeed often referring to kitchen knife, just as frequently is used to denote a sword, Abelard's *gladium*.[15] The line can therefore be translated as "We have the edge and the knife for it."

The context supports such a reading. The poem itself is about topics that would have been familiar to Abelard: the opposition of presence to absence (strophe 2), the emphasis on the visual (strophe 3), the spatialization of time (lines 1–2).[16] Most telling, perhaps is that the entire strophe in which the proverbial phrase is found speaks directly to the problem and the solution of envy: even as the protagonist is not afraid of the knife and the cliff since he embraces both, so he is not afraid of envy because he knows "de paraulas, con van ab un breu sermon, que s'espel / Que tal se van d'amor gaber" (how words go along / With a short speech, which means / That such people are (just) bragging about love). Slanderers' talk is ultimately talk about love. By accepting both members of an opposed pair, the force once ascribed to envy has been turned to speak of love, even as the negative force of the proverbial language in Abelard's hands become a final, positive strophe for Guilhem.

In the third strophe of this poem, dark becomes light, cold warm, and time is not only spatialized but that space is then mediated:

La nostr'amor va enaissi
Com la branca de l'albespi,
Qu'esta sobre l'arbre tremblan
La nuoit, a la ploia ez al gel,
Tro l'endeman, que·l sols s'espan
Per la fueilla vert el ramel.

(Our love goes along the same way
As the branch of the hawthorn,
Which stands trembling on the trees
Through the night, in rain and sleet,
Until the next day when the sun spreads

15 Emil Levy, *Petit dictionnaire provençal-français* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1961), q.v. *coltel*.

16 Bond, pp. 36–39.

Through the green leaves on the twigs.)
(lines 13–19[17])

This theme of mediation is then developed in the fourth strophe in which, to return to the literal level of the poem, the morning is the time in which war has become peace and distance has been overcome by intertwining and a ring. That mediation, is the ultimate message of the poem; not separation, is suggested by the last two lines of this strophe. These lines project a similar reunion in the future, which is concretized by a clear instance of transgression: "Enquer me lais Dieus viure tan / C'aia mas mans soz so mantel!" (God let me yet live long enough / That I might have my hands beneath her cloak) (lines 23–24)).

What is threatening for Abelard is under Guilhem's control; what is a choice of deaths for Abelard is symbolic of life and creation for Guilhem; the *pessa* and *coutel* are not only textual, they are also sexual, the knife as both phallus and pen, the *pessa* the edge that marks the text but also marks sexual difference. The impossible choice Abelard finds himself confronted with becomes the best of both worlds for Guilhem as the envy that so predominates in the *Historia calamitatum* becomes transformed into love, the spoken slander into secret texts, the mutilation of the male body into empowerment via the female body. For if the vernacular is the medium that allows for the objective world to become subjectified, courtly woman, as a text that is read, is the transitional object, the body that exists as both object and subject – the real body that is also a fantasy. The elements hinted at by Abelard are thus realized by Guilhem: women as texts to be read, man as both reader and author; love and reading as occupying the same, transgressive space which is, for both Abelard and Guilhem, the space of the self.

Guilhem IX's apparent youthfulness stems in large part from his independence, his breaking free from inherited systems of thought; his ability to make a vers "de dreyt nien." He does not appear in his lyrics in the way that Bernart will, although his body is certainly present as subject in many of them. He does

[17] Ibid., p. 36.

not appear, I would argue, because, by definition, alterity is lacking from his perception of the world. Nothing, for him, is other. In his "adventure of the signifier" to use Kendrick's apt phrase, poem, self, and body are present and unified.[18] He is a lone cipher gaining meaning from immediate context and enjoying it. His lyrics do not reflect him, they are him to the extent that they represent his body and also his will. Moreover, his works, unlike those of the troubadours who follow, are deliberately not intertextual. While intertextual reference proves as fertile for the later troubadours as it was futile for Abelard, for Guilhem it is, in a sense, impossible. His point is to redefine text in a way that emphasizes its alliance with the feminine. Allusion to other texts could serve only to undermine this aim. In fact, it would not be completely wrong to suggest that Guilhem's goal is to be free of reflection of all kinds, to establish himself as an autonomous unit. Such an approach thus runs counter to that which he would have inherited. That Guilhem also lacks direct reference to his own physical appearance may well be a further attempt on his part to suggest that his writings reflect nothing but themselves.

A brief look at the other end of the critical spectrum, the lyrics of another early troubadour, Jaufre Rudel, helps to clarify this development.[19] Jaufre's contribution to the troubadour tradition has been identified with his concept of *amor de lonh*, love from afar. Interpretations of this notion are as varied as the eras in which he has been read, from evidence of autobiography to a secularization of the Godhead. For this argument, the distance Jaufre marks out between himself and Amors creates a space, a textual space, which he then explores in his poems. The body celebrated by Guilhem IX still provides the motivation for the poetry even as the concept of difference offers the theme. Yet

[18] Kendrick, *Game of Love*, subtitle to chap. 2.

[19] Text of Jaufre Rudel taken from *The Poetry of Cercamon and Jaufre Rudel*, ed. Roy Rosenstein and George Wolf (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1983). Rupert T. Pickens' monumental edition of Jaufre's works, *The Songs of Jaufre Rudel*, Studies and Texts 41 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978) was also consulted; the multiplicity of meanings highlighted in this edition serves to underscore the argument about Jaufre's interest in the textual.

Jaufre's interest lies in the area that is opened up between himself and his love, be it the lady in a distant land or the wife who lies with her husband in the castle. His interest, therefore, is not only in the visual but in what the visual can provoke: what develops in the wake of sight. His lyrics, likewise, do not assert an equivalence between body and text. Rather, the tension provided by distance and anticipation serves to create a textual space in which a dialectic of identity and difference can be played out.

The thematic rendering of this dialectic is clear enough. What is perhaps less evident is the fact that a similar strategy is at work on the level of pure text. That is, Jaufre's theme of love from afar is potentially the result of his place in the poetic tradition. While intertextual echoes do not abound, they are there, and they are crucial. For the textual echoes are from Guilhem, [20] and none, so far as I can see, are direct quotations; each echo adapts the early text to serve a new purpose. Most striking is the line in "Lanqan li jorn" in which Jaufre adapts Guilhem IX's "enaisi ... fadatz" to produce "enaissi·m fadet."[21] Jaufre's seemingly deliberate attempt to insert himself into the Occitan tradition in this way suggests that he identified his text not with the body but with interpretation of the fledgling tradition represented by the works of Guilhem. His poetry extends laterally, spatially, from that presence; it marks out a terrain derived from a certain reading of the earlier works, a reading that grants power through adaptation. This intertextual power is exactly what Abelard sought and could not achieve. For him, textual reference was only a further means of frustration; for him other texts provided more dead ends. But for the troubadours, text, like body, is the source of strength. References to other texts help to reaffirm presence, to strengthen and define the parameters of the space first carved out by Guilhem. For while Guilhem dismantles the inherited hier-

[20] I would have to disagree here with the assertion of Wolf and Rosenstein (p. 102) that Ovidian references are prevalent. There is an important distinction to be made between faint echoes and intertextuality; the first acknowledges a source, the second foregrounds the process of textuality and establishes a precise and reciprocal relationship between two authors.

[21] So points out Rita Lejeune, "La chanson de l' 'amour de loin' de Jaufre Rudel," *Studi in onore di Angelo Monteverdi*, 2 vols. (Modena: STEM, 1959), vol. 1, 403–42.

archies through the assertion that there is a space of creative nothingness, Jaufre and the poets who follow charge that space with the tension of textual imitation and, as a consequence, appropriate the concept of differentiation to the poetic text.

The circles of intertextual reference spread out further and further in the wake of Guilhem and Jaufre. With the increased power granted textuality comes a greater exploration of the mediating space of vernacular text. Such intertextuality speaks to and motivates a new treatment of the sign in which the signifier is foregrounded.[22] Two troubadours who demonstrate this most clearly are Bernart de Ventadorn and Raimbaut d'Aurenga.

Bernart de Ventadorn: self-reflection

When Bernart de Ventadorn's persona loses himself in his lady's eyes, nonetheless something has been found. The patterning of the male persona on the lady as he sees himself in her ("pus me mirei en te") is, as Frederick Goldin has suggested, a major step forward in the imaging of a new self.[23] For as distant and remote as the lady of troubadour lyric is, she has, nonetheless, dimension and presence. It is, in fact, her visible qualities which are desirable, just as it is his visible characteristics that he "sees in her." As Goldin says, "Before it is possible to call her a mirror, a great psychic event has taken place: the courtly ideal and all the doctrines that define it have been translated into a visible form in the immediate image of the lady."[24] While certainly many of the qualities of the *domna* and of *fin'amors* are Augustinian in origin and conception, significant qualities are not. The lady of troubadour lyric is not assimilated to the Godhead; she is not so much put on a pedestal by the troubadours as she is removed from one, and as

[22] Studies of the innovative subjectivity of troubadour lyric have blossomed in the last few years, most notably with the recent work of Sarah Kay, esp. *Subjectivity*. But see also Cholakian, *Troubadour Lyric* and, with some reservations, Donald Frank, *Naturalism and the Troubadour Ethic* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988), chap. 5: "The Troubadour Sense of Self and Nature."

[23] *The Mirror of Narcissus in the Courtly Love Lyric.* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1967), pp. 102 and 103.

[24] Ibid., p. 92.

such represents the descent of the signified.[25] For in giving her a visible and physical presence the troubadour has made it possible for the self to assimilate and incorporate defining characteristics – in a way that Augustine could never achieve – and so to develop a positive, assertive sense of the self.

Bernart de Ventadorn, in "Tant ai mo cor ple de joya," articulates an awareness of the rupture between subjective and objective worlds.[26] The opening strophe of the poem establishes the strong presence of an inner self for whom everything appears different from the way it is in outer reality:

> Tant ai mo cor ple de joya,
> tot me desnatura.
> Flor blancha, vermelh' e groya,
> me per la frejura,
> c'ab lo ven et ab la ploya
> me creis l'aventura,
> per que mos pretz mont'e poya
> e mos chans melhura.
> Tan ai al cor d'amor,
> de joi e de doussor,
> per que·l gels me sembla flor
> e la neus verdura.
>
> (My heart is so full of joy that everything seems changed to me: the frost seems like white, red, and yellow flowers. With the wind and rain my good fortune prospers, so that my fame increases and rises and my songs improve. My heart is so full of love, of joy, and of sweetness that ice seems like flowers to me, and snow like greenery.)
>
> (lines 1–12)[27]

[25] In this context, the now-canonical essay of E. Jane Burns, "The Man Behind the Lady in Troubadour Lyric," *Romance Notes* 25 (1985), 254–70 is helpful. See also William D. Paden, Jr. *et al.*, "The Troubadour's Lady: Her Marital Status and Social Rank," *Studies in Philology* 72 (1975), 28–50.

[26] On Bernart's use of the spatial, see Edward D. Blodgett, "This Other Eden: The Poetics of Space in Horace and Bernart de Ventadorn," *Neohelicon* 3 (1975), 229–51. On Bernart and the Gothic, see Peter Bondanella, "The Theory of the Gothic Lyric and the Case of Bernart de Ventadorn," *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 74 (1973), 369–81.

[27] Text and translation is from S. G. Nichols and J. Galm, *The Songs of Bernart de Ventadorn*, University of North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures 39 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), pp. 169–72;

Inner and outer worlds are clearly comparable, visual and yet separate. This separation between inner and outer realities then becomes the theme of the poem as the poet laments distinction. Yet even as Bernart details the difference between the two "worlds" so he suggests ways in which this difference could be bridged. He acknowledges that while now the lady keeps him "en balansa / com la naus en l'onda" ("poised like a ship on a wave"), he wishes he were a swallow who might fly in the dead of night and come into her room. While now he is as separate from her as his inner reality is from outer, he wishes that the two could intermix, interpenetrate, interweave; that outer could blend with inner. The alchemical quality of the shifting metaphor of self – he virtually transforms from ship to swallow – points towards the power and importance of metaphor in this poem. Such things are possible now, he suggests, only in the world of the image, of the mind.[28]

But he goes even further in suggesting how his wishes might be fulfilled. In the world of the word such interpenetration and union are not only imaginable but already possible. The third strophe closes with

> Mo cor ai pres d'Amor
> que l'esperitz lai cor,
> mas lo cors es sai, alhor,
> lonh de leis en Fransa.
>
> (My heart is close to Love and my soul hastens there too; but my body is elsewhere: here in France, far from her.)
>
> (lines 33–36)

Here, the thematic of separation and distinction in the real world is undercut by the close, almost paranomasiac relation between heart, hasten, and body (cor/cor/cors) and thus suggests a solution to this paradigmatic troubadour dilemma. Heart, body, and hasten may be separated in the world of the signified; in the

hereafter referred to as Nichols and Galm. See, more recently, Alain Pons, "Sur les chansons de Bernart de Ventadorn," *Lemouzi* 101 (1987), 74–84.

[28] On the importance of metamorphosis to this poem, see Werner Ziltener, "*Ai Deus! car no sui ironda?*," *Studia Occitanica*, ed. Hans-Erich Keller, 2 vols. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), vol. 1, 363–71.

realm of the signifier, they are united. If the signifier had more power – if it were somehow as valued as its meaning or its referent – then such union as the poet desires could be attained.[29] Further, Bernart suggests through the image of the swallow that if the methods of inner reality could be allowed to influence those of outer reality, if they in turn were granted more power, then one could actually fulfill one's wishes. Such is not, unfortunately, the case for this poet; to impose the power of inner life on the outer world Bernart represents as pure madness:

> Anar posc ses vestidura,
> nutz en ma chamiza,
> car fin' amors m'asegura
> de la freja biza.
> Mas es fols qui·s desmezura
> e no·s te de guiza
>
> (I can go without clothing, naked beneath my shirt, for true love protects me from the freezing north wind. But he is a fool who overreaches himself and does not act as he should.)
>
> (lines 13–18)

The will, however, is there, expressed on several different levels, as is the model he wishes to discard. On the one hand he shows how separate the two worlds are for him: inner from outer, man from woman, signifier from signified. They are as distinct as Augustine's world is from his God; moreover, having become spatialized, visible, the distinction is even more apparent and emprisoning.[30] Through Bernart's punning on *cors*, though, and through his image of the penetrating swallow, he suggests the direction in which he would like the conceptual model to progress: toward a situation in which the inner could become the

[29] On the assonance in these lines, see Eric Köhler, "'Can vei la lauzeta mover': Uberlegungen zum Verhältnis von phonischer Struktur und semantischer Struktur," in *Semiotics and Dialectics: Ideology and the Text*, ed. Peter V. Zima (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1981), pp. 445–68.

[30] Robert W. Hanning makes a similar observation about the romance narrative of Chrétien de Troyes: "In other words, enclosures which determine and limit the spatial environment limit as well the hero's possibilities for free and full interaction with the world of human experience" (*The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977, p. 169.

outer and the outer inner. A situation in which, in short, the signifier and all its manifestations would be balanced by or even infused with the power of the signified.

Perhaps Bernart does not realize this wish because he does not have the conceptual metaphor for it. That is, while he draws on an image of interweaving to suggest that it is more apt as a model of the self than one which distinguishes polarities, he cannot fully conceptualize such a model in terms of the self and so it remains only a wish.[31]

In "Can vei la lauzeta mover" Bernart de Ventadorn laments the moment he saw himself in the mirror of his lady's eyes: "c'aissi·m perdei com predet se / lo bels Narcisus en la fon" (I have destroyed myself just as the beautiful Narcissus destroyed himself in the fountain) (lines 23–24). Just what he means by this, however, is unclear. Perhaps most perplexing is the fact that the persona's voice shifts from identifying with Narcissus to identifying with Echo, as several critics – Frederick Goldin, Kenneth Knoespel, and Luciano Rossi – have observed.[32]

> De las domnas me dezesper.
> Ja mais en lor no·m fiarai ...
> Merces es perduda per ver ...
> et on la querrai? ...
> je mais no·lh dirai.
> Aissi·m part de leis e·m recre.
> Mort m'a e per mort li respon,
> e vau m'en pus ilh no·m rete,
> chaitius, en issilh, no sai on.
>
> (I despair of women. No more will I trust them; ... Mercy is lost for good ... Yet where shall I seek it? ... I will say no

[31] For the symbolic role of the bird in both the lyrics discussed here, as an emblem of shifting social perspective, see Luigi Milone, "Rossinhol, Ironda, Lauzeta: Bernart de Ventadorn e i Movimenti del Desiderio," *Romanistiche Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 12 (1988), 1–21.

[32] On Narcissus, see Kenneth J. Knoespel, *Narcissus and the Invention of Personal History* (New York and London: Garland, 1985). See also Louise Vinge, *The Narcissus Theme in Western European Literature up to the Early 19th Century* (Lund: Gleerups, 1967); Louis Lavelle, *The Dilemma of Narcissus*, trans. W. T. Gairdner (London: Allen and Unwin, 1973). See also Luciano Rossi, "Chretien de Troyes e i trovatori: Tristan, Linhaura, Carestia," *Vox Romanica* 46 (1987), 26–62. And, finally, G. Rosati, "Narciso o l'illusione dissolta," *Maia* 28(1976), 83–108.

more to her. I leave her and renounce her. She has slain me and with death I shall answer her. Since she does not retain me, I depart, wretched, into exile, I know not whither.)

(lines 25–26, 41, 44, 52–56)

Changing all references of "her" to "him," the verses serve as a fair paraphrase of Echo's lament to Narcissus from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[33] While interpretations of this fact vary, it would seem that Bernart's glance in the mirror is one which results in an emasculating powerlessness; the shift in gender from male to female – Narcissus to Echo – is anything but empowering to this male poet.[34]

Certainly Bernart's tone supports this sense of impotence. He constantly bewails the lack of interaction between himself and his lady. And while "Can vei la lauzeta mover" is the only lyric of his that explicitly mentions a mirror, it is not the only one in which he is portrayed. On the contrary, his lyrics are full of visual images of himself and, more often than not, these images serve as expressions of his frustration.

C'aissi com lo rams si pleya
lai o·l vens los vai menan,
era vas lei que·m guerreya
aclis per far so coman.

(Just as the branch bends wherever the wind takes it, so I was bent to do the command of her who wars with me.)

("Lo rossinhols s'esbaudeya," lines 17–20)[35]

And again:

Cant eu la vei, be m'es parven
als olhs, al vis, a la color,
car aissi tremble de paor
com fa la folha contra·l ven.

33 On a possible connection between Bernart and Ovid, see D. Scheludko, "Ovid und die Trobadors," *Zeitschrift für romanische Philologie* 54 (1934), 129–74.

34 It is striking in this context that Abelard likens himself to Echo in the *Historia calamitatum* (Monfrin, p. 97).

35 Nichols and Galm, pp. 125 and 127.

(When I see her, it is surely apparent in me, in my eyes, in my face, in my color, for I tremble with fear just as the leaf does against the wind.)

("Non es meravelha s'eu chan," lines 41–44)[36]

And finally, as we have seen, "Anar posc ses vestidura, / nutz en ma chamiza" ("I can go without clothing, naked beneath my shirt") ("Tant ai mo cor ple de joya," lines 12–13).[37]

Paradoxically, by inserting himself – his visible, physical presence – into his lyrics, Bernart is *less* able to be with his lady. This seeming contradiction is further emphasized by the fact that although his lady is as present in the poems – as visible, as tangible – as he is, she rarely is able to interact with him successfully. His presence seems, instead, to ensure her absence. Even when the thrust of the poem is positive, the poet still emphasizes a need for separation and concealment: where he is she should not be:

Si no fos gens vilana
e lauzenger savai,
eu agr' amor certana,
mas so en reire·m trai.

(If it were not for peasants and scandal-mongers, I know I would have a constant love; but these pull me back.)

("Can la frej' aura venta," lines 41–44)[38]

The message of the mirror would thus seem to be repeated throughout Bernart's lyrics: proof of visible presence leads to frustration and loss of sexual power. This would correspond with the more general interpretation of *fin'amors* given by Luigi Milone.[39] But we need to adjust our reading slightly and realize that recognition of a visible self is a necessary stage in its development. Whatever consequences follow, the fact remains that if Bernart did not see himself he could not *be* himself. The visualization of the persona which he provides is thus primarily

[36] Ibid., pp. 133 and 134.
[37] Ibid., pp. 169 and 171.
[38] Ibid. pp. 149 and 150.
[39] Luigi Milone, "Raimbaut d'Aurenga tra 'Fin'Amor' e 'No-Poder,'" *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 7 (1983), 1–27.

a positive step; even he says the mirror gave him pleasure as it was destroying him. As such, the persistent imaging of the self found in Bernart's lyrics corresponds, to a certain degree, to Lacan's description of the mirror stage:

> a particular case of the function of the *imago* which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality ... a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation – and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extend from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality – and, lastly, to the assumption of an alienating identity.[40]

Yet D. W. Winnicott argues that Lacan's mirror stage has its origin in something quite different and unalienating: the infant's mirroring of the mother's face. While Lacan states that the mirror image stands at the "threshold of the visible world [and raises] the problem of signification of space for the living organism," Winnicott points out that such looking implies being seen and so offers proof of existence.[41] Bernart's appearance in the visible register of his poems suggests an acceptance of sight and the physical world that is an important stage in the development of the early self. Amidst the anxiety Bernart projects throughout his lyrics one finds an appreciation of the visible as related to an inchoate sense of the self.

Moreover, there is evidence in Bernart's lyrics that mirroring is not destructive but instead the first stage in an important act of creation. For the *cobla* in which he describes seeing himself in his Lady's eyes entails a series of textual doublings which serve to enhance the text. The verse begins:

> Anc non agui de me poder
> ni no fui meus de l'or' en sai
> que·m laisset en sos olhs vezer

[40] Jacques Lacan, "The Mirror Stage," *Ecrits*, trans Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 4. See also Alexandre Leupin, "Absolute Reflexivity," in *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality*, trans. Kate M. Cooper (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) who discusses, in another context, the application of Lacan's mirror stage to developing medieval thought.

[41] Lacan, "Mirror Stage," p. 3; Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, pp. 111–18.

> (Never have I been in control of myself or even belonged to myself from the hour she let me gaze into her eyes.)
>
> ("Can vei la lauzeta mover," lines 17–19)[42]

This editorial, revisionary doubling sets up the end of the stanza where the persona's identity, already doubled by the mirror, is further replicated by the comparison with Narcissus. Yet, significantly, neither of these textual doublings is exact; neither is pure reflection.[43] While the literal message of the verse, as well as the poem as a whole, would seem thus to suggest that perfect reflection is deadly, the textual message would seem to counter this by suggesting that imperfect reflection leads, at least, to textual life.

And it is against this observation that the shift in persona from Narcissus to Echo needs to be reevaluated. By including a reference to Echo, and by employing the same dialogue form in which Ovid casts that part of the tale, Bernart is making it clear that he is working from a particular textual source, not just a passing knowledge of the Narcissus legend. Here, too, then is a mirroring – a textual mimesis – with text imitating text. But here, too, the imitation is not exact. In fact, Bernart not only changes the Ovidian text, he changes it in a specifically Ovidian way: his persona metamorphoses from Narcissus to Echo and in so doing changes the message of the Ovidian tale to a comment on love in the twelfth century. Thus while the literal level of the text speaks consistently of powerlessness, exile and even death through mirroring, the actual textual mirroring that goes on speaks to empowerment and poetic strength.

In short, a double reflection takes place. On the one hand, the persona sees himself in the mirror of his lady's eyes and, losing himself to himself (and to her), becomes feminized. On the other, the poet sets his story up as the mirror of Ovid's Narcissus and Echo tale, but rather than reflecting it as told, adapts it to other ends, retells it. One is an image of pure

[42] Nichols and Galm, pp. 166 and 168.

[43] For a similar reading of this poem, see Sarah Kay, "Rhetoric and Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry," in *The Troubadours and the Epic*, ed. L. M. Paterson and S. B. Gaunt (Warwick University Press, 1987), pp. 102–42.

reflexivity which, while necessary, is nonetheless emasculating; the other an instance of dialogue, interplay, as the reflection is transformed, changed, altered. Mediated mimesis – reflection with a twist – played off against pure reflexivity. Both start from a point that valorizes the visual, but the one admits an opening that the other does not. Together the two allow for a view of the self that is sufficiently double.

But Bernart does not see this. He recognizes the necessity of vision, of an understanding of the self which is framed in spatial terms. He recognizes that that view has limitations. He also recognizes the possibility of reflecting imperfectly, but this he demonstrates only textually. So, for him, the self remains trapped in the exteriority of the visual even as the text moves beyond into an area that admits difference as well. In other words, the story of Narcissus in Bernart's version is that pure reflection is deadly or, at least, emasculating. Merely to replicate this would be to engage in an act of powerlessness. The textual version of mediated mimesis, then, is highly significant since it suggests that power is derived from a form of imitation that allows for and emphasizes difference.

Raimbaut d'Aurenga: beyond the body

In moving from Bernart to Raimbaut d'Aurenga we move from a practitioner of the *trobar leu* to one of the finest craftsmen in the *trobar clus* tradition.[44] Raimbaut's works are to be grouped with those of Arnaut Daniel in his efforts to foreground the artifice of the Occitan language. To a greater degree than Arnaut, however, Raimbaut's lyrics are engaged in the problems at issue here: the relationship of text to body and the role of textuality in the definition of the poetic self.

Raimbaut d'Aurenga's treatment of text is arguably compar-

[44] In *Troubadours and Eloquence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975) p. 147, Linda Paterson argues that only the first of Raimbaut's lyrics is in the *trobar clus* style. I find this difficult to support. On the distinction between *trobar leu* and *trobar clus*, see Ulrich Mölk, *Trobar Clus / Trobar Leu: Studien zur Dichtungstheorie der Trobadors* (Munich: Fink, 1968).

able to Bernart's.[45] Like Bernart, he adapts texts of other poets to his own ends.[46] It is significant, however, that his textual imitations are largely, if not entirely, of works by other troubadours. His relationship to the Latin tradition is backgrounded; for example, Ovid's influence on him is negligible.

Strikingly, this corresponds with the position the body plays in his lyrics. Unlike Bernart, Raimbaut is never fully present in his poems. There are no images of him as object in the world although he does allude to his body in fragments: he pulls his hair, sheds tears, and so forth. Yet Raimbaut is more a successor of Bernart's than it might at first appear. For while Raimbaut never represents himself fully in his works, nonetheless he insists on imitation of the visual as the basis for his literary style. His poems, like Bernart's, cross the threshold of the visible world; his lyric persona is likewise anchored in the world.[47] But in removing himself from the poem, Raimbaut allows the lyric space to develop as expression – not reflection – of the subjective voice and allows the voice to develop in that space. The poem shows what he sees and in so doing emphasizes its distance – and *his* distance – from the world. Raimbaut's lyrics demonstrate, to the degree possible, the place from which, as well as the view seen. The duality one feels so strongly, so painfully, in Bernart is here internalized as the poem becomes the locus of interaction of

[45] On Raimbaut see, above all, Walter T. Pattison, *The Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut D'Orange* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952); see also Linda Paterson, *Troubadours and Eloquence* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), chap. 4; Simon Gaunt, *Troubadours and Irony* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love Lyric* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1968).

[46] So, above all, Maria Luisa Meneghetti, whose *Il pubblico dei trovatori: Ricezione e riuso dei testi lirici cortesi fino al XIV secolo* (Modena: Mucchi, 1984) is a brilliant demonstration of the intertextuality of much of troubadour lyric, including Raimbaut. That Raimbaut was one of the greatest practitioners of this is demonstrated by Jörn Gruber, *Die Dialektik des Trobar: Untersuchungen zur Struktur und Entwicklung des occitanischen und französischen Minnesangs des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1983). I concur with Sarah Kay's distinction between the approach taken by Gruber and Meneghetti, which allows for an intersection of intertextuality and autobiography, and the purely textual approach expounded by Zumthor (Kay, *Subjectivity*, p. 8).

[47] Sarah Kay (*Subjectivity*) comments on the troubadour's use of spatial metaphor, yet does not pursue its origins.

the self. Within the confines of the poem, world and word, self and body can coexist.

Raimbaut's rejection of pure exteriority delivers a familiar message: pure sight – absolute reflection – is, as Bernart suggested, dangerous. But, significantly, Raimbaut indicates a solution.

In "En aital rimeta prima" Raimbaut d'Aurenga offers one of the most cogent examples of what Margaret Drabble in *A Summer Bird-Cage* calls "the double-edged guilt and glory" entailed by the self.[48] A poem about the body, it is also a poem that demonstrates the problems of accepting the body.[49] Ostensibly on the alienation of one figure it also clearly indicates, through its form as well as its content, how mediated mimesis has progressed from solely a textual practice to one that allows for the creation of the self.

"In a rhyme similar to the first / Direct and apt words please me, / for building without rule or line": "bastir ses regl' e ses linha."[50] The architectural metaphor here is clearly intended to link this lyric to Raimbaut's first poem, the much discussed "Cars, douz, e fenhz":

> Cars, douz e fenhz del bederesc
> M'es sos bas chanz, per cui m'aerc;
> C'ab joi s'espan viu e noire
> El tems que·lh grill pres del siure
> Chantan el mur jos lo caire;
> Que.s compassa e s'escaira
> Sa vos, qu'a plus leu de siura
> E ja uns non s'i aderga
> Mas grils e la bederesca.

(The low song of the wren, on account of which I am exalted,

[48] Margaret Drabble, *A Summer Bird-cage* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963), p. 167.

[49] In *Memory and Re-Creation in Troubadour Lyric* (Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991) Amelia Van Vleck argues against such an object-oriented approach to these lyrics of Raimbaut. For a fuller discussion of this work, see my review, *Tenso* 9.2 (1994), 177–80.

[50] Text of Raimbaut's poetry is from Pattison, *Life and Works.* Translation is based on that of Pattison, although I have emended both text and translation needed. In these lines I follow manuscript M which reads "bastir," rather than Pattison's "bastit." My translation has been altered accordingly.

> is dear, sweet, and fictitious to me, for it spreads abroad, exists and grows with joy at the time when the crickets, near the cork tree, sing in the wall under the block of stone; so that their voices, which are lighter than cork, are aligned and squared; and let no one exalt himself so high except the cricket and the female wren.)[51]

The architectonic cast of this first strophe makes the audible visible; the songs of the wren and the cricket are visualized and used to flesh out the scene.[52]

While the rhyme patterns and visual emphasis of Raimbaut's first two poems are indeed similar, the underlying approach is directly opposed: in the first poem, the primary metaphor is explicitly architectural, here the poem will be built without rule or line; there the language is darkly shaded, here direct and apt.

But these lines also suggest that the lyric will be breaking away from more than its own immediate predecessor. "Bastir ses regl'e ses linha" can also refer to rules and lines of another sort: *regla* has as secondary meaning monastic rule; *linha*, genealogical lines. Laura Kendrick's argument that troubadour lyric was opposing the univocality of the church and Howard Bloch's thesis that troubadour lyric was part of a larger movement that turned away from a system of thought restricted by genealogy are both supported if this line is read as suggesting that Raimbaut is engaged in the action of breaking free from such established systems of thought and action.[53]

[51] This poem has been edited three times, by Pattison, *Life and Works*, pp. 65–72; J.H. Marshall, "On the Text and the Interpretation of a Poem of Raimbaut d'Orange (*Cars, douz*; ed. Pattison, I)," *Medium Aevum* 37 (1968), 12–36; and Marc Vijlstecke, "*Cars, Douz e Fenhz* de Raimbaud d'Orange," in *Etudes de philologie romane et d'histoire littéraire offertes à Jules Horrent* (ed. Jean Marie d'Heur and Nicoletta Cherubini (Liège, 1980)), pp. 509–16. Vijlstecke, reacting against much of what Marshall has proposed, returns in large part to Pattison's rendering.

[52] On the relationship between space and time in troubadour lyric, see P. Bec, "Espace poétique," *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 29 (1986), 9–14 and Jean-Charles Payen, "L'espace et le temps de la chanson courtoise occitane," in *Présence des troubadours*, ed. Pierre Bec (Toulouse: AIEO, 1970), 143–65. See also Philippe Ménard, "Le temps et la durée dans les romans de Chrétien de Troyes." *Moyen Age* 73 (1967), 375–401, esp. 391–94. More generally, see Karl Uitti on semiotic space, "The Old Provençal Song of Saint Fides and the Occitanian Concept of Poetic Space," *L'esprit créateur* 19 (1979), 17–36.

[53] Kendrick, *Game of Love*; R. Howard Bloch, *Genealogies and Etymologies: A Literary Anthropology of the French Middle Ages* (Chicago University Press, 1983).

We need to add one other voice to this chorus, that of Amélie Rorty, who writes:

> When a society has changed so that individuals acquire their rights by virtue of their powers, rather than having their powers defined by their rights, the concept of person has been transformed to the concept of self ... [and] the story of men's lives are told by their achievement rather than by their descent.[54]

Monastic rule and genealogical line are both forms of descent – who is your father, who is The Father – each defines a man's powers by his rights; in building without them Raimbaut asserts his selfhood through the demonstration of his individual power.

There is even more in these lines when they are coupled with the ones which immediately follow: "Pos mos volers s'i apila / E atozat ai mon linh / Lai on ai cor qe m'apil." Again *linha* appears, this time in conjunction with the verb *atozar*. This verb, as Pattison notes, "is not recorded in the dictionaries, but since *toza*, "maiden," *tozet*, "child," and other words on the same stem exist, we can postulate a meaning "to rejuvenate." He goes on: "The idea of rejuvenating oneself through love is common enough ... and by hyperbole the joy of love can be extended to one's associates or one's family."[55] But love is not mentioned anywhere in these lines and Pattison's hypothesized meaning for *atozar* depends upon its inclusion. I would propose instead that *atozat*, linked as indeed it is with the words meaning maiden and child, could be translated as "emasculate" or "weaken." Placed back in context this produces the following translation: "Since my will is fixed on it, though my line is weakened there where I would be firm," *linh* now meaning both literally lineage and, metonymically, phallus.[56]

In other words, Raimbaut is busy rejecting his monastic and genealogical inheritance, both of which deny the needs and the strengths of the body. The first strophe ends with "e qi·n

[54] Amélie Rorty, "A Literary Postscript," in *The Identities of Persons* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1976), esp. pp. 312–15.

[55] Pattison, *Life and Works*, p. 74.

[56] William Burgwinkle's 1988 Stanford University dissertation, "The Troubadour as Subject: Biography, Erotics and Culture," (DAI 49/12, June 1989, p. 3743A) includes similar readings of several troubadour poems.

grondilha / No tem'auzir mon grondilh": "and if anyone grumbles, let him not fear my grumbling," translates Pattison. But *grondilh* carries connotations of animal noises, such as growling, which again underscores the reading given here to the first six lines: rejecting the systems which suppress bodily needs, Raimbaut now runs the risk of being treated like an animal, a risk he is willing to take.

Throughout the poem, in fact, Raimbaut aligns himself with the animals rather than with other people. He describes his *joi* as *frainh* and *esfila*, reined in and broken, thus implicitly likening it to a horse. The birds *chant* and *qil* in the third strophe, the poet likewise sings and cries. He *sailh fort* and *grim*, bounds up and leaps, like an animal, causing him to be held in contempt by his lady, all, I would suggest, as demonstration of what he can do by himself, free from the restrictions of rule and line.

For Raimbaut's identification with the animals is a polemical statement which asserts his acceptance not only of his body but of the world as a whole: *linh* appears one other time, in the combined form *relinh*, in the third strophe:

> Qan vei rengat en la cima
> Man vert-madur frug pel cim,
> e qecs auzelletz relinha
> Vas Amor, don chant e qila,
> Per cui ieu vas Joi relinh.
>
> (When I see many firm-ripe fruits in the treetops and each little bird realigns toward love, about whom they sing and cry, I realign toward joy.)[57]

It is the sight of the firm-ripe fruits – again, strikingly suggestive in this form (even more so if read as *vert mas dur*: vigorous but hard) – and the birds which causes him to refocus his attentions, to discover his new alignment which is toward *Joi*, that same *Joi* likened in the second strophe to the horse and as such, reminiscent of Guilhem IX's two horses of sexuality.[58]

[57] Text from Pattison, *Life and Works*, p. 72.
[58] On this issue, see W. Paden, "Utrum copularentur: Of Cors," *L'esprit créateur* 19 (1979), 70–83.

The realignment toward the body is a by-product of a realignment toward space. It is significant, I think, that Raimbaut describes the time of this reawakening in visual terms even as he describes the time of the first song in equally spatial ways. It is, in short, Raimbaut's insistence on space via his use of his body as point of reference, not point of departure, which sets him apart from the ways of line and rule. He knows what he knows because of, not despite, his body. He is presented throughout like the animals because, like them, he is anchored in a body which perceives the world through its senses. This approach, however, while liberating in many respects also has its limiting side, spelled out in the second strophe of this poem:

> De la falsa genz qe lima
> E dech'e ditz (don quec lim)
> Ez estreinh e mostr'e guinha ...
> Per q'ieu sec e pols e guinh.
>
> (About the false men who file and declare and speak because of which I file each one of them, and constrain and point out and stare ... wherefore I wither and pant and stare.)[59]

The poet not only sees, he is seen, and as the object of that vision he becomes, arguably, the victim of vision, perhaps even of the evil eye.[60] Raimbaut's realignment toward his body in particular – his primary possession – and the visible world in general set him up, as it set up Bernart, as susceptible to the same problems latent in Bernart's reference to Narcissus.

Significantly, though, Raimbaut is the victim, not (like Bernart) the aggressor. He withers not because of reflection but because of the glance of the *falsa genz*. What Raimbaut's poem demonstrates is that while he is aware of his acceptance of the

[59] Text from Pattison, *Life and Works*, p. 72.

[60] Such a reading would also explain Raimbaut's use of the verb *limar* in this strophe. Filing, particularly of iron, is associated with warding off the evil eye. So J. Tuchmann who points out that "Dans quelques localités du sud de la France, on croit que lorsque passe une sorcière, il est nécessaire, pour se preserver de ses malefices et notamment du mauvais oeil, de saisir un objet de fer et de le serrer dans la main; à Saint Yriex-la-Perche, Haute-Vienne, il suffit de toucher du fer" ("La fascination," *Mélusine* 7 (1895), 176). For more on this see my "'Lo cop mortal': The Evil Eye and the Origins of Courtly Love," *Romanic Review* 87 (1996), 307–18.

body and sight, he does not define the self solely in terms of the visual. His body may wither, pant, and stare, but he does not die or become impotent as a result. Quite the opposite: inspired by the sight of "firm-ripe fruits and singing birds" he then turns to Joy, about which he sings and cries, and the nightingale arouses itself and wounds him "in that part of the body so wounded by love" to paraphrase Pattison's gloss.

The *falsa genz*, perhaps the *lauzengiers*, or praise-mongers, can only use sight for destructive and offensive purposes. Similarly, the lady, whom the poet aligns with the *falsa genz* through rhyming the words *destreinh* (line 37) / *estreinh* (line 11) uses sight only as defense: she hides behind a screen to shield her vision, acknowledging that her eyes have power through her need to cover them. Both the *falsa genz* and the lady are caught with Bernart in granting absolute power to the visual. But Raimbaut separates himself from the *falsa genz*, and is separated from his lady by acknowledging subjective mediation and desire. In so doing, he allows difference to enter in. Raimbaut – or, rather, his poem – is the center around which the self is organizing itself.

Raimbaut is both exile and model citizen. He is considered dangerous and transgressive by precisely those characters who admire him most but have yet to acknowledge their admiration. It is precisely the symmetry between the two opposing groups, the *falsa genz* and the lady, on the one hand, and the poet on the other, which offers a way to resolve the conflict: alienated by the others, the poet represents nonetheless an image of them.

For Raimbaut, in other words, the self is identified with and by the body, yet it remains distinct from that form: the body is the self's primary possession. Raimbaut distinguishes himself from himself, his first poem from his second; he separates himself from the *falsa genz*, and is separated from his lady, yet in the end these distinctions are only proof of common ground. According to Tobin Siebers, "The community in crisis possesses one and only one need; it must find a center around which to organize itself. The first individual, who emerges from the human group [has imposed upon it] a fascinating persona, a

representation of difference that distinguishes him from the many and places him at the center of a community."[61] Raimbaut is the center around which, whether it knows it or not, the community is organizing itself. As with most marginal figures, his being outcast ensures his spot at the center, ensures his common bond with those who reject him.

But we do not have Raimbaut, the poet; instead, we have a version of the poet in his poem. The form of that poem serves to underscore and represent the poet to us. *Coblas unissonans*, the order of the rhymes is a, a' b, c, b', c', d, d'.[62] Symmetrical in one sense, couplet, alternating pair, couplet, the form still evades perfect symmetry since the couplets employ different rhymes. Moreover, within each couplet the rhymes are not exact but are *rimes derivatius*, grammatical variations; variations, in other words, that alter the sense precisely in relation to the particular person or action being described. While they relate two figures through their similarity they also distinguish them through their person or voice. The form, like the poet as presented in the poem, thus defines itself through a repeated process of similarity and difference. As such, the form, as opposed to the content, is foregrounded – whether it is sung or read – and, like the body to the poet, becomes the organizing principle for the poem.

Raimbaut's strength, it would seem, is based on his refusal to identify the self purely with the visual image. Rather, he suggests that the self is both visible and invisible; never wholly exteriorized. Significantly, women do not serve as images of the self for Raimbaut; instead of aligning the self with the lady, Raimbaut aligns the self with his text. He suggests that a poem can express the dual nature of the self by showing the subjective view of the world while playing out the objective in its tangible textual elements, such as form. Bernart's inchoate sense of mediated mimesis is thus, via Raimbaut, developed to include not just the text but the lyric persona as well. Pure mimesis is passed by,

[61] Tobin Siebers, *The Mirror of Medusa* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), p. 140.

[62] The best introduction to the complicated forms employed by the troubadours is Frank M. Chambers, *An Introduction to Old Provençal Versification* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1985).

rejected; the poet never appears fully in his own poem; other texts are always altered. Moreover, the rhyme scheme reflects the parameters of the subjective vision: the frame. Within that, Raimbaut places the view he sees. He thus uses his poems to reflect the world, but to reflect it selectively, and in so doing, he contains absence as he organizes the poem around his view of the world. The self, absent yet present, visible and not, is thus expressed.

Raimbaut's poetics are best expressed by the Narcissus image provided in a later text, the *Roman de la Rose*.[63] Here, after a version of the Narcissus tale is rehearsed, the Lover looks into the Fountain himself. Through the water he sees two crystals which reflect the garden behind him, and the rose from which the rest of the story is generated. All other considerations aside – and there are many – this episode would seem an exemplum of mediated mimesis. Reflection occurs, but it is reflection from within, and it is reflection that does not include the observer. What the lover sees is everything but himself. It is reflective, mimetic, yet mediated. This is, I feel, exactly what Raimbaut aims to do throughout his lyrics, and perhaps what *trobar clus* aims to do in general. While the poem is made more visual, symmetrical, and spatial through the elaborate rhyme schemes, word play, and the thematic of sight, it is never wholly visual or corporal; it is at once spatial, closed, and yet removed from the physical world. It has dimension, but it is not bound by the laws that usually govern physical objects; it includes but is not closed in by the physical world.

So is this writing the body? I think not. In fact, I would argue that it is exactly the opposite, a sort of embodying of text. The strength and novelty of the troubadour tradition lie both in the poets' efforts to realize the self as a place in which opposing forces coincide and in their realization that the self – not only the body – is a text. Of the poets focused on here, Guilhem insists on the absolute autonomy of text and self. Perhaps in his

[63] While I disagree with Kay's conclusions, her comparison between the *Roman de la Rose* and this poem by Bernart seems right on target: "Love in a Mirror: An Aspect of the Imagery of Bernart de Ventadorn", *Medium Aevum* 52 (1983), 272–85.

role as bridesmaid, Bernart recognizes the impossibility of such an assertion and struggles to be novel in a closed, reflective world. He aligns his textual space and voice with the lady, the other, the impotent, and suggests that if one creates a textual Narcissus – uses the text to reflect only the exterior – one creates as well a textual Echo – an endlessly repeating fragment, incomplete and hence to his mind feminized.

Raimbaut's treatment of literary tradition is similarly mediated. Raimbaut, too, acknowledges his forebears; many of his poems begin with an allusion to an earlier troubadour. Yet the imitation never interferes with Raimbaut's own message, and the allusions are all within the troubadour tradition. As an example, take the first strophe of the lyric "Ar resplan la flors enversa" in which he reflects Bernart's lyric studied above, "Tant ai mo cor ple de joya." As we have seen, Bernart's poem begins:

> Tant ai mo cor ple de joya,
> tot me desnatura.
> Flor blancha, vermelh'e groya
> me par la frejura ...
> Tan ai al cor d'amor,
> de joi e de doussor,
> per que·l gels me sembla flor
> e la neus verdura.
>
> (My heart is so full of joy that everything seems changed to me: the frost seems like white, red, and yellow flowers ... My heart is so full of love, of joy, and of sweetness that ice seems like flowers to me, and snow like greenery.)
>
> (lines 1–4, 9–12)[64]

Raimbaut's lyric begins:

> Ar resplan la flors enversa
> Pels trencans rancx e pels tertres,
> Cals flors? Neus, gels e conglapis
> Que cotz e destrenh e trenca.
>
> (Now the inverse flower shines among the sharp cliffs and

[64] Nichols and Galm, pp. 169 and 171.

> among the hills. What flower? Snow, ice, and frost which stings and hurts and cuts.)[65]

While both poems stress the transformative power of love, Bernart's plays down the difference between inner and outer vision while Raimbaut emphasizes the disparity. Bernart's inner state is projected onto reality in order for reality better to reflect his inner experience. Raimbaut always retains the distance between the two, insisting on the way things are versus the way they seem; as Alice Planche points out, for Bernart snow actually becomes green, while for Raimbaut, it stays white but ceases to be snow.[66] The key words that link the two poems are "desnatura" in Bernart, "enversa" in Raimbaut. While the two terms can be construed similarly as meaning "changed" the slight differences are telling. Bernart's poetic practice, here and elsewhere, is one that comes from nature (*de natura*), even as it separates itself from nature (it is apart from nature). Raimbaut's practice inverts things (*enversa*), but it does that in verse (*en vers*). It is in the confines of the poem that his vision – what he sees and what he thinks he sees – can be played out. Strikingly, the two rhyme schemes bear out these differences. While Bernart's rhyme scheme is an interlocking ab – bc – cd – de, etc., Raimbaut's is a sort of early sestina: each strophe uses the same eight rhyme words. It is as if Bernart's two rhymes were playing out the fate of his two realities: second becomes first in the next strophe: a changing reflection, but one without a real center or organizing force; the message of the poem is exactly the same, as it emphasizes lack of power and real interaction. Raimbaut's lyric, by contrast, closes the poem with its rhyme words so that it circles around an empty yet powerful center. One world is displayed; another world is alluded to, that of the reversed

[65] Pattison, *Life and Works*, p. 199. Text and translation that of Pattison with the exception of "inverse" for "reversed."

[66] Alice Planche, "Texte à l'endroit, monde à l'envers: Sur une chanson de Raimbaut d'Aurenga, 'Ar resplan la flors enversa,' " *Studia Occitanica*, ed. Hans-Erich Keller, 2 vols. (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 213–26. See also Luigi Milone, "L'amors envers de Raimbaut d'Aurenga," *Museum Patavinum* 1 (1983), 45–66. More generally, see Suzanne Thiolier-Méjean, "Raimbaut d'Orange et la composition des mots: recherche sur l'hermétisme," *Actualité des Troubadours*, Ventabren 21, Juin 1987 (Marseille: CRDP, 1988), 5–14.

flower, and the song ends "Let my verse go, for thus I invert it so neither woods nor hills may hold it," so it will not suffer the fate of Bernart's song, endlessly echoing.

What Raimbaut creates in his lyrics is a representation of the self in the early stages of objectification. His lyrics demonstrate a development toward the objects of this world and this life. As we shall see with Marie de France, it is in this context that we should approach the code of courtly love which is, after all, primarily visual. For in order to accept the marginal figure as defining, one has to be able to accept both the creative and the destructive sides of vision: in this case, sight as destroyer as well as inspirer. It seems plausible to suggest that the love arrows of the courtly romance are the metaphorization of this duality. The violence attributed to vision is undone as it is suppressed; sight literally inspires and metaphorically kills. The metaphor allows for slippage while, at the same time, it permits sight to remain the primary organizing principle. While Raimbaut uses his form to stylize and deflect the rays of the visual, the courtly code will develop a system of metaphors to perform a similar function.[67]

The reading given here of Bernart and Raimbaut would seem to suggest that, perhaps, it was text that created self since mediated mimesis – rejection of pure reflection – first appears on the level of textual imitation. Text, in short, was what provided, as it continues to provide, a working model of the self. In order to function, however, the visible world has to be both accepted, transformed, and reorganized. But, more, one has to engage in the dual process of both subjectifying the world and objectifying the will. Guilhem IX, Jaufre Rudel and Bernart de Ventadorn never quite accomplish this; Raimbaut d'Aurenga, I would argue, does.

[67] The link between love and fascination is evident in earlier texts as well. So, Heliodorus, *Theagenes and Chariclea*, in *The Greek Romances*, ed. Rowland Smith (London: Bell, 1901), pp. 82–83. Some of the literature on the evil eye suggests a connection between the two as well. See, for example, A. M. Hocart, "The Mechanism of the Evil Eye," *Folk-lore* 49 (1938), 156–57. Two very evocative studies that link eros and fascination are Lawrence DiStasi, *Mal Occhio: The Underside of Vision* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1981) and Anne Carson, *Eros, the Bittersweet: An Essay* (Princeton University Press, 1986).

5

Writing in the vernacular: the *Lais* of Marie de France

It has long been argued that the world as it is presented in the *Lais* of Marie de France is more textual than real, more semiotic than mimetic. Robert Sturges speaks of the "purely textual" quality of Marie's works, while Brewster Fitz speaks of them as a "purely linguistic experience."[1] Such an approach, however, tends to obscure the importance Marie grants to the visual, tangible world. It is my argument, rather, that the *Lais* offer a textual system in which the text is presented as an object in the world and, as a result, the world takes on a power that it was specifically denied in the works studied so far. The association of text and self is now perceived in terms of their interaction with reality. As a result, the *Lais* of Marie de France offer a new way of reading that speaks to the existence of a self that, like the vernacular text, is rooted in the body but distinct from it.[2]

In the 56-line Prologue to the *Lais*, Marie draws a distinction

[1] Robert Sturges, "Texts and Readers in Marie de France's *Lais*," *Romanic Review* 71 (1980), 244; Brewster Fitz, "Desire and Interpretation: Marie de France's *Chievrefoil*," *Yale French Studies* 58 (1979), 186.

[2] My reading of the *Lais* has been greatly influenced by the teaching and writings of Joan M. Ferrante and Robert W. Hanning. The essays that accompany their translation of the *Lais* include, to my mind, some of the most insightful and useful writing that has been done on Marie: *The Lais of Marie de France* (New York: Dutton, 1978; rpt. Durham: Labyrinth, 1978). See also Lynette Muir, *Literature and Society in Medieval France: The Mirror and the Image 1100–1500* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985); Evelyn Birge Vitz, *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology: Subjects and Objects of Desire*, New York University Studies in French Culture and Civilization (New York University Press, 1989).

between her own approach, which is to dispense with silence and secrecy, ("Ne se deit taisir ne celer, / Ains se deit voluntiers mustrer," lines 3–4) and that of the *anciens* who, as "Priscian" testifies, speak obscurely (*oscurement*), requiring the reader to "gloser la lettre e de lur sen la surplus mettre."[3] Marie provides justifications for both sides. The process of glossing was intended, she argues, to "keep vice at a distance" ("de vice se voeult defendre"); Marie feels, by contrast, that this is no longer true, that what keeps vice at bay for her – what keeps her "veillié," vigilant, – is the recording of *lais* she has heard;[4] not obscurity, then, but arguably its opposite: the open and clear presentation of heard tales.[5]

Moreover, these "heard tales" are destined as a gift for the king. They are to function, in other words, as objects that bridge social gaps, that serve to minimalize the distance between the lowly author and her esteemed audience. From the start, in other words, Marie makes it clear that the purpose of her tales is to make more available, even more tangible, what had resided within her; to reintroduce into the external world something that had lain hidden within.

In asserting that it is her duty not to keep silent but to speak out through her texts, Marie suggests a change in the moral positioning of her voice. For her, to obscure the text through glossing, as Priscian (and Augustine) recommend, does not keep vice at bay. Rather, exposing the text as an object that can bridge

[3] Text of the tales is taken from *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Jean Rychner (Paris: Champion, 1983), p. 1. Translations are mine, although I referred often to the translations in Hanning and Ferrante, *Lais*.

[4] Marie's rejection of translation as an appropriate exercise is interesting here, for it makes clear one of the major differences between the attitude of the Renaissance toward the classics and that of the twelfth century. The act of translating or transforming the past to highlight the present depends upon a geographical conception of the past as opposed to a spatial one. Moreover, translation serves to enrich the present by contextualizing it; the vernacular appropriation of the Latin past, by contrast, is an effort at autonomy marked by difference.

[5] But see Alexandre Leupin, "The Impossible Task of Manifesting 'Literature': On Marie de France's Obscurity," *Exemplaria* 3 (1991), 221–42. For a different reading of *viellié*, see S. G. Nichols, "Working Late: Marie de France and the Value of Poetry," *Women in French Literature*, ed. Michel Guggenheim (Saratoga, CA: ANMA Libri, 1988), pp. 7–16.

internal and external worlds becomes the paradigmatic moral activity.[6]

Interweaving

Marie relies upon the image of interweaving to suggest that it is more apt as a model of the self than one which distinguishes polarities. A brief comparison of the two *lais Laüstic* and *Chievrefoil* demonstrates this well.

> D'euls deus fu il tut autresi
> Cume del chievrefoil esteit
> Ki a la codre se perneit:
> Quant il s'i est laciez e pris
> E tut entur le fust s'est mis,
> Ensemble poënt bien durer,
> Mes ki puis les voelt desevrer,
> Li codres muert hastivement
> E li chievrefoilz ensement.
>
> (*Chievrefoil*, lines 68–76)[7]

> (Of those two it was exactly like the honeysuckle which winds itself around the hazel tree: when it has braided and set itself there and around the trunk is placed, together they can survive well; but if he who can wishes to untangle them, the hazel rapidly dies and the honeysuckle does as well.)

The image of the honeysuckle and the hazel depicted here has caught the attention of many a literary critic.[8] The simile, which likens the intertwining hazel and honeysuckle to the love of

6 The best general essay on the prologue is that of Leo Spitzer, "The Prologue to the *Lais* of Marie de France and Medieval Poetics," *Modern Philology* 41 (1943), 96–102. See also Alfred Foulet and K. D. Uitti, "The Prologue to the *Lais* of Marie de France: A Reconsideration," *Romance Philology* 35 (1981), 242–49; D. W. Robertson, Jr. "Marie de France, *Lais*, Prologue 13–15," *Modern Language Notes* 64 (1949), 336–38.

7 Rychner, *Lais*, p. 153.

8 For the critical history of the chevrefoil image, see Maurice Delbouille, "'Ceo fu la summe de l'escrit ...' (Chievrefoil, 61 ss.)," *Mélanges de langue et de littérature du Moyen Age et de la Renaissance offerts à Jean Frappier*, Publications Romanes et Françaises 112, 2 vols. (Geneva: Droz, 1970), vol. 1, 207–16. See also Henri Rey-Flaud, "Fin'amor, fin mort: Etude du lai des Deux Amants at du lai du Chevrefeuille de Marie de France," *Mélanges de langue et de littérature médiévales offerts à Alice Planche*, 2 vols. (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1984), vol. 2, 405–14.

Tristan and the queen, also serves as an image of Marie's own literary art since it is generated by the message Tristan writes on the *bastun* of hazel. That Marie sees the image of the intertwining honeysuckle and hazel as the governing metaphor of the *lai* of *Chievrefoil* is indicated not only by the title but also, as numerous critics have pointed out, by the number of interweavings the *lai* involves. R. N. Illingworth, for example, argues that Marie's tale is quite literally a braiding of an old folk tale with her new story: the rhyme, style, and subject all suggest that the tale alternates between one and the other in an almost mathematically precise rhythm.[9]

Intertwining, as both theme and technique, is part of a much larger tradition. Eugene Vinaver has shown parallels between thematic interweaving and contemporary manuscript illustration.[10] More recently, Marianne Shapiro has traced the concept of interweaving from certain lyrics of the troubadours into Dante and Petrarch. In "Entrebescar los motz: Word-weaving and divine rhetoric in medieval Romance lyric,"[11] Shapiro shows this technique to be an aspect of lyric hermetics which begins as a formal consideration in the works of Marcabru, Raimbaut d'Aurenga, and Arnaut Daniel and then becomes "thematized into the fabric of content" in Dante and Petrarch. Throughout Shapiro finds that intertwining speaks to a shift in "balance ... from the objectivity of public, connected discourse ... to the outrageous privacy of enigma." The poem which includes intertwining, she argues, references itself before the world.

The image of the intertwined honeysuckle is comparable, as Michelle Freeman has argued, to the image of the nightingale in

[9] R. N. Illingworth, "Structural Interlace in the *Lai* of *Chevrefoil*," *Medium Aevum* 54 (1985), 248–58.

[10] *The Rise of Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 71–98.

[11] *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie* 100 (1984), 355–83. In addition to the references Shapiro offers for the meaning of the word *entrebescar*, see also M. B. Meilach, "*Entrebescar los mots*," *Lingvisticeskie Isledowanija* 2 (1973), 348–56. Vuijlsteke notes the correspondence between the meaning of this Occitan word and the Galician–Portuguese *entravincar* and cites J. M. d'Heur, "Goncal Eanes do Vinhal, ses chansons de Cornouaille et le respect de l'art poetique (Arturiana 2)," *Mélanges de langues et de littératures romanes offerts à Carl Theodor Gossen*, ed. G. Colon and R. Kopp, 2 vols. (Bern: Francke Verlag, 1976), vol. 1, 188.

Laüstic which likewise enables Marie to use her poetics to talk about love.[12] Moreover, both the *lais* of the honeysuckle and the nightingale include what can be construed of as a written text: Tristan's inscription on the stick; the mark the dead nightingale makes on the lady's robe, then reiterated by the piece of cloth which enshrouds the bird "a or brusdé e tut escrit" (*Laüstic*, line 136).[13] In addition, both of these texts are specifically written in the vernacular and both bear silent messages from one lover to the other. Yet the tone in which these images are presented is so varied that it would seem important to discover what qualitative differences exist between them and the messages they convey.

The lover carries the box with him like his heart on his sleeve, a gesture that is at once inappropriate and ineffectual. But the image of the honeysuckle and the hazel which intertwines inner with outer, male with female and allows Tristan to live again is more empowering. Moreover, the hazel *bastun* which motivates the simile serves as a glorious image of the reified and autonomous signifier. The word as object has entered the external world and has been granted significant power.

The dead nightingale wrapped in a text and enclosed in a box, which echoes the situation of the lady herself enclosed in a box-like castle, is one in which inner is clearly separated from outer, female from male, signified from signifier.[14] In *Chievrefoil*, by contrast, she presents a model in which the inner could become the outer and the outer inner; a situation in which, in short, the signifier would be balanced by or even infused with the power of the signified.

[12] For a comparison of *Laüstic* and *Chievrefoil*, see Michelle A. Freeman, "Marie de France's Poetics of Silence: The Implications for a Feminine *Translatio*," *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 99 (1984), 860–83. While I agree with many of Freeman's points, I do not see Marie's efforts as particularly feminine. Her play with indeterminacy is, rather, a trait of twelfth-century vernacular literature as a whole. On the connection with Ovid, see as well Robert T. Cargo, "Marie de France's *Le Laüstic* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *Comparative Literature* 18 (1966), 162–66.

[13] Rychner, *Lais*, p. 124.

[14] For a fuller discussion of the imagery of opposition in this *lai*, see Jacques Ribard, "Le lai du Laostic: structure et signification," *Moyen Age* 76 (1970), 263–74. See also Lucien Dällenbach, "Les metaphores d'origine," in *Le récit spéculaire* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), pp. 227–30. On the imagery of wrapping in this *lai*, see Catherine Brown, "Glossing the Origin: Lost Wax Poesis in the *Lais* of Marie de France," *Romance Philology* 43 (1989), 197–208.

Marie's use of intertwining extends beyond the specific uses examined here to the interrelationship of all her tales. Much like the pattern of a troubadour poem, Marie's characters and plots suggest a cat's cradle system in which the same or similar figures show up in different contexts and relationships.[15] While adultery may be sinful in one instance it is not in another; while love from afar makes a mockery of love in one tale it is its purest expression in another; the use of hazel in one *lai* calls up a different interpretation of the tree than in another. And as with the formal intertwining of troubadour lyric, the change in context provides a shift in emphasis; what is highlighted is the multifaceted, ever-changing qualities of life of the individual in a changing spatio-temporal frame.

The point of such thematic interweaving on Marie's part is precisely what it was formally for the troubadours: it emphasizes the fact that there is no bottom line, there is no one right way. What is right for X in situation Y is not right for X in situation Z or for W in situation Y. Morality, Marie argues, is relative to circumstance. There are a few governing principles but those principles are themselves products of interrelated forces.[16]

Certainly Marie's aim in using intertwining characters and tales is a form of imperfect mirroring that calls up the process favored by Raimbaut d'Aurenga. Such imperfect reflection allowed him to move beyond the inherited polarities and pure externalizations. Marie, too, uses the concept of intertwining between – and as specific symbol within – the stories in an effort to discover a textual process in which polarities can be broached and absolute mirroring mediated.

[15] Here see Douglas Kelly, "'Diversement comencier' in the *Lais* of Marie de France", *In Quest of Marie de France, a Twelfth-Century Poet*, ed. Chantal A. Maréchal (New York: Mellen, 1992), pp. 107–122.

[16] The narrative structure of the *Lais* has been discussed at length by many. To my mind, the most suggestive reading of this type is that of Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, *Shaping Romance: Interpretation, Truth, and Closure in Twelfth-Century French Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), chap. 5. See also Judith Rice Rothschild, *Narrative Technique in the Lais of Marie de France*, North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures 139 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974); and Evelyn Birge Vitz, "The Lais of Marie de France: Narrative Grammar and the Literary Text", in *Medieval Narrative and Modern Narratology*, pp. 149–75.

The fact that Marie projects the intertwining from form to character and plot speaks to more than a change in genre. The implication of such a change is not that Marie believes that a text can serve as a surrogate body but, rather, that reality, as perceived by the body, can and should be read like a text. The outlet Raimbaut discovered in the text for the threats posed by the closed system of court and body Marie finds in her approach to reality. What Bernart and Raimbaut discovered as potentials of a text – that it is at once visible and not, private and not – Marie finds potentially in the world. By using characters and plots the way Raimbaut uses form Marie suggests that the semiotic can also be mimetic.

The contrast with Augustine here is palpable. In the *De doctrina christiana*, as we have seen, Augustine sees the sacred text as a wounded body, reading as the action of bandaging that body and thereby making it whole. He thus treats the text as body. Marie's interest is the obverse: her concern is with figuring out ways in which the body can be treated like a text, areas in which the visible world can suffer mediation through slippage, places in which things can function as both objects in the world and also signs of something else. Augustine speaks of reading as a turning from the literal, Marie recommends a folding in, a use of the visual, the literal, to move elsewhere.

It is hardly surprising in this context, then, to find that Marie's primary thematic concern is with the role of envy in the court. As we have seen with Abelard, envy comes to function in the increasingly visualized world of the twelfth century as the representative of *cupiditas*. Moreover, as much as Marie aims to reintroduce the subjective into the objective world, she also needs to allow that object to retain an attachment with its inner identity. The second prologue, the opening to her first *lai*, *Guigemar*, clarifies this point.[17] This prologue, which is used to

[17] On the relationship between the two prologues see Maurice Delbouille, "'El chief de cest comencement ...' (Marie de France, Prologue de *Guigemar*)," in *Etudes de civilisation médiévale: IXe–XIIe siècles: Mélanges offerts à Edmond-René Labande* (Poitiers: CESCM, 1974), pp. 185–96. On the identity of Priscian see Mortimer J. Donovan, "Priscian and the Obscurity of the Ancients," *Speculum* 36 (1961), 75–80.

justify the placement of *Guigemar* at the head of the collection of the *Lais*, focuses on one specific theme, envy:

> Celui deivent la gent loër
> Ki en bien fait de sei parler.
> Mais quant il ad en un païs
> Hummë u femme de grant pris,
> Cil ki de sun bien unt envie
> Sovent en dïent vileinie:
> Sun pris li volent abeissier;
> . . .
> Nel voil mie pur ceo leissier,
> Si gangleür u losengier
> Le me volent a mal turner:
> Ceo est lur dreit de mesparler!
>
> (*Guigemar*, lines 1–7, 15–18)[18]

> (People ought to praise that one who engenders worthy speech about herself. But when there is a man or woman of great value, those who envy that worth often say evil things, their value they wish to diminish ... I do not wish to leave off [what I am doing] because of this; if critics or praise-mongers wish to turn them against me, it is their right to speak ill.)

Marie's angle on envy is her own, as is her solution to it. Despite the naming of biblical references hers is clearly not a patristic stance. Rather, her interest is more topical for her envy focuses on externals and her very efforts run the risk of being ruined by the envious. It is perhaps for this reason that she makes it clear that envy is the worst and most deadly sin in the court.[19]

[18] Rychner, *Lais*, p. 5.

[19] It is largely on the basis of this that I take issue with Howard Bloch's reading of *Guigemar*. In support of his argument that Marie, in her role as glossator is also associated with jealousy, since both words derive from *goloser*, he concludes with the suggestion that Marie is thus like the jealous husband in *Guigemar* in that, like him, she succeeds in betraying the enigma of the characters. While I would agree with Bloch that Marie is indeed engaged in the construction of transgressive spaces in this *lai*, I disagree with him about what form that transgression takes and, perhaps more importantly, on the role Marie plays in it. Rather than jealousy, I would turn our attention back to envy. R. Howard Bloch, "The Medieval Text – 'Guigemar' – as a Provocation to the Discipline of Medieval Studies," *Romanic Review* 79 (1988), 63–73. See also his "New Philology and Old French," *Speculum* 65 (1990), 38–58. In

Whereas Abelard only hinted at a way out of envy, pointing as we have shown toward the range offered by courtly love, Marie takes it as her personal task to figure out a solution to this problem. All of the tales, it can be argued, are about envy and problems that stem from it.[20] Each tries to articulate, as well, a solution to the vice which undoes the *caritas/invidia* pair and, like the approach taken in the Prologue proper, suggests a middle path that will share qualities of each, while allowing for an appropriate appreciation of her efforts.

Marie's understanding of envy is, judging from the prologue to *Guigemar* alone, that it is the primary sin of the court. Throughout the *lais* Marie suggests, in fact, that a society which is becoming increasingly visually oriented is, of necessity, going to have to grapple with the vice of envy. For her, envy shows itself, in a way that echoes Abelard, through libelous and slanderous speech. It is on account of slander that Lanval leaves the court, that Guigemar is always an outsider, that Tristan leaves King Mark's retinue. In each case the slander is a result of envy provoked by vision: Lanval, Guigemar, Tristan are each deemed the best of their kind, but this judgment has been made on external prowess alone. It is their apparent superiority that causes them to suffer the fate of isolation; their appearance causes them to be condemned by speech.

Envy is clearly for Marie the negative pole of her work, a vice that she classifies with the increasingly externalized values of the

addition, see R. W. Hanning, "Courtly Contexts for Urban *cultus*: Responses to Ovid in Chrétien's *Cligès* and Marie de France's *Guigemar*," *Symposium* 35 (1981–82), 34–57; and Joan Brumlik, "Thematic Irony in Marie de France's *Guigemar*," *French Forum* 13 (1988), 5–16 (who argues that neither fiction nor the *merveilleux* can offer a "permanent refuge" from reality). For further on the *merveilleux* in "Guigemar," see Leslie Brook, "Guigemar and the White Hind," *Medium Aevum* 56 (1987), 94–101; M. Thiébaux, *The Stag of Love: The Chase in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1974); S. Foster Damon, "Marie de France: Psychologist of Courtly Love," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 44 (1929), 968–96; and Robert Green, "The Fusion of Magic and Realism in Two Lays of Marie de France," *Neophilologus* 59 (1975), 324–36. This last article includes useful insight into both *Guigemar* and *Milun*. Finally, see Sergio Cigada, *La Leggenda Medievale del Cervo Biancho* (Rome: Accademia Nazionale de Lincei, 1965).

[20] It is more common to posit that love is the subject in all of the *lais*. See, for example, Sharon Coolidge, "*Eliduc* and the Iconography of Love," *Medieval Studies* 54 (1992), 274–85.

court and that she associates with the closure that such a society comes to need and depend upon. And if envy is the starting point, as the prologue to Guigemar would suggest, then, arguably, *caritas* is the goal, the answer to envy. The ending to the last tale, *Eliduc*, is certainly a celebration of *caritas*; moreover, that love is seen as responding directly and unexpectedly to the restrictive values and mores of the court. A fitting match to *Guigemar* with its explicit interest in envy, *Eliduc* explores the opposite end of the spectrum with its focus on *caritas*.

Aside from this *lai*, however, *caritas* does not play a large part in Marie's work. She seems to be searching for a more realistic goal, an answer to envy that can be found within a more quotidian realm. Moreover, as with Abelard, Marie's concern is not strictly with envy but with being envied. In other words, what she would appear to be searching for throughout her work is an answer to envy that will help, more than anything, the victim of that vice.

Guigemar serves admirably as an introduction to this problem. Both Guigemar and the lady whom he eventually loves – a lady who remains, significantly, unnamed – are each identified as being the best of their kind, the best examples of the social station they hold.[21] Guigemar is described as being without peer, the lady is praised as being a perfect wife. Yet neither is happy; neither is satisfied. The perfection is wholly external and, in each case causes envy: Guigemar is alienated from his fellow knights; the lady is locked in a tower – or so she thinks – by her jealous husband.

The problem of Guigemar, when set in this context, is, how do you confront the problem of being envy's victim? Marie's text offers her own answer. Guigemar, separated from the other knights, is left facing an androgynous deer, or *bise*, standing there with its offspring, and the arrow he sends to kill it returns to wound him. Much like the Narcissus story told by Ovid, the

[21] Bruckner, *Shaping Romance*, pp. 163–70. More specifically on the issue of naming in Marie's *Lais*, see her "Strategies of Naming in Marie de France's *Lais*: at the Crossroads of Gender and Genre," *Neophilologus* 75 (1991), 31–40.

deer clearly works as a reflection of Guigemar; the arrow returns to him as if reflected off the animal.

It is, I would suggest, for this reason that Marie, while calling the animal a *cerf* the first time it is identified, then changes the term to *bise*. *Bise*, usually spelled *bisse* at this time, would have introduced a possible pun with "bis" – second, double.[22] The deer is, indeed, Guigemar's double: his bisexuality is the perfect complement to Guigemar's asexuality. As with the Narcissus tale, Guigemar's glance, reified by the arrow, returns to wound him in the thigh; the sight of his double, a perfect reflection, is ultimately emasculating. In telling Guigemar that he will be healed only by falling in love the hind suggests that the victim of envy may be able to find happiness in love. Guigemar suggests an answer to the pain of envy by offering the possibility that there is a *tertium quid* between *caritas* and *invidia*, a form of love that shares with *invidia* a basis in sight while remaining open, seeking, generous, like *caritas*.

The journey Guigemar embarks on is one, as many have remarked, of self discovery; the *bise* in a sense is the guardian of the domain in which Guigemar will discover himself.[23] The aspect of the trip which follows merely underscores this part of its nature: Guigemar enters into an elaborate boat in the harbor in which he suffers a symbolic death. The supernatural quality of the boat and the bed within emphasize the artistic element and, by foregrounding it, suggest that what follows will take place in an unreal domain: one which is both more external, in that it is outside of the court, and more internal, in that it is supernatural. Within the court depth is not rewarded, only surface; in leaving the court such a journey toward the inner man is possible. Guigemar's wound is his entry into the boat, each indicates the

[22] Although *bis* (meaning "second" or "double") is not attested in twelfth-century French, it is a common word in both ancient and medieval Latin. Spelling and pronunciation of *bis* is affirmed by Tobler-Lommatsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, 10 vols. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1955), vol. 1, cols. 981–82.

[23] See Rupert T. Pickens, "Thematic Structure in Marie de France's 'Guigemar,'" *Romania* 95 (1974), 328–41. Pickens focuses on the deer's role in resolving Guigemar's sexual identity.

passing of a depth which can lead him beyond the superficialities of the court.

If the *bise* is Guigemar's deadly double, mirroring back his own envious gaze, then the lady he finds locked in the tower is clearly his healing other. Like him she has been isolated through envy; like him as well she is a paragon of her social position and, nonetheless, unsatisfied. Each yearns for an inner happiness to match their outer appearance. But, unlike Guigemar, the lady lives within enclosures: the trajectory of her journey heads in the opposite direction of Guigemar's; she is buried within and must escape while he is trapped in externals and must find depth. The mirroring of their situation makes them potentially not only a good couple but a perfect pair and grants to each the healing of the other's wound.

It is significant, although at this point perhaps not surprising, that the love token Guigemar and his lady exchange includes a knotted shirt. Unlike the arrow which only rebounds, and speaks only of superficial exchange, the knot, with its implicit confusion of inner and outer, suggests the significant difference between the envy that marks Guigemar's first encounters and the love that marks his last. While envy is indeed only concerned with externals, as everyone from Basil to St. Bernard has noted, courtly love moves beyond externals, suggesting that sight and an understanding based on vision, must move beyond that vision to some deeper realm. It is in this way that envy can be transformed into love.[24]

In other words, the love between Guigemar and his lady, and the true love Marie writes of in all her stories, is both the cure for envy and the empowerment of *caritas*. Escaping from the enclosed court in which envy rules, the one provoking envy – Guigemar, Lanval, Tristan, Eliduc – finds himself in an open terrain in which this glance can find new expression. Rather than affecting the externals of others, or bouncing back and harming himself, Guigemar finds that a glance which is allowed to penetrate beyond externals, which is based on bridging the

[24] On the use of interweaving in *Guigemar*, see Nancy Vine Durling, "The Knot, the Belt and the Making of *Guigemar*," *Assays* 6 (1991), 29–53.

difference between man and woman – a difference which is a visual one at first – invokes another set of emotions, love.

This *lai* is called *Guigemar*, without equivocation, as it is the story of this one man and his journey. The lady, to a large extent, does not exist. She has no name; she is never fully described. More than any of the other *lais*, *Guigemar* is clearly the story of the self as a duality which, discovered in the transgressive space outside the court and within the body, is played out in the space of the vernacular written text.

But Marie suggests that the love/envy pair has even further ramifications. For the discovery of love, specifically the vision-based courtly love, is really the thematization of the discovery of the reobjectified self. In locating and describing the domain of love, Marie is marking out the territory that will ultimately be inhabited by the individual. And even as love is developed as a response to courtly envy, exploring the wilderness beyond the court, so the self develops in response to the inhibiting, claustrophobic setting of the court. And as with love, the intertwining images one finds throughout Marie's tales are representative of the model she seems to have in mind for the self. For while her *lais* come down clearly in favor of the individual, of love, they also as clearly favor not only the written over the spoken text but the written *vernacular* text over all others. It is the written vernacular which serves as conceptual model for the self.

The same can be said for Marie's approach to the court. While she inherits a polarized view that opposes court to wilderness, and virtue to vice, she is clear in her writing that these polarities merely cover up the actual truth. She tries in the course of her lais to dismantle these pairs – to uncover, whenever it occurs, envy and to clarify, to the greatest degree possible, a middle path.

Punning in the vernacular

Augustine teaches that there are two ways to read scripture, cupidinous and charitable. Marie illustrates that there are two ways of reading the visual world: through envy and courtly love.

Even as envy is bad reading, a reading based on superficiality, so courtly love is a reading of the world that includes the visual yet allows as well for depth, that recognizes difference. Augustine's method is allegory, a figure of thought, Marie's paranomasia, a figure of speech since Marie is interested in the discrepancies that lie beneath the apparently smooth and continuous surface: the depth, the wound. Reading for her is an acceptance of the body and the visual world. While the thematic equivalent is courtly love, in which two figures are bound and yet remain distinct, its rhetorical expression is paranomasia, puns.

A compelling example of this is to be found in *Milun*. As in *Guigemar*, *Milun* is a tale about a superlative knight: "Puis le jur k'il fu adubez / Ne trova un sul chevalier / Ki l'abatist de sun destrier" (lines 10–12). (Since the day he was knighted he could not find one knight who could knock him down off his horse.) This, likewise, provokes envy: "Eurent plusur de lui envie" (line 18). But for Milun this renown also quite specifically provides him with his love:

> ... une fille bele
> E mut curteise dameisele,
> Ele ot oï Milun nomer
> Mut le cumençat a amer.
>
> (a beautiful daughter
> and very genteel girl.
> She had heard Milun spoken of
> and began to love him very much.)
>
> (*Milun*, lines 23–26)

The link between envy and love seems direct – each is based on excellence and prowess, one in the court, one without. The difference from the start, however, is that love leads immediately to tangible signs of that love: the lady sends Milun a message declaring her love, he sends her a ring. Even the child who is soon conceived can be seen in this light: he too is tangible evidence of their love. Significantly, while sent away because the two lovers were not married, the child wears the ring and is preceded by a letter. The emphasis on secrecy is clear, but so is

the link between the body and a text – in almost sacramental terms, the baby is described as a hidden sign of their love.

The motivation behind this textual presentation of the baby and of the love becomes clear when Milun and the lady, forced to part and seek separate lives, desire to be rejoined. The couple, rather than being physically reunited, discover a means for sustaining their love while absent: via the written text. Milun devises the following scheme:

> Un cisne aveit k'il mut ama:
> Le brief li ad al col lïé
> E dedenz la plume muscié.
>
> (A swan he had that he loved very much: the letter he tied to its neck and hid within its feathers.)
>
> (*Milun*, lines 162–64)[25]

The swan is evidently a transference of the baby who was sent away – each has a letter with him, each has something "al col lïé." But, to a certain extent, the swan is the baby one better for while the baby – the love made tangible – is sent only once, the swan keeps up the correspondence for twenty years. Moreover, this last detail suggests that the swan is more a symbol than an actuality, since no swan lives for twenty years.

The artificiality indicated by the twenty-year correspondence is intended, I would suggest, as a purely linguistic device. Marie chose a swan, *cisne*, because the word *cisne* has another meaning – *signe*, sign. The *cisne* – the natural *signe/cisne* – is the means by which love is best kept alive. The letter hidden in the plume of the *cisne* is the private text sent through public means – the troubadour poem par excellence.

That the swan is the written sign is thus pretty clear. But it is my reading that the swan not only keeps love alive it is love itself, given its ability to keep the two together for twenty years. For Marie to make such a statement in the written text is interesting, for she is suggesting, after Abelard, that the written sign, in its ability to be public yet private, seen yet not necessarily understood, is significant. Love, she seems to be

[25] Rychner, *Lais*, p. 131.

suggesting, is the thematization of the vernacular text. The two share important qualities. Each functions on two levels; each is both visible yet not limited to pure exteriority.

Yet even as the *cisne* is a private message enveloped by a public covering, so the story as a whole, rather than ending with the *cisne/signe* episode returns to the level at which it began, in several ways. As the plot circles back to talk about the son, so the son is seen to be just like his father – an excellent knight, renowned throughout the land, so good that "cil ki nel seivent numer / L'apeloent partut 'Sanz Per' " (those who did not know his name called him, throughout, "without Equal") (lines 339–40).[26] Milun, hearing about this contender, seeks him out and jousts with him, only, for once, to lose. In the encounter that ensues, all is revealed. Milun asks the winner's identity; he tells him all he knows; father and son are reunited. The two then go in search of their wife and mother, initially with the idea of killing her husband. Instead they learn that the husband has died, leaving her free to marry Milun.

The two subplots interconnect in a complex fashion. The swan subplot serves first to rewrite the story of the boy. However, the swan also serves to awaken us to a linguistic register of the story by making us focus on the level of the sign: through the unreality of the swan we focus as well on its linguistic double valence as *signe*. The swan's role as purveyor of love trains us to look beyond the visible to see if there is a message lying beneath. As the swan's double name indicates, this message may function on two levels at once.

When the son returns, paralleled as he is to his father through the description offered of his knightly prowess, we are told, significantly, that he is called *sans per*. Conditioned by the swan and the family context of the story as a whole, we are encouraged, I would argue, to read this name on two levels. *Sans per*, as we saw earlier, is the moral equivalent of the best, the one who provokes envy; it is in this register that Milun seeks out this knight to fight him. Yet *sans per* is also *sans pere* – the one

[26] Ibid., p. 136.

without a peer is also the one without a father. In order to move from one to the other, however, one must shift registers, from the literal to the figurative, as the swan taught us to do. And even as the swan's message of love was hidden beneath the plume so it is in the key of love that *sans per* becomes *sans pere*.[27]

But the story is really about Milun, as the title indicates. As Milun is bested by his son he shifts from being *sans per* to being merely *pere*. The chivalric code which is motivated by envy is once and for all transposed to the code of love. Even as *invidia* is suppressed to create courtly love, all negatives being read as positives, so through the joust with his son, *sans per* becomes, finally, *pere*. His identity is realized through a pun. And, through this punning reflection of reality – as *per* becomes *pere* – negative becomes positive, envy becomes love.

Marie's story, then, is a story about Milun, about the figure of Milun shown through a series of lessons. First she teaches us about the importance of vision to love. Then the parallel between the written word, the body, and love itself, the ability of one to sustain, even reproduce the other. Finally, she points to the ability of love to fulfill even as it negates, as the knight *sans per* becomes, through his son, at once *pere* and *per*. The unrivalled one is seen as the fatherless one by the one who has the power to make him fathered.

The stories which are, in a way, the hardest to read in this context are those in which the swan appears to be only a swan, in which the superficiality of limited courtly existence is not allowed to gain any inner depth, in which, for the most part, externals and envy rule the day. *Deus Amanz* and *Laüstic* are perhaps the best examples of this, although several other tales (*Equitan*, *Bisclavret*, *Fresne*, and *Lanval*) bear some resemblance to them. *Equitan*, for example, the story of the king who has his way with his seneschal's wife only to be hoist by his own petard

[27] It is always risky to make assertions about puns, especially if they are not in one's mother tongue. Therefore, I was particularly gratified to find that both *sans per/sans pere* and *cisne/signe* have been suggested by J.-C. Huchet, whose native tongue is certainly closer to Marie's than my own. "Nom de femme et écriture féminine au Moyen Age," *Poétique* 48 (1981), 427, n. 48.

and scalded in the bath drawn to kill the husband, shows how his sentiments were only skin deep. *Bisclavret* and *Fresne* each speak of a petty woman who, since she cannot see beyond the immediate, denies anyone else's ability to do so. In *Bisclavret*, the wife steals the werewolf's clothes. She thinks this will kill him, but it does not. In *Fresne*, a woman makes a rash statement about twins being proof of adulterous relationships which she then must confront when she herself gives birth to twins, yet the children, like the werewolf, do fine. The world is forgiving of anyone who tries to find real love, who aims to push beyond the externals and superficialities of courtly gossip and slander. In each of these two tales the inability of one character to turn envy to love is made clear by their inability to read and interpret the signs around them.

Deus Amanz is perhaps the prototype of this group of tales. Often read as a Pyramus and Thisbe-type love story two lovers are forced to go to such extremes to prove their love for one another that they die before the love is consummated. Ovidian echoes are indeed there. The summit of the mountain which the lovers must climb becomes green on their death at the summit in a way that recalls Ovid's metamorphic understanding of nature. In this way, the story links itself with *Laüstic* which is based as well on an Ovidian plot. The Ovidian echo in each case is subverted and allows us to recall that the one place in which Ovid is specifically alluded to in the *Lais*: in the first tale *Guigemar*, is a spot in which his books are burned by the goddess of love. Marie, conscious of her role as love-author and aware of the parallels between her message and Ovid's – she certainly relies on him for aspects of certain plots – does nonetheless swerve from him and subvert him whenever the messages get too close. *Deus Amanz* is one of those instances.

The structure of the tale is indicative of its message. In *Guigemar* and *Milun* we have seen how the courtly society limits love to such a degree that they must escape the enclosure and discover a *terra nova*, a space of agency in which they can pursue their love and themselves. In *Guigemar* this was *outremar*; in *Milun* it was the text. In *Deus Amanz*, the limitation of

the court is not challenged though it is surely ridiculed. The king, demanding that the suitor of his daughter carry her up a mountain, sets the rules which the lovers then dutifully carry out. Indeed, another space is alluded to and visited by the lover: Salerno, where the girl has an aunt whom the lover seeks to acquire a magic potion. However, neither the land nor the product does any good for them. For in climbing the mountain, the lover refuses to stop long enough to take the potion and he dies as soon as he reaches the top.

The text is focused specifically on externals. The girl goes on a diet and wears only a chemise to lighten her lover's load; even the fact that the court is all there cheering them on suggests an overriding emphasis on the public and on the external. It is, in fact, too superficial to even approach tragedy, and serves instead – like *Equitan*, *Fresne* and *Bisclavret* – as counter-examples to her point, as evidence of the superficial situation from which her heroes and heroines successfully escape.[28]

Conclusion: word and object

By now it must be evident that the crucial sign in almost every tale – the *bastun* in *Chievrefoil*, the swan in *Milun*, the *bise*, the nightingale – is drawn as much from the natural register as from the textual one. Each of these figures functions equally well in both the world *qua* world and the world of the text.[29] Yet Marie makes it clear that there are two types of writing: living and dead. In *Laüstic* writing only serves to mark the end of love; the text is used to wrap the dead, mutilated bird and so becomes the glossing suppression of that animal; the intertextual reference to the Ovidian tale of Philomela helps bury the tale in an endless regression into the Latin past. In *Chievrefoil*, by contrast, the

[28] So Hanning and Ferrante, *Lais*, p. 133–36.

[29] I owe my appreciation of puns, in Marie and elsewhere, to Robert W. Hanning, whose "Marie de France and the Wound of Narrative: Risk and Vulnerability in the *Lais*," (unpublished essay) illuminates another aspect of Marie's punning art. See also his "'I Shal Finde It in a Maner Glose': Versions of Textual Harassment in Medieval Literature," *Medieval Texts and Contemporary Readers*, ed. Laurie A. Finke and Martin B. Shichtman (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 35, n. 15. See also Durling, "The Knot, the Belt," pp. 44–46.

central image not only likens Tristan and the queen to the honeysuckle and the hazel but it compares the honeysuckle to the written word as well, since the message Tristan writes is inscribed on a stick of hazel. The word, Marie suggests, is like the honeysuckle: separated from its page it can only die, as the spoken word does in *Laüstic*. Intertwined on the hazel, however, it lives on and on. But unlike the written word in *Laüstic*, the honeysuckle-like word reifies the signifier; Marie makes it clear through her multiple translations of the word for honeysuckle that it is the vernacular text that remains alive. In other words, it is the innately intertwined vernacular text – be it Tristan's message on the stick or the *lai* itself – that can become the metaphor for the self. Because it is public yet private, visible yet silent, it offers up the possibility for the merging of the signifier with qualities that had formerly been associated only with the signified. Marie draws on the standing tradition of interweaving which had stood for the foregrounding of the signifier and, by extension, the growing autonomy of the self, but applies it specifically to the written vernacular word and, as such, finds in the written text the conceptual metaphor for the new self.[30]

Marie's reference to envy in the prologue of *Guigemar* has far-reaching ramifications. With envy she groups the means of the envious, speech, and the situation in which envy is found, the court. Rejecting all of these, she moves on, through the interwoven course of her highly visual *lais*, to explore a space in which the causes of envy, the increasingly visualized and reified world view, can be manipulated in a different setting to produce different results.[31] This new-found land is the land of love, its means the written vernacular text, and its name, the reified self. In the twelfth century the self shifts from being patterned on the lady to being patterned on the written vernacular text, via the

[30] While Jesse Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book*, develops a similar notion on the importance of boundaries and spatialization, I feel he does not distinguish sufficiently between the use of the text in the early Middle Ages, when it had no bearing on the perception of the self, and that of the later era, starting in the twelfth century, when it became the key to understanding the individual and his role in the world.

[31] For further insights into Marie's use of textualization, see Laurence de Looze, "Marie de France et la textualisation: arbre, enfant, oeuvre dans le lai de 'Fresne,'" *Romanic Review* 82 (1990), 396–408.

image of interweaving. The troubadours show the first evidence of this with their use of a formal interweaving that grants dimension to the signifier; at the same time they speak of a more independent self. Later examples suggest that such a change has indeed occurred: Dante's *Vita nuova* replaces the lady with a text, both his book of memory and his own poetry, and Chaucer writes of people who are texts and texts who are people. Further, I would say that the model the written vernacular word offers speaks to the reification of the signifier and its new spatiality; this, in turn, reflects a similarly autonomous understanding of the self. Marie's text grants to the signifier the power once associated only with the signified; in a comparable way, the self seen developing at this time bears a power once associated only with the divine. The more the self became independent, the more it needed a new model.[32] The vernacular text, with its emphasis on the visible, the tangible, and with its ability to be at once public and private, provided just such a model.

Marie's criticism of Priscian's approach to texts speaks of a similarly changed relation to both body and world. Her *lais* focus on discovering a way to acknowledge the visual without granting it full power. The supernatural element in her *lais* – the deer in *Guigemar*, the weasel in *Eliduc*, the swan in *Milun* – all inhabit even as they constitute such a space of mediation. Her heroes, many of them at least, leave the confines of the envy-ridden court to explore a more open, less defined space without. In each case the visually oriented vice of envy is countered by a new reading strategy, a new *caritas*, that is based on the visual but is not limited to what can be seen. As Guigemar is told, in words that echo the opening lines of the Prologue: "you are in love; take care not to hide it too well" ("Gardez que trop ne vus celez," *Guigemar*, line 446).[33] Love, for Marie, as for Raimbaut, often breaks rules and transgresses boundaries. It neither turns from the body, nor does it cover it over, as Augustine's *caritas*

[32] In this, I am, to a certain extent, disagreeing with Brian Stock (*Implications*, p. 18) in suggesting that the need for the conceptual model predated the rise of literacy and was articulated before the text was adopted as a conceptual model.

[33] Rychner, *Lais*, p. 19.

did. But neither is it locked into pure exteriority. Rather, inspired by the visual, it thrives when allowed to exist in the intermediate state of being both visible and invisible, public and private, mimetic and semiotic.

6

Conclusion

> The vernacular languages of continental Europe made their first substantial appearance in textual form. Owing to economic and demographic expansion, great numbers of hitherto "voiceless" individuals were also making their first acquaintance with culture in the formal sense of an ongoing tradition dependent on the written word. The result was a profound interaction between language, texts, and society.[1]

The vernacular conception of a visually oriented self that one finds in the twelfth century is the result of a long slow change in the role played by Latin literary and cultural traditions. Throughout the Middle Ages, as Brian Stock points out, to write always means primarily to write in Latin.[2] To write in the vernacular, then, means to rewrite, that is, both to identify with and distance oneself from the Latin tradition. Yet even those twelfth-century authors who write in Latin, such as Abelard and Suger, inscribe themselves in the vernacular tradition not by writing in the vernacular but by using Latin in a way that differentiates them from the tradition. The effect of their Latin is in each case the same: a voice is heard but not fully articulated.

The shift in language from Latin to the vernacular is clearly

[1] Brian Stock, *Implications*, p. 26.

[2] "Latin owed its prestige and strength to two sources. It was the only language in which grammar could be taught; therefore, anyone wishing to learn to read and write had to master the ancient tongue. Also, it was the only written language widely known and understood." Ibid.

important. Marie de France suggests in her Prologue that she will not write in or translate from Latin. Rather, she will demonstrate her talents through recording vernacular stories. As a literary tradition that simultaneously accepts and denies the Latin one, the vernacular is uniquely situated to offer an alternative approach to textualization that, in turn, can represent the body in a new way. As such, vernacular authors are able to create in and through their texts a space for – if not model of – the self.

To end where we began, the vernacular definitions of *ore*, the word used of Perceval, demonstrate this change clearly. Moving from Latin to the vernacular the hour became the measurement that was, for all intents and purposes, the one associated with the parameters of the present moment, the popular and non-technical term for the space of the present. So, for instance, a twelfth-century translation of the Latin "etsi ab eorum corde *ad momentum* recesserit" becomes rendered as "cum *a oure* de lor cuers."[3] And as the conflation of *ora/hora* might suggest, *ore* entails as well a double valence. It can mean the point of change in either spatial ("Que d'ore en autre": "From one side of the body to the other") or temporal ("heure de messe," "heure de soleil couchant," "heure de desjeuner") terms.

But in its most common use *ore* is qualified by the adjectives *mal* and *bon* and is used to indicate the moment of birth, the moment that is uniquely yours, the one which makes you who you are: "Benëoite ... soit l'ore Que tu oncques fus enjandrez" (Blessed is the hour when you were born); or "L'heure puisse estre la maudite Que povres on fu concëuz" (Cursed was the hour when the unfortunate one was conceived) – further instances are too numerous to list in full.[4] What is most striking

[3] Tobler-Lommatsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 6, col. 1222.

[4] A brief look at Tobler-Lommatsch, *Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 6, cols. 1210, 1211, 1215 and 1222 provides overwhelming evidence of the prevalence of this use; in addition, see further examples provided in Godefroy (*Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française*, 10 vols. (Paris: Librairie des Sciences et des Arts, 1937), vol. 4 (under *heure*). For a fascinating study of time in the vernacular text see Emmanuèle Baumgartner, "Temps linéaire, temps circulaire et écriture romanesque (XIIe-XIIIe siècles)," in *Le temps et la durée dans la littérature au moyen âge et à la Renaissance*, ed. Yvonne Bellenger. (Paris: Nizet, 1986), pp. 7–21.

about this use of the word *ore* is the emphasis it places not only on the visible and spatial but, more, the stress it lays on marking difference. To define someone in terms of the moment at which they were born is to mark the break in time that becomes identified with that person. Like vernacular textual space in general, the shifting connotations of the word *ore* suggest that what had been denied becomes, by the twelfth century, defining. The homophony of *ore/ore* alludes to its double etymology without being bound by it. The two are joined, body and present, in the one word *ore*, suggesting an appropriation of two formerly unrelated and inaccessible domains.

Three centuries later, Leon Battista Alberti speaks of the properties of surfaces in the following terms:

> Perpetuae autem superficierum qualitates geminae sunt. Una quidem quae per extremum illum ambitum quo superficies clauditur notescat, quem quidem ambitum nonnulli horizontem nuncupant; nos, si liceat, latino vocabulo similitudine quadam appellamus oram aut, dum ita libeat, fimbriam ... altera superficierum qualitas ... tamquam cutis per totum superficiei dorsum distenta.
>
> (The permanent properties of surfaces are two-fold. One of these we know from the outer edge in which the surface is enclosed. Some call this the horizon: we will use a metaphorical term from Latin and call it the brim [*ora*] or the fringe ... the other property of a surface ... is like a skin stretched over the whole extent of the surface.)[5]

For Alberti, continuity, which he identifies with the body ("altera ... qualitas tamquam cutis ... distenta," stretched like a skin), has become the predominant concern in definitions of the surface. Yet such continuity, such autonomy, is dependent, as his nostalgic use of the word *ora* would suggest, on a stage of differentiation. The self, like the surface, has not one permanent property, but two.

The etymology of *ora* demonstrates that shift in perspective

[5] Leon Battista Alberti, *On Painting and On Sculpture*, ed. and trans. Cecil Grayson (London: Phaidon, 1972), pp. 36–39, "De Pictura," Bk. 1, paragraphs 2 and 4.

from time to space which, in turn, is fueled by a shift from wholeness to partiality, from unity to difference. Always associated with personal identity, *ora/hora* moves first from being a marker of space and time to being one of spatialized time. In the Romance languages, however, it progresses further to assert the differentiation necessary to spatialized time, and the centrality of that marginal space. In so doing, it marks the spirit embodied in the vernacularized language. Still associated with identity, it comes now to mark a particular identity, that which is defined by an association with the body. While Latin *ora* in the twelfth century marks the space of difference and differentiation, vernacular *ore* foregrounds that difference and marks the linguistic space in which the self first resides.

The vernacular represents a transgression in and of the Latin tradition, yet it is a transgression that is also a homecoming. As such, while the Latin tradition provides the model for textual space – it is both that which is there and that which is not – the vernacular comes to represent an acknowledgement of identity and difference. Composing in the vernacular consists of a simultaneous assertion and denial of the Latin tradition, even as the construction of a self entails an acceptance and transcendence of the body. The spatialized, vernacular text exists outside of and in contrast to the Latin tradition even as it engages in the process of rediscovery and the assertion of a continuity with that tradition. The development of the vernacular, together with the rise in literacy, speaks to a reevaluation and new appreciation of the inherited Latin tradition, not a rebellion against or rejection of the past.[6]

J.-C. Payen argues that the Latin traditions "suffisent à donner

[6] In saying this, I am, to a certain extent, taking exception to Curtius' argument, which is based on continuity (see E. R. Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask, Bollingen Series, 36 (Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 19), and Stock's stance, which is based on difference (*Implications*, pp. 456 and 521). I have proposed here another model which is not temporal but spatial, a dialectic of identity and difference that places the old next to the new. Like Curtius, I include by Latin tradition more than classical "Latin language and literature." The Latin inheritance I wish to consider entails not only the on going ecclesiastical tradition (church Latin) and the pagan literary past of the Middle Ages (classical Latin) but the wealth of traditional pagan beliefs and rituals that undergird them as well.

à la lyrique profane ses lettres de noblesse" (serve to grant to secular lyric its "patent of nobility").[7] In the romance, the court is analogous to the space and conception of Latin literature. But, as Curtius notes, " 'Romance' is the name that the early Middle Ages itself gave to the new Latin vernaculars, precisely in conscious contrast to the language of the learned, Latin."[8] Vernacular text – and the self – become that which exists outside the court where the internal is externalized, private made public.[9] Each work studied here demonstrates an approach to the inherited Latin tradition that simultaneously asserts and denies its existence; writing for each of these authors represents an acceptance and rejection of the Latin tradition. If writing is writing Latin, then writing in altered Latin, in the *lingua romana* as opposed to the *lingua latina*, asserts a simultaneous identity and difference with the text – and, at the same time, a representation of the other, of textual space, of a space which is like Latin but also always different. This serves, in turn, as a model for the self.

In other words, both the vernacular and the self it constitutes not only does not but could not exist without the uninterrupted presence of the Latin literary tradition.[10] This body of texts in Latin – which are, and as far as the Middle Ages are concerned, have always been, *written* texts – provide the context out of which the vernacular arises and from which the self is constituted. It is Latin and the inherited Latin tradition that remains the suppressed yet necessary framework for the development of both vernacular and self.[11]

[7] "L'invention idéologique chez Guillaume IX d'Acquitaine," *L'esprit créateur* 19 (1979), 106. See also Peter Stallybrass ("Boundary and Transgression: Body, Text, Language," *Stanford French Review* 14 (1990), 9–23) who speaks of Latin as "a prestige language fantasized as stable" (p. 22).

[8] Curtius, *European Literature*, p. 31.

[9] See Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," *Viator* 13 (1982), 367–414.

[10] See S. G. Nichols, "Deflections of the Body in the Old French Lay," *Stanford French Review* 14 (1990), 27–50. Nichols points out the enigmatic quality ascribed the body in Old French, and hence its relationship to the signifier and its use as the locus of love.

[11] So Curtius, *European Literature*: "The flowering of the vernacular literatures from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in no sense signifies a defeat or retreat of Latin literature ... The common man knows as well as the educated man that there are two languages: the language of the people and the language of the learned" (p. 26).

The self that emerges is a self defined by parameters, a space of agency rather than a free agent. As a result, the voice one hears is strikingly similar to the post-modern autobiographical voice. Now, as then, the voice of the self that appears does so first in the margins commenting on, critiquing, the fixed text at the center. Such a situation cannot exist until absolute truth has been questioned since an identification between text and self depends upon the acknowledged existence, and habitation, of transgressive space.

See also A. J. Minnis, ed. *Latin and Vernacular: Studies in Late-Medieval Texts and Manuscripts*, York Manuscripts Conferences: Proceedings Series, vol. 1. (Cambridge: Brewer, 1989) for a fascinating series of studies of the interplay of Latin and the vernacular. While the texts studied are later than those covered here, many of the observations support the conclusions I reached here.

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