

**The Eternal Joust of Parents and Adult Children in Thirteenth-Century  
French Saints' Lives**

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**Abstract of the Dissertation****The Eternal Joust of Parents and Adult Children in Thirteenth-Century French  
Saints' Lives**

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Thirteenth-century French saints' Lives often depict conflict between the saintly protagonists and their parents, who either intentionally or accidentally work to disrupt their children's higher calling. In general, critics who have studied saints' parents have tended to treat them as interpreters of the saints' actions. The saints are so perfect, it is difficult to imitate them directly. Thus, the parents imitate their children, and because the parents are less perfect examples than the saints, they show audiences what the saints do that the audiences can imitate. Nonetheless, these parents may also be seen as exemplary in their own right, especially in Lives where abusive parents serve as negative examples. The texts show that even these wicked parents try to do what they believe is best for their children, and they are somewhat sympathetic. The fictional parents are concerned about issues of lineage and inheritance – major issues for noble families in the thirteenth century. The Lives depict forms of secular family as positive; they do not suggest that the children's choice to abandon worldly life, "wed" God, and form a descendance of Christian followers is necessarily the type of family that their audiences should aspire to have. In this study, I examine *La Vie sainte Juliane*, Gautier de Coinci's *Vie de sainte*

*Cristine*, and *Li Roumans de saint Alessin* to see how they explore questions of the parents' motives, how sympathetic the parents are, and various family structures. I demonstrate that although at first glance, these Lives may seem to portray conflict between parents and their adult children as dichotomous, the texts actually depict complex, ambiguous relationships between family members and God. Furthermore, the texts valorize loving and disciplining children in moderation, and obeying and respecting one's parents.

### **Dedication Page**

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## Introduction

Medieval saints' Lives depict remarkable heroes and heroines who survive terrible ordeals, combat such monsters as demons and dragons, and subject themselves to the harshest and most isolated lifestyles imaginable, all for their love of God and with His assistance. These exceptional people have earned the title of "saint" because, as Thomas Head explains, "saints were, both during their lives and after their deaths, key members of the Christian community. Saints demonstrated their holiness through their actions [...] With God's assistance, they could turn that holiness into miraculous actions, such as curing the sick, defeating their enemies without the use of force, and exorcising demons" (xiv). Furthermore, Head states, "[Hagiographers] wrote [saints' Lives] not simply to record and preserve the past, but to influence the present, holding up their stories of holy men and women as examples of Christian conduct" (xvii). One important question, then, is how or to what extent can the texts' audiences follow the saints' examples? It is with good reason that some scholars have suggested that saints are inimitable exemplars<sup>1</sup> – not only is it highly improbable that one could make a demon manifest himself in such a way as to give him a sound thrashing, it is also extremely difficult for people to relinquish their worldly goods and abandon their families to pursue a religious vocation.

Since scholars of saints' Lives generally assume that the Lives have a didactic function, it may seem as if these texts recommend that like their saintly protagonists, their audiences leave behind their worldly lives and enter the monastic vocation. Nonetheless, not only are the saints themselves meant to be exemplary figures, other characters within their Lives may also serve as examples for the texts' audiences. In the Lives composed

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see A. G. Elliott (37), Stebbins ("Humanity' of Saint Alexis," 865).

in French in the thirteenth century, one particular group of characters who may serve such a function tends to appear in saints' Lives in an antagonistic role – saints' worldly parents, the majority of whom are nobles. Of primary concern for the parents are issues of lineage and inheritance – major issues for thirteenth-century laypeople who would not enter into monastic life. Although saints' parents often set the plots of their children's Lives in motion, whether beating or baptizing them (depending upon the parents' orientation as either pagans or Christians), they seem to have been left out of the critical limelight. Critics may have studied the parents and their perspectives relatively little because people tend to take for granted their antagonistic roles toward their progeny. The parents' goals of marrying their children to suitable spouses so that they may inherit the families' estates and carry on their family lines seem self-evident and typically in binary opposition to the children's goals of following their higher calling and devoting themselves to God.

However, while, from the hagiographers' perspectives, the saints are necessarily making the right choices to abandon their worldly families and inheritances in favor of heavenly ones, their Lives do not suggest that adult children in general should take drastic measures to assert their independence, nor do they necessarily argue in favor of a monastic vocation to the detriment of forming a traditional family, in which one would marry and reproduce to carry on the family line. Rather, the inclusion and roles of the saints' parents in these texts raise issues of family structure, familial affection, and filial obedience and loyalty which hint at the value of various forms of lay families and at the importance of forging positive familial relationships.



Fundamentally, saints' Lives are quests which culminate in the saints' death and rebirth, their union with God, a relationship which is often described in terms similar to those used to describe marriage for female saints, or relationships between fathers and their sons or feudal lords and their subjects for male saints. Furthermore, conflict between saints and their parents tends to revolve around problems that relate to worldly marriage. Marriage and the processes that lead to the formation and development of family structures are of interest to studies of family history, as historians such as Michael M. Sheehan (e.g. *Marriage, Family, and Law*, 89) and David Herlihy (e.g. *Women, Family, and Society*, 135) have shown. Sheehan in particular examines ideas about marriage and family that the Catholic Church may have tried to disseminate throughout Europe across a span of four centuries when the Church was trying to exercise greater control over marriage (*Marriage, Family, and Law*, 101-103).

I do not mean to imply at all that there was stability in ideas about marriage or family over the centuries or even in many regions simultaneously. However, according to Sheehan, at the end of the twelfth century, new ideas about marriage were gradually developing. An ideological shift occurred over the course of time, which led to the more widespread knowledge and application of these concepts (*Marriage, Family, and Law*, 91-92). Sheehan says that "The scholar's problem is to bridge the gap between the period when the new ideas on matrimony were enunciated [in the twelfth century] and those last years of the fourteenth century when court records reveal that to a considerable extent those ideas were understood and acted upon" (*Marriage, Family, and Law*, 102).

Sheehan also notes that historians often focus their studies on "surveys of various kinds," although the Church acted "primarily in the realm of ideas and moral guidance –

areas that, for the most part, historians of the medieval family have tended to avoid” (*Marriage, Family, and Law*, 89). Sheehan himself investigates texts like the case studies from canon law examined in Gratian’s *Concordia discordantium canonum*, Peter Lombard’s positions on marriage in the *Libri IV Sententiarum*, papal decisions in marriage cases in Gregory IX’s *Decretals*, and pastoral manuals which were meant to train priests (*Marriage, Family, and Law*, 93-104). The case studies from canon law expressed new ideas about marriage, while texts like compendia for priests “instructed both the officiating priest and all those involved in the marriage ceremony – principals, family, and parish community – on the necessity of the couple’s consent to their union. Furthermore, they describe a ceremony that emphasized social control of the marriage while de-emphasizing the part in that control that fell to family and lord” (*Marriage, Family, and Law*, 117).

Sheehan strongly urges scholars in other disciplines, including literature, to “[examine] the Church’s [various] instruments of teaching” (*Marriage, Family, and Law*, 103), and his work suggests that a literary study of ideas about marriage and family in saints’ Lives would be of particular interest. A number of other authors support Sheehan’s suggestion that literature is a very valuable source of information about how people thought about contemporary social issues. Among them is Karen G. Casebier, who describes how thirteenth-century Old French literary genres reinforce their lessons and are made more entertaining to audiences by sharing common elements. These genres, which Casebier calls “fluid,” respond to each other, to other types of texts and to works of art (1-3, 235-236), and thus can reflect and contribute to societal debates.

Several of the Old French texts that Casebier studies are primarily about conflict between parents and adult children regarding lineage and inheritance. Together, Sheehan and Casebier make a good case to open a literary inquiry into this conflict in a sampling of thirteenth-century Old French saints' Lives. To this end, I will closely analyze the roles of saints' parents in three Lives, two of which depict daughters of pagan tyrants whose parents abuse them for being Christian, and one of which portrays the son of a pious Christian couple who runs away from home on his wedding night, abandoning his family and worldly life. I have chosen to focus on textual analysis to gain a better understanding of the Lives' nuances. Doing this close reading has allowed me to see how the texts depict complex, ambiguous relationships between family members and God.

These texts are as follows: an anonymous *Vie sainte Juliane* (Bodl. Can. Misc. 74, early 13<sup>th</sup> c.: "Ci commence la vie sainte Juliane," incipit: "Or escolteiz bon crestoiien"), Gautier de Coinci's *Vie de sainte Cristine* (Paris, BnF f. fr. 817, 1465: "Cy commance la vie madame sainte Cristine," incipit: "Le sage Salemon qui fluns fu de savoir"; Carpentras, cote 106, late 13<sup>th</sup> c., no title, incipit: "Li sages Salemons ki fu fluns de savoir"), and *Li Roumans de saint Alessin* (Paris, BnF 12471, 13<sup>th</sup> c.: "C'est li roumans de saint Alessin," incipit: "Signour et dames, entendés un sermon"). Although Juliane's and Cristine's parents are pagan, their desire for their daughters to marry suitors of their choosing and to value their ancestral traditions can reflect the similar concerns of thirteenth-century Christian parents. In their contemporary setting, the "ancestral traditions" that they would not want their children to abandon would include their "enlightened" Christian rites and rituals rather than the wicked pagan ones which are familiar to the characters in the ancient Roman setting of the Lives.

The Lives do reflect the increasing emphasis on consent to marriage and children's personal choice that Sheehan notes in other texts from the late twelfth through thirteenth centuries. However, the ways in which the Lives depict the roles of parents and family suggest that children's obedience, as well as parental prerogatives in choices of vocation and marital partner for children, are still very important concerns for the texts' audiences. Through the texts' parallels between the parents and other antagonists to the saints, the depiction of the children's concerns about their abandonment of their ancestral traditions, and the parents' pleas for their daughters' obedience in Juliane's and Cristine's cases and their son's return home in Alessins'<sup>2</sup> case, these Lives validate not only the monastic vocation that the children pursue but also the formation of loving Christian families.

Although the conflict between the noble parents and their adult children in these Lives and the importance of serving God as opposed to obeying worldly parents, lords, or kings or to loving worldly families might seem dichotomous, the texts actually provide a nuanced and complex picture of familial relationships. For example, the delineation between people's duty to their families and their duty to God is neither clear nor in direct opposition. Rather, the obedience, love, and respect owed to one's parents mirrors the obedience, love, and respect that one must display for God. Amy V. Ogden asserts that according to the Lives, one's love for another person can enhance his or her ability to become closer to God, assuming that he or she becomes more virtuous as a result of that worldly love (123). Conversely, the texts also show that familial affection and duty can

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<sup>2</sup> Although the title lists the protagonist's name as "Alessin" without the "s" at the end, I will be referring to him as "Alessins" because that is the spelling most commonly used throughout the text.

be problematic because it might interfere with one's duty to God if one focuses too much on worldly pursuits.

The Lives' protagonists struggle with their parents' worldly ambitions and affection for them, but these antagonistic parents elicit our sympathy to varying degrees. The texts depict parents who seem to want what they believe is best for their children, even if what they believe is best is quite the opposite of what is "right," according to the texts' perspective. The children essentially become saints by thwarting their parents' aspirations for their futures. What their parents want for them is "wrong" because it would cause the saints to lose God. I will demonstrate that even the most "wicked" of the pagan parents in these Lives are not completely bad. Their sympathetic aspects and their human imperfections allow audiences to identify with them more readily than with the saints.

As I will explain, existing studies of saints' Lives in which the saints' parents are present tend to see them more as interpreters of their children's actions. The saints are the ultimate teachers of the text's audiences and the audiences' role models; the saints' parents help audiences see how to imitate their children. However, I argue that the parents can serve as examples in their own right, not just as interpreters. I also intend to explore variations on themes surrounding family conflict more from the parents' perspectives than from the children's, the latter of which have been the focus of existing studies of saints' Lives. I will necessarily discuss the children's thoughts because the young protagonists' roles are inevitably interconnected with their parents'. I will focus on the children's concerns that relate specifically to family and the importance of familial

relationships rather than on those thoughts which are more self-centered regarding the children's need to escape from family and worldly life.

As far as existing studies go, more significant critical attention has been devoted to parental characters in medieval romances than to those in saints' Lives, and the parents of the saints whom I will examine have been studied more extensively in other versions of their Lives than the ones which I will treat. With respect to parents in romance, critics have focused especially on the romances of Chrétien de Troyes. Baudemagu, Méléagant's father in *Le chevalier de la charrette*, and Perceval's lack of a father-figure and his mother in *Le conte du graal* have been of particular interest. Baudemagu became quite popular in articles in the mid-1980s, and descriptions of him range from Pierre Gallais' extremely positive and somewhat reductive presentation of him as an image of God in his article "Méléagant et la Contradiction" to Cristina Alvarez's more moderate discussion of his role as Lancelot's enemy in "Le Conflit Père-Fils dans *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*." Alvarez shows that Baudemagu's goal to stop Méléagant from fighting Lancelot is not only to protect his son; his courtly behavior is also a cover for undermining Lancelot and preventing him from gaining acclaim (128).

While fathers like Baudemagu hamper their sons' actions in Chretien's works, Perceval's absent father in the *Graal* is of equal concern for critics, though they often seem to take for granted the definition of "father-figure." For example, Ann McCullough suggests that all of Perceval's crimes come from a subconscious wish to suppress a proper comprehension of his father's suffering and death, which would evoke the knight's great vulnerability (48, 52-56, 61). Irit Ruth Kleiman further emphasizes the role of Perceval's late father, and claims that Perceval must gain a father-figure to

properly become his father's son as a knight (969, 974-975, 979-982). Perceval's education is unquestionably lacking due to his mother's overprotection, but whether he needs a father-figure is questionable. A medieval father-figure, as defined by Philip Grace (e.g. see 211-213, 218-223, 231), is not necessarily the same as a *mestre*, which King Arthur suggests is the type of instructor whom Perceval needs (l. 973), or what Amy V. Ogden terms an "uncle-figure," like the hermit (personal communication, Nov. 2011), though they may share common traits. Examining Perceval's educational issues from another angle, Ewa Słojka argues that Perceval's mother taught her son incorrectly not only because she was afraid to let him live in the hostile environment of a society with chivalric values, but because this very fear resulted from a partial loss of faith in God to protect His people. Słojka refers to the mother's dying prayer, where she recommends her son to God, as the indication that the mother "recovers her faith that God is active in human life" (82). Słojka presents an interesting hypothesis that the sin which causes Perceval to lose sight of God and his duties is not necessarily his own, but his mother's sin of excessive grief upon his flight from home (70). Immoderate love for a worldly being, which leads to this kind of severe grief, is a grave sin. In the chapters to follow, I will address this sin with respect to the parents of the three saints whose Lives I will study.

In addition to Chrétien's romances, *Le Roman de Silence* portrays a parent who has received relatively significant critical attention – Silence's father Cador. While he does not really have conflict with his daughter, the way in which he has her brought up as a boy leads to her internal conflict. In her comparison of father-daughter relationships in *Silence* and Christine de Pizan's *Cité des dames*, Catherine L. White shows the difference

between fathers like Cadore, a “benevolent, adoring father” (“Women and their Fathers,” 43) and a jealous, tyrannical father like the version of Urbain, saint Cristine’s father, who appears in the *Cité des dames*. White questions the role of the father in these texts as a figure in the position of ultimate power over his daughter and asks, “At what point does benevolence become oppressive?” (“Women and their Fathers,” 45). She does not say so explicitly, but White seems to suggest that Silence’s unorthodox upbringing may be “oppressive” because of how Cadore manipulates and defines her gender, yet White appears to be less concerned about the ways in which Silence’s society in general constructs gender for both males and females.

Other critics grapple with Silence’s gender role transformation at the end of the *Roman*. Peter Allen shows disdain for this ending, where Silence is relegated to the traditional position of the presumably more passive, silent, and far less powerful female (101, 108). Meanwhile, Christopher Callahan suggests that at first glance, twenty-first century readers may be uncomfortable with an ending that “strikes [them] as impetuous and poorly conceived [...] Marriage to the very sovereign who was responsible for her predicament hardly seems a fitting resolution to a tale that belies its own misogynist rhetoric by presenting Silence and her subterfuge in a very sympathetic light.” He examines medieval inheritance law to “justify the reservation concerning the marriage expressed by *Silence* scholars” (12-13). Like other critics with this “reservation,” Nicole Clifton qualifies her description of Silence’s coronation as a reward: it punishes Silence because she is made subordinate to a man, and the lands she will finally inherit “will be annexed to those of the crown” (238). However, Casebier argues that the themes which *Silence* shares with the Lives of transvestite saints, such as Marine’s and Eufrosine’s,



make Silence's coronation into a terrestrial equivalent of the saints' heavenly coronations (224-227, 235). The events that lead up to Silence's coronation can be likened in particular to those which initiate Marine's heavenly one because both women accomplish great feats of valor while perfectly obeying their fathers' wishes for them to act like men, which derive from the fathers' concern for their daughters' inheritance, worldly or spiritual, respectively.

Other romances that have elements which may be compared to parent-child relationships in saints' Lives include *Aucassin et Nicolette* and the *Conte de Floire et Blancheflor*. They present pagan tyrant parents, and the fathers want to kill their sons' beloved slave girls. These texts may merit more extensive discussion of how their parent-child relationships compare to those in saints' Lives, as well as the parents' perspectives in general. Critics of *Aucassin et Nicolette* generally seem to be more interested in evaluating the text's genre and performativity than in analyzing the relationship between Aucassin and his parents, although some of their studies, like Evelyn Birge Vitz's, mention the humorous roles of these secondary characters (238-241). Jean-Jacques Vincensini also discusses the initial scene of family conflict at length in his article regarding the interjections in the text (103-106). However, his explanation of how such interjections serve to set a rhythm and dramatic structure for the narration does not include a description of how they portray the family dynamic between Aucassin and his parents.

The family dynamic between Floire and Blancheflor and their parents is both more complex and more bizarre, as Sharon Kinoshita shows in her discussion of the pagan-Christian relationships within the text. Kinoshita suggests that Blancheflor's

“disgraced single mother reveals the high price of illicit passion” in being captured as a slave (80), so problems of lineage exist even before the children are born. Kinoshita also notes, however, that Floire’s father, Felix, is unusual in his distress at his son’s love attachment because “caliphs and emirs routinely took Christian wives and concubines of both high and low station” (86). Kinoshita’s description of Felix’s opinion of Blancheflor’s worth echoes concerns of the parents in saints’ Lives regarding lineage. Unfortunately, as Kinoshita explains, Blancheflor seems to have less worth as a Christian girl in Felix’s lineage system than she does as a commodity in the slave trade (89).

In *Aucassin et Nicolette*, although Nicolette’s *parrain* has had her baptized, both Aucassin’s father and Nicolette’s *parrain* describe Nicolette very much as a commodity on a marriage market. However, since the *parrain* intends to find her a husband who will earn her an honest living (e.g. II, ll. 30-34; IV, ll. 11-14; VI, ll. 16-20), the text begs the question as to whether this marriage market is categorically bad. Likewise, Nicole Clifton considers Floire’s father’s motive to have Blancheflor killed – his “concern for the political future of his son and his country” – to be positive (180). There appears to be, nonetheless, greater critical attention devoted to issues of the children’s striking similarity (in spite of their religious difference) and their travels than to their familial relationships. Kinoshita’s, Jane Gilbert’s, and Marla Segol’s studies, for example, focus primarily on the ideas of pilgrimage, conversion, and cultural contact which they explore through their analyses of the children’s actions.

Analyses of some saints’ Lives where the protagonists’ parents or parental figures are present have addressed the parents’ roles more thoroughly than many studies of romances and other Lives. In particular, critics have examined the relationships between

female transvestite saints such as Marine and Eufrosine and their parents. The interactions between these women and their fathers are unique because of the ways in which their fathers' actions lead to their gender role transformation. Marine's father wants to protect his daughter's spiritual inheritance. Therefore, he recommends that she live in the monastery where he brought her up and that she continue to conceal her gender. Taking her father's advice, Marine parents the illegitimate son of a woman who accuses Marine of being the infant's father. Meanwhile, Eufrosine's filial relationship transforms such that she "becomes [her own father's] spiritual father" (Ogden, 199).

In her article about Marine and Eufrosine, Emma Campbell points out the mirroring effect in Marine's father's last speech and the lies that the innkeeper's daughter, the mother of the illegitimate child whom Marine raises, tells her own father. Marine's failure to reveal that she is a woman and her parenting of the other girl's illegitimate son in turn mirror Marine's father's actions ("Epistemology of the Cloister," 220-221). Like Marine, Eufrosine imitates her father when she reverses roles with him. Campbell maintains that both saints' deceptive male roles serve to reinforce their positions in *non-lieux* between the physical and spiritual worlds, and to highlight the idea that true knowledge is knowing that one cannot know all ("Epistemology of the Cloister," 227-229). Ogden emphasizes this idea in her description of the *Eufrosine* poet's demonstration of the inadequacies of language and human understanding to reach spiritual truth (96).

Ogden argues that Eufrosine's care for Panuze makes her both more likable and easier to imitate; her own father achieves salvation by following her example (130, 219). Ogden treats the transformed relationship between Eufrosine and Panuze as one of

friendship, comparing it to that of Lunete and Yvain in Chrétien's *Chevalier au Lion* (137-141). Whereas the traditional, vertical, unilateral form of inheritance in Eufrosine's filial relationship with her father would necessarily end at some point, their friendship permits everyone to benefit in a circular exchange. Not only are Eufrosine and Panuze spiritually redeemed; so are the monks and abbot Tédose who help them, while others, such as the orphans to whom Panuze gives alms, receive worldly comfort. Ogden also demonstrates how Panuze's relationship to Tédose, which parallels that of Panuze to Eufrosine, evolves from a more self-interested to a more generous, purer form of friendship (193-199). While Ogden and Campbell do explore the roles of parents in saints' Lives, their studies focus more on how the father either imitates his child (in Panuze's case) or how the child's imitation of her father makes her a saint (in Marine's case). In other words, these critics describe how one can better imitate the saints, using the parents' actions as lenses through which to interpret those of the saints.

Critics like Ogden and Campbell are primarily interested in the saintly protagonists, whereas I intend to address the importance of the secondary characters and to show how the parents in these Lives can serve as examples in their own right. For instance, one can use the negative examples of Juliane's and Cristine's parents to see how not to discipline children, and the positive examples of Alessins' family members to see how familial love and charity both lead to one's salvation and help make him or her a productive member of a larger "family": his or her community. The texts also show the importance of children's obedience to their parents and filial duty, which gives greater value to the parents as individuals and suggests that "spiritual friendship," a relationship

with God and the “community” of Christian souls, is not the only kind of relationship which the texts prioritize.

Like other saints, Juliane, Cristine, and Alessins achieve the most perfect relationships with God possible, ultimately producing “families” that revolve around spiritual friendship<sup>3</sup>. Nonetheless, the thirteenth-century versions of their Lives that I will explore also depict other forms of secular family as good. These forms of family include the following: the traditional family, in which each generation marries and produces children to carry on their family lines; the ascetic model of withdrawal from the world and dedication to God; and the spiritual marriage, in which a couple marries but does not produce offspring, and both the man and wife remain virgins, devoted to God. I will also argue that *Li Roumans de saint Alessin* expands the spiritual marriage model to recommend for laypeople what I will call a “spiritual family,” in which a couple marries and produces one child; then the husband and wife abstain from further sexual contact and serve God together. The texts may seem to portray the traditional family and the ascetic model as dichotomous, but this is not necessarily the case. Rather, they show that these types of family are both valuable, provided that people have moderate familial affection and properly devote their love and obedience to God, prioritizing their duties as they should in the hierarchy of worldly and heavenly family. Meanwhile, the spiritual marriage and “spiritual family” serve as middle grounds for those who cannot bring themselves to categorically reject their worldly families and worldly life. These family structures seem to be presented as superior to the traditional family because in them,

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<sup>3</sup> The “children” of the martyrs tend to be Christian followers who were previously pagan, or followers whom they help to be better Christians (e.g. before she dies, Juliane tells some Christians who protected themselves by concealing their religious beliefs to repent for it; ll. 1209-1226.)

people are able to become closer to God than they may be in traditional family settings, even if they cannot break all worldly ties. Before I address how the individual texts depict different forms of family and their arguments about one's place within his or her family and the broader Christian community, I will look at some historians' and literary critics' research of these topics to try to see how the saints' Lives may respond to audience members thoughts about family.

*What is an "adult child?"*

Crucial to a study of conflict between parents and adult children is an understanding of what constitutes an "adult" from the texts' perspectives and those of their audiences. As I will suggest, these texts seem to have had in mind lay audiences or mixed lay and ecclesiastical audiences. For the purpose of my analysis, an "adult child" is one of marriageable age. According to Paul B. Newman, "Marrying usually conferred or affirmed adult status, but medieval Europeans married at a wide range of ages. Further, some brides and grooms were still young children and were certainly not considered adults simply because they were married" (241). Likewise, in her study of young noblewomen in medieval France and England, Fiona Harris Stoertz explains that "sexual and marital, rather than educational or vocational, status marked elite female life stages" ("Young Women," 23). In the saints' Lives that I will study, the protagonists' parents' attempts to match their children with suitable spouses suggest that these Lives use marriage as such a milestone of adulthood. Furthermore, Newman notes:

For civil law and purposes of government administration, the ages of twelve and fourteen were common thresholds [...] As part of its regulation of marriage, the Church set minimum ages for brides and grooms. Under canon law, boys could marry at the age of fourteen and girls at the age of twelve. Again, while these ages are quite young by modern [twenty-first

century] standards, they reflect the views of medieval society about the mental and moral development of boys and girls. By these ages, boys and girls were thought to have developed sufficiently so that it was reasonable to hold them responsible for their decisions and actions. However, the Church permitted exceptions to these age limits, and parents could promise their children in marriage when they were only seven. While such betrothal was not the same as marriage, children were expected to ratify their parents' promises and marry when they reached the appropriate age" (244, 252).

Twelve and fourteen, for girls and boys, respectively, were ages of puberty "derived from Roman law" (Stoertz, "Young Women," 31).

The Lives of Juliane, Cristine, and Alessins reflect these milestone ages; the youngest protagonist is Cristine, at age twelve, and while the texts do not explicitly state the ages of all of the other characters, they appear to be in their late teens or early twenties. For example, Juliane is referred to as "creüe" (l. 120), "grown up," while Juliane's fiancé, Eliseus, goes to the emperor to be knighted (l. 153), which implies that he is likely at an age when men were knighted, in his early twenties (Newman, 234). Of course, "creüe" is a rather nebulous indicator of age, and literary, like historical sources, "tended not to distinguish between different life stages for girls as they did for boys" (Stoertz, "Young Women," 24), but Juliane does not seem younger than Cristine. Meanwhile, Eufemiens' servants call Alessins a "jone baceler" (l. 483) in their description of him to their innkeeper during their search for him. It is possible to estimate what this means from the timeline of Alessins' life that the text presents. He spends seventeen years away from home (l. 557) and returns and spends seventeen years under his parents' staircase (l. 872). Prior to leaving home, he goes to school, then serves the emperor for seven years (ll. 70-75). If each period of Alessins' life is approximately seventeen years, then he was likely married at around age seventeen or possibly slightly

older, such as at age twenty, since it seems that he was made master chamberlain after seven years of service to the emperor and spent some time serving in that capacity (ll. 76-82).

Other thirteenth-century texts recommend similar marriage ages. In David Herlihy's discussion of marriage in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he mentions that "In the middle thirteenth century, Philippe de Navarre advised that boys not be allowed to marry before completing their twentieth year, but girls could be 'willingly' placed with a husband after their fourteenth" (*Medieval Households*, 105). These minimum ages do not provide information about how close the man and woman to be married should be in age. According to Stoertz, "Earlier scholarship has suggested that most elite men married late or not at all, resulting in a large age gap between men and women. While this appears to have been true among Italian elites, I found in England and, particularly, France that a majority of royal boys married for the first time in their teens or early twenties" ("Young Women," 31). Stoertz adds that "Large age discrepancies were more likely to occur in the case of remarriage, a common occurrence since both men and women practiced serial marriage" ("Young Women," 32). The protagonists who fall in love in literary texts, both romances and saints' Lives, tend to be relatively close in age to one another, as are the saints in the texts that I will examine and the spouses whom their parents choose for them. Perhaps the saints' Lives provide their protagonists with more "ideally" aged potential partners, as opposed to widowers or widows who are seeking to remarry, to make the saints' sacrifices in choosing God and the ascetic lifestyle over worldly love and the formation of traditional families seem greater.



*The traditional family*

This brings us to the question of what constitutes an upper-class “traditional family” in thirteenth-century France or England. The basic concept may seem self-evident; each generation marries and produces offspring, carrying on the family line. However, much as studies like Sheehan’s, Herlihy’s, and Stoertz’s suggest, the ways in which noble families were formed and their households were run seem excessively rigid given some twenty-first century concepts of family structures. Rather than try to explore a diversity of medieval family structures, I will address ones that resemble those in the saints’ Lives which I will study. How marriages were arranged and how young nobles were prepared for their future roles in their households are pertinent to the elements of these Lives regarding parent-child conflict.

As evidenced by both legal and literary documents, arrangements of noble marriages were typically made by the betrotheds’ families, in the interest of the families’ fiscal gain, political alliances, and social status. Geneviève Ribordy compares the familial and personal paths to marriage arrangement among nobles in medieval France. She affirms that while the church theoretically promoted personal choice in marital partner, it generally did not interfere with parental and familial prerogative in the selection of children’s spouses or marriage negotiations. The church strongly opposed premarital sex, but it “tacitly acknowledged the importance of family control on marriage because it contributed to social order and perhaps because it tamed the dangers of love that could lead to sex and sin” (331). As we will see, although the saints’ Lives depict characters who defy their parents to choose God over worldly spouses, they do not contradict the other literary and historical documents that Ribordy studies. For example,

Alessins, who does not want to marry, does not seem opposed to either the concept of marriage or to the bride whom his father chooses for him. Alessins' and his wife Lesigne's fathers arrange their marriage in a meeting that resembles the "familial meeting" which Ribordy describes for marriage arrangement: "Usually, the man approached his future wife's parents [...] although parents of both spouses also spoke [...] Whether informal or official, [such meetings] occurred when both parties were French and close geographically" (327). Alessins' Life emphasizes that both Eufemiens, Alessins' father, and Signourés, Lesigne's father, are noblemen from Rome (ll. 54a, 89), so in their status and proximity, they would match up with Ribordy's profile of thirteenth-century French fathers who meet to arrange their children's marriages.

Meanwhile, Juliane's fiancé Eliseus exemplifies the suitor who seeks a young woman's hand in marriage, making an ostentatious display of wealth to impress her family. Ribordy explains that "Costly festivities and lavish offerings, like numerous ambassadors, were expressions of the prestige and wealth of prospective spouses and their families [...] Marriage itself was an important manifestation of power, of one's capacity to obtain a mate of high status and wealth and to outdo one's competitors" (328). *La Vie sainte Juliane* refers to Eliseus as a rich and powerful man, of whom Juliane's family approves (ll. 123-127). He also gives much gold and many gifts to the king so that he may be knighted and become chancellor, for Juliane says that she will not marry him unless he carries that title (ll. 140-143, 150-153). Similarly, Cristine's suitors in *La Vie de sainte Cristine* offer many lavish gifts in hopes of winning her hand in marriage (ll. 263-264). The setting of the Lives thus provides a convenient spacial and temporal locale to make commentary on contemporary thirteenth-century marriage arrangement

practices and family life in general. Those who composed these texts avoided persecution by safely distancing their characters from their present time, so that even Alessins' parents, the characters who are most akin to their contemporary Christians, would not be directly mapped onto living persons.

While the saints' Lives say relatively little about the saints' youth prior to marriage, both Cristine's and Alessins' Lives describe their childhoods very briefly. Therefore, I will touch on medieval children's development prior to marriage to see how it compares to that of these saints. The training that led up to this important milestone of adulthood varied depending upon the child's social status, gender, and number of living siblings. Since Juliane, Cristine, and Alessins are all of high nobility and only children, their gender is the primary differential with respect to their upbringing. According to Stoertz, "In general, a girl's lifestyle and education remained uniform until her betrothal or marriage with no significant change occurring at puberty, unless marriage occurred at that time" ("Young Women," 24). Stoertz explains that girls tended to be supervised very closely, both before and after marriage: "Most educational theorists recommended close supervision, believing that girls possessed weaker intellects than boys, and thus fell easily into sin" ("Young Women," 29). Similarly, in *La Vie de sainte Cristine*, Cristine's father Urbain fears that his daughter will fall prey to "sin." From Urbain's pagan perspective, Christian practices are sinful. Since he fears that his daughter will become Christian, he locks her in a tower with twelve handmaidens to keep her company (ll. 156-175, 204-206). Urbain's idea of what constitutes "sin" is the antithesis of what the text's intended audience would consider to be sinful. However, if one compares him to a

medieval Christian father who loves his daughter and fears for her soul, Urbain may not differ too greatly from the Christian norm.

Meanwhile, Alessins' father is expressly described as a "good father" who sends his son to school, then to serve the emperor (ll. 71-73). Alessins learns letters in school and later in the text, when he speaks to the cleric Ermener, he tells him that he made the mistake of becoming a knight and marrying after having been a "clers" himself (ll. 560-564). Although Alessins is an only child, destined to take over his family's estate rather than to become a cleric, it was important for young noblemen to be lettered so that they could rule properly. They needed to be able to perform such functions as accounting and reading legal documents. Even in lower classes, there was an increasing need for businessmen to receive training in reading and writing to manage their accounts, as education became more widely available in the later Middle Ages (Newman, 182). The value that the text gives to Alessins' training in letters suggests that the *Roumans* was written for an audience which would have included both laypeople and those in the monastic vocation because while Alessins regrets having become a knight, it seems necessary for him to learn how to read and write before he does so, regardless of whether or not he does. Since younger nobles who had older male siblings typically had no choice but to enter the monastic vocation (Newman, 205), saints' Lives such as Alessins' might also have been composed to comfort children who could not inherit their families' estates. If a saint willingly gives up all his worldly inheritance, the ability to continue his family line, and his familial relationships in general, then entering a monastery or convent might seem more positive than otherwise for someone who has no choice but to do so.

*The ascetic model*

The ascetic lifestyle, as presented by these saints' Lives, and in particular, Alessins', since he is the only saint of the three who is a confessor rather than a martyr, is one of such extreme renunciation of worldly life that it would be highly unlikely for a person to imitate it. Most people who pursued a monastic vocation still lived and worked in religious houses, which often interacted with the wider Christian community not only as places where clerics, priests, monks, and nuns acted as mediators between laypeople and God, but also as sites where laypeople themselves lived and worked, such as in fields held by the church. Newman explains:

For its part, the Church was frequently involved in worldly affairs. Cathedrals, churches, and monasteries received innumerable grants of land, rents from properties, and other valuable donations over the course of the Middle Ages. Through these gifts, some archbishops, bishops, and abbots became temporal lords as well as spiritual ones because possession of land under the feudal system typically entailed swearing fealty to the nobleman who had dominion over the land (204).

Thus, even members of religious orders could become lords in their own right, which explains why Alessins, who does not want the worldly honor of becoming a lord, flees from Alsis when the people want to make him a bishop, just as he had run away from home on his wedding night (ll. 570-577). That Alessins wants no part of this life truly sets him apart from what would likely occur in reality. According to L. Genicot, the distinction between the roles of clergy and laity was not as sharp as the saints' Lives may make it seem. Genicot notes "l'existence de clerics dont le mode de vie différait si peu de celui des laïques qu'on pouvait douter de leur statut" (43). Even as the clergy was trying to distinguish itself from the laity by taking such measures as forcing clergymen to give up their wives and children (D. Elliott, 97-100), certain elements of lay existence would

have been important for the church to maintain, such as control of land and rents. Saints' Lives would have been useful tools of propaganda to reinforce the distinction between clergymen and laypeople and the supremacy of the clergy in their society's hierarchy.

*Spiritual marriage and the "spiritual family"*

According to Dyan Elliott, "spiritual marriage" is a nebulous term that was used to refer to a variety of situations, including the allegorical union of Christ and the church, a metaphorical marriage between an unmarried person and God, and a marriage in which a couple lived together following their wedding ceremony, but did not have sexual relations (3-4). For the purpose of my study, I will use the term "spiritual marriage" to refer to the latter of these definitions – a marriage in which both partners in a married couple devote themselves to God, abstaining from sex. In *Li Roumans de saint Alessins*, when Alessins tells his wife that he must leave home to avoid lusting after her, Lesigne proposes that they have a spiritual marriage instead; she will go with him and serve him as a wife, but she will not tempt him carnally. Alessins declines this offer, concerned that the temptation would be too great (ll. 305-317). Some medieval defenders of the concept of spiritual marriage argued that it was actually a form of self-flagellation, the man and woman suffering to overcome their sexual urges. According to Virginia Blanton, *La vie seinte Audrée* describes the saint as one who must endure her "interior struggle with her own physicality during [her] first marriage, for it was Audrée who experienced sexual desire for her spouse, it was she who had to resist the carnality of her own body, and it was she who suffered great torment and, as a result, was able to experience a kind of martyrdom" (96). Comparing Alessins' case to Blanton's analysis of Audrée's, it makes Alessins seem more childlike. He runs away from home, fleeing what would be adult

responsibilities for a recently-married young nobleman – producing an heir and continuing to contribute to his household in preparation for becoming its head.

Alessins believes that he cannot control his libidinous urges should he remain in his wife's presence, so he seems somewhat less mature than Audrée. Since he will not allow his wife to be with him, she asks his parents to allow her to remain with them out of love for him (ll. 429-447). Lesigne essentially takes her husband's place as the family's only child, and as we will see, she and his parents perform charitable acts together. In this way, she establishes what I will call a "spiritual family." In this family structure, a married couple, after producing one child, abstains from further sexual relations; in a saint's Life, the child typically remains a virgin, the family line ends, and all the family members serve God together.

The "spiritual family" model that I propose focuses not on the relationship of the married couple, but on the relationship between the parents and their child. In the "spiritual family," the child is not necessarily expected to reproduce, and is therefore not seen merely as an engine or vessel for perpetuating lineage. The "spiritual family" shows the importance not just of the affection between family members that leads to the betterment of all of their souls but also of the role that children have in caring for their parents in the parents' old age, including reciprocating their love and supporting them financially or emotionally, which can improve both their worldly and heavenly life. Prior to leaving home, Alessins supports his parents financially by giving them much of what he earns while working for the emperor, then he supports them spiritually, praying for them and teaching them to be better, more charitable Christians than they already are. He also makes them somewhat like martyrs by removing himself, the object of their

excessive affection, from their presence, which ultimately helps their souls, although it leads to suffering during the course of their lives. Meanwhile, as we will see, Lesigne supports Alessins' mother emotionally when she loses her son, and Alessins' parents and wife all work toward the betterment of their souls by performing charitable acts together. These characters demonstrate the value of a relationship between parents and their child wherein the child is allowed to select his or her vocation; Alessins and his wife choose not to reproduce but they love and care for his parents in their own ways.

Chastity in marriage was not just attributed to couples who never reproduced. D. Elliott explains that church authorities on marital chastity generally "presupposed that chastity in the context of marriage not only would but should follow a period of normal sexual activity, a period that corresponds with the couple's youth. The transition to marital chastity was not intended to be abrupt or violent but to correspond with the individuals' life cycle" (41). In some versions of *Alexis' Life*, his parents' prayer includes the promise to remain continent, should God grant them a child (Uitti, "Paradigm, Legend, Meaning," 271). Although Alessins' parents make no such promise, they have only one child, first Alessins, then Lesigne, who replaces him when he is lost to them. The "spiritual family" that Alessins, his parents, and his wife have is more extreme than some "spiritual families" because Alessins and his wife are only truly united in heaven, in death (ll. 1320-1324). They are both saintly for making the abrupt choice to stay virginal immediately after marriage. In discussing situations like theirs in *saints' Lives*, D. Elliott indicates that "The combination of virginity and martyrdom doubled the potential for projecting marriage beyond the grave" (70). Theirs is such a pure form of relationship, they will be rewarded with it lasting eternally.



I distinguish the “spiritual family” from just a spiritual marriage because it encompasses two generations of relatives, with an emphasis on the child’s reciprocation of the parents’ care for him or her. The “spiritual family” does not presuppose a perpetual family line, regardless of whether the child ultimately does marry and reproduce. It emphasizes how the affection and care of a couple for their child and the child for his or her parents improves their experience in both this world and in the afterlife. Whereas Alessins works to improve his family’s situation in the afterlife, the text implies that his wife helps his parents to have a slightly less burdensome existence on earth. Even though they do not have a continued family line in the sense of a traditional family, Alessins’ family extends to the wider Christian community through their charitable actions, they have an extended “family” not only because the saint has followers but also because of their care and support of other community members, such as servants and beggars.

### *The Lives*

*La Vie sainte Juliane*, Gautier de Coinci’s *Vie de sainte Cristine*, and *Li Roumans de saint Alessins* are good examples of Lives with conflict between parents and adult children because they depict family differently from one another but still have similar elements to their conflict. While Juliane’s father has a minimal role in her Life, undertones of concern about familial relationships and filial obedience run throughout the text. Gautier’s version of *La vie de sainte Cristine* is unusual because Cristine’s pagan parents are remarkably sympathetic, as pagan characters go in medieval French literature. Their role is also quite substantial, with the interaction between Cristine and her family taking up half of the text; the other half is devoted to the torments she suffers from two

other tyrants subsequent to her father's death. Meanwhile, *Li Roumans de saint Alessins* is a later version of a text that has been of interest to scholars of French literature – *La Vie de saint Alexis*. Although generally less studied than the twelfth-century *Vie*, the *Roumans* version has several features that set it apart from its antecedent. The text presents itself as a “romance” as opposed to a “Life,” which suggests that it was composed particularly for the entertainment and instruction of a lay audience; the wife and parents, who already have relatively substantial roles in the *Vie*, have significantly expanded ones in the *Roumans*; and the *Roumans* proposes multiple forms of family structure as possibilities for lay families.

#### *La Vie sainte Juliane*

In *La Vie sainte Juliane*, Juliane suffers martyrdom at the hands of her pagan tyrant father, Affricanz, and fiancé, Eliseus. She also faces and overcomes a third adversary, a demon who appears to her in the form of an angel while she is enchained in Eliseus' dungeon. Juliane's father only appears for a few hundred lines, enough to beat his daughter and give her to Eliseus for further abuse – should she continue to disobey him by persisting in her belief in Christianity. Affricanz is an example of the type of pagan father common to Lives in which saints' parents are pagan tyrants, and at first glance, he does not seem of interest to study at length. The text's message with respect to his role appears to be straightforward; he is evil and wrong, his daughter is good and right, and she must disobey and rebel against him. Marriage may seem to be as wicked an institution as Affricanz and Eliseus are villainous. However, even after Affricanz has left the scene, the other characters' conversations and Juliane's prayers continue to betray concern about familial relationships, particularly those between fathers or father-figures

and their children, filial duty and obedience, abandoning one's family's ancestral beliefs, and the potential value of marriage. Thus, while the text may seem to promote the ascetic lifestyle and potentially to argue against family life, it may in fact argue in favor of family, presenting a hierarchy of obedience and love owed to parents, feudal lords or kings, and God.

The JONAS database lists six extant copies of the version of Juliane's Life that I will study, and I will work from Hugo Von Feilitzen's edition of the Bodleian Library's Can. Misc. 74. Can. Misc. 74 has been dated to the early thirteenth century and in addition to this 1300-line octosyllabic Old French verse *Juliane*, among the texts compiled in it are versions of the Lives of Saints Alexis and Eufrosine (Ogden, 23-24). That someone chose to bind a version of Alexis' Life together with *Juliane* and that the texts have similar themes, such as "the dangers of terrestrial life and the virtues of solitude" (Ogden, 28), provides additional support for studying the *Roumans de saint Alessins* alongside it. Von Feilitzen identifies an additional Old French version of Juliane's Life, a prose text (3). However, English versions of her Life are better known and have been studied more extensively by literary scholars. Cynewulf's Old English *Juliana* is popular because it has a named "author" and it is bound in the manuscript which has come to be known as "the Exeter book" (Exeter Cathedral Library, MS 3501), which has been dated to the late tenth century. Scholars have also examined an anonymous Middle English prose version of Juliane's Life (Winstead, 9-10). In attempting to find its source text, some critics have tried to trace Cynewulf's text to the Latin prose version of Juliane's Life, the *Acta S. Julianae virginis martyris* published in

the *Acta Sanctorum* (Strunk, 65; Kennedy, *Preface*). I will briefly mention their studies in my discussion of *La Vie sainte Juliane*.

Gautier de Coinci's *Vie de sainte Cristine*

Gautier's version of *La Vie de sainte Cristine* stands out among versions of her Life because her parents seem to be such atypical pagan villains in Old French literature. They express exceptional love for their daughter, whom they want to protect from the "wicked" Christian religion in which she chooses to believe. Unfortunately, when she will not obey her father Urbain and worship his pagan gods, he turns to abuse and goes to such great lengths as to try to kill her. Meanwhile, her mother commits suicide, despairing that her husband is abusing their daughter, and unable to convince Cristine to obey. The parents' character development is much more significant than that of some secondary characters, particularly because Urbain undergoes an internal struggle; should he treat his beloved daughter gently or attack her as the Christian enemy that she is? The allegorical figures of *Nature* and *Cruauté* debate this in his mind, with *Nature* acting as the voice of reason and compassion. The parents' role in the text is much more extensive than in other versions of Cristine's Life, such as those in Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend* and Christine de Pizan's *Cité des dames*. Cristine interacts with her parents throughout the first half of Gautier's 3792-line text (ll. 57-2028), after which her father dies and she is tortured by two other tyrant rulers until she dies. Although Cristine's parents are wicked pagans, their immoderate affection for their daughter can serve as an example of excessive attachment to a worldly being. The pathetic mother's weakness and inability to understand Cristine's faith demonstrates in an extreme way how blinded and lost one can be by straying from Christian belief. Meanwhile, Cristine's violent

reactions to her parents hint at ways in which she is like them; although Urbain and his wife are extreme in their worldly love for their daughter, she has exceptional love for Christ, which enables her to fight back.

Gautier's *Cristine* is in alexandrine couplets, and there are three extant manuscripts or fragments of manuscripts that contain copies of at least some portion of it; Olivier Collet, the text's editor, mentions a fourth possible copy, the whereabouts of which are presently unknown (xvi). I will be working from Collet's edition, the base manuscript of which is the copy held by the Bibliothèque nationale de Paris (BnF, fr. 817); its copyist, who identifies herself twice in the text as Marguerite de Chauvigny, states that she completed it on December 19, 1465. While it is not the oldest of the text's copies, Collet uses it as the base manuscript for his edition on the grounds that it is the most complete and least fragmentary. I will study it not only because it is his base manuscript but also because it demonstrates that *Cristine's* story was of interest to audiences from the late thirteenth through the late fifteenth centuries, which means that its topics continued to be relevant during that time. Furthermore, it depicts *Cristine's* relationships with her parents differently from relatively contemporary fifteenth-century versions of her Life such as Christine de Pizan's version in the *Cité des dames*. Just as *Juliane's* Life has a relatively well-studied version in the English tradition, William Paris composed a late fourteenth-century Middle English version of *Cristine's* Life which, according to its translator Karen A. Winstead, is "much admired by scholars" (61).

*Li Roumans de saint Alessins*

As compared to its twelfth-century vernacular French predecessor, *La Vie de saint Alexis*, the thirteenth-century *Roumans de saint Alessins* has received relatively little

critical attention. The *Vie* has garnered scholarly interest due to its early composition date, and because of its hero who is so strangely cold to his loving family. The *Vie* also depicts Alexis' wife as shockingly silent when he tells her on their wedding night that he will be leaving her, which makes first-time twenty-first-century readers of the text, such as Maureen Gillespie's students, uncomfortable. Gillespie points out that "exactly what [the students] don't like about *Alexis* (his abrupt departure, the resignation of his bride, his cold interactions with his family upon his return) also annoyed medieval audiences. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century versions of *Alexis* re-work the story significantly. They respond to this criticism, and the story incorporates its audiences' complaints [...] And his wife, finally given a name, really talks back" (48-49).

The *Roumans* is one such thirteenth-century version. It develops the characters more thoroughly, naming each of them; it expands the wife's and parents' roles and makes Alessins seem more compassionate toward them. The parents and wife, who are already relatively sympathetic characters in the *Vie*, are much more so in the *Roumans*. After the text introduces Alessins' parents and describes his youth and how he gets married, Alessins has an extensive discussion with his wife before he leaves home, in which several forms of family structure – the traditional family, ascetic life, and the spiritual marriage model – are mentioned. Alessins leaves home and later flees from Alsis, the town where he has chosen to live as a beggar, when a miraculous speaking statue identifies him as a holy man and the people want to make him a bishop. God directs the ship on which he is travelling back to Rome, and he ultimately decides to request charity from his father and lives under his family's staircase until he dies. During this time, his wife chooses to stay with his parents, which establishes a "spiritual family,"

and the three of them lament his loss. In the *Roumans*, Alessins' interactions with his parents, including his thoughts about family when he is not speaking with them directly, his conversation with his wife, and the family's laments and regrets address potential audience concerns regarding Alessins' coldness toward his family in earlier versions of his Life, depict various forms of family, demonstrate how excessive worldly affection can lead to suffering, and promote charity and acceptance of non-family members to extend the family to the wider Christian community.

As Alison Goddard Elliott, the text's editor, notes, there are nine extant manuscripts that contain Old French and Anglo-Norman versions of Alexis' Life which scholars have classified as members of the "Alsis-family" because "In these poems the saint spends seventeen years in a city named 'Alsis,' while in the Latin *vita* and versifications made directly from it, the name of this city is Edessa" (13). She labels one of the texts in the "Alsis-family" "S," the 1331-line thirteenth-century *Roumans*, Paris, BnF fr. 12471, which is held by the Bibliothèque nationale de Paris (14). Another of the nine texts, which Elliott labels, "M," the thirteenth-century *Vers d'Alexis*, held by the Cathedral Library at Carlisle, has a somewhat similar storyline to the *Roumans*, with some expansions to the wife's and parents' roles from earlier versions of Alessins' Life, but less of them than in the *Roumans*. According to A. G. Elliott, these two texts "differ stylistically although they tell the same story, are genetically related in some fashion, and are both composed in epic decasyllables. In general *S* shares many features of popular (epic) style – reliance on formulaic language, the use of linked *laissez*, *laissez similaires*, a jongleuresque prologue. The work, moreover, is intended to be sung" (50). As for other versions of Alexis' Life, the earliest vernacular French version is the Anglo-

Norman *Vie*, held by the Hildesheim Library, as I have previously mentioned. A. G. Elliott states that the Hildesheim *Vie* was “copied no later than 1123” (15) and that there are a number of versions of Alexis’ Life, including “independent versifications, in Latin and Old French, of the Latin *vita*” (13). Nonetheless, of the nine Old French and Anglo-Norman copies she identifies, she suggests that “It is not possible to construct a *stemma codicum* for those manuscripts which reproduce the Hildesheim version with varying degrees of fidelity, that is, for *L, A, P, and V*” (15).

#### *Principles of translation*

For my translation of *La vie sainte Juliane*, I have worked from the edition produced by Von Feilitzen. I have tried to keep the translations as literal and true to their original text as possible, unless a passage would become awkward or confusing, in which cases I may have rearranged lines (indicated by out-of-order line numbering) or added footnotes with explanations. For example, in cases where I have replaced colloquial expressions with twenty-first century English approximations, I have included footnotes with more literal translations of the original text. Furthermore, when the text refers to characters as “he” or “she” without clarifying about whom it is speaking, I have tried to identify the characters in question. To preserve content and fidelity to the text, I have refrained from attempting to imitate its poetic form. I have also tried to maintain the text’s original verb tenses, including where tense changes abruptly from past to present, or vice versa. Text in brackets is my own, and used for clarification. Brackets which contain “from l.” followed by a line number and colon, then text, indicate that the bracketed portion of the line has been transferred to the line above or below to clarify potentially awkward or confusing passages.



In general, I have preserved Von Feilitzen's punctuation. However, in some places, I have preferred a different punctuation mark, such as an exclamation point in lieu of a period, or the beginning of a new sentence in lieu of a semicolon. These punctuation changes are not indicated. To differentiate Von Feilitzen's additions to the text from my own, curly brackets replace the square brackets that he uses. Parentheses and ellipses are also the editor's. Similarly, I have preserved his line numbering, including where there appear to be errors in it, which I have indicated with footnotes.

All other translations within the chapters are my own, with the exception of passages taken from Nancy Vine Durling's translation of the earlier *Vie de saint Alexis*, "The Life of St. Alexis." Where I have used her translation, I have cited the text with "Durling, *trans.*"

In composing the translations, I have referred to the following reference texts: Godefroy's *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française*, the glossary of Karl Bartsch's *Chrestomathie de l'ancien français*, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, and the *Ultralingua* online dictionaries and English thesaurus. I have also checked portions of my translations of lines in *Alessins* against Ogden's unpublished translation of some passages of the text.

### **Chapter 1: Beating sense into a daughter in *La Vie sainte Juliane***

The Old French *Vie sainte Juliane* only gives its audience a brief glimpse of the interaction between Juliane and her father Affricanz; he plays such a small role and is so devoid of character that he may seem inconsequential to study at length. Affricanz beats his daughter for her Christian faith. When she refuses to renounce Christ, he passes her off to her fiancé Eliseus so that the young man can torture her if she continues to be disobedient. Nonetheless, Affricanz's presence in the text highlights Juliane's concerns about breaking with ancestral tradition, as well as Eliseus' concerns about bowing to human authority figures such as the king, a significant father-figure whom one must obey. Furthermore, Juliane's suggestion that she might marry Eliseus should he convert to Christianity hints that she might not wholeheartedly disagree with her father's wish to give her a worthy bridegroom. It is because both Juliane's father and the bridegroom whom he has selected for her are cruel persecutors of Christians that Juliane has only one viable option for her future: to allow Affricanz to beat her and Eliseus to torture her to death.

The text's audience, living in a medieval Christian society, would not be similarly concerned about being persecuted for their beliefs. However, Juliane's and Eliseus' concerns still echo thoughts about family that might have borne some resemblance to concerns of audience members about children's obedience and following family traditions. Although I will discuss Juliane's and Eliseus' thoughts to a considerable extent, these thoughts about family are significantly connected to their relationships with their parental figures. It is necessary to describe Juliane's and Eliseus' thoughts in

particular to see how the text continues to carry undertones of parental concerns even though the only biological father present in the text, Affricanz, has such a limited role.

The issues that Juliane and Eliseus discuss while he tortures her, together with Juliane's prayers, ultimately suggest that rather than abandoning one's worldly family for God, the best possible solution would be to form a loving Christian family which supports one's ability to love God and obey His mandates. The text provides a model for the obedient child as well as for the loving parent; children grow to follow their parents', worldly authority figures', and God's commands so that they may achieve salvation. The family is situated at the base of a three-tiered hierarchy that determines how an individual should interact with others. Loving one's family members and being an obedient child teaches one how to interact with society at large and obey worldly authority figures, which in turn opens up the possibility for entering the holy family of God and loving and serving the ultimate Father and Son.

The Old French *Vie sainte Juliane* exists in six manuscripts. The first two are held by the Bodleian Library in Oxford, Bodl. Douce 381 and Bodl. Can. Misc. 74. Can. Misc. 74, the text of which I will be studying, has been dated to the early thirteenth century. According to the JONAS database, Douce 381 contains miscellaneous texts of variable dates; JONAS does not list the approximate date of Douce 381's copy of *Juliane* but it gives a date of the end of the thirteenth century for another text within the manuscript. The third and fourth manuscripts, held by the Bibliothèque nationale de Paris: BnF fr. 2094 and fr. 1807, have been dated to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, respectively. The fifth manuscript, held by the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris, Ars. 3516, has been dated to the end of the thirteenth century, possibly around

1267-1268. Finally, the sixth manuscript, held by the Bibliothèque royale Albert I<sup>er</sup> in Brussels, [I] 10295-10304, has been dated to 1429.

There are other, better-known vernacular versions of Juliane's Life than the Old French text. The most notable of these is Cynewulf's Old English *Juliana*, though scholars have also examined an anonymous early thirteenth-century Middle English version of Juliane's Life (Winstead, 9-10). Cynewulf's text has drawn the attention of English scholars not only because it has a named "author" but also because its only extant copy is compiled in the manuscript which has come to be known as "the Exeter book" (Exeter Cathedral Library, MS 3501). "The Exeter book," which has been dated to the late tenth century, is famous for its early date and because, as Rosemary Woolf states, it "is the largest and most varied in content of the four codices of Old English poetry" (1), though she does not describe the other three codices which she mentions. Cynewulf's *Juliana* may also owe part of its fame to William Strunk, co-author of Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style*; Strunk's edition of Cynewulf's *Juliana* was first published in 1904. Strunk and Charles William Kennedy, the latter of whom translates Cynewulf's text, agree that in spite of significant differences between the versions, Cynewulf likely used the Latin prose version of Juliane's Life, the *Acta S. Julianae virginis martyris* published in the *Acta Sanctorum*, as a source text (Strunk, 65; Kennedy, *Preface*). While scholars have only identified the one extant copy of Cynewulf's *Juliana*, Woolf lists twelve copies of the *Acta S. Julianae* and two shorter Latin versions of Juliane's Life (11).

Historical analyses of Cynewulf's *Juliana*, like Strunk's and Woolf's, include attempts to identify Cynewulf's source text and studies of Cynewulf's signature in which

critics try to link together a corpus of works attributed to Cynewulf. Other discussions of different versions of Juliane's Life tend to focus on comparisons of the texts' treatment of Juliane's interactions with the devil (e.g. Anderson, 85-87; Smithson, 369-370, 372; Strunk, xxxix-xl; Woolf, 15-16) the ways in which Eliseus expresses his love for Juliane and how wicked he is (e.g. Alexander, 156; Anderson, 88-89; Woolf, 15), or the torments which Eliseus inflicts on her (e.g. Nelson, 97-101, 109).

For example, Strunk suggests that "if we compare the scene between Juliana and the demon [in Cynewulf's text] with the corresponding scene in the Old French *Vie de sainte Juliane*, we can see the difference between [Cynewulf's] conventionalized, bookish conception of good and evil, and [the Old French version's] which is closely associated with physical images or with the humble facts of every-day life" (xxxix). It makes sense that critics have tended to focus on the devil in Juliane's Life because he is central to the text; the devil provides members of the audience with critical lessons on how to protect themselves from his seduction. Nonetheless, although it may not be apparent at first glance, Juliane's father Affricanz is also key in the Old French *Vie sainte Juliane* because he helps to bring to the fore the other references to parents and children which are sprinkled throughout the text.

After Affricanz beats his daughter for her "foolish" belief in Christ and hands her off to her fiancé, Eliseus, Affricanz's influence remains in the background of the text because Eliseus follows Affricanz's advice and begins to torture Juliane for refusing to marry him and renounce Christ. Meanwhile, Juliane prays to God to protect her, comparing herself to Isaac, whose father would have sacrificed him out of love for God; her rendition of Isaac's and Abraham's story depicts how a loving family should serve

God. Furthermore, although she wishes to remain a virgin, Juliane demonstrates that she may value marriage because she suggests to Eliseus that she would marry him if he were to become a Christian. Eliseus claims that he would have himself baptized out of love for her. Unfortunately, he fears repercussions from the emperor, the imposing father-figure to whom Eliseus refers in very similar terms to those in which the narrator describes Juliane's father.

Even when Eliseus has Juliane thrown in his dungeon and the devil Sathanas tries to mislead her, Sathanas' argument favors family. In the guise of an angel, Sathanas tries to convince Juliane to marry Eliseus, telling her that God commands it, which can remind the audience that marriage is a sacrament. Juliane briefly feels relief at "God's command" to marry Eliseus and she needs to break the illusion with a prayer, which reinforces the importance of marriage. Juliane then captures Sathanas and forces him to tell her of hell and its torments and his favorite sins; the torments recall those which Affricanz had mentioned upon handing his daughter over to Eliseus and the sins refer to financial issues which tie into inheritance and lineage. Overall, even when the text does not appear to address questions of family and marriage, they remain in the background as a textual concern; Affricanz, although easy to overlook, helps to highlight their importance in a text which might otherwise seem to be directed mostly at a monastic audience.

I will raise the following questions regarding family issues which are found within the text. What distinction does the text make between worldly and heavenly inheritance and why is the latter preferable for Juliane? How does the text describe the power structure in Juliane's society and the ways in which Juliane overturns and

overcomes it? In what ways do Juliane's prayers and her response to Eliseus reflect that she values family and marriage in spite of her choice to "wed" Christ? How do Juliane's adversaries, Eliseus and the devil Sathanas, demonstrate the importance of family and following the orders of father-figures, even though these characters are wicked? How does Juliane show that although she disobeys her father and Eliseus, it is important for children to obey their parents?

It is easy to overlook Affricanz's short role in the Old French version of Juliane's Life since he is never afforded the opportunity to express himself at length; he seems to treat his daughter like property, nothing more than a means to achieve personal social, political, and financial gain. Through his crudeness and lack of character development, as well as the fact that he has such a short-lived role in the text, Affricanz is an even more exaggerated example of one who seeks "*iceste anor qui est terrestre, / c'um tost conquiert et tost put perdre*" (ll. 334-335) than is Eliseus.

Nonetheless, there is no clear indication that when Affricanz first agrees to give his daughter's hand in marriage to Eliseus, he is only doing so for personal gain; to a pagan ruler such as Affricanz, marriage to a wealthy and powerful prince like Eliseus is most likely in Juliane's best interest. The text emphasizes Eliseus' wealth and power, repeating that he is "*uns mut fors prince, / Eliseus, uns hom mut riches. / Riches hom ert a grant poir / d'or et d'argent et d'altre avoir*" (ll. 122-125). Had Juliane married Eliseus, it would have caused several power transfers which would have improved all three characters' status in their pagan society: Juliane's, Eliseus', and Affricanz's. This is to say that while Affricanz would gain honor in giving Juliane to Eliseus, Juliane would gain power in becoming a princess and matriarch of a powerful household, and Eliseus

would similarly gain power and status by taking a position as a new patriarch. As Philip Grace emphasizes in his article, “Aspects of Fatherhood in Thirteenth-Century Encyclopedias”: “One of the clearest marks of adulthood was marriage. In this way, a man was subject to his father until he became a father himself,” the status of “father” being virtually conferred on him at the point of marriage because its “explicit goal” was reproduction (222). Grace adds that, “The father’s authority, however, was not wholly negated at marriage [...] In addition to providing for marriage, inheritance was a part of a father’s relationship and continuing effect on his children” (222-223). Unfortunately for Eliseus, his promised marriage fails, and he loses power instead of gaining it because he only receives a major liability in the form of a dangerous prisoner who successfully converts a number of his people to Christianity. Meanwhile, Juliane ascends to an infinitely higher position of power in becoming a sort of “matriarch” of Christianity when she becomes a saint and “inherits” the glory of God and heaven.

Juliane gives up her worldly inheritance because she must choose between it and a heavenly inheritance. Although Juliane’s choice may make it seem that her Life urges its audience to completely abandon all familial and worldly ties, especially their inheritance, the narrator hints that people’s charitable donations can help redeem their souls. In the text’s prologue, the narrator explains that he who loves God will inherit from God’s kingdom but there is no indication that a worldly inheritance is inherently bad: “ce dist deus, li justeciers, / k’il iert de son regne heretiers. / Ki aimet lui et sa parole” (ll. 11-13). For Juliane, to gain a worldly inheritance is evil because to do so would require that she abandon her faith. Worldly goods are not only the signs of power and wealth that define Eliseus as a ruler; they are also tools which he would use to seduce



Juliane. He tells her that he will give her more riches than any woman ever had if she were to return to the pagan faith: “Se vos moi creeiz, / a nostre loi returnereiz. / Tant vos donrai argent et or, / ainc n’en ot fenme teil tresor” (ll. 1089-1092). Whereas Eliseus’ wealth is bad because it assists in his attempts to manipulate people and lead them to sin, wealth can be positive if used correctly. The narrator mentions that souls ask for good deeds and charitable donations to the poor: “Les anmes ne demandent mie / ne l’orguel ne la felonie, / mais les bi[e]n faiz et les almones / qui sunt mises es mains des povres” (ll. 23-26). This suggests that the proper use of one’s inheritance during his or her lifetime can contribute to that person’s ability to inherit heaven. Since neither her father nor Eliseus would permit Juliane to properly use her worldly goods, she cannot accept an established place in their social hierarchy. Her physical body is also a worldly “good” in the sense that it can be abandoned in favor of spirituality and she allows her father and Eliseus to destroy her body so that she may overcome them spiritually.

Juliane’s exchange of her physical body for spirituality results in her power reversal with her father, which the narrator expresses in the form of a stock metaphor common to similar Lives of child martyrs. Very early on in the text, the narrator uses metaphor and chiasmus to demonstrate Juliane’s power over her father, even though she is the one whom he physically abuses. In both *La Vie sainte Juliane* and Gautier’s *Vie de sainte Cristine*, the narrator compares the saint to the beautiful rose which her father, the thorny branch, has generated. According to the narrator in Juliane’s Life:

car en la rose at bele flor,  
 mais voirement li arbriseaz  
 u ele creist, n’est guaires beaz,  
 anz est mut laiz et espinous,  
 et si portet mut bele flors. (ll. 99-103).

While the poetic merits of the Old French version of Juliane's Life have been overlooked by critics, the poem's innovative use of this metaphor in particular emphasizes Juliane's spiritual and worldly relationship to her father. Through the use of chiasmus, the "bele flor" encloses, and thus overcomes, the "arbriseaz / [...] mut laiz et espinous." Juliane's goodness and beauty blot out her father's ugliness and cruel sharpness.

The characters embody the metaphor's description, not only in its depiction of their familial relationship, but also in its representation of their strengths. Juliane's beauty is a physical manifestation of her internal beauty, her moral and intellectual strength, whereas Affricanz only has strength in physical violence. Affricanz is such an empty character that when he beats his daughter, it is as if he takes the narrator's metaphor literally, for he uses a whip of "very painful and thorny" branches, which the narrator describes in almost the same terms as those with which he compares Affricanz to the rosebush's thorny branches: "verges noouéses /et mut punianz et espinoses" (ll. 192-193). Meanwhile, Juliane, who is represented as the metaphorical rose that is often used to describe martyrs, always reacts vocally to her human attackers, Affricanz and Eliseus, rather than lashing out against them physically as she will against her demonic adversary, and complex turns of phrase are her weapons of choice to confound them. Like Cristine in Gautier's Life, Juliane tells her father that the only one whom she will marry is Christ. She calls Him "un roi [...] parfit et sage / cui j'ai promis mon pucelage" (ll. 166-167), which makes Affricanz believe that she is speaking of some other man to whom she has secretly become engaged. He asks her: "U est, fille! icil espous (celeement) / c'as en ameit si en absous?" (ll. 178-179). Even though for Juliane, describing Christ as a King

is not metaphorical, He is not the kind of king that Affricanz understands to be a suitable bridegroom; Christ is not of the physical world, and Affricanz, an idol-worshipper, has no comprehension of anything that is not physical, concrete, or literal. By resisting Affricanz, and later Eliseus, verbally and not physically, Juliane lets them assault her body, but she upholds and defends her faith in a way that reinforces the worthlessness of the body. Using language instead of physical violence to fight back shows that words, which supposedly come from God, are much more powerful than the feeble, easily destroyed body.

Juliane's defiance of her father also signifies an overturning of the backwards pagan social order but it is questionable as to how directly one should take a child's defiance to be positive in and of itself. Juliane's disobedience is good because she is morally and theologically right to defy her father. What justifies her defiance is that it represents God's voice; Juliane's Life does not urge children to disobey their parents in general. Karen Winstead mentions in her discussion of an Old English version of Juliane's Life that "The central conflict is not merely a good Christian's refusal to marry a pagan but more specifically a daughter's refusal to bow to her father's authority. Africanus's response to his daughter's declaration that she cannot marry Eliseus because she is already betrothed to Christ clearly portrays Juliana's faith as an assault on social convention and paternal prerogative as well as on paganism" (44). In the Old French Life, the narrator's use of the rose metaphor to describe Juliane and her father reaffirms Juliane's righteousness. Juliane is not merely a misbehaving child who attacks her father's "paternal prerogative," she is an agent of Christ and the rose symbolizes her connection to Him. Affricanz has significantly less of a voice in the Old French Life than

he does in the one that Winstead analyses, which may help to make Affricanz's "paternal prerogative" less evident. Nonetheless, the rose imprisoning the thorny branch figuratively represents Juliane's "assault on social convention and paternal prerogative" in its reversal of perceived "natural" order, in which the daughter should obey her father.

In fact, Juliane challenges Affricanz to punish her excessively, for she will remain steadfast in her faith regardless of how much he beats her. Juliane's suggestion that Christ will save her no matter what: "Pere [...] asseiz me bat, / car damledeus moi saverat" (ll. 200-201), seems ludicrous to the pagan for whom Juliane's "fiancé" is a figment of her imagination because He is not of the physical world. Even worse, Juliane selected this imaginary fiancé without her father's approval and Christianity inspires her belief that He is real. Her Christian beliefs directly oppose Affricanz's pagan beliefs which govern not only religious practice but also his legal system. Regardless, for a Christian audience, in the face of Juliane's backwards pagan society, her defiance is reasonable. Her father accuses her of madness for being Christian: "mut par es fole" (l. 188), so she must defy him. If the opposite were true and Affricanz were in the right, the discipline that he gives his daughter, beating her with the thorny branches, might be socially acceptable for two reasons. First, a certain amount of corporal punishment was seen as an appropriate means of "reasoning with" those who were incapable of comprehending reason. Although the extent to which a medieval author actually based his or her work on historical sources is highly questionable, there was a significant amount of continuity between the ways in which ancient Roman and thirteenth-century authors described "appropriate" uses of corporeal punishment.

According to Sheehan, the rediscovery of Roman legal documents influenced ideas about family law which were developing in the thirteenth century, particularly ideas about marriage. Sheehan notes that “A collecting and sorting, ordering and interpretation of patristic literature went on through the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. The process was assisted mightily by the discovery of the texts of Roman law and the impetus that it gave to the development of legal science” (161). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to draw a parallel between ancient Roman practices of corporeal punishment and those used by thirteenth-century parents. Christian Laes’ study, “Child Beating in Roman Antiquity,” confirms that corporeal punishment was considered part of the necessary process of correction for children’s misbehavior, with a caveat: “A father with a sense of duty will occasionally use the whip on a recalcitrant son, but always *in moderation*” (79, my emphasis). Girls were no different in this respect, and in fact, Laes adds, “Animals, slaves, women and children were outsiders in the hierarchy of the educated *civis Romanus* and had to be brought to a better understanding in a heavy-handed way” (84). Charles J. Reid, Jr. confirms that “While Roman parents were known to rely on beatings to ensure discipline, ‘only the bad parent resorted to corporeal punishment for light offenses.’” Similarly, Reid says, medieval authors such as the thirteenth-century Hostiensis argued that “Discipline is ‘well-approved’ (*bene licit*) where ‘restrained means’ (*modo temperato*) are used” (92-93).

In this sense, Affricanz would be acting in a way in which a rosebush’s thorns should function: to protect the rose by correcting Juliane’s misbehavior and recalling her to reason. Second, this protective function should extend to the rest of his household, for he is its patriarch, and maintaining order within the household requires keeping the

integrity of his people's pagan belief system. According to Eve Salisbury, Georgiana Donavin, and Merrall Llewelyn Price, "it was understood to be the patriarch's duty to protect his property, or as Georges Duby puts it, 'to ward off violence, to threaten with severe punishment anyone who dared to violate the taboo and cross the threshold'" (5). Juliane is a severe transgressor against her father's household. She threatens her family's socioeconomic status because she ends the family line. She also poses a threat to their religious beliefs, and therefore to the authority structure of the society which is centered around them.

Since she is the powerful tyrant's daughter, as well as the most beautiful maiden in the land, Juliane can strongly influence her father's subjects. She can subvert the power her father would have wanted her to have as a pagan noblewoman and use it to spread her Christian beliefs. The text does not explicitly mention Affricanz's possible concerns regarding the dangers which he may face because of Juliane's potential power over his people. However, while Eliseus tortures Juliane, he explains how she is destroying his own household as she encourages his people to convert to Christianity: "Juliane,' dist li paiens, / 'tu fais mes homes cretoiens, / se longement toi lais regneir, / n'ai en la terre ke clameir" (ll. 945-948). Juliane effectively usurps Eliseus' power because he loses his people to her. Therefore, it follows that if Affricanz should keep his daughter in his household, he risks having his people convert to Christianity. It is therefore highly beneficial to him to marry her off to Eliseus as quickly as possible not only because Affricanz would gain honor and material goods from the match, but because by handing over Juliane to the young man, Affricanz eliminates the threat that she poses to his own authority and household. Affricanz seems to recognize this threat because

upon giving her to Eliseus, Affricanz swears to his gods that if Juliane should disobey Eliseus, he should dismember, tear apart, and torture her: “s’ele li fait jor mais enjure, / ke luec la facet demembreir / et depercier et tormenteir” (ll. 217-219). Indeed, Affricanz’s oath signifies the moment of Juliane’s transition from one torturer to another, one generation of patriarch to another.

Even as Affricanz hands over Juliane to Eliseus, which removes Affricanz from the scene, the issues surrounding obedience to a parent or parental figure linger, and they come out in Juliane’s and Eliseus’ discourse and in Juliane’s prayers. The ways in which the children express their concerns demonstrate that while Juliane chooses to remain a virgin, the text actually validates and encourages marriage when the family that results from it is a Christian family in which the family members’ love supports their religious conviction. Although Juliane clearly champions obedience to God over worldly parents when the parents’ orders hinder the child’s ability to serve God, in submitting to Eliseus’ torture, she ironically obeys her father while simultaneously disobeying him. It is as if she accepts the suffering to which Affricanz sentences her when he gives her to Eliseus, because at that point, Affricanz lays out the terms of her punishment. More specifically, the torments which Eliseus later inflicts on Juliane and those with which he threatens her include the torments mentioned by Affricanz.

Juliane obediently accepts her punishment, much as she hints she will when she challenges her father to “beat her all he wants” (ll. 200-201). It is striking that Juliane’s first prayer to God includes a description of the story of Isaac, the perfectly obedient son who permits his father Abraham to offer him as a sacrifice to God. Isaac’s and Abraham’s relationship is significantly different than the one between Juliane and her

father because both Abraham and Isaac put God before their worldly family members, yet Juliane's telling of their story draws parallels between their father-son relationship and Juliane's relationship with her father. Juliane uses Isaac's and Abraham's story as an example of a situation where God rescued an innocent child who was about to be sacrificed, and she begs God to prevent Eliseus from defeating her:

En liu del petit valleton  
 li [to Abraham] envoiat deus un multon.  
 D'icel fui faiz li sacrefisces,  
 s'en fut remeis li homecides.  
 Beaz sires deus! saintismes rois!  
 si voirement cum ce fut voirs,  
 si moi defen, beaz sires pis!  
 ne moi venkent cist anemis! (ll. 286-293).

Juliane is offering herself to God as a martyr, like the "petit valleton" who is replaced by "un multon" to prevent his sacrifice. Furthermore, Juliane eventually dies from being beheaded, and God orders Abraham to behead his son: "son fil ocire et decoleir" (l. 281).

Her comparison to Isaac, a well-known, heroic male child, empowers Juliane. Meanwhile, she weakens Affricanz's position because in comparing herself to Isaac, Juliane makes an indirect comparison between Affricanz and Abraham, a man who acts in submission to God's will. Even if Affricanz shows no love for his daughter, he is a father who, like Abraham, puts his child in a position to be beheaded. However, unlike Abraham, who truly loves God as well as his son and who holds the sword to his son's throat out of obedience to God, Affricanz essentially sentences Juliane to death. He tells Eliseus to torture Juliane and Eliseus ultimately beheads her. Eliseus exacts the torture to which Affricanz sentences her, and she submits to Eliseus' torture. Thus, it is as if Juliane accepts her father's unjust punishment, all the while upholding her earlier



challenge to Affricanz; Eliseus can beat her all he wants because no matter what he does, Christ will save her. Of course, in the Biblical story, Abraham goes to slaughter Isaac not as a punishment but because God has ordered him to do it, in order to test Abraham's loyalty.

Abraham and Isaac form an ideal parent-child pair – according to the logic of the text, their story presents the “correct” hierarchical model for how children should obey their parents and how everyone should serve God. Isaac accepts his fate in spite of knowing that his father must suffer the torment and grief of killing and losing him. Abraham's and Isaac's familial love reflects and supports their love of God. Abraham demonstrates that parents should love their children very deeply but not so much so that their love detracts from their humility before God and their subservience to Him. People must be willing to make sacrifices, even if it means that they suffer the worst losses imaginable.

Sacrifice is present in Juliane's family life not only because of how she sacrifices her life and social status to serve God but also because of how Affricanz influences her to sacrifice herself. The text does not say so explicitly, but the parallel between Abraham and Affricanz hints that like Abraham, Affricanz has offered his child as a sacrifice in his own demented way. Affricanz seemingly sacrifices her not to God but to his pagan gods, because he seeks to exterminate all Christians. According to the logic of the text, God is the ultimate arbiter of justice. Therefore, Affricanz apparently tries to replace God as the one who doles out his daughter's punishment of death by beheading. On the one hand, Abraham is acting in submission to the higher power in which he believes, God, who tells him to kill his son. On the other hand, Affricanz is acting completely of his own volition.

In other words, unlike Abraham, Affricanz's gods do not *tell him* to have Juliane tortured. Rather, *he swears by* his gods that she should be tortured. Whereas according to the story of Abraham and Isaac, God decides people's fate, Affricanz evilly tries to usurp God's power by ordering his daughter's beheading. Thus, Juliane and Affricanz struggle for power in their own ways; Juliane uses simile to demonstrate her humility while Affricanz literally attempts to put himself in God's place by sentencing people to death.

Nonetheless, Affricanz's evil is not specific to the abuse of his daughter; he sentences all Christians to death. Actually, as we will also see with Cristine and her father Urbain, the texts seem to limit the degree to which the fathers are successful at killing their children, which indirectly suggests that their paternal relationships restrain them from completely destroying their daughters. Unlike Urbain, Affricanz never even directly orders anyone to kill his daughter. However, the torments to which Juliane is submitted echo Affricanz's oath that should Juliane disobey Eliseus, the young man should dismember her, riddle her body with holes, and torture her: "ke luec la facet demembreir / et depercier et tormenteir" (ll. 218-219). Immediately before Juliane's account of Abraham's and Isaac's story, Eliseus breaks her bones: "trestoz les os li fait brisier" (l. 266) and immediately after Juliane's prayer, Eliseus threatens to severely injure her limbs: "cum mar eüs les tiens beaz membres, / ki or seront martirijet / et a teil honte deperciet" (ll. 297-299). Although breaking one's bones is not dismemberment, both acts of violence involve bone-breaking, and Eliseus' threat to riddle Juliane's limbs with holes and severely injure them is suggestive of the dismemberment and flesh-piercing that Affricanz mentions. Eliseus even uses the word "deperciet" (l. 299) to describe what he might do to her limbs, the same word which Affricanz uses in his oath.

Much later in the text, Eliseus attaches Juliane to a wheel in order to make good on his threat, “et les siens membres toz derompre” (l. 960), but God restores her, a miracle which Eliseus sees as “mervillos enchantement. / Ge la vi tote demembreie, / et s’est si tost resusciteie” (ll. 1012-1014). On the one hand, although the pagan breaks her bones repeatedly, Juliane remains intact because she will not break her vows to God. On the other hand, in abandoning the pagan faith, Juliane severs her pagan family line and overcomes it.

It may seem that Juliane wishes to remain a virgin and break away from her family because she disapproves of getting married. On the contrary, she values marriage because apparently, she would even give up her virginity, the “possession” to which she is more attached than any other, if Eliseus were to become a Christian and serve God with her. She suggests that she will marry Eliseus if he should have himself baptized.

Juliane tells Eliseus:

ja ton avoir nen amerai,  
 ne mon sanior ne guerperai,  
 ne moi savras ja tant prometre,  
 k’en altre point moi puisses metre,  
 se tu deu reconissois  
 et baptizier ne toi faisois ;  
 [...]  
 Fai toi a saint Esperit temple,  
 deu servirons andui ensemble (ll. 310-319).

Although her idea of “serving God together” might not necessarily include marrying Eliseus, her statement implies that she might marry him because she encourages him to have himself baptized out of love for her. She also repeats that if Eliseus will not love God because he loves her, then he will have no part in her friendship: “Cant tu ne vuls pas par m’amur / deu adorer [...] ja n’avras part en m’amisteit” (ll. 348-351). If loving

another person might lead a nonbeliever to love God, then from the text's perspective, interpersonal love could have great redemptive power. Conversely, Affricanz's poor relationship with Juliane hints that one may not have a loving family when its family members do not love or serve God well. Although Juliane refuses to love or marry Eliseus, her Life encourages one to love others in moderation. Juliane cannot forge a relationship or form a family with Eliseus because he will not convert to Christianity.

Eliseus is unfortunate, "chaitis" (l. 234), because he is too afraid of the consequences of worshipping God; Eliseus is paralyzed in his submission to the emperor, a father-figure whom Eliseus describes very much in terms of lineage and inheritance. Eliseus claims that he would become a Christian out of love for Juliane but he is too attached to the world and fears losing his worldly honor, his inheritance, or his limbs, all of which Juliane sacrifices out of love for God. Eliseus' theoretical conversion out of love for Juliane emphasizes the possibility that one's love for another person can improve an individual's relationship with God. However, emotions such as love and fear of authority figures, which can be positive and lead to serving God well, become problematic when they are excessive. When Juliane advises Eliseus to convert to Christianity, he says that he would obey her except that he fears the emperor too much to do so:

Dist li paiens: "Ja nel ferai,  
ni les miens deus ne guerpirai,  
et nun parkant si t'ain je tant,  
ke je feroie ton commant,  
mais je redot l'empereor;  
tost moi toldroit ma grant honor,  
u moi feroit deseriteir  
u toz les membres decolpeir.  
Ilh ainmet plus deu Apolin

ke toz les homes de son lin,  
 jamais s'amur non averoie,  
 se je ses deus li guerpissoie" (ll. 320-331).

The emperor controls the young man as if Eliseus were a son. Although I am focusing on parent-child relationships between blood relatives, the specific terminology with which Eliseus relates himself to the emperor and the way in which he describes the emperor's attachment to his pagan gods puts Eliseus in a position vis-à-vis the emperor which is akin to Juliane's position vis-à-vis Affricanz.<sup>4</sup> According to Eliseus, the emperor, like Affricanz, loves his pagan gods more than any of the men of his lineage, and this emphasizes the wickedness of both pagan father-figures and of the pagan family structure in general. Eliseus' description of the emperor also has a similar structure to the narrator's metaphor regarding Juliane and her father, where chiasmus highlights the dominant force; with the emperor, "deu Apolin" and "ses deus" surround and overcome "toz les homes de son lin" and "s'amur." Whereas Juliane as the metaphorical rose overpowers her thorny father, Eliseus and the other pagan men who submit themselves to the emperor are overpowered by their fear. The pagan gods ultimately inspire fear and love that encourages the emperor to kill those who do not obey their laws. Just as Juliane's ultimate seigneurial overlord is God, the men's seigneurial overlords are the pagan gods which prescribe their behavior and establish their laws.

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<sup>4</sup> As J. Mulliez points out, in Roman law, "n'est père que celui qui se déclare tel : le père n'est pas celui qui engendre mais celui qui commande: *pater autem familias appellatur qui in domo dominum habet*" ("there is no father other than he who designates himself as such: the father is not he who engenders but he who commands...") (28-29), so as the leader of his people, the emperor is Eliseus' "father." Beyond the strong correlation of kingship to fatherhood, Grace emphasizes that "If one's father died, one entered the wardship of, significantly, his seigneurial overlord, who would provide for one's care, administer one's inheritance, and sometimes arrange for eventual marriage [...] being an heir was to some degree related to being a child of someone" (222-223).

Unlike God, however, the text demonstrates that these pagan gods are powerless beyond their ability to confound and instill fear in people. As the devil Sathanas describes to Juliane when she chains him up, his strength is to make people destroy themselves through the use of deceptive language. Sathanas first appears to Juliane in Eliseus' dungeon in the guise of an angel, God's messenger, and he tries to trick her, claiming that God commands her to marry Eliseus: "Pren lo païen isnelement, / et sers les deus devotement. / Or lo fai tost, nel contre dire, / ce toi mande Jhesus, tes sire" (ll. 404-407). Very briefly, Juliane feels relief that God might approve of her union to Eliseus, saving her from her suffering: "Se la virgene s'en esjoïst, / et granz leece l'en presist!" (ll.408-409). That Sathanas tells her to marry Eliseus while disguised as an angel and more importantly that the devil's argument influences Juliane at all and she has to pray to God to reveal the devil's identity reaffirms that the text does not argue against marriage itself. Rather, Juliane's potential acceptance of the devil's suggestion may serve as a reminder that marriage is a sacrament and God approves of it; Eliseus is simply a bad match because he encourages Juliane to sin.

As we will see, Cristine's mother, like Juliane's devil, comes to Cristine in Urbain's dungeon to beg her to obey Urbain. Juliane's demonic enemy is less dangerous to her than Cristine's mother is to Cristine because Cristine's mother appeals to her daughter using arguments of motherly love. On the one hand, Cristine's mother argues very reasonably that since she gave birth to, nourished, and raised her daughter, it is Cristine's duty to care for her mother in the mother's old age. Cristine's mother also puts the burden of her own suffering on her daughter; should Cristine obey Urbain, he will no longer torture her, so Cristine's mother will not have to suffer the agony of watching her

husband abuse their daughter. This is not to mention that Cristine's own suffering should motivate her to obey. On the other hand, Sathanas can only tell Juliane to obey Eliseus to protect herself from harm; Juliane is not held accountable for any other person.

Even though Sathanas minimally influences Juliane in his attempt to get her to marry Eliseus, the devil uses down-to-earth, convincing arguments when seducing his victims. Juliane makes Sathanas reveal some of these arguments when, with God's reassurance, she captures the devil and forces him to tell her about hell's torments and what sins he most enjoys committing. He describes how he likes to distract people from praying and listening in church by reminding them of their worldly concerns. Sathanas tells churchgoers to get back to work because they must make a living from it. Sathanas reminds them that their earnings can be used to give alms and suggests that they go to church when they have more free time:

aleir t'estuet a ton ahan,  
dout tu dois vivre trestot l'an.  
Mieldre chose est de guaaniar,  
ne soit d'oreir ne de proier,  
car del labour fait almones,  
si en puet hom revestir povres;  
cant tu avras mellor loisir,  
asseiz i porras revenir (ll. 737-744).

Sathanas' arguments make sense because they touch on people's basic needs. Not only does he refer to how his victims must survive the year through their work, he also mentions how they can use their earnings to help clothe the poor, which recalls the narrator's advice at the beginning of the text that one should give alms. The text does not mention using one's worldly inheritance to give alms but a noblewoman like Juliane would likely gain the funds that she would use for charitable acts through an inheritance

rather than through the physical labor which the devil describes. Therefore, a worldly inheritance can be positive if it is properly employed, just as alms-giving is positive when it is not used as an excuse to avoid going to church.

In comparing Sathanas to the devil from Cynewulf's Old English *Juliana*, Strunk praises the simple beauty of Sathanas' arguments in the Old French text. According to Strunk, "There is nothing in Cynewulf's whole poem so lifelike and natural as this simple bit of bad council." Strunk prefers the devil's portrayal in the Old French text because, he explains, "In the *Vie Sainte Juliane*, [unlike in Cynewulf's *Juliana*], the devil repeats literally to Juliana the wicked suggestions by which he leads his victims astray, and his language is precisely that which might be used by some godless man to his churchgoing neighbor" (xxxix-xl). Sathanas' down-to-earth comments are powerful because they are so persuasive, though significantly less persuasive than the emotionally-charged arguments which we will see Cristine's mother make.

Nonetheless, the devil himself is as powerless as the theoretical foolish neighbor whom Strunk describes. Sathanas does little more than bring to the fore the fears and concerns with which his victims' minds are already preoccupied; ultimately, the victims cause their own problems. Sathanas explicitly states that a man who leaves church because the devil has sufficiently goaded him on has tricked himself: "Malvaisement at exploitiet, / cant lui meisme at foloiet" (ll. 775-776). The pagan gods are weak because they operate on a basic level; the gods can encourage people to sin but the gods have no tangible power of their own like God does. Furthermore, because their only power is that of persuasion, the pagan gods lack the ability to confer gifts on their followers, particularly lasting "inheritances," yet these people will undergo torture in hell.



On the one hand, while hell and its torments might be considered another form of lasting “inheritance,” the text never describes them as such. Although the narrator describes Juliane and her father metaphorically, he only refers to hell literally as Affricanz’s burial place when the narrator says that Affricanz is unfortunate because he is damned: “mar lo fist et mar fut neiz, / car en infer en est dampneiz. / Trop at li las male aventure, / cant en infer at sepulture” (ll. 91-94). Likewise, when Juliane forces the devil to tell of hell’s torments, he does not make a comparison with the “martire” (ll. 602, 604) which the devils inflict on the damned; he merely lists them. Specifically, these torments include bathing the unfortunate souls in a river of molten lead, ripping them apart and dismembering them: “une riviere [...] tote de plonc fundu, / asseiz plus trenchet de nul fou. / Illoc baniomes les chaitis [...] lo deschiret et de[m]embre” (ll. 593-600). It is the fate of the damned to suffer these torments, but not the “inheritance” that they earn in exchange for their sinful life.

On the other hand, from the very beginning of the text, the narrator clearly states that Christians will receive their inheritance from God’s kingdom: “ce dist deus, li justeciers, / k’il iert de son regne heretiers” (ll. 11-12). Since the only lasting honor and inheritance are heavenly and one is repeatedly dismembered in hell, Eliseus will eternally suffer from loss of all three things which he fears the emperor, his worldly father-figure, will take from him should he convert to Christianity. According to the Life, the only father who can give his children a lasting inheritance is God. However, the devil’s list of torments, all of which Juliane endures to become a saint, and the text’s suggestions about the importance of giving alms hint that worldly inheritance is not wicked in itself and that worldly possessions can be used for good. Eliseus’ obedience to the emperor is damning

because fear of false gods drives Eliseus to obey and because Eliseus places his worldly desires above all else.

Furthermore, Eliseus' overarching concern for worldly possessions and for the integrity of his physical body belies his unease with challenging and breaking with the traditions of the past. The breaking of Juliane's bones, her dismemberment, and especially her decapitation symbolize her break with her pagan family traditions. The text draws a parallel between Juliane's beheading and a break with ancestral beliefs when the "pagans" who are secretly Christian lament her death. Juliane tells them to abandon the incorrect beliefs of their ancestors and worship God: "guerpissiez ceste creance / ke ja tinrent vostre ancessor / si aoreiz nostre sanior" (ll. 1224-1226). This statement immediately precedes Juliane's final prayer to God, where she reaffirms her readiness to die in God's name, unlike her earlier prayers, which have been pleas for protection to prove God's power before she dies.

Juliane's break with ancestral beliefs is extremely violent, yet the narrator emphasizes that Juliane accepts her ultimate punishment with humility. When the pagan goes to decapitate her, Juliane lowers her head humbly, then the pagan strikes her neck so hard that her head flies off of her body and her soul is severed from it: "Lo chief li baisse humlement, / et cil i fiert si durement, / ke del bu li at fait voleir / et l'anrme fors del cors sevreir" (ll. 1259-1262). Juliane's final motion of humility before the executioner might remind the audience of the importance of a child's humility and show that even Juliane, a model who is disobedient because she is right and her father is gravely wrong accepts the consequences of her actions.

Juliane tolerates and even welcomes her father's and Eliseus' inscription of her disobedience onto her body, exchanging her worldly assets for heavenly ones. She devalues the body and believes that her worldly inheritance and honor must be abandoned in favor of spiritual inheritance and honor. To Juliane, the only true form of inheritance is spiritual.

However, the text does not suggest that worldly inheritance is evil in and of itself, even if Eliseus' allegiance to the pagan gods rests partly on his fear that the emperor would take away his inheritance if he should become Christian. Furthermore, Eliseus' obedience to the emperor as a father-figure would be positive if the emperor were Christian and depending upon Eliseus' motives for obeying. As Juliane urges, Eliseus should have himself baptized to serve and love God with her. Not only does she tell Eliseus to convert because he loves her; she also repeats her suggestion that he convert when he marvels at how God protects her and fixes her broken bones:

Croi mon conseil, si feras bien,  
 et si toi fait ost crestoiën  
 et si croi bien en cel sanior  
 ki m'at faite si grant honor,  
 ki or fui morte et or sui vive (ll.1019-1023).

If Eliseus were to listen to Juliane, he might gain the wife whom he desires as well as God's protection. Juliane and Eliseus might then produce Christian children who could in turn continue the family line and expand God's kingdom. Instead, Eliseus ironically helps Juliane to expand God's kingdom by killing those whom she converts to Christianity and making martyrs. Per the text's logic, Eliseus' motives for attacking Juliane are wicked like Affricanz's – both men seek to stop her from believing in Christ

and to make her worship the pagan gods. However, Eliseus' actions have spiritually positive results because he accidentally gives Juliane a "family" of Christian followers.

The conflict between Juliane and her father is less clear-cut than it may seem at first glance; the text does not instruct all children to disobey their parents, nor does it necessarily prioritize the monastic vocation over marriage. Juliane cannot marry in her society because her father does not provide her with an acceptable partner who would help her in serving God. While it may seem that Affricanz cruelly uses his daughter solely as a tool for personal political and financial gain, marrying her off to a wealthy and powerful lord like Eliseus could be seen as beneficial to a thirteenth-century audience, provided that Eliseus were Christian. Although Juliane disdains and abandons all worldly goods, the narrator's, Sathanas', and Eliseus' references to inheritance and other fiscal issues hint that worldly goods may be properly employed, so gaining a worldly inheritance does not necessarily prevent one from "inheriting" heaven. Furthermore, Juliane's discomfort with the idea of abandoning her ancestral traditions may serve as a reminder that children should maintain their familial customs, assuming that these customs do not interfere with worshipping God. Juliane's humility and comparing herself to the extremely humble and obedient son Isaac counterbalance the unease that she expresses about abandoning her ancestral beliefs and customs. She shows that people must be humble before their superiors, especially children before their parents and God; they should not disobey their worldly superiors unless they are inspired to do so by God. That Juliane and Eliseus voice their concerns regarding issues of filial disobedience and that Affricanz lacks depth of character helps to bring these issues to the fore. Thus, even while the text praises Juliane's righteous disobedience, it highlights the children's

responsibilities and duties to their parents and families as well as the importance of family serving as a model for obeying worldly rulers and God and for loving God.

## Chapter 2: Loving to death in Gautier's *La Vie de sainte Cristine*

The *Vie de sainte Cristine*, narrated by a self-identified Gautier de Coinci<sup>5</sup>, is atypical of most martyrs' Lives in which pagan parents torment their children because Cristine's parents expressly demonstrate that they adore their daughter. The text implies that the love of Christian family members, their cooperation, and their support for one another permit them to build a successful future and attain salvation. It does this through its depiction of Cristine's parents' familial love, their desire to protect their daughter from the "false" God in which she believes, their willingness to permit Cristine to choose her own vocation, and their suffering when she fails to obey. As a pagan tyrant, Cristine's father Urbain suffers from severe internal conflict and ultimately, the adoration he feels for his daughter gives way to the cruelty which has caused him to persecute Christians in the past. Furthermore, Cristine's mother kills herself out of distress at her daughter's suffering; the mother's suicide threats and pleas for Cristine to obey Urbain make the mother both a dangerous and sympathetic character. The mother's arguments regarding maternal and filial love are valid, but her encouragement for Cristine to worship the pagan gods is wicked. In Gautier's text, and especially in the copy that the self-identified scribe Marguerite de Chauvigny completed on December 19, 1465, Cristine's parents, particularly her mother, are significantly more sympathetic and have greater psychological depth than in other versions of Saint Christine's Life, including Jacobus de Voragine's version in the *Legende dorée* and Christine de Pizan's version in the *Cité des*

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<sup>5</sup> Critics suggest that this version of Cristine's Life is one of the texts "d'attribution certaine" of Gautier de Coinci, the thirteenth-century author of the *Miracles de Notre Dame* (Collet, xi). It is very difficult to determine to whom one should attribute authorship of a text and especially authorship of variants within the text, particularly when using a base manuscript which was copied in a period following the death of the person who has been identified as the author. Therefore, when I refer to "Gautier," I will use the name in terms of the text's narrator and not in terms of a historical author.

*dames*. It is possible that Gautier's text targeted a more diverse audience than the other versions of Christine's Life and that the scribe Marguerite had reason to include information which highlights the mother's love for her daughter even more explicitly than one can see in the mother's dialogue in extant thirteenth-century copies of the text.

Before I begin to analyze the ways in which the text intertwines evidence of sympathy toward Cristine's parents with critiques of their wickedness, I will discuss extant manuscript copies and summarize the first half of the text, where the parents play a role. Critics have identified three extant manuscripts or fragments of manuscripts which contain copies of at least some portion of Gautier's *Vie de sainte Cristine*; Olivier Collet, the text's editor, mentions a fourth possible copy, the whereabouts of which are presently unknown (xvi). Collet indicates that the earliest known copy of the text is preserved in four fragments, which are held by the Széchenyi Library in Budapest. Collet dates these fragments to the late thirteenth century, most likely after 1280, though he suggests that their earliest possible date would be around 1250. The Budapest fragments seem to have been copied in France, probably in the region of l'Île-de-France, which is to say modern Paris (xv).

The second oldest manuscript which contains Gautier's *Cristine*, the older of the two relatively complete copies, is held by the Bibliothèque Inguimbertaine de Carpentras; this copy likely dates to the last quarter of the thirteenth century. The text is collated with a series of other religious texts, primarily hagiographic, in both verse and prose. Three scribes participated in the manuscript's production, two of whom copied Gautier's *Cristine*. Based on dialectic traits, Collet identifies these copyists as northern French. In her *Études sur les Miracles Notre Dame de Gautier de Coinci*, Arlette P. Ducrot-

Granderye notes that according to a citation on its twenty-fifth folio, the Carpentras manuscript originated in the Saint-Rémy abbey in Reims (107).

The copyist of the third manuscript, held by the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris (BnF, fr. 817), who identifies herself twice in the text as Marguerite de Chauvigny, states that she completed her copy on December 19, 1465. Although it is not the oldest of the text's copies, Collet uses Marguerite's copy as his base manuscript for his edition on the basis that Marguerite's is the most complete and the least fragmentary (xvi-xvii). I will examine Marguerite's copy of Gautier's text not only because it is Collet's base manuscript but also because it demonstrates that Cristine's story garnered interest during a wide span of time, from the late thirteenth through the late fifteenth centuries, suggesting that this telling of the story remained relevant for later audiences. Furthermore, Gautier's text as presented by Marguerite is of interest because it depicts Cristine's relationships with her parents differently from relatively contemporary fifteenth-century versions of Cristine's Life such as Christine de Pizan's version in the *Cité des dames*.

Marguerite's copy does differ somewhat from the Carpentras manuscript, the most complete of the extant thirteenth-century copies of Gautier's version of *Cristine*. The differences between Marguerite's copy and the Carpentras manuscript are not sufficient to classify Marguerite's copy as a unique "version" of the text. Additionally, Marguerite copied Gautier's *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, and her copy of the *Miracles* is bound together with her copy of *Cristine*. Although the scribe signs her name at the end of each text (*Miracles*, folio 170; *Cristine*, folio 191), the narrator affirms in *Cristine* that



he is “don Gautier de Coinssi” (ll. 3303) and scholars have identified both texts as “Gautier’s” (Collet, xi).

Within the lines covering the first half of Cristine’s Life, the most notable differences between Marguerite’s copy and the Carpentras manuscript are in the scene where Cristine’s mother begs her daughter to obey Urbain. The Carpentras manuscript does not contain a number of lines that are present in Marguerite’s copy. Her copy also has several lines that are not identical to their analogues in the Carpentras manuscript, in which minor changes nonetheless affect the text’s treatment of family relationships. For example, the following lines are not in the conversation between Cristine and her mother in the Carpentras manuscript: ll. 1177-1178, 1180, 1243-1244, 1267-1272, 1276, 1345-1346. Some lines that differ in the copies of the text and which contain references to family or make Cristine’s parents more sympathetic in Marguerite’s copy than in the Carpentras manuscript include ll. 1181-1183 (1182-1184), 1206 (1207), 1215, 1242 (1243), 1292 (1294), 1313 (1314). (Unless otherwise indicated, line numbers I cite are from Collet’s edition of Marguerite’s copy – here, parentheses indicate Carpentras manuscript line equivalents, in cases where the line numbers differ.)

While I will not discuss all of these variants, I will address a few of them when I examine the relationship between Cristine and her mother. I will not attempt to hypothesize whether the copyist added or altered the lines or whether Marguerite was working from a copy already in circulation that differs from the one used in the production of the Carpentras manuscript. That these lines exist as such in Marguerite’s copy suggests that they were of interest to the copyist, and therefore, she or the audience she envisioned for the text may have had an interest in parent-child relationships,

especially mother-daughter relationships. Further work in comparing the text to historical documents remains to be done to speculate whether a thirteenth-century audience of the Carpentras copy of Gautier's *Cristine* or a fifteenth-century audience of Marguerite's copy might have had greater interest in parent-child relationships. I will discuss why the variants are of interest to the parent-child dynamic within the text.

In Gautier's *Vie de sainte Cristine*, Urbain's and his wife's interaction with Cristine suggests that while people must love and obey God and they should not be excessively attached to their worldly relationships, parents should love and discipline their children moderately and within reason. In turn, children should love and obey their parents and care for their parents in the parents' old age. Through the depth of character of Cristine and her family members, this text demonstrates more intensely than *La Vie sainte Juliane* how parents and children should serve God together and love each other. If Cristine were to worship her family's gods and become a pagan priestess rather than a Christian, even the wicked Urbain would not object to his beloved daughter remaining a virgin, although he and his wife have great aspirations for her as their sole heir<sup>6</sup>. Together, Cristine and her parents serve as models for noble families of all types, whether the children marry and become parents themselves or figuratively marry Christ and enter the monastic vocation. Cristine's family also serves as a model for a noble family regardless of whether the noble parents choose their children's spouses and vocations or the children are afforded more choice.

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<sup>6</sup> Previous studies of the versions of *Cristine's Life* that I mention have dealt with Urbain insofar as he is wicked, but have not explored any of the parents' potentially redeeming aspects. For example, Campbell describes his love for his daughter as "incestuous" and "suffocating" (*The Gift*, 92). Catherine L. White examines the role of Urbain in Christine de Pizan's *Cité des dames*, a father whom she justifiably calls "sadistic" ("Not so Dutiful Daughters," 197).

At the beginning of the text, the overarching parental love of both Urbain and his wife strongly resembles that of Christian parents in other saints' Lives, such as in Alessins' Life, which we will discuss in the following chapter. Before Cristine is born, her parents so greatly desire an heir that they fervently pray to the pagan gods for a child (ll. 75-94). Cristine's father Urbain adores his daughter and celebrates her birth with a grand festival (ll. 95-104). However, like Juliane, Cristine is divinely inspired and learns the teachings of Christianity unaided by any religious leader (ll. 105-132). Concerned about his daughter, Urbain shuts her up in a tower in order to prevent her from practicing Christianity (ll.149-236). Since she is the most beautiful maiden in the land, many suitors come to request Cristine's hand in marriage; however, because of her father's exceptional love for her, he wants to be sure of her interest in a suitor before considering a formal engagement (ll. 252-261)<sup>7</sup>.

When Urbain asks Cristine whom she would marry, she prays to God, seeking council from Him as her Father and the Virgin Mary as her mother; Cristine replies to Urbain that she will only marry the "one true King" (ll. 269-376). Despite the harsh way in which Urbain has tried to shelter his daughter from knowledge of Christianity, he turns away the suitors because she wants to remain a virgin and Urbain does not want to displease his beloved daughter by forcing her to marry (ll. 377-388). Urbain accepts Cristine's choice because although Cristine uses circumlocution when referring to Christ as the king whom she wants to marry as Juliane does, Cristine makes it clear that her

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<sup>7</sup> On the one hand, Urbain expresses this concern for his daughter and willingness to let her choose to remain a virgin in all copies of the text, with little variation in wording [e.g. l. 261, which in Marguerite's copy is "Que j'aim plus en ce monde que rien nule vivant" ("Whom I love more in this world than any living thing at all"), as opposed to the thirteenth-century Carpentras copy's "Cui j'aim plus en mon cuer que nulle riens vivant." ("Whom I love more in my heart than any living thing at all")] On the other hand, Christine de Pizan's and Jaques de Voragine's versions of Cristine's Life do not contain any such concern.

beloved “king” is a god. This leads Urbain to believe that Cristine intends to become a pagan priestess (ll. 385-388).

Knowing that her father will kill her when he discovers how she hates his gods, Cristine prays to God and fasts; a devil in her mind argues that she should obey Urbain (ll. 400-432). Meanwhile, Urbain warns Cristine of the gods’ wrath due to her refusal to sacrifice to the gods and begs her to listen to him because both he and his wife love her and they do not want her harmed by her insolence (ll. 636-690). Furious at her father for his insistence that she pray to his gods, Cristine cries out that she is not his daughter and she pushes him away when he tries to kiss her. She explains to Urbain, who is shocked and hurt by her reaction, that she will only pray to the one true God, one God in three in the form of the Holy Trinity (ll. 695-734). Misunderstanding, Urbain explains that the other gods will be angry if Cristine only prays to a few of them (ll. 735-756). To set her straight, Urbain decides to hold a grand feast like he did when she was born and to force her to sacrifice one of a hundred bulls which he will offer to the gods (ll. 757-771). Cristine prays again and begs God to give her the strength to fight back against her father. He sends Cristine an angel who brings her “spiritual food” so that she will not have to consume the food which her parents provide (ll. 779-871).

Later that night, Cristine makes a rope and climbs out of the window of her tower. She goes to the temple and smashes all of her father’s idols (ll. 901-978). The next day, when he sees what she has done, the livid Urbain strikes his daughter in the face and has her beaten. Like Juliane, Cristine stands up to her father and goads him on to continue to beat her (ll. 1027-1155). Urbain has Cristine thrown in a dungeon, intending to starve her (ll. 1156-1166).

Cristine's mother finds out what has happened and is beside herself with grief over the injuries that her husband has inflicted on their daughter (ll. 1173-1194). As Urbain foreshadowed earlier in the text (ll. 660-661), Cristine's mother threatens to commit suicide if her daughter does not obey Urbain (ll. 1205, 1239, 1277, 1288). The mother makes these threats both because of her daughter's suffering and because she cannot understand Cristine's abandonment of their ancestral traditions and religion (1200-1214). Cristine's mother reasons that a daughter must be dutiful and care for her mother in the mother's old age. The mother's arguments focus on her motherly love, which has been intensified by the pains and efforts of child-bearing and nurturing (ll. 1240-1249, 1273-1280, 1285-1293, 1300-1308). Cristine prays to God so as not to be swayed by her mother's pleas and explains to her mother that she would rather have her father boil her in fat than abandon her faith in Christ (ll. 1251-1257, 1263-1272). Cristine's mother describes their conversation to Urbain, which causes him to summon Cristine in order to continue torturing her (ll. 1354-1377).

Upon seeing his daughter, whom Christ has kept healthy and beautiful in spite of her imprisonment, Urbain begins to be tormented by internal conflict between the allegorical figures *Nature* and *Cruauté* (Nature and Cruelty) (ll. 1395-1410). *Cruauté* dominates Urbain's dealings with Christians as he tortures and kills them. In particular, *Cruauté* reminds Urbain that Cristine has destroyed all of his gods because she smashed Urbain's idols, so Urbain should destroy Cristine as a result. However, it is natural for a father to love his daughter and *Nature* champions both parental love and reason; she argues that cruelty is the greatest form of madness (ll. 1411-1447).

As Urbain yields to his cruel, tyrannical side, he tortures Cristine until bloody bits of flesh slough off of her body. She throws some of her flesh in his face, calling her father a werewolf and a dog and telling him to eat the meat that she has thrown before him (ll. 1499-1528). Following further attacks on his daughter, Urbain announces that Cristine's mother has killed herself out of grief (l. 1884). Since Cristine miraculously survives all of Urbain's torments, he has her thrown in the ocean with a rock tied around her neck in order to drown her (ll. 1877-1900).

Christ sends angels to rescue Cristine and baptizes her in the ocean's water (ll. 1918-1994). After her baptism, the angels return Cristine to her father's dungeon, at which point she prays to God for vengeance; Urbain dies and devils drag his soul down to hell (ll. 2012-2020). Although Cristine undergoes torture from two subsequent tyrants before she dies, I will focus on the first half of the text, especially on Urbain's psychological transformation, Cristine's interaction with her mother, and Cristine's replacement of her birth parents with God.

Although Urbain and his wife adore their daughter, it is questionable to what extent their love is truly positive, "natural love," familial affection that is tempered by reason and moderation. While Urbain's paternal love gives way to his tyrannical cruelty, all of his feelings and actions are excessive; the allegorical figure *Nature* warns him of this as he plunges deeper into madness. Urbain's theoretically good intentions in disciplining his daughter are ultimately wicked because his ignorance and the blindness brought on by his pagan beliefs lead him to misuse proper Biblical teachings. Cristine's mother also loves her daughter excessively, as she demonstrates by repeatedly threatening to commit suicide because Cristine will not obey Urbain. Like him,

Cristine's mother cannot understand her daughter's faith and why Cristine would abandon the religion and traditions of their "wise" ancestors as well as her family and inheritance. The mother's incomprehension and excess which leads to her suicide makes her akin to a pagan martyr; however, unlike Cristine, who is beatified by her martyrdom, the mother is doomed to hell, completely destroyed by her excessive love. In her threats and pleas to Cristine, the mother becomes like a temptress, encouraging her daughter to abandon her Christian beliefs and focus on worldly life. The mother's arguments in favor of filial love have an impact on Cristine because she must bolster her willpower to resist them.

Without God's help, Cristine might not be able to categorically reject her parents' familial love; even though there is no indication that she ever feels affection for her father, she does not seem entirely indifferent to her parents' feelings. Cristine's conscious determination to reject their love is evidenced by her progressively more thorough psychological replacement of her worldly parents with God as her spiritual Father, her language reflecting this movement. The text also seems to remind its audience of the parents' wickedness and Cristine's response to it to reinforce why she must disobey them and that her filial disobedience is acceptable only because she suffers unusually dire circumstances. The text seems to be sympathetic to loving parents. It is only because Cristine's parents are pagans who misuse their knowledge of Biblical teachings regarding family, are excessively attached to worldly things, including people, and ultimately abuse and torture their daughter that they are not to be obeyed. Cristine sees worldly love, which is rooted in the material world, as negative, while her parents

focus on its positive aspects. Nevertheless, according to the text's perspective, familial love is generally positive.

Whether familial love is positive or negative relates in particular to the role of *Nature* in Gautier's text. This personified force equips people with both their physical and moral attributes. *Nature* serves as a positive rational force for Urbain, so what I am calling "natural love" is non-incestuous, worldly affection for a family member, which is tempered by reason and moderation.

Although she is the voice of reason for Urbain, as we will see, *Nature* bestows corporeal characteristics first and foremost, as Gautier notes when he describes Cristine. Her shining virtue also reflects in her external appearance; however, Cristine has received her gift of physical beauty and her gift of goodness combined with wisdom from *Nature* and God, respectively. Gautier says that Cristine "Tant par fu bele et gente c'onques a sa faiture / Par le plaisir de Dieu rien n'oblia Nature. / Nature i mist *beauté* et Dieu i mist *savoir*" ("She was so very beautiful and good that never in the crafting of her / By God's pleasure, did Nature forget anything. / Nature put *beauty* [in her] and God put in *wisdom*") (ll. 113-116, my emphasis). *Nature*'s negative aspect, her worldly quality, relates to Cristine's worldview because Cristine has disdain for all things of the physical world, including food and interpersonal relationships of any kind, which she calls "charnel" (e.g. ll. 792, 1257), "carnal" or "worldly." While we think of the term "charnel" today as sexual, in Gautier's time, it often referred to anything worldly rather than divine and according to Godefroy's *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française*, "charnel" was especially used as an adjective defining someone as another person's blood relative. Its primary definition was "du meme sang, intime, en parlant de parents et



d'amis" ("Of the same blood, close, when describing relatives and friends") (Godefroy, "charnel," adj.), which highlights the link between Cristine's refusal to consume the "charnel norrissement" ("worldly nourishment") (l. 792) that her parents attempt to feed her and her plea that God eliminate her "charnel amistié" ("worldly love") for her mother (l. 1257).

Cristine rejects her parents' nurturing, thereby preventing them from fulfilling their parental duty, and she refuses to reciprocate their love and care for her. At the moment when Cristine prays not to love her mother, Cristine's mother has been begging Cristine to take pity on her. Not only does she love her daughter, she has also birthed and nursed her. She emphasizes how her motherly love developed as a result of the pains she suffered to bring Cristine into the world and how she cared for her daughter because of that love. Cristine's mother exclaims, "tant t'aim tenrement et amerai tous tans / Com cele qu'alaitai et portai en mes flans. / Fille, voi cy les costes que ix mois te porterent / Et les lasses mameles que ta bouche alaiterent" ("I love you so tenderly and will love you for all time / As the one whom I nursed and carried in my flanks. / Daughter, see here the ribs that carried you for nine months / And the weary breasts which fed your mouth") (ll. 1243-1246). Like many parts of the text, the mother's speech frequently uses chiasmus for emphasis; the repetition of the verbs "alaiter" and "porter" underscore the critical roles of child bearing and nursing in motherly love and a daughter's duty to her mother as a result of the pains that the mother endures. Providing the child with nourishment is just as critical as carrying her, if not more so, for the mother's mention of breastfeeding surrounds her comment about childbearing. Nourishing a child is doubly important because fathers also participate in this aspect of childcare; Urbain also mentions how he

has “doucement norrie” (“sweetly nourished”) (l. 995) his daughter. According to Cristine’s parents, Cristine should obey and respect them partly because they have fulfilled the significant parental duty of nourishing her.

Marguerite’s copy of Gautier’s text establishes an even clearer link between *Nature*, parents’ care for their children, and familial love than does the thirteenth-century Carpentras manuscript because of the repetition of “charnel” in Marguerite’s copy. Whereas “charnel norrissement” links to “charnel amistié” and by extension, to *Nature* in Marguerite’s copy of the text, the Carpentras manuscript describes the food that Cristine refuses as “mortel norrissement” (“mortal nourishment”) (l. 792). The connection between the mother’s love and the food which Cristine equally rejects makes familial love seem more like a necessity and natural – one needs “charnel norrissement” to stay alive, so “charnel amistié” also serves as a form of sustenance. Without “charnel norrissement,” a miracle of God is necessary to live, and although the text does not say so directly, it implies that only a perfect love of God can replace a total lack of familial love. Since Cristine survives her self-imposed starvation only through superhuman willpower and love of God, even though her mother tries to manipulate her daughter by referring to her parental love and care, the text overall is not criticizing familial love. While Cristine totally rejects all things which are “charnel” in her quest for “savoir,” wisdom that is related to a higher moral and spiritual understanding, and Christianity, Cristine’s Life does not suggest that people should reject their families. Actually, although the text does not mention it, children who go into the monastic vocation and do not materially reciprocate their parents’ nurturing can provide “spiritual nourishment” to their parents in the form of prayers just as God provides “spiritual nourishment” to Cristine while she

fasts. God sends an angel who brings Cristine “du pain esperitable” (“spiritual bread”) (l. 858) when Cristine prays for the strength to fight against her father, whom she calls a “tyrant” at that moment in the text: “Ne me lai, beau douz Pere, por nul tourment plaissier / Vers le tirant qui vieult ton saint non abaissier” (“Do not let me, dear sweet Father, yield for any torment / To the tyrant who wants to debase your holy name”) (ll. 825-826). Although starved of worldly food, Cristine receives strength of soul from the power of Christ. Cristine replaces worldly food completely with spiritual food because she feels that her soul would be compromised by accepting further nourishment from her parents. However, although Cristine refuses worldly food, the kind of food that one would receive from nature, *Nature* is not all bad. On the contrary, *Nature* works in tandem with God to help people develop healthy relationships with one another.

*Nature* is especially positive in her role as the voice of reason for Urbain; she argues that without reason and moderation, he will fall prey to cruelty, the greatest possible folly, and perform the unnatural act of destroying his daughter. In Gautier’s text, “raison” (“reason”), which distinguishes man from animal, permits one to have “savoir” (“wisdom”), but one can have the former without achieving the latter.

Unlike in texts like *Silence*, where *Nature* competes with *Raison*, in Cristine’s Life, *Nature* argues in favor of following reason and moderation, which is the right thing to do, during her debate with *Cruauté*. *Nature* tells Urbain that he must treat his child gently and love her as much as he loves himself: “Tu n’as c’un seul enfant, doucement le demaine / Autant le doiz amer com fai ton cors demain” (“You have only one child, treat her gently / You should love her as much as you do your own self”) (ll. 1439-1440). To some extent, Urbain follows *Nature*’s advice because he loves her as his creation, an

extension of himself linked through lineage. Urbain relates to other people, particularly his daughter, as physical beings because he does not have the capacity to have “savoir.” In fact, he cannot even attain “raison” because he is too “assoté, fol, et nice” (“foolish, mad, and ignorant”) (l. 77). Even though he is very devoted to his pagan gods, Urbain’s belief is purely material. Cristine attacks his gods not only by believing in Christ, but also by smashing the idols in his temple. As he threatens his daughter, Urbain will destroy her whom he created because she destroyed his gods: “D’enfant ne fist nul pere ce que de toi ferai. / Tous mes dieux as defaiz, et je te desferai” (“No father ever did to a child that which I will do to you. / You destroyed all my gods, and I will destroy you”) (ll. 1677-1678). Urbain draws a significant parallel between his daughter and the idols here, which, as we will see, points to his image of her as a form of idol – his paternal adoration leads him to venerate her like an idol.

For a medieval Christian audience, Urbain’s misguided and excessive love should serve as a warning not to love a worldly individual too much, so much so that one loses sight of properly loving and worshipping God. Though Urbain does not indicate here that he “made” his daughter, the repetition of the verb “faire” and the suggestion that she can be “unmade” like the idols serve as reminders that she is one who was created, which can also remind the audience that the saint is still “only human.” Later in the text, when Cristine insults her father, he exclaims, “Trop iez [...] hardie quant tu ainsi paroles / A celui qui ta vie a escrite en sa main! [...] Je ferai de ton cors si grant destruiement / Qu’a lions et a [wivres] ferai ta char mengier” (“You are too [...] bold when you speak thus / To the one who wrote your life in his hand! [...] I will bring such great destruction on your body / That I will have your flesh eaten by lions and by vipers”) (ll. 1796-1801).

His wording in claiming to have written her is interesting because they are both characters whose lives were written and recopied in real people's hands. Just as Juliane's prayer draws a parallel between her father and God, showing the limited extent to which humans can arbitrate justice, Urbain's false statement that he "wrote" Cristine's life emphasizes his powerlessness not only before God but also as a literary character and very much a product of human creation.

When *Nature* warns Urbain against attacking his daughter, her outcry does not suggest that Urbain created Cristine. Though the Life does not state it directly, it reminds its audience that according to its logic, God is the only true creator: "toute joie t'eface / Se tu desfaiz cel[i] que tu as engenee" ("may all joy be taken from you / If you destroy the one whom you engendered") (ll. 1412-1413). Urbain, as he who engendered his daughter, played a relatively insignificant role in Cristine's creation. Regardless, she is still his child, which means that his attempts to "unmake" her are especially horrific. Urbain's actions against Cristine clash with Nature's mandate, especially for a father who once loved his daughter so much.

However, even when he loves his daughter, the irrational and excessive nature of Urbain's paternal love makes it questionable that he ever has truly "natural" love for her. When he turns away Cristine's suitors because he does not want to anger her, he expresses a degree of care for his daughter's wishes that appears to be a demonstration of natural love. Unlike Juliane's father Affricanz, who makes marital arrangements for his daughter contrary to her wishes, Urbain actually asks Cristine whom she would like to marry, if she would have anyone. Urbain explains that many suitors have come to ask her hand in marriage and consults with her as to what he should tell them: "'Bele fille',

fait il, ‘molt t’est bien avenu / De lointaines contrees sont a moi ci venu / Li prince et li hault homme qui te vuelent avoir. / Or me di ton corage, si leur ferai savoir” (ll. 269-272) [“‘Dear daughter’, he says, ‘great good has come to you / Princes and highborn men who want to have you / Have come here to me from faraway countries. / Now tell me your desire, and I will make it known to them” (ll. 269, 271, 270, 272)]. In Lives of virgin saints who object to being married off, it is unusual for parents to question whether or not their children want to marry. This is especially unusual in Urbain’s case because, as we will see, he obsesses over having a child in the first place because he wants someone to inherit his worldly goods and carry on his family line. He tells Cristine’s suitors, “Je l’aime tant que n’os faire chose qui li dessiee [...] Jamais tant com je vive, sur mes dieux le creant, / Ne sera mariee se n’est par son creant” (“I love her so much that I dare not do anything which will displease her [...] Never, for as long as I live, I swear it by my gods, will she be married if it is not with her consent”) (ll. 384-388). Unlike the parents in some saints’ Lives, who simply assume that their children will be happy with spouses whom the parents select, Urbain apparently wants to ensure that his daughter is happily married.

In addition to loving his daughter and wanting her to be happy, Urbain accepts her decision to remain a virgin because he mistakenly believes that she intends to become a pagan priestess. Like Juliane, Cristine uses circumlocution to describe Christ as the only King whom she will marry. Unlike Juliane, Cristine confuses her father for quite some time; rather than directly state that Christ is her “betrothed,” Cristine makes Urbain think that the “one God” whom she will wed is Zeus. Cristine says: “Voirement doi je bien au dieu sacrifier / Qui en moi deigna sens et beauté alier [...] Cil sera mon espous, autre ja

ne penrai. / Celui aim por amor, tous jors mais m'i tenrai" ("Truly and well must I sacrifice to the God / Who deigned to join sense and beauty in me [...] This one will be my spouse; I will never take another. / I love this one with true love; I will keep myself for Him in perpetuity") (ll. 367-372). Cristine's statement "Voirement doi je bien au dieu sacrifier," which sets up Urbain's confusion, is important for two reasons. First, Cristine's comment responds to Urbain's concern that she will anger the gods by dishonoring them. Second, Cristine sacrifices herself to God, both in the form of remaining a virgin to "wed" Him and in the form of sacrificing her body as a martyr.

Urbain's love for his daughter manifests itself because he thinks that Cristine is finally considering a vocation of which he approves and which honors his family in the context of their pagan society. As a parent, Urbain claims that he dares not do anything to displease his daughter when she is acting in a way which he deems to be "sensible." Even though Urbain has kept Cristine locked up in a tower to try to prevent her from practicing Christianity and thus, he has only done things which displease her, he has ostensibly done so only in an effort to protect her from the "false" religion and the foolish beliefs that will harm her. Since natural parental love also involves disciplining children to cultivate positive qualities in them, especially reason and moderation, even Urbain's actions against his daughter are attempted acts of natural parental love.

Although his paternal affection is neither incestuous, as it may seem because of its excess, nor intentionally wicked at the outset, it is *irrational*, and even Urbain recognizes this. During Cristine's judgment, he asks himself: "Comment ferai justice / De cele qu'ai amee tant qu'ainz n'en seu mesure?" ("How can I administer justice / To the one whom I loved so much that I *never knew moderation in it?*") (ll. 1408-1409, my emphasis).

Urbain does not just *love* his daughter, he *idolizes* her. Gautier mentions how Urbain begs Cristine as if she herself were a goddess to pray to his gods: “Si doucement la prie com s’ert dieuesse ou dieux” (“He beseeches her as sweetly as if she were a goddess or god”) (l.677). Though treating one’s child “doucement” (“gently”) is in accordance with *Nature*, idolatry, be it of false gods or people, is *not*. In fact, *Nature* specifically advises that Urbain treat his daughter “doucement” (l. 1439), according to “raison” (l. 1421), and she accuses *Cruauté* of “folie” (“madness”) and “desmesurance” (“being outside the confines of morality or justice”) (ll. 1420-1428). Meanwhile, *Cruauté* retorts, “si tost com la garce eut ses dieux tous desfaiz / La deüst il larder ou pendre ou escorchier” (“Just as soon as the brat had destroyed all his gods / He should have burned or hanged or flayed her”) (ll. 1416-1417). Since *Nature* favors reason and restraint, she calls into question the status of Urbain’s love for his daughter.

When Cristine smashes her father’s idols, provoking the unnatural *Cruauté* in his psyche, she shatters *all* of the images that he worships, especially the way in which he sees her as a person. She transforms from the earthly goddess that he loves more than anything into a demon: “Ce est un vil diables, ce ne fu onques femme” (“This is a vile devil, it was never a woman”) (l. 1890), Urbain rages. He is so blinded by error and cruelty that he does precisely the opposite of what the text suggests is right: he reveres his daughter when he sees her as a person who will carry on his lineage, but he loathes her as a wise and saintly individual.

Urbain’s overarching pride, his “outrecuidance” (“excess”) and “orgueil” (“pride”) (l. 60), not only blind him to that which is good and right, they also push him to extremes, the “desmesurance” (l. 1426) which *Nature* protests as being the greatest



possible folly. Gautier associates a number of Urbain's actions with adjectives and adverbs such as "molt," "grant," and "tant" (all of which have multiple meanings that relate to excess, such as "great" and "greatly," "very much," "large" and "largely," "extreme" and "extremely") to show that he takes them to a degree of excess. For example, before Cristine is born, Urbain wants an heir so much that he madly prays for one:

N'avoit ne filz ne fille, <i>molt</i> en est tormentez,	He had neither son nor daughter, he is greatly tormented by it,
<i>Molt</i> s'en est a ses dieux complains et dementez	He complained and grieved a great deal to his gods about it.
<i>Tant</i> avoit il le cuer assoté, fol et nice	He had such a foolish, mad, and ignorant heart
Qu'offert leur en avoit <i>maint</i> riche sacrefice	That he offered them many a rich sacrifice
[...]	[...]
Urban d'enfans avoir est en <i>grant</i> desirance:	Urbain is in great desire of having a child:
<i>Molt</i> avoit a son cuer <i>grant</i> ire et <i>grant</i> pesance	He had great ire and a great weight on his heart
Quant n'a qui maintenist après lui son barnage,	Because he has no one who would maintain his barony after him,
Ses <i>grans</i> possessions ne son <i>grant</i> heritage (ll. 75-84, my emphasis).	His many possessions or his large inheritance

The repetition of the one-syllable adjectives "molt" and "grant" creates a cadence that reflects Urbain's heightening anger and frustration. Furthermore, the greatness of Urbain's estate and the quantity of his possessions echo his frustration at not having a child who can inherit them. Urbain is so synchronized with his worldly estate that he has gone mad from that which he controls, he has amassed worldly goods to match the magnitude of his wild emotions. Urbain's wife also wants a child very badly and

sacrifices to their gods, but the repetition of Urbain's actions and the detailed description of his wild emotions emphasize his excess more than hers: "La dame en refaisoit *molt grans* oblacions, / *Molt* en est vers les dieux en *grans* afflictions" ("The lady made many great oblations because of it, / She is in a state of great affliction before the gods") (ll. 79-80, my emphasis). She follows his example to a much lesser degree.

Nonetheless, the problem is not that Urbain and his wife pray for a child and greatly desire an heir. In fact they are not unlike the Christian parents of saints like Alessins and Eufrosine, who pray to God and make charitable donations in hopes of having heirs to carry on their family lines. To all of these parents, God gives children who will carry out His will and become virgin saints. Gautier says that while Urbain and his wife prayed to their pagan gods for a child, God gave them Cristine: "Mais puis li dona Dieu por essaucier son non / Une fille molt belle qui Cristine eut a non" ("But then God gave them, to glorify His name / A very beautiful daughter whose name was Cristine") (ll. 85-86). However, Urbain and his wife pray to the wrong gods and Urbain in particular is so immoderate in his prayers and sacrifices that he acts insanely.

Likewise, since he is immoderate, he punishes his daughter wrongly. He does so not only because her disobedience puts her in the right, per the logic of the text, but also because he cannot properly interpret wise lessons regarding childcare. As in the case of Juliane's father Affricanz, from Urbain's perspective, he is initially doing what is best for his daughter when he strikes her in the face and beats her (ll. 1069-1075). In addition to the problem of converting his people, he believes that worshipping any god other than his pagan ones will harm her soul. He recalls Solomon's wisdom: "Voir se dist Salemon: 'Qui espargne la v[e]rge, / Orgueil et desmesure en son enfant herberge'" ("It is true what

Solomon said: ‘He who spares the rod / Cultivates pride and excess in his child’”) (ll. 1001-1002). At the very beginning of the text, Gautier also mentions that one should follow Solomon’s advice: “Le sage Salemon qui fluns fu de savoir / En divine Escripiture a pluseurs fait savoir, / Qui set nul bon essample ne s’en doit ja retraire / Volentiers ne le doie enseigner et retraire” (“The wise Solomon who was a river of knowledge / Made many people know in divine Scripture, / That he who knows any good example should never withhold it / He should gladly teach and tell it”) (ll. 1-4). Gautier describes Solomon’s reference to teaching important examples, rather than his parenting techniques, but the parallel he makes between himself as a good teacher and Urbain suggests that when Gautier calls Urbain “assoté, fol et nice” (“foolish, mad and ignorant”) (l. 77), Urbain’s ignorance may not be a lack of knowledge of proper Biblical teachings. Rather, Urbain is blinded by his foolishness and pagan madness, which causes him to be incapable of properly interpreting and comprehending Solomon’s example. As Gautier explains, Urbain’s ignorance makes it so that “la soutilité / Ne puet savoir n’entendre de Sainte Trinité” (“the subtlety / Of the Holy Trinity, he can neither know nor understand”) (ll. 731-732). Urbain’s misuse of his knowledge may make him more wicked than Juliane’s father Affricanz, who simply does not seem to know Christian doctrine.

The misuse of an ostensibly positive lesson, as Strunk hints in his aforementioned analysis of Juliane’s devil, whom he compares to a bad Christian neighbor (xxxix-xl), makes Urbain a potentially more dangerous adversary than one who is not armed with knowledge. From the outset, then, Urbain fails to rebuke his daughter appropriately *because he lacks moderation* and his extreme cruelty to her is another manifestation of

the immoderate love that he has for her. He may *think* that he's doing what's best for Cristine, but Urbain is so rash and blinded by folly that even if his religious beliefs were acceptable from the viewpoint of the text, he would be incapable of imposing them on her. Paternal love is actually a positive quality and as we have seen with Juliane, discipline by corporeal punishment may not be considered problematic in the context of medieval France or England.

Urbain's problem is not necessarily of disciplinary method; rather, it is an issue of the excess which leads to injury to his daughter. In Laes' aforementioned study regarding child beating in Roman Antiquity, he remarks that "Parenting practices such as corporal punishment may arouse [twenty-first century] concern but may be motivated by love and care. The one thing does not exclude the other" (87). The primary issue with which medieval lawyers would have grappled in a case of child abuse would be to what degree the parent harmed his child. Reid cites an example of child abuse from a medieval legal text: "In *Ad Audientam Apostolatus*, a certain priest was called upon to discipline a member of his family. He struck the offending child with a belt and apparently opened a wound on his back. Although the child lived for a while, he eventually took ill and died, quite possibly of infection" (92). Applying this ruling to Cristine's case, even before he starts torturing his daughter by starving her in his dungeon, Urbain's excessive punishment of her would make him guilty of child abuse. Urbain's actions are wicked because of his excess and because of his motives; since he attacks Cristine to try to force her to worship idols, does he really love his daughter? Although his relationship to his daughter appears to change drastically, Urbain's paternal

love, so strong that it is unhealthy and irrational, and therefore *unnatural*, according to my definition, drives him to rebuke his daughter in overly severe ways.

Urbain focuses very distinctly on Cristine's worldly qualities. Cristine's physical beauty initially inspires his paternal love and he rarely refers to her "savoir" when speaking about her positive attributes or how much he loves her. Gautier describes the moment at which Urbain first lays eyes on his infant daughter as follows: "Quant Urbain voit sa fille ou tant a mis Nature / De beauté qu'il n'est nee tant bele creature, / Tant l'aime tenrement qu'il ne set qu'il en face" ("When Urbain sees his daughter in whom Nature put so much / Beauty that such a beautiful creature was never born, / He loves her so tenderly that he knows not what he should do about it") (ll. 133-135). It may seem that Urbain loves Cristine incestuously but while he has a problem of excessive attachment to his child and affection for her, he loves her as a worldly being and does not demonstrate sexual attraction to her or lust for her. Emma Campbell's analysis differs. She argues that "Urban's love for Christine is excessive to the point of being incestuous. The physicality of [this love] has a suffocating and rather disturbing quality to it; indeed, the fervour of his embraces eventually results in Christine's request that he refrain from kissing her on the mouth because she wishes to make a pure sacrifice to God (Cri, lines 713-16)" (*The Gift*, 92). However, to a medieval audience, kissing on the mouth was not necessarily considered sexual as a twenty-first century audience might interpret it.

Actually, Yannick Carré affirms that in the Middle Ages, people kissed on the mouth for a number of reasons completely unrelated to erotic passion – to greet each other (e.g. 102-106), to seal contracts (e.g. 153), and to make peace agreements (e.g. 163-168). Furthermore, Carré explains that parents kissed their children on the mouth

regardless of the children's age, both as a greeting and as a sign of parental affection: "les parents baisent leurs enfants sur la bouche *quel que soit leur âge* [...] Malgré une préférence plausible pour les garçons (fils héritier ou neveu), les pères aiment aussi leurs filles [...] L'iconographie confirme la pratique du baiser sur la bouche entre parents et enfants" (109, 121, his emphasis). As Carré shows, medieval texts are not lacking in passages where fathers show affection for their children by kissing them on the mouth, "scenes tendres entre un père et sa progéniture" (121). If such scenes depicted incestuous relationships in medieval texts, they would not be so abundant or described by medieval authors in positive terms.

In narrating the passage that Campbell cites to suggest that Urbain loves his daughter incestuously, Gautier makes no indication that Urbain's attempt to kiss her results from sexual attraction. Rather, the joy and pride that Urbain feels when he believes that his daughter has "wisely" chosen to remain a virgin and "marry" one of the pagan gods motivate his kiss. According to Gautier, "Or a Urban grant joie, ja greigneur n'ara hon, / Qu'il cuide qu'ele die Tervagant ou Mahon. / Baisier la veult de joie, ses bras au col li lace, / Mais cele li trestorne et le col et la face" ("Now Urbain has great joy, no man will ever have greater, / For he believes that she is talking about Tervagant or Mahon. / He wants to kiss her out of joy, he wraps his arms around her neck, / But this one pulls away from him both her neck and her face") (ll. 709-712). It is not clear that the "fervor of his embrace" causes Cristine to push her father away.

Rather, she rejects his paternal love because he is trying to force her to worship idols. She specifically tells him that she wishes to make a clean, pure offering to God. His response to her rejection, shock at her comment that she wishes to worship only one

god, does not seem to be the type of anger that one might express at being rejected by his beloved:

<p>“Fui de ci, fui de ci, ne conchie ma bouche!</p> <p>Au Roi volrai offrir offrande nete et monde Qui de nient crea et forma tout le monde.”</p> <p>Son père s’esbahist, si l’esgarde a merveille.</p> <p>“Belle fille”, fait il, “trop par diz grant merveille.</p> <p>Ne peus pas par ung dieu aorer et servir L’amor a tous les autres avoir ne deservir. S’a tous ne sacrifies communement ensamble, Ilz se corroceront tost a toi, se me samble” (ll. 714-722)</p>	<p>“Flee from here, flee from here, do not befoul my mouth!</p> <p>I want to make a clean and pure offering to the King Who created and formed the whole world<sup>8</sup> from nothing.”</p> <p>Her father is dumbfounded, and looks at her, astonished.</p> <p>“Dear daughter,” he says, “you are saying too strange a thing.</p> <p>You cannot pray to and serve only one god, Have or merit the love of all the others. If you do not sacrifice to all of them together, It seems to me that they will all become angry with you.”</p>
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While his shock almost certainly relates to how hurt he feels by his beloved daughter pushing him away, Urbain evinces more concern about how Cristine will anger the gods than he does that she has just told him not to kiss her. If she wished to make a “pure” offering to all the gods whom he wants her to worship, it might even please him.

It is particularly emphasized that his love for Cristine is not incestuous when Urbain turns away Cristine’s suitors because he understands that she wants to remain a virgin. It suggests that if she were to worship his gods, Urbain would allow Cristine to determine to some extent what would happen to her body. He tells her suitors: “ne la voz

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<sup>8</sup> It seems more likely that she means “the whole world” as opposed to just “everyone” here.

os prometre. / De son proposement ne la vueil pas fors metre, / Car je croy que son cuer soit de tel qualité, / Perseverer volra en sa virginité” (“I dare not promise her to you. / I do not want to force her against her will, / For I believe that her heart is of such a quality / That she will want to persist in her virginity”) (ll. 251-254). Then, after he speaks to Cristine and believes that she wants to become a priestess, although he says that she is the one whom he loves the most in the world, Urbain specifies that he will not marry her to one of them because it is her wish to sacrifice to the pagan gods:

“Seigneurs”, fait il, “n’a roi ne prince ne baron En cest mont que ma fille presist mie a baron.	“Lords,” he says, “there is no king or prince or baron In this land whom my daughter would take for a husband at all.
Ne m’en voist nul qui vive d’or en avant priant, Car por tout le tresor qui fu au roi Priant	Henceforth, no one alive shall go entreating me about it, Because for all the treasure that belonged to King Priam
Ne la vorroie avoir tant ne quant corrociee. Je l’aim tant que n’os faire chose qui li dessiee.	I do not want to have her angered at all. I love her so much that I dare not do anything which upsets her.
Puis que c’est adonee aus dieux sacrifier,	Because she has devoted herself to sacrificing to the gods,
De ce puet en moi seürement fier :	Of this, she can certainly trust in me:
Jamais tant com je vive, sur mes dieux le creant, Ne sera mariee se n’est par son creant” (ll. 379-388).	Never for as long as I live, I swear it on my gods, Will she be married if it is not with her consent”

Urbain focuses distinctly on Cristine’s desire; he does not want to *anger* or *upset* her. Unlike Affricanz, who makes an oath that his proposed son-in-law Eliseus should torment Juliane for failing to marry him, Urbain swears that his daughter will not marry,



ironically because he thinks that Cristine is acting in a way which he would deem to be appropriate and she is prepared to give herself over to worship his gods.

Nonetheless, although Urbain's willingness to allow Cristine to remain a virgin suggests that he does not lust after his daughter, it does not mean that he prizes her wisdom above her worldly qualities. Urbain's worldly attachment blinds him to Cristine's most important qualities. Urbain only speaks of Cristine's "savoir" twice and both instances of the word occur during the passage where he believes that she has "come to her senses" and will worship his gods:

<p>"Douce fille", fait il, "vos devés bien penser A hanz dieux de çaiens servir et encenser, Car plus [vos] ont doné et beauté et <i>savoir</i> Qu'il n'en ont consenti nule fame a avoir. [...] - Belle fille", fait il, "vos ferés grant <i>savoir</i> : Meilleur baron des dieux ne poez mie avoir." (ll. 361-373, my emphasis).</p>	<p>"Sweet daughter," he says, "you should think well About serving and censing the holy gods of the house, For they gave you more beauty and wisdom Than they ever consented to letting any woman have. [...] Beautiful daughter," he says, "you will prove yourself to be very wise: You cannot have a better husband among the gods at all"</p>
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To Urbain, Cristine will be "wise" if she is prepared to obey him. It makes sense that a father would see an obedient child as making a wise choice, especially because Urbain thinks that Cristine has finally decided to abandon what he believes to be her "false" faith in God. If she were to obey him, Cristine would be an heir of whom her father would be proud, but he does not seem to comprehend that from the text's perspective, she is truly wise, whereas he is not, and that her beauty is secondary to her wisdom. The lack of wisdom that Urbain perceives in his daughter would be reason to give her corporeal

punishment, as Laes suggests when he mentions how women and children were considered “uneducated” and had to be beaten to be made to see reason (84). Urbain beats Cristine especially because her belligerence suggests to him that she is mad, believing in a deity who is not one of her family’s gods.

Whereas Urbain ultimately expresses his parental love primarily through physical abuse, Cristine’s mother displays hers in an attempt to manipulate their daughter emotionally. Unlike in other versions of *Christine’s Life*, such as Jaques de Voragine’s *Golden Legend* and Christine de Pizan’s *Cité des dames*, Cristine’s mother is an extremely sympathetic character who is instrumental in highlighting issues of Cristine’s disobedience. Cristine has only one conversation with her mother, which takes place in the dungeon. The 183-line dungeon scene may not seem like much in a 3792-line text (in Marguerite’s copy of the text; the same scene in the Carpentras manuscript is approximately 168 lines long), but in her emotional display, Cristine’s mother expresses critical concerns about her relationship to her daughter, how a daughter should demonstrate filial affection, and how a daughter should care for her mother in her mother’s old age. Some versions of *Christine’s Life* treat the mother as a much less sympathetic opponent to Cristine or they eliminate the mother entirely. This suggests that the mother’s role and textual concern for parents’ roles in general may be more significant to both Gautier’s thirteenth-century audience and the audience which Marguerite de Chauvigny envisioned for Gautier’s text than to other audiences, be they earlier or contemporary. Jacobus de Voragine grants the mother one line of direct discourse in the *Golden Legend*: “Christina, daughter mine, have pity on me!” (387). Her plea for pity sounds entirely selfish, for she makes no mention of her daughter’s well-

being. Meanwhile, in *La Cité des Dames*, Christine de Pizan cuts Saint Cristine's mother completely out of the picture (256-261)! A mother concerned about her daughter's safety would presumably fit in well with the community described by Christine's text, and plenty of pagan women serve as positive examples in it. However, Saint Cristine's mother is a bad one because she advises her daughter to worship pagan gods so as to spare herself bodily harm. Regardless of her status in other versions of Cristine's Life, in Gautier's text, the mother appears to genuinely care for her daughter.

Although from the text's perspective, Cristine's mother is also ignorant because of the blindness induced by her pagan beliefs, she seems to have a somewhat deeper understanding of her daughter than her husband does, especially in Marguerite's copy of the text. Cristine's mother first refers to her daughter when the mother laments that Urbain is tearing apart Cristine's flesh, which may make it seem that she is only superficial and focused on Cristine's physical attributes: "Lasse, lasse', fait ele, 'que pris a [a]atine / De sa fille destruire mon baron le tyrans ? / Ha ! bele douce fille, com je suis souspirans / De vo blanche char tenre c'on a hui debatue" ("Unhappy one, unhappy one', she says, 'what vexation took / My lord the tyrant to destroy his daughter? / Ah! Dear, sweet daughter, how I am full of laments / About your tender white flesh that has been beaten today'") (ll. 1180-1183). These lines in Marguerite's copy of the Life differ slightly from their analogues in the Carpentras manuscript, and Marguerite's copy alludes more strongly to the family's troubled situation. In the Carpentras manuscript, Cristine's mother laments, "ki a pris aatine / De *ma* fille destruire c'est Urbains *li tyrans* / He biele fille douce con *je suis desirans* / De *veoir* vostre car tenre c'on a hui debatue" ("who took up the gauntlet / To destroy my daughter it's Urbain the tyrant / Ah dear sweet daughter,

how I am desirous / Of seeing your tender flesh that has been beaten today”) (1181-1184, my emphasis). On the one hand, the mother’s speech from the Carpentras manuscript is exceedingly self-centered. She seems focused on Cristine as an extension of herself in much the same way as Urbain sees their daughter, and she does not refer to her husband as “my lord,” which can also mean “my husband,” but simply as “the tyrant Urbain.” In this passage, she does not evince the kind of concern for Cristine’s plight that the mother from Marguerite’s copy does because when she mentions how she wants to *see* Cristine’s beaten flesh, it is as if the Carpentras mother wants to check on the condition of an asset. This is to say that as an heir, Cristine’s physical beauty makes her more marriageable and therefore, the destruction of it is worrisome. On the other hand, the mother from Marguerite’s copy describes the situation with concern for both *her* husband and *his* daughter, and she is *distressed about* the destruction of her daughter’s flesh. They are linked together as a family, with both husband and daughter involved in the lament.

In both full copies of Gautier’s text, the mother then expresses her parental love in a description of her daughter wherein she depicts Cristine as wonderful in all respects. She focuses on interior as opposed to exterior qualities. It is unclear as to whether her references to beauty are purely about the girl’s physical attributes or if she is remarking on both internal and external beauty, but Cristine’s mother notes more than once that her daughter was endowed with wisdom. Cristine’s mother calls her “ma tres bele fille qui en li enclose a / Gentilesce, beauté, cortoisie et savoir, / Et trestous les bons poinz que femme puet avoir” (“my very beautiful daughter in whom there is enclosed / Kindness, beauty, decency and wisdom, / And truly all the good qualities that a woman can have”) (ll. 1192-1194). As we have seen in *Nature*’s reaction to Urbain, she greatly prizes

“savoir” (l. 1425) and if its placement in Cristine’s mother’s statement is any indication, she, too, believes that it is her daughter’s most important quality. “Savoir” is at the end of the line (l. 1193) and rhymes with “avoir” in “trestous les bons poinz que femme puet avoir” (ll. 1194). Cristine’s mother recognizes her daughter’s key traits, her wisdom and decency, but like her husband, she is unable to comprehend Cristine’s faith.

While she has concern for lineage and inheritance, Cristine’s mother seems even more concerned that her daughter is abandoning the religion of the ancient wise men. She implies that Cristine has given up her own wisdom:

Ton cuer, fille, ou estoit si grant sens assenez,	Your heart, daughter, which was endowed with such great sense <sup>9</sup> ,
Por quoi despit la loi et les dieux ensement	Why does it scorn the faith and the gods as well
Ou li sage ont creü des le commencement ?	In whom the wise men have believed since the beginning?
Tel conseil, bele fille, en ton cuer qui a mis	Who placed such a sentiment in your heart, dear daughter,
Que tu lais por celui pere et mere et amis,	That you leave father and mother and friends,
Joie, honeur et richesse, hautesse et seignorie,	Joy, honor and wealth, glory and power,
Que les juiz pendirent et tolirent la vie ? (ll. 1208-1214).	For the one whom the Jews hanged and whose life they took?

As in Juliane’s Life, a critical component of the central conflict is the saintly child’s rejection of ancestral beliefs. Cristine’s parents believe that their daughter’s acceptance of the “new” religion is foolish particularly because the pagans do not believe in resurrection, a fundamental precept of Christianity. Therefore, for Cristine’s mother, her

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<sup>9</sup> “Assenez” also refers specifically to a woman’s dowry, some of the goods a husband receives upon marriage (Godefroy, “assener,” vb.).

daughter's choice is to love a dead man, Christ, over her living family members. Essentially, she is throwing her life away, and her mother's excessive love is such that Cristine's actions make her want to do the same.

Since Urbain abuses and tortures their daughter, Cristine's mother suffers her own form of martyrdom in the sense that she commits suicide, which to some extent makes her more worthy of compassion than Cristine because she loses not only her life in the process but also her soul. Nonetheless, her use of suicide threats to try to manipulate her daughter to listen to Urbain is wicked.

Cristine's mother has two motives for her self-destruction. First, she kills herself out of grief for her beloved daughter's suffering. Second, the cruelty that she perceives in her daughter's reaction to her pushes her to lose her will to live. Of the three French and Latin versions of *Christine's Life* to which I have referred thus far: Gautier's, Jacobus', and Christine de Pizan's, Saint Cristine's mother's suicide is unique to Gautier's version, which again hints at the relevance of parental roles in Gautier's text. Cristine's mother either threatens or attempts suicide six times before Urbain announces that she has killed herself: "Sa mere se ocist, la chaitive, la lasse" ("Her mother killed herself, the miserable one, the unhappy one") (l. 1884).

Cristine's main movement of attachment to the world – her moment of pity for her mother – takes place immediately after the third mention of suicide, which partly justifies her mother's grief because it suggests that Cristine feels some sympathy toward her mother. Gautier informs us that "La sainte damoisele profondement souspire, / N'est mie grant merveille se li cuer li apite. / Doucement en plorant requiert Saint Esperite / Que de son cuer li ost charnel amistié toute" ("The holy maiden sighs deeply, / It's not at

all a great marvel if her heart is moved to pity. / Sweetly, in tears, she beseeches the Holy Ghost / That He eradicate all worldly love from her heart”) (ll. 1254-1257). It hints that Cristine cares about how her mother is feeling to some extent even though she does not want to care because she fears that her mother might sway her to listen, and therefore, she might take pity on her mother. As her mother loves her to the extent to which she is capable based on her understanding of the world, Cristine reciprocates her love in her own way. For the saintly virgin, this is a form of “carnal” love because it is of the physical world, and she must force herself to reject it lest she give in to the temptation of listening to her mother to stop her from harming herself.

From Cristine’s perspective, her mother plays a similar role to that of the devil who comes to Juliane in Eliseus’ dungeon disguised as an angel; Cristine’s mother is a temptress who argues in favor of praying to the pagan gods in order to fulfill the obligations of filial love and duty. Cristine’s mother is a more dangerous temptress than the devil because her arguments about filial duty harken back to one’s duty to God to love and obey one’s parents, whereas Juliane’s devil only argues that she should marry Eliseus to protect herself from bodily harm. However, Cristine’s mother’s pleas to her daughter to reciprocate her and her husband’s love and care of Cristine also make her a character with whom an audience can identify and may call into question Cristine’s reaction to these pleas. When Cristine’s mother repeats her plea for her daughter to pray to the pagan gods, Cristine lashes out against her violently; she cruelly rejects her mother and denies their relationship. Cristine responds to her mother in the same way in which she had spoken back to her father when he blasphemed God.

Nevertheless, there is a distinct difference of nomenclature which indicates that Cristine retains some filial ties to her mother which do not exist between her and her father. On the one hand, the names which she gives to her father parallel his movement from loving father to cruel tyrant in his treatment of Cristine. At a moment when Urbain lovingly begs his daughter to pray to the pagan gods, he also blasphemes God. Urbain's "gentle" pleading contrasts with how he misuses God's name, which infuriates Cristine and provokes her to tell Urbain that he is not her father. Urbain "si doucement la prie com s'ert dieuesse ou dieux: / 'Trop sera grant', fait il, 'et outrageus les dieux / Si tu metz, belle fille, les dieux en nonchaloir / Pour celui qui ne puet secorre ne valoir [...] Bien doit estre effaciez ses nons et abatuz" ("entreats her as sweetly as if she were a goddess or god: / 'It will be too grave, he says, 'and outrageous to the gods / If you have contempt for the gods, dear daughter, / On behalf of the one who can neither aid [anyone] nor be worth [anything.] / His name should well be erased and struck down") (ll. 677-684). As a loving father, Urbain's motivation to "reason" with his daughter would be positive, except that it is wicked because he is neither reasonable nor sane.

Urbain's desire to erase God's name results in his daughter's open statement of how she has definitively replaced Urbain with God as her father. She violently rejects Urbain, crying out "Ne sui mie ta fille ne jamais non quier estre, / Ains sui fille au hault Roi, le glorieux celestre [...] Garde que ne m'atouche! / Fui de ci, fui de ci, ne conchie ma bouche!" ("I am not at all your daughter, nor do I ever seek to be, / Rather, I am a daughter of the high King, the glorious holy one [...] Beware not to touch me! / Flee from here, flee from here, do not befoul my mouth!") (ll. 697-714). Rather than Urbain erasing God's name, Cristine erases Urbain's identity as her father. Following their



dialogue, Cristine consistently addresses Urbain disrespectfully. She uses terms such as “Hom” (“Man”) (l. 740), “cruelz tyrant” (“cruel tyrant”) (l. 1149), and even “lou varous” (“werewolf”) (l. 1517) and “chien” (“dog”) (l. 1519).

On the other hand, in spite of Cristine’s cruel outburst denying her filial relationship to her mother: “Fui de ci, fui de ci, tu n’es mie ma mere!” (“Flee from here, flee from here, you are not at all my mother”) (l. 1264), she continues to use the name “mere” throughout their conversation (ll. 1281, 1309, 1341). Furthermore, though she lashes out with spiteful words, Cristine seems to express genuine affection for her mother when she uses the term of endearment “Bele mere” (“Dear mother”) (l. 1222), yet it is unclear as to whether she means it when she calls Urbain “Beau pere” (“Dear father”) (ll. 213, 315, 324, 365) or if it is just to appease him. Cristine’s first use of the expression is immediately preceded by her comment under her breath regarding her hatred of the pagan gods and her disgust with her father: “Male flame les arde! / Si bien les aorrai et s’en ferai tel garde / Dont maint païen seront corrocié et dolent, / Voire vous tout premier [qui] m’alés acolant” (“May the flames of hell burn them! / I will pray to them so well and I will observe them so well / That many pagans will be angered and aggrieved, / [Including, o]f course, you, first of all, you who are trying to kiss me”) (ll. 209-212). She only refers to Urbain as “beau pere” three other times, all of which occur in the passage wherein he asks her whom she wants to take as a husband, and she cajoles him for wanting to marry her off at so young an age (ll. 315, 324, 365). Though Urbain shifts from loving his “belle fille” (“dear daughter”) to hating her as a Christian, Cristine likely never holds her father dear.

Cristine's relationship with her mother is more ambiguous and the most significant change in it is effected at precisely the center of the passage describing Cristine's mother's actions and her dialogue with her daughter. The line central to this passage is the one in which Cristine says that her mother is not her mother, which amplifies its pivotal impact on their relationship. It is the "parole si amere" ("so bitter statement") (l. 1273) that no daughter should say such a thing to her mother. Cristine's "parole si amere" reflects her mother's "parole amere" ("bitter statement") (l. 1263), the request that she obey her father and pray to the pagan gods.

The mirroring effect of Cristine's and her mother's speech reflects how Cristine replaces her mother's worldly parental love with spiritual love. In Marguerite's copy of the text, this mirroring effect is significantly more pronounced than in the Carpentras manuscript because in Marguerite's copy, even the methods of suicide and martyrdom that the mother and daughter describe bear a strong resemblance to each other, which again hints that the mother is akin to a pagan martyr.

The mother's and daughter's bitter statements form a chiasmus surrounding Cristine's explanation that she would suffer the worst tortures for her belief in Christ, highlighting not only her desire to be Christian but also her position vis-à-vis her parents' wishes and what her faith dictates. This chiasmus emphasizes in particular the ways in which Cristine and her mother are reflections of each other; their situation is one in which a twenty-first century reader might say, "like mother, like daughter," but the parent and child are also the inverse of one another. From the perspective of the text, the mother is backwards and pagan due to her lack of Christian faith. She attempts to subvert her daughter because she is blinded by the ignorance brought on by her belief system.

Whereas Urbain evilly misuses knowledge of Biblical teachings, his wife simply seems to lack knowledge; she knows that Christians believe in Christ as their God and in resurrection, but she does not demonstrate any other “savoir” or “sagesse” regarding Christianity.

The chiasmus that brings together Christine and her mother makes the mother a verisimilar example because she shows in a violent way how, according to the saint’s Life, one can fall prey to vice due to ignorance of Christian teachings. The mother is both a negative example of a person tormented by vice and one whom an audience might pity because she lacks knowledge and understanding of Christian teachings.

The mirroring effect in Cristine’s and her mother’s speech also demonstrates how the mother’s blindness and excessive grief and attachment to the world prevent her from listening to her daughter’s reasoning regarding following Biblical law and Christ. For eight lines (ll. 1265-1272), Cristine repeats the verbs “aconsuivre” and “ensuivre” in rhyming position to show her mother how crucial it is to follow Christianity:

La virge en hault s’escrie : “Ci a parole amere !	The virgin cries out aloud: “Here is a bitter statement!
Fui de ci, fui de ci, tu n’es mie ma mere !	Flee from here, flee from here, you are not at all my mother!
Si de Sainte Escriture vueil les poins aconsuivre,	If I wish to follow the precepts of Holy Scripture,
Tout me covient laisser por Jhesucrist ensuivre.	It suits me to abandon everything to follow Jesus Christ.
Bien sai de verité que nul ne l’aconsiut	I know well, in truth, that no one reaches Him
Qui ne laist lui meïsmes et de cuer ne l’ensiut.	Who does not abandon himself and follow Him with all his heart.
De si amoureux cuer et de si vrai l’ensiu	I follow Him with such a loving heart and such a true

	one	
Que boullir me lairai en saïn ou en siu		That I will let myself be boiled in fat or in oil
Ains qu'adès jor et nuit de tel cuer ne l'ensiue,		Rather than not follow Him unceasingly day and night with such a heart,
Qu'ainçois morrai por lui que je ne l'aconsiue." (ll. 1263-1272).		Such that I will die for Him before I cease to follow Him.

Cristine's emphasis on the torments she would prefer to suffer rather than abandon Christ do not exist in the Carpentras manuscript. Again, while this may be because Marguerite was copying from a source manuscript that was longer than the one used in the production of the Carpentras manuscript, these lines significantly link Cristine's and her mother's speeches through the way in which they mirror what the mother says about her own suffering. That Marguerite recorded (or potentially added) these lines suggests that she may have been interested in the mother-daughter relationship.

The six lines that appear in Cristine's speech in Marguerite's copy but not in the Carpentras manuscript amplify how Cristine's mother's riposte mirrors Cristine's speech because of both the similarity of their language and the types of torments they describe. The mother uses language referring to the bitterness of Cristine's words, and she describes how a daughter *ought to* love her mother versus how Cristine is treating her. The mother's repetition in rhyming position focuses on the sound "mere," with "mere" as mother, "amer" meaning bitter and "emer" meaning "to love." Central to these eight lines is Cristine's mother's only mention of *Nature*, wherein she refers to the allegorical figure as "Mother Nature" and threatens suicide by drowning in the sea (mer). She highlights the significant linguistic link between the words "mother" and "sea" when she places them in central rhyming position:

La mere respont : “Lasse ! parole si amere	The mother responds: “Unhappy one! Such a bitter statement
Onques mais a nul jor ne dist fille a sa mere.	Never on any day did a daughter utter to her mother.
Fille, respondu m’as si tres amerement	Daughter, you responded to me so very bitterly
C’or puet on por voir dire Nature en mere ment	That now one can say in truth that Mother Nature lies
Quant je tost ne m’oci ou ne me noi en mer.	If I do not soon kill myself or drown myself in the sea.
A ta mere que doiz sur toute rien emer	To your mother whom you should love above all else,
Ne deüsse[s] ja dire paroles si ameres.	You should never utter such bitter words
Trop sont dures les filles qui ne croient leur meres (ll. 1273-1280).	Daughters who do not trust their mothers are too harsh.

Although it is common for narrators and characters in medieval texts to make use of the “mere,” “mer” rhyme and parallel, particularly when they refer to the Virgin Mary in discussions of sea voyages<sup>10</sup>, Gautier’s text very effectively links drowning to the destruction of Cristine’s family.

In particular, Gautier attaches death by liquid torture to Cristine and her mother, even though he does not describe the method by which Cristine’s mother ultimately kills herself. Prior to the mother’s talk of suicide, Urbain foreshadows the event, as well as his own death of grief and the fact that he will attempt to drown their daughter in the sea. Should Cristine persist in her desire to be Christian, Urbain tells her, “Ja s’en corroit ta mere en une eaue noier / Si elle savoit qu’eusses si les dieuz enhaiz” (“Your mother would run immediately to drown herself in a body of water / If she knew that you held

<sup>10</sup> For example, in Rutebeuf’s *Vie de sainte Marie l’Egypcienne*, Rutebeuf mentions that it is bitter to describe the sea voyage that Marie took (ll. 131-133). It was shocking that hell did not swallow up the boat (ll. 134-156) on which “there was no man born of a mother” who, if he wanted to do so, failed to sin with Marie (l. 134-136) while this boat traveled on the “clean and pure sea” (l. 153). Later in the text, Marie prays to the Virgin Mary to make amends (ll. 261-332).

the gods in such contempt”) (ll. 660-661). Even though he does not specifically mention the sea in this passage, he has already predicted his eventual command that his daughter be drowned in the sea (l. 1900)<sup>11</sup>, which sets up the sea as an important site of watery doom: “Je l’aim tant com plus puet pere enfant amer, / Mais je volroie mieux que fust noiee en mer / Que ja [creïst] celui que li juiz pendirent” (“I love her as much as any father can love his child, / But I would prefer that she be drowned in the sea / Than that she ever believe in the one whom the Jews hanged”) (ll. 161-163). Urbain’s prediction of his attempt to drown Cristine and his wife’s threat to drown herself follow a similar pattern, reflecting one another: Urbain loves his daughter more than any father can but he would rather that she be drowned than that she believe in Christ; Cristine’s mother will drown herself because Cristine *ought* to love her more than anything else but she has spoken bitter words to her.

In Marguerite’s copy of the text, the line position within the mother’s outcry of her threat of suicide by drowning also reflects Cristine’s comment about boiling in fat, a liquid torture that she would endure for her perfect love of Christ. Whereas her parents mention the sea, which has some positive ties not only to “Mother Nature” but also to its purifying water because it is the site of Cristine’s eventual baptism, she focuses on boiling in fat, a very fleshly form of death with no possible positive connotations. Cristine’s proposed martyrdom takes the violence of her mother’s suggested “martyrdom” by suicide out of grief to the next level. Although both forms of death are horrible, it seems that Cristine opts for the more repulsive one; death by boiling in fat

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<sup>11</sup> Urbain ultimately orders his men: “Ains qu’il soit ajorné, en mer la me noiez” (“As soon as it is daytime, drown her in the sea for me”) (l. 1900). These are the last words which he pronounces in direct discourse. They seal his demise as opposed to his daughter’s.

would be more like an animal sacrifice to the pagan gods because the fat is also an animal product. However, Cristine's sacrifice is also the only acceptable one, from the text's standpoint, and it is pure and good because it leads to her sanctity. Cristine's mother's pagan ignorance leads her not only to attempt to sway her daughter to worship idols but also to suggest that she "sacrifice herself" in a somewhat farcical baptism, by drowning herself in the very waters in which Cristine is ultimately baptized.

Cristine's mother loves her daughter excessively, there are self-serving aspects to this love, and her maternal ties push her to commit suicide. However, there is more of a sense that her maternal love approaches "natural love" to a degree to which Urbain's paternal love does not. Nonetheless, the same concerns about familial love and inheritance that make her one with whom audience members might identify and which make her potentially sympathetic also make her act wickedly. She performs the unnatural act of suicide because she lacks the strength to withstand human suffering that her daughter draws from Christianity. Between her tyrannical husband and apparently unloving child, Cristine's mother has no one left to bolster her will to exist. Even in her somewhat selfish-sounding plea for pity, she focuses her distress on her daughter and husband: "Cristine, belle fille, se tu vieux que je vive, / Aies pitié de toi et pitié de ton pere, / Aies pitié de moi qui sui ta tenre mere / Qui tant t'aim tenrement et amerai tous tans" ("Cristine, dear daughter, if you want me to live, / Take pity on yourself and pity on your father, / Take pity on me, I who am your tenderhearted mother / I, who love you so tenderly and will love you for all time") (ll. 1240-1243). It is clear that she is losing all that she loves, for which she has lived.

The mother is mad with grief; however, her arguments in favor of filial love and the duty that Cristine has to her make sense. In particular, Cristine's mother's aforementioned comments about how she suffered during pregnancy and childbirth would resonate with a female audience; unsurprisingly, as Fiona Harris Stoerty notes, "Among the reasons given to children for honoring their parents was the agony and danger that their mothers underwent in pregnancy" ("Suffering and Survival," 102). Where Cristine's speech mirrors her mother's, her actions do not; she refuses to honor and care for her mother in the same way in which her mother cared for her.

Cristine's mother argues that just as she cared for her daughter, Cristine should care for her in her old age. She also brings up issues of lineage and inheritance; Cristine is her only child and should inherit all of their family's property:

<p>"Douce fille", fait ele, "car regarde les flans Et les las de costez ou tu fus engenee.  Fille, qui plus iés sade que nouveau miel en ree, Des honeurs te soviengne et des [biens] qui t'atendent. Les grans terres ton père qui en tens lius s'estendent  A toi sont atendens, car s[er]eur n'as ne frere. Ains n'eut enfant que toi ta chaitive de mere  Que tous jors mais deüsses garder et maintenir, Por mener en viellesce et par la main tenir" (ll. 1300-1308).</p>	<p>"Sweet daughter," she says, "now look at the flanks And the weary ribs where you were engendered. Daughter, you who are sweeter than new honey on a comb, Think of the honors and the goods that await you. The great lands of your father that extend to so many places Are waiting for you, for you have no sister or brother. Never did your unfortunate mother have any child but you Who should always, forever, tend to and protect her, To lead her in old age and hold her by the hand</p>
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The difficulties of childbirth and the low survival rate of both mother and newborn child were serious concerns for thirteenth-century women, so the mother's plea that her daughter "repay" her for successfully suffering the pains of childbirth would be a powerful argument. The mother's worldly concerns about inheritance are also reasonable for a noblewoman whose only child refuses to accept her inheritance. Therefore, Cristine's mother becomes like a temptress, a proponent of worldly life who is actually more dangerous than Juliane's demon. On the one hand, Juliane quickly calls into question the demon's thin ruse of making himself seem angelic and there is no reason to have sympathy towards him as Juliane comically jumps on his head and parades him before the crowd of pagans to punish and humiliate him. On the other hand, both because Cristine's mother is one whom Cristine should love and obey and because the mother argues in favor of a daughter's compassion towards her loving parents, the mother demonstrates how insidious these worldly concerns can be if used as a weapon of temptation to influence someone to sin.

Like Urbain misusing Solomon's teachings, Cristine's mother tempts their daughter due to her misguided belief in the pagan gods. The mother is simultaneously sympathetic and extremely wicked; Cristine must reject her because unlike Juliane's demon, whose pleas for mercy serve as comic relief, she makes a seemingly heartfelt and very human plea for pity to her daughter. Nonetheless, as we have seen, Cristine is not entirely callous toward her mother, even if she resolves not to show any affection. Like Juliane's prayers, her prayers express her anxiety about disobeying her parents and rejecting their love.

Cristine's concerns about disobeying her father and rejecting her parents' love reinforce the importance of filial obedience. Before her mother tries to lead her away from her Christian beliefs, a demon in Cristine's mind encourages her to listen to her father. That Cristine's demon manifests himself psychologically rather than physically like Juliane's demon emphasizes Cristine's concern for her betrayal of her family's ancestral traditions and her filial disobedience. Gautier says that Cristine:

Sovent de prie a Dieu, le filz Sainte Marie,	Often she prays with insistence to God, the son of Saint Mary,
Que si son plaisir est, si la gart et conduie	That if it be His pleasure, may He protect and guide her
Qu'ennemis son corage par enging ne sousduie,	So that the devil not seduce her heart by means of ruse,
Qui sovent par pensee tence a li et estrive.	He who often debates and quarrels with her in her mind.
“Ahi !”, fait il, “dolente, com iés fole et chaitive	“Ah!” he says, “unhappy one, how mad and unfortunate you are
Quant tu as diex ton père ne te vieuz assentir.	Because you do not wish to acquiesce to the gods of your father.
[...]	[...]
De croire en nouveau dieu, chaitive, qu'as affaire ? (ll. 420-428).	What business have you to believe in a new god, unfortunate one?

Although Juliane's demon also says that he most enjoys encouraging people to sin by putting evil thoughts into their heads, Cristine's demon is actually *in* her head; he more clearly resembles her father's allegorical *Cruauté* because he never materializes as a physical entity. Since the demon is more like a construct in Cristine's mind than he is a separate entity, his presence suggests that Cristine acknowledges her parents' love and that rejecting them is a serious matter. Cristine's anxiety about disobeying her father

reappears and she specifically calls upon God as Father when she expresses her concerns: “Pere esperitable [...] Pere douz, d’entier cuer a toi servir m’aloi, / Por toi ai deguerpi et mon pere et ma loi. [...] Si toi plaist, beau douz Père, et je vif longuement, / Molt leur cuit bien monstrier que jes ha[iz] durement” (“celestial Father [...] Sweet Father, I consecrate myself to serve you with my whole heart, / I abandoned both my father and my [ancestral] faith for you [...] If it pleases you, dear, sweet Father, and I live long enough, / I very much wish to show them that I hate [the pagan gods] intensely”) (ll. 508-518). She repeats “Pere” in reference to God and opposes “Pere douz” (“sweet Father”) to “mon pere” (“my father”) at approximately the center of this prayer in which she begs God to give her the strength to show the pagans how she hates their gods. Her repetition of “Pere” in reference to God as opposed to “mon pere” reinforces her resolution to replace her worldly father, to whom she refers only once, with God as her spiritual Father.

The specific use of God as Father is striking, especially since at the beginning of the text, Gautier seems to reserve it for Cristine, which emphasizes the way in which she linguistically “annihilates” her father. In the first 1200 lines of the text, Cristine refers to God approximately 72 times, with 31 instances in personal prayers or monologue. Of these 72 references, 10 are to God as “Pere,” one of which is used in dialogue with someone else: Urbain. Meanwhile, only one other reference is made to God as father, which is Gautier’s, when he puts Urbain in parallel to God, foreshadowing Cristine’s linguistic and psychological replacement of her worldly father with God: “Son pere ne vault mie novele li soit dite / Du Pere ne du Filz ne du Saint Esperite” (“Her father does not want any information to be told to her / Of the Father or of the Son or of the Holy

Ghost”) (ll. 235-236). Since only Cristine and Gautier speak of God as father and Cristine specifically uses “pere” with reference to God in her personal prayers, referring to Him primarily as “Dieu” and “roi” or “sire” when speaking to other characters, their usage emphasizes this psychological development.

	Pere	filz	Roi/ sire	Dieu	espous/ ami	Jhesu- crist	St. Esperit	“cil qui”/ “celui”	total refs.
personal prayers/ internal monologue	9	2	10	8	2	0	0	0	31
dialogue with others	1	1	17	13	1	2	2	4	41
% of uses in personal prayers vs. dialogue with others	90%	67%	37%	38%	67%	0%	0%	0%	43%

In her study of Christine de Pizan’s portrayal of Saint Christine in the *Cité des dames*, Catherine L. White says that “Saint Christine replaces her sadistic father with a benevolent one” (“Not so Dutiful Daughters,” 197). White goes on to suggest that Urbain and the other fathers in the works she studies “are responsible for a certain degree of annihilation of their daughters. Despite their annihilation, these women are never consistently dutiful. Perhaps for twentieth century readers of medieval literature, this is more than interesting; perhaps it is encouraging” (198). Twentieth or twenty-first century readers might find these daughters’ disobedience to be “encouraging” because in standing

up to their wicked, abusive fathers, they may seem to be young women championing women's choice in vocation in the face of misogyny in medieval texts.

However, the degree to which a daughter is disrespectful to her father in a Life like Cristine's may be significantly more disquieting to a medieval audience than to a twenty-first century one and Cristine's replacement of her father is also a symbolic form of annihilation. While Urbain literally annihilates his daughter by attempting to kill her, Cristine annihilates him linguistically not only by putting God in his place but also by reacting to him like Juliane acts toward Affricanz. More forcefully than Juliane, who tells her father to beat her all he wants, Cristine actually claims that she enjoys her punishment: "Toute ta tyrannie ne tous tes batemens / Ne m'est [se] deduit non, joie et esbatemens" ("All of your tyranny and all of your beatings / Are, if not delights to me, nothing but joy and diversions") (ll. 1121-1122). As Urbain's destruction of Cristine's body intensifies, she more intensely verbally abuses her father: "Quant tu vieuz, si m'essille, / Que je ne t'apartieng ne ne sui [pas] ta fille, / Ainz sui fille au hault Roi, le Pere esperitable. / Ne vueil pas estre fille a tirant n'a deable" ("As you wish, now torture me, / But I do not belong to you, nor am I your daughter, / Rather, I am a daughter of the high King, the spiritual Father. / I do not want to be the daughter of a tyrant or of a devil") (ll. 1477-1480). Father and daughter mutually tear each other apart; Urbain tears into his daughter's flesh and Cristine damns him for it. She even throws a piece of her flesh in his face, telling him to eat it: "Une piecece sanglante de ses costes esrage, / Son pere l'a flatie droit parmi le visage. / 'Fameilleux vuainz', fait ele, 'lou varous enragiez, [...] Chien, menjue la char qu'ai devant toi jete'" ("She tears off a bloody piece of [flesh from] her sides, / She threw it straight in the middle of her father's face. / 'Famished,

empty thing,' she says, 'Enraged werewolf, [...] Dog, eat the meat that I have thrown before you") (ll. 1514-1519). It seems that "never consistently dutiful" would be an understatement.

Cristine may seem even less dutiful when she begs God for vengeance following her miraculous baptism in the waters in which her father attempts to have her drowned. That she miraculously receives baptism as opposed to dying makes her father's monstrous action ironically positive, in some sense, which might also make him seem more sympathetic. Nonetheless, the text notably reminds the audience of Urbain's evils to balance out the positive aspects of their results and to justify Cristine's vengeful prayer. Cristine, having been returned to her father's dungeon by God's angels<sup>12</sup>, implores God to avenge her and give Urbain his just desserts. When she learns of his death, she thanks God ardently:

<p>“Beau sire Dieu”, fait ele, “haut Roi de tot le monde, Com toute iniquité ou cuer mon père habonde Qui me volt ier ardoir et puis après noier  Por ce que je [ne] volz ton saint non renoyer ! Tu qui ta sainte main as tous jors aouverte Por doner et por rendre a chascun sa deserte, De l’anui qu’il m’a fait si li ren sa</p>	<p>“Dear Lord God,” she says, “high King of all the world, How much iniquity abounds in the heart of my father, The one who wanted to burn me yesterday, and afterwards, drown me Because I did not want to forsake your holy name! You who always opened your holy hand To give and to dole out to each one his just desserts, For the pain that he inflicted</p>
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<sup>12</sup> “En la chartre son pere vers le jor l’en raportent” (“Towards daytime, they take her back to the dungeon of her father”) (l. 1995). This detail is specific to Marguerite’s copy – perhaps it was simply to maintain continuity with the rest of the story, but it does not seem necessary to specify that she returns to *her father’s* dungeon because the text later states that she has been returned there: “Ainci cuide chascun [the pagans] que la vierge soit morte, / Mais ele est en la chartre” (“Thus each one [of the pagans] believes that the virgin is dead / But she is in the dungeon”) (ll. 2057-2058). The earlier mention of the father’s dungeon might also serve to emphasize Urbain’s injustice and the righteousness of Cristine’s request for retribution.

merite	on me, now give him that which he has merited
Que souzhauciee en soit ta sainte loi parfite.	So that your perfect, holy law be praised for it.
Assés m'a fait d'anui por petite achoisson."	He inflicted so much pain on me with so little reason."
De s'ancele oï tost le filz Dieu l'oroison,	The son of God heard the prayer of His servant immediately,
Car je truis en l'istoire, que le voir m'en raconte,	For I read in the legend, which tells me the truth of it,
Qu'en cele eure me[i]smes morut il a grant honte	That in that very hour, he died very shamefully
De mort pesme et horrible, amere et dolereuse.	Of a cruel and horrible death, bitter and dolorous.
En la chartre d'enfer qui molt est tenebreuse	Into the dungeon of hell, which is very dark,
En porterent diablez l'ame toute peestre.	Devils carried the very paltry soul.
Tous nous gart de tel mort la puissance celestre.	May the celestial power protect us all from such a death.
Quant la mort de son père la pucele entendi,	When the maiden heard of the death of her father,
Ses deuz mains vers le ciel en plorant en tendi.	She raised up her two hands toward the heavens in tears.
Le Roi en mercia qui tous jors a tendue	She thanked the King who always tightened
S'aubalestre pour ceux vengier sens atendue	His bow to avenge those without delay
Qui de bon cuer le servent et qui a lui s'atendent (ll. 2003-2023).	Who serve Him with their whole heart and who rely on Him.

Whereas Urbain's many horrible attacks on his daughter do not actually kill her, her prayer successfully leads to his death and devils drag his soul to hell. Furthermore, in Marguerite's copy of the text, that his soul goes to "la chartre d'enfer" ("the dungeon of hell") (l. 2016) sets up a parallel between Urbain's soul and Cristine's body – she remains in her father's dungeon and her father's soul goes to the dungeon of hell, with "la chartre

son pere” (“the dungeon of her father”) (l. 1995) rhyming with “la chartre d’enfer” (“the dungeon of hell”) – Urbain has created his daughter’s worldly hell, so his soul must suffer torments in eternal damnation.

Nevertheless, Cristine’s request for vengeance and God’s response to her plea do not focus on Urbain’s relationship to his daughter. His “iniquité” (“iniquity”) comes from his desire to make her renounce God, while Cristine’s brief mention of the actions he takes to do so seems to function specifically as a justification for why Urbain deserves to die a horrible, painful death. Unlike Cristine’s conversation with her mother, which is heavily charged with repetitions of “mère” and “fille” to underscore the importance of their relationship, “père” occurs only twice in this passage, at the beginning of the prayer and when she discovers that he has died. This repetition forms a chiasmus which gives closure to Urbain’s life and his role in the text.

To some extent, it seems that the father’s incapacity to kill his daughter directly makes him slightly more sympathetic because his actions help her achieve sainthood. Like Affricanz, whose daughter is killed by Eliseus, Urbain’s daughter passes through two subsequent torturers before she dies. Since God does not permit even these wicked fathers to actually kill their children, the texts reinforce the value of familial ties and the idea that only God can ultimately decide when someone must die, recalling again Juliane’s prayer in which she speaks of Abraham and Isaac. According to the texts’ message, Christians who properly devote themselves to God will be protected from the injustices of the world. One of the worst of these injustices would be for a father to harm his own child, particularly if he does so because she has chosen to remain a virgin for God. That Cristine actually receives baptism in lieu of dying when her father tries to



have her drowned can also be a reminder of how a parent is instrumental in having his child baptized, and Cristine's baptism secures her sanctity. Even more importantly, Christ performs the service Himself, so Cristine receives the ultimate baptism. God sends angels to clothe and crown her:

La joie ne la feste n'[iert] ja dite n'esmee	Neither the joy nor the revelry will ever be told or estimated
Qu'ilz font quant la coronne sur le chief li ont mise	That they expressed when the crown was placed on her head,
Que Jhesucrist li a de paradis tramise.	The one which Jesus Christ sent to her from heaven.
[...]	[...]
Ainsi a Jhesucrist portee compaignie	Thus Jesus Christ brought companionship
Par ses anges en mer s'especial amie (ll. 1979-1994).	By means of His angels to His special friend in the sea.

Therefore, the worst possible situation is transformed into the best one by God. He is the only true arbiter of justice and humans can merely beg that He exact it on those who deserve it, as does Urbain. It seems that Cristine causes Urbain's death, at least in part, through her prayers, while Urbain does not succeed at killing her and she is baptized instead. Unfortunately, the degree to which Urbain is sympathetic is tempered by his "unnatural" attacks on his daughter. Although he is a complex character when compared to Affricanz, Urbain's motives and actions make him wicked in spite of the affection which he expresses for his daughter at the beginning of the text.

That Cristine categorically rejects her parents' worldly love does not mean that Gautier's text argues against familial love; rather, as *Nature* argues, parental love is good if the parent is reasonable. Cristine's entire family is volatile and each of its members is either excessive and wicked or transcendently good. Whereas her parents love her

excessively, Cristine loves God above all, which puts her in the right, according to the viewpoint of the text. While Urbain is diabolical because he attacks Cristine physically, her mother is insidiously wicked because she attacks Cristine mentally through emotional manipulation and suicide. Urbain is an example of one who, in addition to worshipping pagan idols and adoring his daughter virtually to the point of idolatry, misuses what knowledge he has of Biblical teachings. He becomes even more dangerous because he has rudimentary knowledge but lacks reason and the comprehension to employ it positively. Meanwhile, Cristine's mother seems to suffer from more complete ignorance. She is a victim of her incapacity to understand and embrace Christianity. Cristine's mother is akin to Eve in that she tries to lead her daughter to sin but she does not realize that what she is doing is wrong. When Cristine refers to Eve in one of her prayers to Christ, she says that He allowed Himself to be hanged "Por le mal decevent decevoir et sousprendre / Qui no premiere mere nos deçut et flata / Quant par ung mors de pomme mors en mort translata" ("To deceive and surprise the evil trickster / Who deceived and blandished our first mother for us / Such that by a morsel of apple, he translated a bite into death") (ll. 814-816). Like Eve, Cristine's "first mother," her worldly mother, attempts to "deceive and blandish" her. Furthermore, however cruel Urbain may be prior to his death, he initially punishes his daughter with good intentions. Both he and his wife want Cristine to be a good heir to their estate and although his methods are wrong, he attempts to protect Cristine from a belief system which he perceives to be evil. Ultimately, although he seeks to kill his daughter when she refuses to the point of becoming his enemy, it is notable that Urbain does not actually succeed. This hints that his, as well as Affricanz's, failure to defeat their daughters directly makes them ever so

slightly more sympathetic or that the concept of a father killing his child is so unthinkable evil that God cannot permit it to happen. Ironically, Urbain is particularly instrumental in securing his daughter's sanctity because his attempt to drown her actually causes her to be baptized.

Through the characters' psychological struggles and especially the depiction of Urbain's severe psychological shift from paternal love to tyrannical cruelty, Gautier's text informs parents of what constitutes "natural" and therefore "reasonable" parental love. Urbain and his wife initially love their daughter so much that their love borders on idolatry. Though parents should love their children, as *Nature* emphasizes, this love should not be so intense that it supersedes either parents' or children's love of God and their religious observation. "Natural" familial love is rooted in the material world, so it can easily hinder one's ability to relate to God. Cristine's progressively more thorough replacement of her parents with God clearly demonstrates that becoming overly attached to someone, even a parent, who does not properly worship God can damage one's soul. Nonetheless, although there is no indication that Cristine ever feels affection for her father, her prayers, like Juliane's, show that she needs God to strengthen her resolve to reject her parents. Indeed, the way in which Cristine needs to bolster her willpower to resist her mother's arguments in favor of filial love hints at the positive aspects of familial love. Parental love and care demand reciprocation from a child in the form of caring for his or her parent in the parent's old age or praying for the parent to protect his or her soul.

As we will see with Alessins, a saint born into a pious Christian family, even a child who leaves his family to pursue a monastic vocation can contribute to his family's

salvation by encouraging them to be more charitable and pious than they already are and by praying that God protect them. In this way, by the logic of saints' Lives like those of Alessins', familial affection can eventually improve one's chances of salvation, although it will compromise one's relationship with God if it is excessive like Cristine's parents' love is for her. Cristine's parents are similar to Alessins' in a number of ways – they pray for an heir, they love their only child and want to give her that which they believe is best for her, even though their idea of what is best is very wrong, and they are blind to their daughter's needs. Unfortunately, unlike Alessins' parents, Cristine's parents' blindness and ignorance make them wicked because this ignorance stems from their pagan belief system, and not merely from a pious Christian's sin of loving his or her son too much. Cristine's parents are also wicked because they actively try to lead their daughter astray – they promote pagan beliefs and try to force her to worship idols, whereas Alessins' parents promote Christian ideals and encourage their son to start a family “with God's blessing” (ll. 112-113). All of these parents are overly focused on worldly concerns, lineage and inheritance, even Alessins', so on the one hand, their presence in the texts helps the texts' audiences see the value of the saints' renunciation of worldly things.

On the other hand, the saints' Lives give value to these parental characters not just as lenses through which to interpret and imitate the saints' actions, but as examples in their own right. The negative example of Cristine's mother can warn the text's audience of the dangers of a lack of faith, while Urbain can demonstrate the dangers of misusing knowledge and punishing one's child inappropriately (after all, devils did drag him down to hell!) As *bad* as they are, these pagan parents are *good* examples of what not to do and

how not to be. While Cristine's devotion to God may be too perfect for most people to imitate, it is relatively easy to see where her parents go wrong and to take away from their actions a lesson that one might follow. Through Cristine's parents' thoughts and actions, the text provides lessons for both parents and children. For example, people should not be overly attached to worldly beings, parents should discipline their children moderately and treat them gently, and children should reciprocate their parents' care and affection. Gautier's text also calls into question at what point worldly love becomes so excessive that it ceases to be love at all, as Cristine's parents abuse her physically and emotionally. I will now turn from this complex and bizarre family dynamic between Cristine and her parents to *Li Roumans de saint Alessin*, where family conflict is further complicated by the more "natural" familial affection of Alessins and his parents and by Alessins' initial attempt to obey his father in spite of his wishes.

### Chapter 3: Marrying into eternal bliss in *Li Roumans de saint Alessin*

While Cristine comes from a pagan family where parental “love” ultimately results in child abuse, Saint Alessins comes from a Christian family in which his parents treat him with great care. Alessins is also a confessor rather than a martyr, and his story might be categorized as a case of “parent-abuse” more than one of child-abuse. Alessins runs away from home on his wedding night, fearing to sin with his wife, Lesigne, because he lusts after her so much, he will lose God while abandoning himself to the pleasures of sexual intercourse. He subsequently returns home after fleeing from the worldly honor of becoming a bishop. Finally, he watches in silence, disguised as a beggar under his family’s staircase until he dies, as his parents and wife continually lament his loss. The thirteenth-century Old French *Roumans de saint Alessin* focuses not only on the importance of familial love and Christian charity, which expands the definition of the family unit to the larger Christian community<sup>13</sup>, but also on the problem of excessive worldly attachment. Charity plays a major role in the text since much of what Alessins does, other than refuse worldly honor, is divest himself of worldly goods; he shares what he earns as a young man with his parents, then he shares his belongings and food with other beggars. Meanwhile, Alessins’ family takes him in as an anonymous Christian pilgrim, his identity concealed by the hardships he has endured, and feeds and houses him

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<sup>13</sup> The text seems to distinguish Christians from non-Christians because when its protagonist travels to Jerusalem and finds that he is the only Christian there, he leaves quickly “because of the [presence of] Jews”: “Pour les Juis n’i osa estre plus, / Car a cel jour que li sains i fu / N’i avoit il des Crestiens nesun” (“Because of the Jews, he did not dare to be there any longer; / For on this day when the saint was there, / There were no Christians at all.”) (ll. 353-355). The pagan parents in Juliane’s and Cristine’s Lives can be compared to Christian parents less directly than the characters in Alessins’ Life because Alessins’ Life seems to exclude non-Christians from the community it depicts. The distinction that Alessins’ family – even the extended “family” of the community-at-large – is one of Christian believers makes the issues which the text brings to the fore more problematic than similar issues presented by Cristine’s and Juliane’s Lives. These issues are more problematic because the characters’ flaws in *Li Roumans de saint Alessin* cannot be blamed on the characters being non-Christian.

(albeit poorly). The text demonstrates how excessive worldly attachment leads to suffering because Alessins' father Eufemiens unknowingly initiates his family's suffering when he arranges his son's marriage, rather than asking Alessins whether he would like to marry, or even exhibiting concern for his son's wishes. The family members' laments convey that their sadness results from the loss of the Alessins they loved – the young man who became a knight and served the emperor, and who seemed prepared to follow a vocational path similar to his father's.

This is not to say that the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman *Vie de saint Alexis*, the version of Alessins' Life with which scholars of French are more likely to be familiar, focuses on different themes, but the *Roumans* expands the roles of all of Alessins' family members, including his parents, making them significantly more sympathetic. While the twelfth-century *Vie* has captured the attention of critics due to its early date (Kendrick, 23), analysis of the *Roumans* has focused primarily on the considerably larger part Lesigne plays in the text as it compares to the role of the unnamed wife in the *Vie*. Perhaps A. G. Elliott, Gaston Paris, and Janis M. Pinder, critics of the *Roumans*, have focused on Lesigne rather than Alessins' parents because the text presents itself as a romance and the manuscript which contains it pairs it with a miniature of Alessins' wedding (e.g. A. G. Elliott, 17; Paris, 202-203; Pinder, 71-73, 75). For example, Pinder suggests that in the *Roumans*, "an appeal to current literary taste is combined with the presentation of a model of obedient wifely fidelity that is divinely sanctioned and rewarded, which counteracts any possible interpretation of the original story as devaluing marriage" (87). Although she mentions the important role of filial obedience in Alessins' undesired marital vows (82-83), it is of secondary interest to her argument regarding the

importance of the depiction of the wife in the text. Critics of the *Roumans* may also devote less time to the parents than to the wife because those who work on the earlier *Vie*, like Molly Robinson Kelly, speak so much about the parents' roles in the *Vie*<sup>14</sup>.

Nonetheless, the *Roumans* shows greater concern for Alessins' parents than does the *Vie*. The *Roumans* refers to them frequently, including during Alessins' conversation with his wife on the night when he leaves home; Lesigne reminds him of the pain which he will inflict on them by choosing to flee. The majority of the *Roumans*' extensive expansions to the text focus on Alessins' wife and parents. It is clear that, as Pinder suggests, it is a response to earlier versions which may have bothered audiences due to Alexis' coldness to his family. Alessins' extended prayers and conversations with his family members almost always show increased involvement in family life and hint at his concerns about them, especially his thoughts that he is sinning by making them suffer. The text has a few expansions to descriptions of the saint's travels (e.g. ll. 323-356) but even then, it refers to his thoughts about family that do not appear in the earlier *Vie*. For example, when he leaves home, he expresses gratitude to his wife for having let him leave (ll. 323-324), then he looks back, thinks about his parents, cries, and has to console himself (ll. 334-336). I will examine in particular the ways in which the *Roumans* uses descriptions of Alessins' interaction with his parents, his conversations with his wife, and the family members' laments and regrets to propose models for improving familial relationships within both the household and the context of a larger Christian community, placing an emphasis on familial affection and charity.

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<sup>14</sup> For some examples, see Burrell (4, 8-10), Durling ("Hagiography and Lineage," 452-456), Kelly (71-77, 85-87, 101-116).



Before analyzing the family's role in the *Roumans*, it is important to summarize the plot and to note its relevant features which expand on the family's role as it compares to their role in the earlier *Vie*.<sup>15</sup> Comparing the texts is important because, at first glance, the *Vie*'s Alexis evinces disturbingly little compassion for his grieving family. Gillespie describes the difficulty of teaching the *Vie* to an undergraduate class: "Quickly, the students grow to dislike [the saint]. Last semester's consensus was that Alexis appears not only cold and uncaring, but downright hurtful. His actions inflict profound grief on the very people who love him most; his willful anonymity adds insult to injury" (47). Gillespie's students are not alone in their discomfort with the saint's actions; Margaret Burrell goes so far as to ask the question: "Does the fact that 'plus aimet Deu que [tres]tut sun linage' (250) mean that Alexis can treat them with sadistic disregard for their distress? [...] What kind of intercessor [between people and God] will he make? What can he understand of human frailty, when he despised that of his family so completely?" (9, 12). The *Roumans* suggests that a medieval audience also questioned Alexis' coldness toward his family and this thirteenth-century version may alleviate some concerns like Burrell's.

The *Roumans* begins similarly to the *Vie*, deploring the loss of the past golden age of chivalry and honor. However, the *Roumans* mentions how loyalty no longer exists between fathers and sons, men and their wives, a comment that the *Vie* does not include. After the prologue, the text introduces Alessins' parents (laises 1-5). Unlike the *Vie*, the *Roumans* names all of the characters who have speaking parts and those who are related

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<sup>15</sup> Following the usage of published editions, I will continue to distinguish between the two versions of the text by referring to the twelfth-century version as the *Vie* and the thirteenth-century version as the *Roumans*.

to them, so in addition to telling its audience that Alessins' father is Eufemiens, it states that his mother's name is Bone Eurée, daughter of Flourens (l. 56). The parents, childless after being together for a long time, are very unhappy; they pray to God, who grants them their son (laissez 5-6). The text then gives specific details of Alessins' youth and his active engagement in family life prior to his marriage that are unique to the *Roumans* (laissez 7-8).

Eufemiens, thinking about the future, seeks a bride for his son. He selects Lesigne, the daughter of Signourés and another only child whose father wants to find a good match for her (laissez 8-10). Alessins marries Lesigne and when Eufemiens tells him to go to bed with her, he obeys, little as he wants to, so as not to anger his father (laissez 10-12).

However, once they are alone in the bedroom, Alessins gazes at his beautiful bride and fears to sin with her and lose God. He prays, begging God that the devil may have no power over either him or Lesigne, and acknowledging that his father thinks to do what is best for him (laisse 13). Alessins then begins to speak with Lesigne, deploring worldly life and asking her to devote herself to God, which he intends to leave home to do. He cuts his wedding ring in half and gives one half to Lesigne, which he asks her to keep (laissez 14-17). Unlike in the *Vie*, where Alexis' wife does not respond to his similar actions, Lesigne questions Alessins' motives and asks how she should react. While he continues to urge her to devote herself to God, she repeatedly begs him to tell her when he will return. She states that he has a very hard heart to leave not only her but also his loving parents, who, she reminds him, will be devastated by his disappearance. Nonetheless, she knows that she cannot change his mind, so she gives him leave to go,

making their separation consensual, which was necessary for a formal separation in the eyes of the church<sup>16</sup> (laissez 17-24). She then proposes a compromise: a celibate marriage, in which the husband and wife would remain together, devoting themselves to God and never consummating their marriage, which Alessins rejects on the grounds that he might still lose God in such a relationship (laisse 24).

Following the conversation with his wife, Alessins leaves the house, boards a ship, and goes on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem (laissez 24-25). He travels by land to the city of Alsis, where he distributes all of his money and belongings among the poor, then joins the other beggars who are sitting near a statue of the Virgin Mary (eventually, the statue will miraculously speak, informing a cleric of how Alessins left his parents to become a holy man) (laissez 26-30).

At this point, the narrative turns back to Alessins' family, as they grieve for him. Alessins' wife expresses her desire to stay with Alessins' parents; she has decided not to remarry, and to serve God as Alessins had asked her to do. Eufemiens and Bone Eurée accept their daughter-in-law into their household, praising her devotion to their son, and together, the three of them lament about his loss (laissez 31-36).

Eufemiens sends his servants to find Alessins; as in the earlier *Vie*, they come upon him among the beggars in Alsis and even give him alms, but they do not recognize him because his physical appearance has been changed by his hard life (laissez 37-39). A scene that does not take place in the *Vie* follows; it shows compassion for Alessins' family which seems to be lacking in the *Vie*. Alessins follows the servants and overhears

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<sup>16</sup> According to Pinder, "for the public of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries [, the problem of Alexis' flight after marriage] created difficulties in two areas [: Alexis' intention in making the vow of espousal against his wishes, and whether he left his wife with her consent.] These areas both involved the notion of consent, which by the thirteenth century was recognized as an essential condition for a valid marriage" (74).

a conversation which they have with their host, where they explain that they are looking for a young man whose father is beside himself with grief over his missing son. Hearing this, Alessins thinks of how his heart has hardened and is reminded of his gratitude to his wife for having given him leave to go (laisse 40).

The description of how God makes the statue speak for Alessins and the ensuing conversation between Alessins and the cleric, Ermener, to whom the statue speaks, also mentions Alessins' family, which it does not in the *Vie*. The statue tells Ermener to seek out the "man of God" who abandoned his father, mother, and entire family for his love of God. Ermener finds Alessins, who identifies himself and gives a bit of background about how he became a clerk, then a knight. He explains that he had married, then left his wife and family to become a hermit (laisse 42-45). News of the miracle of the speaking statue spreads throughout the land and the people want to make Alessins a bishop. However, because he wants no part of the worldly honor, he boards a ship and flees (laisse 46). The ship travels to a port near Rome, where God has destined it to go.

Alessins fears that his family, friends, or the people of the city might recognize him, and that they might take God from him by forcing him to return to his previous life as a lord and husband. He prays to God that he should remain concealed by his decrepit physical appearance, but that he might be able to see his family without them realizing who he is (laisse 46-50). The *Roumans* then shows Alessins praying from a psalter that describes the relationships of parents and children, a scene which does not appear in the *Vie*. This encourages Alessins to request lodging from Eufemiens, for love of God and his lost son. They have a lengthy conversation, in which the text details the reactions of both of Alessins' parents when they hear mention of their son and describes how they

take him in, in spite of another lord's, Constantins', offer to house and feed Alessins instead (laissez 51-56). In the earlier *Vie*, Alexis' and Eufemiens' conversation is minimal and involves neither Alexis' mother nor another charitable individual who steps forward to offer Alexis room and board (laissez xliv-xlvi). The *Roumans'* expansion of their conversation is significant because it is one of the moments in which Alessins recognizes the strength of love between a father and son, making him more human than Alexis, at least as Burrell sees the latter (6-8).

As in the *Vie*, Alessins takes up residence under his family's staircase, at which point the *Roumans*, like the *Vie*, indicates that in spite of seeing him often, no member of his family ever speaks to him or asks him his name (*Roumans*, laisse 58; *Vie*, laisse xlviii). Actually, this is not the case with the *Roumans*; eventually, both of his parents and his wife do speak to him, and his father asks his name. His mother and wife have a conversation with him during which he begs forgiveness from his mother for having burdened her with his illness; she tells him that "all will be forgiven of him" (laissez 63-65).

He remains under the stairs, surviving on table scraps, for seventeen years, and when he foresees that he will die, he writes a letter with the story of his life (laissez 67-72). At this time, a miraculous voice calls out in the city, telling the people to seek the man of God who will heal them. When the voice informs the distressed populace to look at Eufemiens' house, they accuse him of having sinned by hiding this holy man from them, but he defends himself, saying that he knew nothing of the man (laissez 72-78). As Alessins is on his death bed, he speaks to his wife, asking her to arrange for his burial.

While Alessins' soul passes on, the bells in the city miraculously ringing for him, Lesigne comments that she believes he is her beloved (laissez 81-82).

The man who has served Alessins during his stay under his family's staircase informs Eufemiens of "the pilgrim's" death, and the father goes to his dead son, in whose hands he finds the letter. Eufemiens tries to take the letter, but he cannot, so he goes to the pope, saint Innocent, who, along with Rome's two emperors, pray that God let Innocent take the letter, which the pope does (laissez 83-89 [90]). Unlike in the *Vie*, when Innocent shows the letter to the people, it miraculously flies up out of his hand, settling in the bosom of Alessins' wife.

Lesigne is frightened by this miracle, which the text's narrator describes as a sign from God of the loyalty that men owe their wives. Innocent reassures Lesigne that she is blessed because God chose to give her the letter (laissez 90-94 [95]). She and the pope give the letter to saint Ambrose, who then reads it to the people. When Alessins' wife and father hear about Alessins' life, they begin to grieve very bitterly (laissez 94 [95]-102 [104]). Bone Eurée hears her husband's lament, and hurries to the room, mad with grief, crying and kissing her son's dead body (laissez 103 [105]-110 [113]). Lesigne comes to, and continues to grieve, lamenting that she is now a widow (laissez 111 [114]-115 [119]).

The pope chides the family for grieving excessively, and points out that the dead Alessins will heal the people of Rome through miracles (laissez 116 [120]). The people carry the body away, singing joyously, and any ill person who touches it is instantly cured. They transport it to the church of Saint Boniface, where Alessins had asked Lesigne to have him buried. After the rich tomb is made, Alessins' family reluctantly allows him to be buried, mourning bitterly (laissez 125 [129]-131 [135]). The family

stays together, Alessins' parents and wife all serving God, and the narrator indicates that Lesigne's and Alessins' souls are now in heaven together, singing their psalms (laises 132 [136]-134 [138]).

Thus, it seems that in the afterlife, they have attained the spiritual union which Lesigne had proposed to Alessins on their wedding night. Since their union in heaven refers back to their post-nuptial conversation, it might seem like a more satisfying ending to the text than the similar ending in the earlier *Vie*, which appears to be a more abrupt, feebler attempt to justify Alexis' actions and make him seem less cold to his family.

Alessins does express significantly greater concern for his family, not only for his wife, but also for his parents, than does the Alexis of the *Vie*, and this concern emphasizes the importance of familial love. Especially in the *Roumans*, the love between Alessins and his parents makes the family's situation more complex than that of Cristine's family. According to the logic of the texts, because Alessins' parents are devout Christians, and they love God, they are capable of feeling affection for one another and their child to a degree to which Cristine's parents are not.

To see how the *Roumans* addresses potential audience concerns regarding the saint's behavior in other versions of his Life, as well as how it addresses issues of familial love in general, I will first look at Alessins' interactions with his parents, including his thoughts about them when he is not speaking to them. In so doing, I will examine how the text shows Alessins' greater concern for them than that of the *Vie*'s Alexis, as well as the text's depiction of problems with excessive worldly attachment, which may cause people like Eufemiens, who think that they are doing good, to cause harm to themselves and to their family members. Second, I will examine Alessins'

conversations with his wife, to see the various potential family structures that the text presents, particularly that of the spiritual marriage, the appeal of which the text seems to emphasize. Third, I will explore the ways in which Alessins' family's laments and regrets express the pain inflicted on them not only by their loss of Alessins, but also, to a lesser degree, by the resulting breakdown of the traditional family structure, as well as how Lesigne's devotion to her husband restructures the family into what I will call a "spiritual family."

Overall, the text seems to advocate two forms of spiritual marriage as good possible family structures for the laity. In the first model, the "spiritual family," which is ultimately exemplified by Alessins' parents and wife, they produce one child, fulfilling their traditional familial duty of reproduction, then shift to a family structure in which they abstain from sex and devote themselves to God. In the second model, the one proposed by Lesigne, a married couple remains together without sexual intercourse, and husband and wife both "marry" God, taking vows of celibacy. While the text suggests that this second marital model more closely approximates the kind of relationship which a devout individual might achieve with his or her spouse in the afterlife, and thus it is a more perfect form of relationship than either the traditional family or the "spiritual family," a lay couple is more likely to be able to form a "spiritual family" than to have a spiritual marriage, and the "spiritual family" is a better family structure than the traditional family. Therefore, in spite of Alessins' rejection of worldly life, the text does not seem to recommend that its audience imitate him explicitly in renouncing worldly things. Rather, it implies that worldly familial affection might lead to a greater capacity



to love God, if the believer is not too blinded by excessive worldly attachment to focus sufficient attention on heavenly matters.

The text foregrounds the crucial role of the secular family from the beginning by showing how Alessins is very much a product of his secular noble education. Alessins is born as a result of God answering his parents' prayers for a child, and the text includes adjectives that praise them for raising him as good Christian parents should. Although the conditions of Alessin's birth are not really interactions between him and his parents, I will discuss his birth because it relates to his formation as a Christian nobleman and his youth.

The births of saints in Lives that mention their parents often occur as a result of the parents' prayers, a "motif" which Karl Uitti notes is "in keeping with the tendency of hagiographic literature to stress the earliest observable signs of holiness [where] extraordinary circumstances frequently attend the saint's birth." Furthermore, Uitti compares this motif to the story of Abraham and Isaac, with the significant difference that in these saints' Lives, it is the child who "offers himself [to God], usually in opposition to his parents' wishes" ("Paradigm, Legend, Meaning," 271).

We have seen a similar motif of parents praying for a child, who then sacrifices herself for her love of God, in Cristine's Life. Cristine's birth is more unusual than Alessins', because God gives her to her parents in spite of their prayers being directed toward their pagan idols, and her situation is somewhat closer to Isaac's in that her father attempts to sacrifice her, albeit to the wrong gods. God chooses to give Cristine to her parents so that she can combat their pagan belief system and convert their people, so in

their case, the blessing of a child might be considered a gift from a vengeful God as opposed to a benevolent one.

God gives Alessins to his parents, however, because of their piety and devotion. They pray to God humbly and “parfitement” (l. 60), an adjective which has the dual meaning of “perfectly” and “completely” or “accomplishing their goal” (Godefroy, “parfiner,” vb.; *Complément*, “parfaitement,” adv.). Like the abbot who prays on behalf of saint Eufrosine’s parents<sup>17</sup>, Eufemiens and Bone Eurée ask for a child who will be pleasing to God: “Diu en apelent andoi parfitement: / ‘E, Rois de gloire, par ton commandement, / Soit ta mercis et tes otriemens / Qu’enfant nous donne[s] qui soit a ton talent” (“Both of them prayed to God for one perfectly: / ‘O, glorious King, by your decree, / May it be that out of your clemency and your bounty / You give us a child who would be pleasing to you.”) (ll. 60-63). It is noteworthy that they ask for a child “a [Diu] talent” (who is “pleasing to God”), since the specificity tends to result in children who are inspired to choose monastic vocations. Nancy Vine Durling suggests that “only a remote suggestion of parental sanctity is found in the [earlier *Alexis*...] The saintliness which the prayer would *seem* to imply instead functions ironically, as an ultimate frustration of the parents’ real, worldly ambitions for their son. The saint’s separateness

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<sup>17</sup> Similar to Alessins’ parents, Eufrosine’s father and mother lament that they have no child to inherit their property and land (ll. 25-30). The father, Panuze, then prays for a child and gives alms (ll. 31-35). Panuze seeks the help of an abbot (ll. 56-60), who intercedes on his behalf and asks God to give Panuze a child, if God should “see his profit and his improvement in it” (ll. 66-79). The abbot’s caveat to the prayer causes Panuze’s wife to give birth to the saintly child who will ultimately help her father become more pious.

In his discussion of the “motif” of the saintly child whose parents conceive him as a result of their prayers, Uitti cites the example of “St. Daniel the [Stylite, whose] parents were barren until his mother made special prayers, miraculously answered when she conceived and bore him; Alexis too was God’s answer to his parents’ entreaties (and vow – as expressed in some versions of the legend – to remain chaste should their prayers be answered)” (“Paradigm, Legend, Meaning,” 271).

(his defining attribute as *hagios*) is anticipated by the parents' request" ("Hagiography and Lineage," 453). In the thirteenth-century *Roumans*, although the prayer has somewhat ironic results, there is no indication that it downplays the parents' sanctity. The text might even make the couple's prayer seem slightly more humble than its counterpart in the *Vie* by including the line "Soit ta mercis et tes otriemens" ("May it be that out of your clemency and your bounty") (l. 62). Gaston Paris suggests that this is a line "sans intérêt" (an "uninteresting" line) which has been added to the text (202).

On the contrary, I would argue that the addition of this line is of interest because it makes a nod toward the text's greater focus on the family's role. As long as Alessins' parents pray humbly and fulfill their obligations to God, one of which would be reproduction following marriage, the couple's sanctity should not be called into question. From the viewpoint of the text, the parents' more evident humility makes them better Christians. Therefore, it makes them better examples in their own right, not just characters whose reactions to the saint help an audience to identify with and imitate him. A good Christian who continues his noble line and governs his family's estate will serve God well, even if he is not as holy as a virgin saint, as the text hints later when Eufemiens tells his son to go lie with his new bride "a Damediu congié" ("with God's blessing") (l. 113). Presumably, a man who seeks to produce an heir is acting to serve God because matrimony is a sacrament and reproducing with one's spouse is pleasing to God, albeit less so than remaining a virgin. This would be the case especially if the child himself is pleasing to God.

That prayers for children "a Diu talent" (who are "pleasing to God") often result in saintly children might remind the audiences of saints' Lives not only of the power of

prayer but also of how important it can be to word prayers carefully. Alessins' parents, among others whose children secretly leave home to become hermits or nuns, want an heir to their family's estate who will continue their family line. Instead, God answers their prayer exactly as they word it, giving them a son who will devote himself to Him. Kelly points out that "if Eufemian's and his wife's prayers for a child are deemed worthy of such a miraculous answer, the couple is probably not entirely lacking in righteousness" (103). Rather than tone down the parents' sanctity, as Durling's analysis seems to suggest, the text demonstrates that they are good Christians, worthy of God's indulgence, because God grants them a child in accordance with their humble prayer.

Not only are the parents good in their humility and devotion to God, they also care for their child in accordance with Christian traditions. The text indicates that after Alessins is born, his parents have him baptized, then raise him:

De saint bastesme l'on[t] fait rengenerer, Bel non li misent selonc crestienté.	They had him reborn in holy baptism, They gave him a good name in accordance with Christian precepts.
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Baptisiés fu, s'ot a non Alessis; Qui le porta volentiers le nourri, Puis li bons péres a escole le mist; Tant aprist letres ke bien en fu garnis, Puis l'envoia l'empereour servir (ll. 67-73).	He was baptized; his name was Alessins. She who carried him willingly nourished him, Then [his] good father sent him to school; He learned his letters so well that he was very learned in them, Then he <sup>18</sup> sent him <sup>19</sup> to serve the emperor.
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<sup>18</sup> Alessins' father

As a good mother, Bone Eurée, whose name means “Blessed One” or “Happy One,” raises her son, with whom she has been blessed, “willingly.” Then Eufemiens, “the good father,” sends Alessins to school, and when he has been well-trained in letters, he sends him to serve the emperor. This description of Alessins’ upbringing seems to be a model for the text’s audience to follow in starting a family, especially since the line which begins “Puis li bons péres” (“Then the good father”) is central to the *laisse*. Its central position highlights the importance of having one’s son well-educated.

This fairly standard line<sup>20</sup> could resonate with quite a broad audience in the thirteenth-century, for at the time, an increasing number of specialized vocations were becoming available to the laity, as David Herlihy explains:

Medieval society, once a simple association of warriors, priests, and peasants, came to include such numerous and varied social types as merchants, lawyers, notaries, accountants, clerks, and artisans. A new world was born, based on the cultivation and preservation of specialized, sophisticated skills.

The emergence of specialized roles within society required in turn a social commitment to the training of children in the corresponding skills. Earlier educational reforms—notably those achieved under Charlemagne—had largely affected monks and, in less measure, clerics; they had little impact on the lay world. One novelty of the new medieval pedagogy, as it developed from the twelfth century, is the attention now given to the training of laymen. Many writers now comment on the need and value of mastering a trade from early youth. Boys, notes Philippe of Navarre, should be taught a trade “as soon as possible” (*Women, Family and Society*, 229).

Although noble lords like Alessins would have needed to be well-trained to run their estates, and being able to read and write would be important for handling financial and

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<sup>19</sup> Alessins

<sup>20</sup> Other saints whose fathers have them well educated include Catherine (ll. 138-144), Eufrosine (ll. 86, 99-100, 135-136), Gilles (ll. 37-68), and Nicholas (ll. 66-68). It is worth noting that like Alessins, all of these saints are also only children. For example, see Catherine (l. 140), Gilles (l. 256), and Nicholas (l. 59-60).

legal matters, Herlihy's description of the increasing diversity of specialized skills in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries suggests that the *Roumans'* might have appealed to a mixed lay audience, in which some members were not necessarily of the high nobility, but for whom a basic reading knowledge might have been crucial.

In general, but especially for noblemen like Alessins, being lettered would give one options for either lay or monastic vocations, which could be particularly important for second or third sons whose brothers would gain their family's inheritance, requiring them to enter monasteries. However, if their older brothers were to die, they might have to take over the family estate and be prepared to manage it (Newman, 206). Alessins is an only child, but since he makes a vow to God and relinquishes his inheritance and leaves his wife, his example might console an audience member who has no choice but to enter the monastic vocation because his brother will inherit his family's estate. Therefore, before the text describes Alessins' success while working for the emperor, in addition to reminding its audience that Alessins' is, after all, "only" human, it provides important advice for lay audience members and sets up both Alessins and his parents as exemplary characters whose actions could be imitated by several groups of people: noble parents, parents of lesser status whose children might advance in society by learning a trade, and children who will eventually either become noble lords or enter monasteries.

Next, the text shows Alessins' active participation in lay society and his investment in his family. It explains how Alessins serves the emperor well; he becomes the master chamberlain and is richly rewarded for his service. He then gives his parents much of what he earns:

Li emper[er]es ot non Oteviens;            The emperor was named

Illuec servi enfreci a .vii. ans,	Otevians <sup>21</sup> . There he <sup>22</sup> served until seven years had passed,
Et puis l'a fait son maistre cambrelanc.	And then he <sup>23</sup> made him <sup>24</sup> his master chamberlain
Se li carja tous ses commandemens,	And entrusted him with all his orders
Et sa justice deseur toute sa gent,	And his rulings over all his people,
Cevaus et murs et palefrois amblans,	Horses and mules and ambling palfreys,
Et plainnes males entre or fin et argent.	And coffers full of both fine gold and silver.
Son père ama, si l'en a donné tant,	He loved his father, and he gave much of it to him
Et a sa mère, rice sont et manant (ll. 74-82).	And to his mother; they are rich and powerful.

The earlier *Vie* lacks these details of Alexis' youth and particularly the mention of how he loves his father and mother. Like in the previous *laisse*, where "li bons pères" ("the good father") is placed at the center to emphasize it, "Son père ama" ("He loved his father") starts the line in the middle of this *laisse*. This emphasizes how a son should reciprocate his parents' affection and take care of them as they have taken care of him.

The second half of the *laisse* describes how Eufemiens chooses to find a bride for his son:

Or voit li père que mais n'ara enfant	Now the father sees that he will never have a child
Mais que ce seul que il par aime tant,	Other than this only son whom he loves so very much,
Dont se pourpense del siecle en avant;	Then he thought about the generation to come,
Sil velt qu'il prenge moillier a son vivant,	And he wants him <sup>25</sup> to take a wife during his lifetime;
Pour li a quise le fille un noble Franc (ll. 83-87).	He sought the daughter of a noble Frank for him.

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<sup>21</sup> "Octavian" in English

<sup>22</sup> Alessins

<sup>23</sup> The emperor

<sup>24</sup> Alessins

<sup>25</sup> Alessins

Essentially, the first half of the *laisse* describes Alessins' active participation in lay family life, and the second half, the event that drives Alessins to leave this life. The *laisse* outlines the duties of the young nobleman: working and gaining honor and prestige through good service to the emperor, loving his parents and contributing to his family, and carrying on his family line after marrying a woman of whom his father approves. It also shows the father's role in choosing a marital partner for his child.

Comparing the text's description of Eufemiens' role in arranging his son's marriage with its description of Eufemiens' own marriage seems to emphasize the difference between the father's and son's goals for their respective adult lives. While Eufemiens apparently seeks out a bride for Alessins without asking him whether he will marry, it seems that Eufemiens makes a more active choice to marry. Although it may be implied that Eufemiens' and Bone Eurée's marriage was similarly arranged by their fathers, the text says that he "*prist moillier vaillant et hounorée*" ("took a wife who was worthy and honorable") (l. 54b, my emphasis) and "*il l'espousa au los de ses parens*" ("He married her with his family members' approval") (l. 57)<sup>26</sup>. Though Alessins similarly marries Lesigne "*al los de ses parens*" (l. 97), the subjects of the verbs describing the terms of their marriage are clearly their fathers. The two fathers choose to have them married and meet to set the date of the wedding:

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<sup>26</sup> In comparing the *Roumans* to the twelfth-century *Vie*, this line is one of those which Gaston Paris sees as an unnecessary addition to the text: "Trois vers sans intérêt sont ajoutés à la str. 5" ("Three uninteresting lines are added to *laisse* 5") (202). The other two "uninteresting" lines are the one that repeats the names of Eufemiens' wife and her father, and the line that I previously mentioned as a possible amplification of the couple's humility, which extends their prayer for a child. Together these three lines are as follows: "Bone Eurée, li père ot non Flourens / Il l'espousa au los de ses parens, [...] Soit ta mercis et tes otriemens" ("Bone Eurée, whose father was named Flourens; / He married her with his family members' approval, [...] May it be that out of your clemency and your bounty") (ll. 56-62).



La pucele iert de mout grant parenté,	The maiden was of very noble lineage,
Fille a un conte de Rome la cité	The daughter of a count from the city of Rome.
Lesigne ot non, ses péres Signourés;	She was named Lesigne, her father, Signourés;
N'a plus d'enfans, bien le puet marier.	He has no other children; he is able to marry her off well.
Emsemble en vont li doi pére parler;	The two fathers go to speak about it together;
Les .ii. enfans veulent faire asambler.	They want to join the two children in marriage.

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Noument le terme de leur assablement;	The fathers set the date of their marriage;
Quant vint au jour se fisent belement (ll. 88-95).	When the day came, they celebrated it beautifully

The structure of the ninth *laisse* indirectly emphasizes the fathers' goal of marrying their children to continue their noble family lines because "parenté" ("lineage") at the end of l. 88 is placed in parallel with "asambler" ("join") at the end of l. 95. The only verbs in *laisse* 9 that have a subject other than Eufemiens and Signourés apply to Lesigne, and they only show traits which would be of interest to Alessin's parents in a suitable bride for their son. Lesigne's description as "de mout grant parenté" ("of very noble lineage") and "fille a un conte" ("daughter of a count") focuses on her in the context of her family (there is no physical descriptor of her as a beautiful young woman, for example, which the text gives later, during the bedroom scene, where she becomes Alessin's "temptress," the woman who might cause him to be tied to worldly life).

The two fathers' goals take priority over their children's, which is reflected in the way the text sets them up as the subjects of the *laisse*. Signourés, like Eufemiens, whose only child is Alessin, has no child other than Lesigne, so *he* can marry her off well. The

fathers *go* to speak to one another, and *they* set the date for the wedding. Alessins and Lesigne take no active part in this process and there is no indication that Eufemiens thinks to involve his son in the choice in any way.

The father's blindness to his son's needs that results from Eufemiens' attachment to the world sets in motion the family's problems because Alessins, as a good son, obeys his father implicitly, even though he does not want to get married. Immediately after the wedding takes place, the text explains that Alessins wants no part of it: "Mais de tout çou ne vausist il nient, / De tout a a Diu son talent; / Plus aime Diu que nule riens vivant" ("But he did not want any of this at all, / He places all his desire completely in God; / He loves God more than any living thing") (ll. 99-101). The concepts of how little he wants to go through with the marriage and how much he desires God form a chiasmus in these three lines, which emphasize that God is at the heart of Alessins' desire, whereas worldly love is undesirable. He wants to get married "nient" ("not at all") and in the *laisse*, this parallels how he loves God more than "riens vivant" ("any living thing"). Meanwhile, God, at the center of the three lines, is also central to the last line; Alessins' desire focuses on God, but he is in an overwhelming position of being attached to unwanted worldly love. The text strongly contrasts Alessins' wishes with his parents', for the central line of the next *laisse* expresses their great pleasure that he has married Lesigne: "Mout en fu liés et li père et li mere" ("Both his father and his mother<sup>27</sup> were very joyful about it") (l. 104). Although the text does not say so explicitly, it seems to imply that the

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<sup>27</sup> It is not entirely clear if this is describing the joy of just Alessins' parents, or if Lesigne's parents' joy is also implied, since both fathers so fervently desired their children's marriage.

parents want for their son the kind of happiness they have had in their married life. They apparently assume that he will be happy living like they do.

As selfish as their desire to have their son married might seem, Alessins' parents believe that they are doing what is best for him, as he notes when he prays to God: "Mes péres m'aime; si cuide grant bien faire. / Qui me desfie de la vie terrestre / Tollir me vieut nostre signour celestre" ("My father loves me and believes that he is doing a great service. / He who defies me in this terrestrial life / Wishes to take away our celestial Lord from me") (ll. 135-137). While Eufemiens focuses on continuing his family line by marrying his son to Lesigne, he does not seem to see other options for Alessins' future vocation. By showing that Alessins acknowledges that his father is trying to give his son the best possible future in the only way he knows how, the text shows sympathy for the noble parents. Alessins' prayer suggests that the text is not against traditional marriage for everyone.

However, it is not an option for Alessins himself, as he expresses his concern that he will be tied to worldly life and lose God as a result. Furthermore, Alessins does not seem to disagree with his father when Eufemiens tells him to go lie with his wife, with God's blessing. It is not that Alessins thinks God is opposed to a husband and wife lying together; it is simply not what Alessins wishes to do:

Ce dist li péres, "Biaus fius, alés coucier Avoec t'espose, a Damediu congié."	The father says this: "Dear son, go lie With your spouse, with God's blessing."
Ne vaut li enfes son père corecier;	The child does not want to anger his father;
Sus se leva envis u volentiers;	He stands up, be it begrudgingly or willingly;
Va en la cambre o sa gente moillier.	He goes into the bedroom with

<p>Li père i fu et la mère au coucier (ll. 112-118).</p>	<p>his noble wife. The father was there and the mother as they went to bed.</p>
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The central lines of this *laisse* are “Ne vaut li enfes son père corecier / Sus se leva envis u volentiers” (“The child does not want to anger his father; / He stands up, be it begrudgingly or willingly”) (ll. 114-115) and the lines ending with “coucier” (“lie” / “go to bed”) form a chiasmus that stresses how trapped Alessins feels by the fear of angering his father and his impulse to disobey.

As the chiasmus also expresses the parents’ involvement in arranging the bedchamber for the wedding night and their presence in the room while Alessins and his wife are prepared to go to bed, it even more strongly contrasts Eufemiens’ and Bone Eurée’s wishes with their son’s. Pinder notes that the “motive of filial obedience” which these lines express is the reason behind both Alessins’ acceptance of his marriage vows and his reluctant move to go to the bedchamber with his wife (82-83). That Alessins obeys his father in spite of his wishes once again shows sympathy for the parents and confirms that Eufemiens is not wicked or wrong *per se* to send his son to bed with Lesigne, even if it is ultimately not right for Alessins to lie with his wife.

In her discussion of the earlier *Vie*, Molly Robinson Kelly notes that the text bears no evidence which would suggest that Eufemiens’ worldview is wrong just because it differs from his son’s: “The *Life*’s presentation of two co-existing perspectives, held by two good men, underlines how difficult it is for a ‘normal’ person like Eufemien to understand God’s will [...] This scene, and the prominent presence of Alexis’s family in general, indicate the poem’s development of a multifaceted truth that surpasses simplistic

dualities” (77, n. 23). As Kelly explains, both Alessins and his father see possibilities for his future that would be theoretically valid in God’s eyes.

Alessins cannot obey his father and lie with Lesigne even though filial obedience is generally appropriate in cases where the parent is not instructing the child to do wrong. Alessins fears that his soul will suffer from the life which his father has arranged for him. As a result, he will run away from home, causing his parents’ and wife’s worldly suffering, a necessary evil for the betterment of all their souls, according to the text’s message. Again, this message applies to both parents and children: the parents’ failure to recognize their child’s needs can lead to suffering, as can the child’s disobedience.

Although Alessins flees from his worldly life and familial duties of governing his family’s estate and carrying on his family line, the text suggests that its audience should sympathize with the family for their grief through Alessins’ thoughts about his parents and wife, and the concerted effort he must make to harden his heart toward them. While fleeing, Alessins pauses to look back at his home and he thinks about his parents: “Regarde Rome et en lonc et en lé [...] Puis se li est de son père membré / Et de sa mère; si commence a plourer. / Par lui meïsmes s’en est reconfortés” (“He looks up and down at Rome. / [...] Then he was reminded of his father / And of his mother and he begins to cry. / He consoled himself about this.”) (ll. 328-336). His need to comfort himself hints that it is at least partly a personal sense of loss for his family, and not just detached compassion for how his parents will feel when they learn of his disappearance. Unlike some later passages in the text which focus more on the family’s grief, the degree to which Alessins’ thoughts show worldly affection for his parents reminds the text’s audience of the importance of familial love and how the saint is only human.

Whether the majority of his thoughts about his parents and wife focus on Alessins' personal loss or concern for his family, they indicate a significant bond between parents and child that is not present in the earlier *Vie*, which contains no indication that Alexis thinks about his parents at all from the moment he is alone with the girl in the room to the moment when he boards the ship (ll. 56-76). Alexis does not recognize that his father was doing what he thought was best for him, nor does he pause to gaze back at his homeland, tearfully remembering his parents. In the thirteenth-century version, Alessins' need to console himself for the loss of his family further suggests that the text was composed for an audience which includes laypeople because it hints at his need to dissociate from his previous lay life. It shows how even a saint who fled from worldly life may suffer from abandoning his family.

Later in the text, however, there is a shift in Alessins' thoughts about his family; not only do they continue to focus more on concern for the family's grief than Alessins' own sense of loss for his family, but they sometimes turn to his wife when he hears about his parents. Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean that Alessins' affection for his parents has been overridden by his love for his wife, and rather than lessen the importance of the parents' role, it helps tie them together with the children as a unified, loving family under God, keeping them in the foreground rather than phasing them out as does *La Vie sainte Juliane* with Juliane's father.

One moment in the text where Alessins hears about his father and thinks about his wife is when he overhears his father's servants, whom Eufemiens has sent looking for him, speaking to their innkeeper. They say that the man for whom they are searching is a young man whose father is so bereft at his loss, no man who heard him lament would

have so hard a heart as not to cry: “Onques ses péres, qui l’avoit engené, / N’ot plus d’enfans, sel pooit mout amer / [LACUNA] / Sous ciel n’a houme, s’il l’ooit regreter, / Ne li estuece des iex del cief plourer” (“Never did his father, the one who engendered him, / Have another child, and he was able to love this one very much. / [...] / There is no man under heaven, if he heard him lament, / Who should not be forced to cry his eyes out.”) (ll. 485-488). At first glance, Alessins’ initial reaction to this speech may seem like he does not feel for his father because he does not cry as the servants suggest that he should. Rather than express sympathy for his father, he displays gratitude toward his wife for having let him leave, in spite of his having wronged her: “‘E, cuers,’ dist il, ‘com estes adurés! / Gente pucele, mout de mercis et grés; / Jou t’ai fait mal et tu m’as hounéré.’ / Pitié en ot, si commence a plourer.” (“‘Ah, heart,’ he said, ‘how you are hardened! / Noble maiden, many thanks and best wishes; / I did you wrong and you honored me.’ / He felt pity for her and began to cry”) (ll. 493-496). It appears that even though he feels pity and begins to cry, his pity is directed at his wife, not at his father.

While Alessins’ response to what he overhears may seem like he is being so callous to his father that he lacks affection for him, it is also possible that the text simply has no need to show Alessins’ affection at this moment because he shows how he cares for and respects his father at other key moments in the text, such as when he returns home and begs his father for charity. Furthermore, A. G. Elliott identifies a lacuna in the text during the servants’ speech<sup>28</sup>. It is possible that Alessins reacts to their description of his father’s grief at some point in the missing lines.

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<sup>28</sup> A. G. Elliott does not state whether this lacuna is due to manuscript damage, but from her description, the gap in the text seems to be due to damage rather than scribal omission. According to A. G. Elliott, “the

Regardless of whether Alessins has additional thoughts about Eufemiens in this passage, the way in which the passage expresses the father's love for his son could respond to audience members' concerns. Families who have lost their sons, be it to illness, in battle, or otherwise, could empathize with Eufemiens, and the characters in the text who are explaining what happened to Eufemiens are already giving the cue for the audience to sympathize with him. Therefore, on the one hand, since the audience is meant to feel compassion for Eufemiens, the text might not need to explicitly relate Alessins' comment regarding his hardened heart to his father's grief; the audience can already see how hard his heart has become. On the other hand, that Alessins' thoughts turn to his wife when he hears about his father also emphasizes how Lesigne was able to sacrifice her planned future as a mother and her life with her husband, whereas Eufemiens cannot let go of his son, to the extent that he has sent search parties far and wide seeking to bring him home, apparently by force, if necessary. Thus, although the audience should feel compassion for Eufemiens, perhaps they are supposed to feel even more for the truly selfless Lesigne. Alessins' gratitude to Lesigne emphasizes how selfless she is; meanwhile, this gratitude explicitly reminds the text's audience that a man should be grateful to his wife when she indulges him, especially if he wrongs her.

The young couple's relationship may seem to take precedence over the parent-child relationship, but even when the text highlights Alessins' wife's role, it links the entire family together by mentioning the parents at key points where it refers to the spouses' relationship. Much later in the text, after Alessins dies, and his letter goes to his

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servants must have described the bride's fidelity and love" (35). Moreover, she suggests that one could use the *Vers d'Alexis*, the other thirteenth-century version of Alexis' Life which she edits, to fill in the gap (35, n. 58). The *Vers d'Alexis* expands the servants' description of the family's grief (laisses 29-30).



wife, the narrator makes a point of stating how the letter goes *not* to the parents but to the loyal wife:

[O]iés, signour, con grande loiauté	Now hear, lords, what great loyalty
Tout home doivent a le moiller porter.	All men should give to their wives,
Car tel moustrance fist le jour Damedés	For our Lord God gave such a sign that day,
Que a sa mère ne vaut la cartre aller	That He did not want the letter to go to his mother
Ne a son pére qui l'avoit engené,	Nor to his father who had engendered him,
Mais a l'espouse ki bien avoit gardé	But to the wife who had kept so well
Le compaignie de son ami carnel (ll.1093-1099).	The company of her mortal beloved

Although Alessins is not alive to interact with them at that point, the way he thinks about his wife when his parents are mentioned does not seem to lessen his affection for them. Rather, as the text mentions both his parents and wife, it emphasizes the importance of their relationship as a family unit.

The wife has devoted herself so completely to God and sacrificed her ability to become a mother in response to her husband's wishes that she merits special treatment. That God sends the letter to Lesigne as a sign of how loyal a man must be to his wife further suggests that the text was composed for a lay audience, as it is a lesson which would be most important for married couples or young people who are soon to be married. It is not surprising that a text which presents itself as a "romance" would provide lessons regarding love and marriage. However, the parents are not to be forgotten, which implies that one should be loyal and obedient to his or her parents as well, even if the text highlights Lesigne's exemplary loyalty to her husband, how God

rewarded her for it, and how He demonstrated that husbands must be loyal to their wives. As we will see later in their laments, the parents' continued relationship with Lesigne expands the text's message in favor of spiritual marriage to a spiritual connection not only between the husband and wife who have devoted themselves completely to God but also between generations of parents and children. That Alessins' thoughts turn to Lesigne when he hears about his father similarly reflects how all family members should serve God together.

Even if Alessins may seem not to be compassionate or affectionate to his parents when he overhears the servants speak about his father searching for him, upon his unplanned return to Rome and through the end of his life, the thirteenth-century *Roumans* contains several passages which explicitly demonstrate sympathy toward the parents. The text also recalls Alessins' love for his parents, even though he purports to have completely hardened his heart toward them. The text ties in comments about parents and children from holy writings to Alessins' return home, because it shows him reading from a psalter that contains a description of how parents care for their children. Thus, the *Roumans* provides more clearly defined motives for him to seek out his father that do not exist in the *Vie*; Alessins' choices seem more directly inspired by God because the psalter opens to the page about parents and children.

The twelfth-century Alexis, whose concerns and fears seem less pronounced than Alessins', expresses his fear of being recognized and the knowledge that his parents and wife miss him. Then Alexis decides to give himself over to his family, certain that they will not recognize him because he has changed over the years:

<p>“E Deus!” dist il, “bels reis qui tut gouvernes, Se tei ploüst, [i]ci ne volisse estra. S’or me conuissent mi parent d’icesta terre, Il me prendrunt par pri ou par poëste; Se jos an creid, il me trairunt a perdra.</p>	<p>(41.) “Ah, God,” he said, “gracious king who governs all things, if it were pleasing to you, I would not wish to be here. If my parents recognize me now, in this land, they will take me, by pleas or by force. If I’m right about this, they’ll drag me to ruin.</p>
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### XLII

<p>Mais nepurhuc mun pedre me desirret, Si fait ma medra plus que femme qui vivet, Avoc ma spuse que jo lur ai guerpide. Or ne lairai nem mete an lur bailie; Nem conuistrunt: tanz jurz ad que nem virent” (ll. 201-210).</p>	<p>(42.) But, nevertheless, my father longs for me, and my mother too, more than any woman alive, along with my wife whom I have left with them. Therefore, I will put myself in their power; they will not recognize me; they have not seen me for so long (Durling, <i>trans.</i>)</p>
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Molly Robinson Kelly explains that Alexis’ “decision to live with them was a sign of his love, to be understood only after his death” (115). This especially makes sense in light of the fact that he is a saint, but the *Vie* provides less clear evidence for her argument than does the *Roumans*.

The thirteenth-century Alessins, in a much longer, more involved thought process, evinces concern for his family, fears recognition, and prays to God to remain anonymous, mentioning his parents several times in his prayer:

<p>Ajue, Diex, qui nous as em baillie; [...] Si me counoist ma mère l’esmarie</p>	<p>“Help me, God, you who have us in your protection, [...] If my mother, the unhappy one, should recognize me,</p>
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Et mi parent, et m'espouse, et me sire,	And my family members, and my wife, and my father <sup>29</sup> ,
Il me tolront le vostre compaignie.	They will take away your companionship from me.
[...]	[...]
Et ne pourquant mes péres me desire,	And nonetheless my father yearns for me,
Si fait ma mère plus que feme ki vive,	As does my mother more than any living woman,
Si fait l'espouse que je lor ai guerpie	As does the wife whom I left with them.
[...]	[...]
Com Diex me doinst, sire, par itel guise	May God grant me, Lord, that in this way[, looking impoverished and ill],
Que bien les voie et sace lor couvine;	I may see them well and know how they are doing;
Ne me counoissent, ne nus home ne lor die! (ll. 607-624).	May they not recognize me, nor any man tell them anything!

Unlike the twelfth-century Alexis, Alessins does not appear to be so confident that his family will not recognize him. The thread of fear that they will identify him and bring him back to his lay life runs throughout Alessins' prayers, but he wishes to see his parents and wife and find out how they are.

The structure of the passage and the reference to Alessins' mother highlight both the parents' roles and how the mother has been changed by the experience of losing her son. The three lines in which Alessins first expresses his concerns that his family will recognize him are structured such that "ma mere l'esmarie" ("my mother, the unhappy one") and "me sire" ("my father") are placed in parallel and surround "mi parent" ("my family members") and "m'espouse" ("my wife"). This not only underscores the parents' role by having them at the outsides of the four-part list of mother, family members, wife,

<sup>29</sup> "Sire" means both "lord" and "father." Its use here recalls the power that Alessins' father has over him.

and father, it also gives his mother Bone Eurée the only adjective modifier; she is now Alessins' "unhappy mother." Her given name of "Blessed One" or "Happy One" has been completely replaced due to her grief at the loss of her son, and now her role as a mother and her sadness have taken over. Further emphasizing the parents' role, Alessins' prayer repeats how much they desire his return home before it mentions his wife's wishes for him to return.

He then prays a second time from his psalter, where he reads about how parents care for their children. He opens the book, seemingly unintentionally, to the page that mentions parents, which hints that God is inspiring him to see his family. Upon reading from the psalter, Alessins, distressed, decides to seek out his father. The psalter responds to Alessins' thoughts about family, reaffirming the critical roles of parents in their children's lives:

Son sautier a parfondemont préé;	He prayed deeply from his psalter;
Il [l']a ouvert, si a devens gardé	He opened it and looked inside it,
Si a tels letres el parcemin trouvé	And he found the text on the parchment,
Que la mère a son enfant a garder	That describes how the mother has her child to raise
.vii. ans tous plains, c'est li premiers eés,	For seven whole years, [this stage of growth] is the first age of man,
Et puis li pére, s'il ciet en effretés <sup>30</sup> ,	And after that, the father [has the child to raise], and [Alessins] falls in a fright,
Toute sa vie que il a adurer <sup>31</sup> .	[Thinking about] the whole of

<sup>30</sup> The manuscript reads, "Et puis li prie..." According to Elliott, this is "A corrupt line. G. P. emends 'Et puis li prie' to 'Et puis apres'" (145). "Et puis li prie" would yield, "And then he prays to him, and he falls in a fright." Elliott's revision highlights the text's focus on family because it suggests that Alessins wants to go see his father after reading about fathers caring for their children. Gaston Paris' change, "And then afterwards, he falls in a fright," does not seem to make more sense than the original "And then he prays to him..."

	his life which he has to endure <sup>32</sup> .
Or vauroit sur son pére araisonner;	Now he would like to speak to his father;
Par itel guise peust a lui parler,	In the same way[, because of his poverty and illness], he should be able to speak to him;
[...]	[...]
Va s'ent en Roume a son pére parler (ll. 633-653).	He went off to Rome to speak to his father.

Since Alessins does not intentionally open the psalter to this page, it seems that God is indirectly urging him to think about his parents. The text supports its emphasis on family with the Scriptural message about the parents' role in caring for their child, which serves as a reminder that even though Alessins has left his parents and wife, caring for one's child is a duty according to sacred writings. This message would also hint at a lay audience for the text because it values parents' roles in society and might remind one that moderate familial love is appropriate. That Alessins' distress at reading the psalter ultimately triggers his resolution to speak to his father hints that he may still feel affection for Eufemiens, even if he does not want to do so. At the very least it hints that he recognizes the importance of the father-son relationship and feels pity for his father's loss and grief.

The text brings out the significance of the father-son relationship in particular during Alessins' conversation with his father, when he begs for charity. The scene during

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<sup>31</sup> Elliott separates "adurer" into "a durer," but the manuscript has it as one word (62r).

<sup>32</sup> This line's meaning is unclear. For example, it could mean that "The father [has the child to raise...] For the rest of his life," in which case it remains unclear as to whether it describes the rest of the father's or the child's life, or the lives of both. It could be a prediction of Alessins' later reflection about how causing his family to suffer may come back to him at the Last Judgment (ll. 738-740). Alessins might be thinking about his father's life, what Eufemiens is going through because of his distress at his son's disappearance, and how he must suffer from his loss for the rest of his life. Another possibility is that "adurer" refers to how Alessins must continue to harden his heart not to care about his family.

which he makes this request functions in two ways. First, it shows Alessins' compassion for his father and his parents' love for their son. This validates their love and loss, although their desire to find their son is so excessive, they cannot see that he is speaking to them. Alessins cannot tell them who he is because he fears that doing so will lead to his return to feudal life, so as his fear of angering his father early in the text when he is ordered to go to bed with Lesigne contributes to the family's suffering, he continues to be paralyzed and silenced by fear. The text associates these fears most closely with Alessins' father. Much as Eliseus in *La Vie sainte Juliane* justifiably fears the wrath of the emperor should he disobey him, Alessins fears his worldly father. Kelly argues that in the twelfth-century *Vie*, Alexis' mother "is the one who threatens most to disrupt his calling" (106). In the *Roumans*, at least, Alessins seems to fear his father more. His mother is a threat in that she wants to see him and she comes closer to recognizing him than does his father. Nonetheless, as we will see, Alessins puts himself at a greater risk of being discovered by his mother when he speaks to her before he dies than when he speaks to his father because he begs his mother's forgiveness for his actions. Whereas he does not evince similar compassion for his father during his stay under the stairs in his parents' house, the scene where he begs his father for charity suggests that he feels some affection for his father because during this passage, he praises the love between father and son. Second, the passage in which Alessins asks for charity from his parents illustrates the role of charity in the process of building a Christian community because the parents are so willing to take in the beggar Alessins, whose identity has been concealed by the hardships he has endured. That they do so in the name of love for their lost son links this

charity back to the idea of family and may remind the text's audience that all Christians are part of one family under God.

I will address the issue of the role of charity before discussing the passage's expression of the father-child relationship because Eufemiens' acceptance of Alessins leads up to his reaction to his father's expression of love for him. When Alessins approaches his father and mother, they are leaving church, hand in hand, which recalls their piety mentioned early on in the text. Unlike in Durling's interpretation of the twelfth-century *Vie*, this suggestion of their piety seems sincere and not ironic; they can be good Christians but still be blinded to what they most desire (seeing Alessins) by the sin of desiring it excessively: "[S]on père encontre ki revient d'orison; / Si iert sa mère qui le tient par le poing. [...] Del fil parloient, mais il n'iert gaires lonc" ("He encounters his father who is returning from mass, / As well as his mother who holds him by the hand [...] They were speaking about the son but he was not at all far away") (ll. 660-664). Alessins' parents are already talking about their son before he addresses Eufemiens, which highlights the extent of their affection for him. Eufemiens says that he has not seen Alessins for seventeen years: "xvii. ans a que de mes oels ne vi; / Elas, pecière, ne sai s'est mors u vis" ("Seventeen years have passed and I have not laid eyes on him<sup>33</sup>, / Alas, sinner<sup>34</sup>, I do not know whether he is dead or alive!") (679-680). He acknowledges that he does not know whether his son is alive or dead, and seems to attribute this to his own sin. It is clear that Alessins occupies his parents' thoughts. Perhaps they were praying for the well-being of his soul at church, but because the text does not say so

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<sup>33</sup> Literally: "It has been seventeen years during which my eyes have not seen him."

<sup>34</sup> Eufemiens seems to be referring to himself here.



explicitly, it seems more likely that they would have been focusing most on their desire for his return.

It is of note that the passage in which the Alexis of the twelfth-century *Vie* asks his father for board and lodging contains no details of Alexis' mother's presence. The *Vie's* passage is significantly less detailed; Alexis sees Eufemiens leaving church with his men and makes his request, then Eufemiens cries at being reminded of his son and accepts the beggar into his home (ll. 214-225).

The thirteenth-century *Roumans* significantly expands the scene, demonstrating how the parents love each other because they leave church hand-in-hand and how much they miss and love their son. The details that the thirteenth-century text provides emphasize the role of charity in society and the importance of familial love. It is not just because Alessins requests lodging in his name that his father chooses to provide it; it is also, first and foremost, out of love for God. Alessins asks for help "pour Diu amour [...]" Et pour ton fil qui Allessis ot non" ("for the love of God [...] And for your son whose name is Alessins") (ll. 667-670). Eufemiens replies, "Pour Diu [...] et pour mon cier ami, / Tot te ferai, bons hom, çou que tu dis" ("For God [...] and for my dear loved one, / I will do all for you, good man, that you say") (ll.674-675).

Although the *Vie's* request and response is similar, Alexis requests lodging "pur Deu [...] Empur tun filz dunt tu as tel dolur" ("for God [and] for love of your son, because of whom you have such pain," Durling, *trans.*) (ll. 217-219). Alexis mentions how his father feels pain at his loss, whereas Alessins does not. Meanwhile, Alexis' father says nothing of how he is a sinner, so there is no hint that he might feel somewhat responsible for his loss.

Along with the details added to the *Roumans*, other issues arise that may not in the sparse presentation of the scene from the *Vie*. For example, why would Eufemiens not try to get information about his son from Alessins, when he expressly requests lodging in his name? On the one hand, perhaps Eufemiens has no need to question Alessins since he had sent so many men to search for him and Eufemiens could assume that a pilgrim would know of him and his son. On the other hand, Eufemiens' unquestioning acceptance of the beggar could come from a combination of factors: his sin of excessive affection for Alessins that results in his blindness to his son's presence; his wishes that others from whom Alessins requests charity will assist him; and his piety and general charitable nature. Regardless of Eufemiens' precise reasons for taking in the anonymous beggar, that he does so may suggest that even good Christians can be sinners, but they can still be redeemed by pious and good deeds. Meanwhile, a saint's intercession, which would be represented by Alessins' prayers for his family, certainly improves one's chances of redemption. Eufemiens' acceptance of the beggar in his home can also remind the text's audience of how one's "family" is made up of not only blood relatives but also other Christians, and one should help those in need.

This idea is further emphasized when Constentins, another baron, intercedes and offers to take in Alessins instead, Alessins repeats that he wants Eufemiens' help, and his mother insists that he stay with their family because he asked Eufemiens for help rather than the other man. When Constentins says, "Laissiés le moi, sire [Eufemiens], vostre merci. / O moi venés, biaux sire pelerins" ("Leave him to me, lord, by your grace. / Come with me, dear lord pilgrim") (ll.684-685), Alessins thanks him but declines his offer: "'Sire,' dist il, 'de Diu .v.c. mercis [...] La me tenrai u primiers me sui pris'" ("Lord,' he

said, ‘By God, five hundred thanks [...] I will stay there where I was first taken’”) (ll.691-699). Alessins’ mother then tells her husband, “ja t’a il ostel quis. / Car le herbeges, pour Diu et pour ton fil” (“He already sought shelter from you. / Now house him, for God and for your son”) (ll.702-703). The debate about who should lodge Alessins is a major deviation from the twelfth-century *Vie*; it evokes the generosity of Alessins’ parents as well as his desire to be helped by them specifically. The suggestion that the first person from whom a fellow Christian in need requests help should assist that individual hints at a lay audience for the text because it would encourage people to help others more eagerly. That the passage includes Alessins’ mother in the decision-making process suggests that women were part of this audience. Although the text does not say so explicitly, Alessins’ eagerness to go with his family may relate to the desire he expressed earlier in his prayers to see how his wife and parents are faring. Alessins’ affection for his family seems to be reflected in how adamant he is to go with them rather than Constantins. While the *Vie*’s Alexis gives himself over to his family because he knows that they want to see him (ll. 206-210), Alessins’ actions suggest even more strongly that *he loves them* and wants to be with them.

Furthermore, although it is also not explicitly stated, he might want to help them by having their souls benefit from their charitable acts, his prayers for them and their acceptance of the anonymous beggar serving as the best form of reciprocation he can provide for their love and his parents’ care for him as a child. When he sees his parents’ distress after he recalls that they are lodging him “for their son,” it seems like Alessins might want to reciprocate his family’s love. At the very least, he seems to wish that his actions were not leading to their suffering:

Pleure la mere le duel de son enfant;	The mother cries for grief about her child;
Tot ramentoivre le duel dont ot le cuer dolant.	It all reminds her of the grief from which her heart suffers;
Li pére en va ses mains si detorjant	The father goes along wringing his hands so much
Que a la tere en cairent si gant.	That his gloves fall down on the ground.
S[ains] A[lessins] s'abaisse, se li rent.	Saint Alessins bends over and returns them to him.
“E Dius,” dist il, “vrais pére tous poissans, Quele amistié entre pére et enfant!	“Oh God,” he said, “true, all- powerful Father, What love between father and child!
Ces felonniees que jou lor fac si grans	These wrongs I do them, which are so great,
M[e sont] legières, ses trouverai pesans;	Are <sup>35</sup> light to me, but I will find them weighty:
Al grant juise me revenroit devant,	At the great Judgment, it would come back to me,
Pour pére et mère qui me pourmetent tant,	For father and mother who promise me so much,
Que si par fac coreciés et dolans.	Whom I made so very distressed and aggrieved;
Ajue, Diex, s'en sont si desirant!” (ll. 731-743).	Help me, God, they are so desirous of it <sup>36</sup> !”

This passage recalls Alessins' reaction to his father's servants' comments to the innkeeper when they were looking for him. Now, Alessins is concerned about the sin of bringing pain to his parents who are giving him so much: “pére et mere qui me pourmetent tant” (“father and mother who promise me so much”) (l. 741), just as he was concerned about his wife whom he wronged, while she indulged him: “Jou t'ai fait mal et tu m'as hounéré” (“I did you wrong and you honored me”) (l. 495). Thus, he might have

<sup>35</sup> Elliott edits “mest” to “me sont,” following Gaston Paris (146).

<sup>36</sup> Seeing Alessins

appeared not to feel any sympathy toward his father when he overheard the servants speaking to the innkeeper, but he shows that he does now.

In this passage, it is also striking that Alessins, who has previously referred to God in the capacity of “heavenly lord” and “spouse” addresses Him as “vrai père” (“true Father”). In so doing, he adds force to his exclamation about the strength of the love between father and son. His comment applies to his worldly father, whose grief and love for his son Alessins is witnessing, as well as to his heavenly father, for whom he has expressed his love by making the extreme sacrifice of abandoning his family and possibility of worldly lineage. The text also seems to show more sympathy for parents in general because of Alessins’ reference to God as father than if it did not contain this reference. Though he abandoned his worldly father, Alessins has devoted himself completely to the “true” heavenly father, who takes precedence over worldly family. The text implies that love between father and son is powerful and positive, but love from the “true father” is perfect and even more powerful. It prioritizes the heavenly family of redeemed Christians as children of God, but the worldly family of blood relatives as a component of this is still important.

On the one hand, the relationship between worldly father and son mirrors the better father-son relationship that Alessins has established with God by choosing to remain a virgin and retreat from worldly life. On the other hand, there is a danger that a father can love his worldly son too much, and this overzealous attachment to a worldly being can obscure his vision to the point that he can no longer recognize his loved one. God as the “true father” protects the souls of both generations of His sons, Eufemiens and Alessins, by creating this blindness so that Eufemiens cannot force Alessins to return to

lay life, thereby committing a grave sin. As we saw with the reference to Abraham and Isaac in *La Vie sainte Juliane, Li Roumans de saint Alessins* suggests that the relationship between worldly father and son, and God as their father, is complex because father and son should love each other, but they should love God more.

The *Roumans* continues to evoke the importance of familial relationships during Alessins' time under his family's staircase. Unlike the older *Vie*, the *Roumans* includes significant conversations between Alessins and each of his parents, each of which hints that he feels sympathy for his parents' plight and that he might still feel some degree of affection for them.

The *Roumans* initially repeats the *Vie*'s indication that Alessins' parents never inquire as to his name or native country: "Il ne lor dit, n'il ne [li] demandérent, / Ques hom estoit et de quele contrée" ("He did not tell them, nor did they ask him, / What man he was and from which country") (ll. 758-759). According to the *Vie*: "N'il ne lur dist, ne il nel demanderent, / Quels hom esteit ne de quel terre il eret" ("He did not tell them, nor did they ask him / what man he was, or from what country he came," Durling, *trans.*) (ll. 239-240). In the *Vie*, Alexis is just a beggar under the stairs, and his family members seem to pay him little heed as they are completely caught up in their laments at having lost him.

In the *Roumans*, Alessins' father and mother each approach him and speak to him, and he is mentioned in both conversations, highlighting the parents' blindness to the obvious, that they are speaking with their son, while at the same time showing sympathy for their plight. Eufemiens is the first to ask his son's name, and during their exchange,

the text reminds the audience of his charitable nature because he also asks if Alessins needs anything:

<p>“Biaus crestiens, ne savons vostre non. Faut vous conrois ? De coi aiés besoing?” “Sire,” dist il, “Crestiens ai a non, Et trestout cil qui levé sont des fons. [...] “Par mon droit non, sire, m’avés noumé Se tant sui bons que m’en puisse garder. [...] Conroi ai tant que ne le puis user. Celui em puisse grassier et loer Pour cui amour le me faites donner; Il vous remaint l’enfant ke tant amés.” “Bons hom,” dist il, “ke me ramentevés? N’est mie vis qui tant a demouré. Salve en est l’ame se Dieus l’a commandé, Et Dius em penst par sa grant pieté. Mout a dur cuer qui si m’a oublié.” (ll. 795-815).</p>	<p>“Dear Christian, we do not know your name; Do you need food? What is it you need?” “Lord,” he said, “Christian is my name, As is each and every one of those who are raised from the baptismal font. [...] “By my true name, lord, you have named me, If I am good enough that I may keep it<sup>37</sup>. [...] I have so much food that I cannot consume it. For it, I should thank and praise the One For whose love you have given it to me; He returns to you the child whom you love so much.” “Good man,” he said, “of what do you remind me? He is not alive at all, the one who has stayed away for so long; May his soul be redeemed if God commanded it, And may God care for him in His great mercy; He who has thus forgotten me has a very hard heart.”</p>
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<sup>37</sup> The name of “good Christian”

Although Eufemiens is so blinded by his excessive affection for his son and grief at his loss that it is a sin which makes him fail to recognize his interlocutor, he is nonetheless a good, charitable Christian.

In this same passage, Alessins says that his name is Christian, but when he says that Eufemiens “named him by his proper name,” his comment might have a double meaning, because he then says that everyone who is baptized is named Christian. The other meaning would be that his father gave him the name Alessins on the baptismal font. If it does mean that his father called him by his true name in naming him as an infant and having him baptized, it could highlight Eufemiens’ blindness to his presence. Eufemiens’ reply to Alessins’ reference to himself further emphasizes his father’s absorption in his grief because he mentions that Alessins must have a truly hard heart if he has forgotten him. At the same time, the reminder of Alessins’ hard heart may either encourage sympathy for the parents because Eufemiens’ loss is so poignant or it may hint at the father’s selfish desire to see his son again. Regardless, the text balances its depiction of Eufemiens’ excessive affection for his son and attachment to the world with its reminder of his goodness and charity.

Similarly, when Alessins’ mother approaches her son, she suggests to his wife that they charitably change the sheets of the sickly pilgrim: “Car li faisons ses drapiaus relaver; / Çou iert aumosne, si nous en sera gré” (“Now let us have his sheets washed again; / This will be a good deed and he will be grateful to us for it”) (ll. 836-837). The way in which his mother’s blindness to his identity manifests itself seems more unusual than how his father’s unawareness is shown because although Alessins reminds her of her son, she does not question his reasons for wanting to conceal his identity.



However, her blindness might not be as strange as it may seem because prior to speaking to him, in her conversation with Lesigne, she also claims that she will die of grief at his loss. She tells Lesigne: “Quant jel regart, membre moi de mon fil; / Pour un petit nel resamble del vis. / Lors plour des oels, ne m’en puis astenir; / Çou est li dels dont m’estora morir” (“When I look at him, he reminds me of my son; / He resembles him closely in the face. / Then I cry bitterly, I cannot hold myself back; / This is the grief from which I must die.”) (ll. 842-845). According to the logic of the text, death from excessive grief caused by attachment to a worldly being is sinful.

Thus, perhaps the punishment for her sin is partly her unquestioning acceptance of Alessins’ confusing response that he does not want to lie about who he is: “Je ne devroie vous ne autrui mentir, / Car par mençoignes pert on saint Paradis” (“I must not lie to you nor to anyone else, / For through lies, one loses holy Paradise”) (ll. 850-851). After he says this, rather than receiving a response from his mother, the narrator intervenes to mention how Alessins wants to write a letter before he dies: “Mais ains qu’il muire vaura faire un escrit” (“But before he dies, he wants to write a letter”) (ll. 855). The abrupt narrative interruption in their conversation makes the lack of response from the mother even more striking. Is it meant to suggest that she would have asked for further information, or to highlight that she does not? When he begs her forgiveness immediately thereafter, is it implied that he also begs forgiveness for not telling her who he is?

That he does beg his mother for forgiveness, whereas he does not say anything similar to his father, suggests that he might feel more remorse for causing his mother pain than his father. Furthermore, Alessins makes a show of humility before his mother, but

he makes no such display before his father, which also hints that he might fear having sinned by bringing her grief more than by causing his father to grieve:

<p>Il s'abaissa, as piés se li caï;          Puis le baisa, se li cria merci.          "Sire," dist ele, "quel pardon m'avés          quis?"</p>	<p>He bowed down, he fell at her          feet;          Then he kissed them and          begged mercy from her.          "Lord," she said, "What          pardon have you asked of          me?"</p>
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<p>"Sire," dist ele, "quel pardon me          querés?"          "Pour mon malaige quic jou estre          emcombrés."          "Sire," dist ele, "tout vous soit          pardonné."          "Vostre grant painne que eü en avés,          Pour amour Diu, si le me pardonnés."          Et la pucele les a bien esgardés;          Se li pardonne, ele fait autretel (ll.          861-870).</p>	<p>"Lord," she said, "what pardon          do you ask of me?"          "Because of my ailment, I          believe myself to be          burdensome."          "Lord," she said, "all will be          forgiven of you."          "Your great pain which you          have had,          For the love of God, now          forgive me for it."          And the maiden looked at          them well,          She forgives him, she does as          well.</p>
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Unlike many passages in the text, where each character speaks in sentences spanning several lines, this exchange is characterized by brief questions and answers. This gives it a rhythm that heightens the effect of how odd and painfully ironic the situation is. The mother is so blind to her son's identity that she never wonders why he will not reveal it to her. However, that he begs her forgiveness gives her pause, causing her to question why the anonymous pilgrim would do such a thing. The text highlights her question because it links *laissez* 65 and 66 by repeating the question from line 863 in line 864. When he specifically requests forgiveness for having encumbered his family with his illness, and

his mother replies that “all is forgiven,” she unknowingly pardons him for having caused pain for his family as well as for having been a potential burden during the final years of his life. His wife equally pardons him, presumably in a way that would similarly forgive him for any wrongs which he may have done her.

In this passage, the interaction between Alessins and his mother and wife hints at the key role that forgiveness plays in familial relationships. Since sin is inherent in human nature, and even without intending to do so, people necessarily bring grief to their family members at some point in time, they should beg forgiveness of the aggrieved as well as from God. This moment in the text may be one of the most poignant exchanges between Alessins and his parents in which he demonstrates the humility that a child owes his mother as he bows before her and kisses her feet. The passage during which he begs forgiveness from his mother is also of note for the following two reasons. First, it is the last conversation he has with either of his parents before he dies, which suggests that it is important to expiate one’s sins not only by confessing them to God but also by making amends for them within the world before dying. Second, Alessins seems more selfless at this moment than at some points in the text, especially during the conversation with his wife before he first runs away, during which he evinces no particular concern for his parents’ feelings about his disappearance. In his conversation with his wife, it is not Alessins, but Lesigne, who mentions how his parents will be beside themselves with grief when they learn of his disappearance. As we will see, Lesigne proposes a model of spiritual marriage in which she would run away with Alessins, serving God without romantic involvement with her husband, but she also argues on behalf of the whole

family, and the text ultimately appears to extend the possible spiritual model to include parents in a form of “spiritual family,” as previously defined.

To see how the text may argue in favor of spiritual marriage or a “spiritual family” for potential lay audience members, and the ways in which the conversations between Alessins and his wife show sympathy for his parents, I will now turn to these conversations. Their first discussion is the passage in the text that has been of primary interest to scholars, for it gives Alessins’ wife a voice that she does not have in the twelfth-century *Vie*. According to A. G. Elliott, “The midnight interview between Alexis and Lesigne is one of pathos, developed with concern for psychological realism and depth. It stands out as one of the great emotional scenes of medieval literature” (36). The scene definitely gives depth to Alessins’ wife, as she was completely silent at his departure in the *Vie*, but A. G. Elliott herself affirms that “Literary as well as textual discussions of the *Vie de saint Alexis* have been almost universally restricted to the Hildesheim manuscript. The implication is that the later versions 1) are uninteresting and 2) lack independence from previous versions” (28). Alessins’ “midnight interview” with his wife must not have stood out sufficiently as “one of the great emotional scenes of medieval literature” for many critics to explore it.

Nonetheless, Gaston Paris, who dismisses many of the lines which he sees as additions to the text as “uninteresting,” does indicate that “Les efforts de la jeune fille pour le retenir, sa résistance de plus en plus difficile, mettent en relief ce que la situation a d’étrange et de touchant; d’autre part ses réflexions pieuses plaisent à un public avide d’édification autant que d’amusement” (“The young lady’s efforts to detain him, his increasingly difficult resistance, highlight the strange and touching aspects of the

situation; on the other hand, his pious thoughts please an audience who is just as avid for edification as for amusement”). He then leaves the analysis of the passage to his reader: “je laisse au lecteur le soin de faire entre ce développement et l’original une comparaison qui ne sera pas sans profit pour l’appréciation de notre poésie aux deux époques respectives qui ont produit l’un et l’autre” (“I leave to the reader the task of making a comparison between this development and the original that would not be without profit for the appreciation of our poetry from the two respective centuries which produced them”) (203).

While I will not focus on comparing the *Roumans*’ discussion between Alessins and his wife with Alexis’ monologue to his wife in the *Vie*, their conversation in the *Roumans* is the one that presents three models for family structure which the text brings to the fore. These include the traditional family structure in which each generation marries, produces children, and carries on the family line; the ascetic model of withdrawal from the world; and what appears to be one of the text’s preferred models for lay audience members, the spiritual marriage.

Of course, the only family structure that Alessins desires for himself in his worldly life is the ascetic model, as he is adamant about abandoning any worldly ties. He insists to his wife that God is the only true spouse, and he encourages her to devote herself entirely to Him, as he intends to do:

<p>“Bele,” dist il, “celui trai a espous Qui nous raienst de son sanc precious, Car en cest siecle nen a parfite amour.</p>	<p>“Beautiful maiden,” he says, “Take this One as your bridegroom, He who redeemed us with His precious blood, For in this life, there is no perfect love.</p>
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A mout grant joie s'asembent peceour,	Sinners come together with great joy,
Mais il desoivrent a doel et a tristour” (ll. 148-152).	But they separate in mourning and in sadness.”

According to Alessins, a worldly union can only end in sadness, so the lifestyle that his parents have chosen is not one which he wishes to imitate, nor does he recommend it to Lesigne. As the text demonstrates, their choice of family structure does lead to great sadness when Alessins flees and they lose their source of joy: the family and descendants they had so hoped to have.

That this unhappiness comes to his family to such a degree does not necessarily imply that the text argues against the traditional family, just that it is inferior to other family structures shown in the text. The primary reason why so much of his wife's and parents' lives are spent in mourning is their premature loss of Alessins. His flight from his worldly life represents not only the breakdown of his worldly relationships and traditional family structure, but also his failure to fulfill the familial duties of becoming a father and head of household that his education and knightly vocation had prepared him to perform. Thus, their separation leads to amplified and premature grief which is not likely to come to everyone who starts a family.

Whereas Alessins' parents desire a traditional family where members of each generation carry on the family line and live and work together to govern their lands, Alessins seeks to withdraw from the world. The worldly “family” which he chooses is that of God and the broader “family” of the collectivity of all Christian souls. This is to say that the only close relationship he wants to have with any being in this life is with God, for he fears that his worldly human relationships with his parents and wife will

supersede his relationship with God and prevent him from gaining his heavenly inheritance.

Alessins' flight ultimately brings the salvation of his parents and wife because it deprives them of that which they desire and they cannot satisfy their extreme worldly attachment. The inability to satiate their worldly desire prevents them from losing God because it becomes like a form of martyrdom, as they are tormented by their longing for Alessins.

Their loss also brings them together as a new worldly family. At the end of the text, the narrator explains that this resulting "spiritual family," Alessins' parents and his wife, "Ensamble [furent] dusqu'a Deu en alérent. / Lor compaignie est boine et hounérée; / Pour cel saint home ont lor ames sauvées" ("They {were} together until they went to God. / Their companionship is good and honorable; / Thanks to this holy man, they saved their souls.") (ll. 1312-1314). Alessins' family is partly forced into this family structure by his choices, even though Lesigne reluctantly consents to his departure. Alessins' asceticism falls at the opposite end of the spectrum of possible family structures from the one his family truly desires, so to some degree, one might suggest that he forces his family to live in the way in which *he* wants them to live, even though he repeatedly flees in fear of *them* forcing him to participate in their lay life.

By the text's logic, Alessins is in the right because he is the saint and his family's souls are saved by his actions, but during their debate, his wife's arguments hint that she and his parents might be more exemplary and significantly more imitable for the text's lay audience members than is Alessins himself. In A. G. Elliott's discussion of this conversation, she describes how Lesigne

is painted with sensitivity and psychological verisimilitude: we watch her pass from shocked disbelief (“Por coi me lais? Ja m’as espouse,” 167), to concern for herself. Having been rejected (she feels) by her husband, Lesigne generalizes her fears, anticipating that his parents will abandon her as well, as if she had been his concubine (*asoignentée*, 171) instead of his lawful wife. This anticipated fear of rejection is not rational, as the ensuing action makes plain, but its intensity indicates the magnitude of the shock she has suffered.

[...]

The bride, who loves her husband in spite of his behavior, has passed from worry about herself to concern for him. [...] Comforted, perhaps, by [his response to her concerns which indicates that he does, in fact, love her], the girl continues to express her concern for *his* well-being. Her questions are natural ones: “What are you going to do?” (234); “When will you return?” (247ff.) (32-33, her emphasis).

While A. G. Elliott mentions Lesigne’s concern for herself and her husband, her analysis does not describe how Lesigne reminds her husband of how his parents might feel upon learning of his disappearance. Lesigne’s concern for herself might be selfish, and even the questions that A. G. Elliott cites regarding Alessins’ plans could be interpreted as selfish because they may focus on Lesigne’s personal loss and separation from her husband.

However, Lesigne’s concern for Alessins’ parents is more selfless, especially because her initial reaction is that they will reject her. She mentions his parents four times, wondering what she can say to them when they find him gone, accusing him of having a hard heart, and reminding him twice that they will be deeply aggrieved by his loss.

The first mention precedes her distressed comment that they will throw her out of their land, so on the one hand, it might be considered part of her more selfish worries: “Que porai dire ton père ne ta mere? / Sempres m’aront de leur terre jetée; / Puis m’en irai com autre asoignentée; / Tel honte arai, jamais n’iere hounérée” (“What will I be able



to say to your father and your mother? / Straightaway, they will have thrown me out of their land; / Then I will go away like any concubine; / I will suffer such shame, never again will I be honored”) (ll. 169-172). On the other hand, she might mention his parents in this context because she anticipates their distress, and their resulting grief could lead to their rejection of her. She might fear that his parents would reject her because they might blame her for causing him to run away.

In her second reference to his parents, she accuses him of having a hard heart, showing his callousness toward his family and hinting that the audience should feel sympathy for her and his parents: “Mout as dur cuer qui or me veus laiscier, / Et père et mère qui *par* t’ont *si tres* cier” (“You have a very hard heart, for you wish to leave me now, / And your father and mother who hold you so very dear”) (ll. 249-250, my emphasis)<sup>38</sup>. She uses three intensifiers to emphasize the extent of his parents’ love for their “dear” son: “par,” “si,” and “tres.”

Alessins’ wife recalls the love that the text had previously mentioned which the family shared, her triple emphasis amplifying its importance, as compared to the double emphasis in the narrator’s indication of the affection between Alessins and his parents: “Son père ama, si l’en a donné tant, [...] Or voit li père que mais n’ara enfant / Mais que ce seul que il *par* aime *tant*” (“He loved his father, and he gave much of [his earnings] to him, [...] Now the father sees that he will never have a child / Other than this only son whom he loves so very much”) (ll. 81-84, my emphasis). Lesigne’s reminder of the affection between parent and child also recalls how the narrator describes Alessins after

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<sup>38</sup> In the next two lines, she mentions how she ought to detain him by force: “Jou sui mout fole, si ne fas mie bien, / Quant ne fac et piés et mains loier” (“I am very foolish and I do no good, / When I do not have you bound, both hand and foot”) (ll. 251-252). Again, although her statement might be based on her selfish desire, it seems that she intends to keep him for his parents in this context.

the wedding dinner: “cel saint houme que Diex par ot tant chier” (“this holy man whom God held so very dear”) (l. 109). It seems as though Alessins’ wife recognizes that his parents’ love for him is so strong that it parallels God’s love for him.

While the magnitude of his parents’ affection might be a sinful overattachment to a worldly being, Lesigne, who agrees with Alessins’ arguments about the importance of forming a relationship with God, as she indicates: “Sire, voir avés dit; / Les vos raisons doit on bien retenir” (“Lord, you have spoken the truth; / One must retain well these lessons of yours”) (ll. 283-284), does not criticize Alessins’ parents at all. Rather, even though she lets him go, she seems to try to inspire Alessins’ pity for them, as well as for herself:

“Or t’en va, sire, Dieus te laist revenir	“Now go, lord, may God let you return,
Quant autrement ne te puis retenir.	For it seems that I cannot keep you in any other way.
Dolante e[r]t cele qui te nori,	She who nourished you will be afflicted with grief,
Si ert li péres qui toi engenui,	As will be the father who engendered you,
Et jou meïsmes qui t’avoie a mari (ll. 288-292).	And I, myself, who had you as a husband.

Her reminder of the family’s distress could be considered a somewhat selfish-sounding plea to retain him, but since she first gives him leave, then expresses her concern for his parents, she is conceding that the family which she and both his parents desired will be impossible for them to have. She recognizes his need to leave and more selflessly accepts it than she might otherwise do. Her use of the verb “retenir” (l. 289) recalls how one should retain Alessins’ lessons well; though she cannot have him, she can have his wisdom.

In his analysis of the wife in a Latin version of Alessins' Life, Uitti states that the wife's "ability to love Alexis is touching, and, I think, signifies that she DOES understand him, even though, at the outset, she cannot fully conceptualize what has happened" ("Paradigm, Legend, Meaning," 282). Kelly similarly says that the earlier *Vie* "implies some form of understanding and assent on [the wife's] part" (80). Meanwhile, Laura Kendrick maintains that "The Latin gloss over the head of Alexis' bride in the bedroom scene [which accompanies the text of the *Vie*], 'O sponsa beata semper gemebunda' (O blessed bride ever lamenting) attributes to her a *saintly* status like that of Alexis" (29). Unlike the silent wife of the *Vie*, Lesigne expressly states that she understands Alessins' choice, even if it is not in accordance with her wishes.

She also recognizes how bad his parents will feel. In the *laisse* that follows, she again foreshadows his parents' distress, this time mentioning his father first, then his mother, and finally herself:

"Or t'en va, sire, jou te commant a Dé	"Now go, lord, I entrust you to
	God,
Quant autrement ne te puis retourner.	For it seems that I cannot
	change your mind in any
	way.
Cil ert dolans qui t'avoit engené,	He who engendered you will
	be afflicted with grief,
Si iert ta mere qui te porta en lés,	As will be your mother who
	carried you in her flanks,
Et jou meïsmes qui sui en vevés,	And I, myself, who am
	widowed by this;
Hui v[errai] noeces a grant duel	Today, I will see my wedding
deserver." (ll. 297-302).	end in great sorrow."

The repetition in her description of how his family will suffer emphasizes his parents' concern because she mentions the mother, then the father at the center of the first of these two *laises*, while she speaks of his father, then his mother in the second. Meanwhile, the

part of her argument where she expresses concern for herself occurs at the end of each *laisse*.

The structure of the *laises* highlights the parents' roles and the debt Alessins owes them for raising, engendering, and giving birth to him. Her presentation of these roles may seem odd in terms of the order in which she lists them; however, it is Eufemiens, and not Bone Eurée, who is so possessive of their son that he sends out search parties to bring him home. Furthermore, placing the father's role at the center can highlight how Alessins is destroying the family structure from its core by leaving. He, too, was supposed to engender a child, while Lesigne should have filled the mother's role. Thus, listing the distress of "cele qui te nourri" ("she who nourished you") (l. 290) after her hope that he will return might remind the audience of how Alessins' mother "volentiers le nourri" ("willingly nourished him") (l. 70) and might suggest that Lesigne also hoped to raise a child. That she mentions how his mother "[le] porta en lés" ("carried [him] in her flanks") (l. 300) immediately before her distress that due to his departure, she is widowed, may emphasize not only the complete breakdown and loss of her intended future family, but also how his mother's joy at being blessed with a child will never be the kind of joy she can experience. Lesigne's comment regarding the mother's loss anticipates Bone Eurée's lament: "Ma[r te] portai, biaux fils!" ("How unhappily I bore you, dear son!") (l. 1189). The love between parent and child and the parental roles that Lesigne recalls during her conversation with Alessins before he leaves seem to hint that a son owes his parents a debt for producing and raising him, like the way that Cristine's mother says that a daughter should care for her mother in her old age

in Gautier's *Vie de sainte Cristine*. For Alessins, the most important parts of his debt would be to carry on the family line and govern his father's estate.

After Lesigne acknowledges that the traditional family which his parents and she desire is impossible, she proposes a compromise between his asceticism and the traditional family which she cannot have. She requests that he allow her to go with him, should she serve God and not interfere with his religious pursuits. A. G. Elliott indicates in a footnote: "What [Lesigne] is proposing is 'spiritual marriage,' an institution in general rejected by the Church Fathers; see Labriolle, 1921. Hagiographic accounts, however, contain many examples of such unions; see below, and Gaiffier, 1946" (34, n. 56). Why might hagiographic texts provide so many examples like this if the Church generally disapproved of spiritual marriage?

In particular, Alessins' Life seems to hint that spiritual union is positive because he and Lesigne are rewarded with a form of this relationship in the afterlife. Summarizing Leo Spitzer's discussion of the twelfth-century *Vie*, A. G. Elliott suggests that according to Spitzer, "the life transcends normal human experience and serves as an example" (37). Although Alessins' actions may "transcend normal human experience," his family seems to be quite imitable, and Lesigne's proposal of spiritual marriage seems like a positive compromise:

S'a ten conseil le peusse trouver	If you can find it in your heart
Qu'ensamble toi me laissaisses aler,	To allow me to go along with
	you,
Ja me veroies gentement conreer,	You will always see me nobly
	prepared,
Tondre mes crins, .i. capel afubler,	My hair cut, covered with a
	cap,
Et prendre escerpe et .i. bourdon ferré;	And taking up a beggar's purse
	and a pilgrim's staff

<p>Servirai toi de tes dras relaver,          Ne ja luxure ne [m'] verras demener,          Ne adultère ne autre put[eé] (ll. 307-          314).</p>	<p>adorned with iron;          I will serve you by cleaning          your clothes.          You will never see me fall          prey to lust,          Nor adultery, nor any other          debauchery.”</p>
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If he were to accept her offer, she could at least have his companionship, even though she would not have the family she had thought to raise upon marrying him.

Her proposed spiritual marriage would also prevent the dissolution of their marital bond implied by his separation from her. As A. G. Elliott explains, “Voluntary separation after marriage was considered a sin and was expressly condemned, although exceptions were made in unconsummated marriages for entry into a religious order by one (or both) of the partners” (39). The way in which Lesigne suggests that they remain together in a spiritual relationship might lessen the potential sinfulness of their failure to consummate their marriage. It seems strange that the text would appear to argue in favor of spiritual marriage if it, among others of the “many examples of such unions [in hagiographic accounts]” (A. G. Elliott, 34, n. 56) were considered so sinful.

The *Roumans* shows that Lesigne’s devotion to her husband is rewarded at the end of the text, not only because she miraculously receives Alessins’ letter, but also because her soul lives with his in heaven, in a relationship very much akin to the worldly spiritual marriage: “Bele pucele, dont il se fist estrange, / Or sont privé, ensamble sont lor ames. / Or sont en gloire sans nule repentance; / Illuec conversent et si lisent lor salmes” (“The beautiful maiden from whom he estranged himself, / Now they are intimate, their souls are together; / Now they are in glory, without any repentance; / There they are together and now read their psalms”) (ll. 1320-1324). Perhaps this is merely part of how

saints' actions "[transcend] normal human experience" (A. G. Elliott, 37), but again, the text assigns a great deal of verisimilitude to Lesigne, as A. G. Elliott suggests in her aforementioned analysis of the conversation leading up to Alessins' departure, where she says that the scene is "developed with concern for psychological realism and depth" (36). Thus, although she might seem slightly selfishly attached to her husband and her own worldly honor at certain points in the text, one could much more readily follow Lesigne's example than Alessins'.

Furthermore, even though the text expressly states that her soul and his parents' were saved because of him, she is instrumental in establishing their ultimate family structure because she asks to stay with them during the family's first lament following his departure. She tells his mother: "Or mais vivrai a loi de tourtereule / Qui p[er]t son malle, puis ne veut autre querre. / Quant n'ai ton fil, ensamble toi voel estre; / Servirai Dieu, car miex ne puis jou faire" ("Now and forever I will live in the way of the turtledove / Who loses her mate, then she never wants to seek another. / While I cannot have your son, I wish to be with you; / I will serve God, for I cannot do better") (ll. 427-430). When Eufemiens agrees that she may stay with them, she replies: "Servirai toi pour amour a ton fil" ("I will serve you out of love for your son") (l. 437). This statement emphasizes how, as Uitti indicates of the wife in a Latin version of Alexis' Life, "throughout the *Vita* she is fidelity incarnate" ("Paradigm, Legend, Meaning," 282). Her fidelity to Alessins translates into her commitment to the family of which she has become a part. She remains determined not to remarry and try to form a new family with a different husband.

Therefore, she has abandoned the traditional family model, and through her choice, the text hints at the value of parent-child relationships where the child is valued by his or her parents not for his or her capacity to produce heirs, but for his or her own good qualities and contribution to the existing family. Lesigne, choosing to serve Alessins' parents out of love for him, seems to be taking on the responsibilities to the family that Alessins has abandoned. She gives herself to his parents as a child to replace the son they lost. In spite of her choice not to have children, her presence and actions within Alessins' family emphasizes that the parent-child relationship between just two generations is meaningful and the implied way that Eufemiens envisions "the future" as a continuous reproductive chain (ll. 85-86) is not the only way to have a secular family.

Although the text does not explicitly state how she will serve them, Lesigne might care for Alessins' parents in their old age like Cristine's mother hoped her daughter would care for her, for example. Even though the family has lost the income that Alessins was providing while working as a knight, Lesigne can still contribute to the household as a daughter might<sup>39</sup>.

Furthermore, Lesigne supports Alessins' mother emotionally during her lifelong mourning period. When the parents discover that their son has left home, his mother begins to grieve bitterly, and Lesigne says that she will serve his parents out of love for him; they cry together for their lost loved one: "Quant [ot la mère que la pucele] dit, / Que Damediu servira pour son fil, / Tout em plourant la baise enmi le vis. / Plourent ensamble del duel de lor ami" ("When {the mother heard what the maiden} said, / That

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<sup>39</sup> It is of note that she also serves Alessins after he returns home and lives under the stairs. She brings him food under the stairs (l. 779), and much as she says she will wash his linens should he allow her to stay with him, she goes with his mother to wash his sheets as a good deed (l. 836).



she will serve our Lord God for her son, / All in tears, she kisses her on the face. / They cry together out of grief for their loved one”) (ll. 448-451). Although she is also grieving at the loss of her husband, in mourning, Lesigne helps Alessins’ mother to bear the loss of her son. It is of note that when they know for certain that Alessins has died, his mother begs the people of Rome to help her grieve (ll. 1205-1206) but the people of Rome are busy rejoicing because Alessins’ death marks their salvation (l. 1287). Lesigne is the only mourner evident in the text who is not Alessins’ blood relative, and she effectively replaces Alessins as the family’s only child. When she does so, the resulting family is a “spiritual family”: parents with one child who serve God together, and do charitable acts together, such as cleaning a beggar’s linens.

The scene where Lesigne goes with Alessins’ mother to speak with the anonymous beggar Alessins also provides evidence of how she supports his mother emotionally. The mother expresses her concern that the pilgrim “hates her” because he will not speak with her: ““Savés, pucele, dont m’ara mout pesé? / Moi est avis cis pelerins me het; [...] nul eure ne me vaut aparler[.]’] Dist li pucele, ‘Alons li demander’” (““Do you know, damsel, what will weigh upon me greatly? / It is my opinion that this pilgrim hates me; [...] There was never an hour when he wished to speak with me[.]’] The maiden said, ‘Let us go ask him’”) (ll. 830-840). Although Alessins’ mother proposes that they charitably clean the beggar’s linens, it is Lesigne who encourages her to speak to him and ask the country where he was born. Lesigne figuratively “holds the hand” of her mother-in-law as Cristine’s mother suggests that a daughter should for her mother (ll. 1306-1308). In her discussion of masculinity in the twelfth-century *Vie*, Emma Campbell suggests that Alexis “institutes a form of marriage that privileges spiritual community

over the sexual congress that perpetuates secular patriarchy” (“Separating the saints,” 460). I would argue that in the thirteenth-century *Roumans*, Lesigne may contribute more to setting up this family structure. Taking the place of Alessins’ parents’ child, she becomes “le signe,” a sign of God within Eufemiens’ household.

The text promotes “spiritual family” and spiritual marriage over the traditional family structure because of how it eternally rewards Lesigne and Alessins’ parents for their choices. The text does not condemn the traditional family, especially since Alessins tells Lesigne that should she not hear from him for a year following his departure, she would be free to assume that he were dead and she a widow, and to take another husband: “D’ui en un an le renvoierai ci / Par .i. mesaige u moi se jou sui vis. / Si ne revieg, puis pues prendre mari / Savoir porras que alés sui a fin” (“One year from today, I will send it back here / By a messenger or myself if I am alive. / If I do not return, you may take a husband then; / You may assume that I have come to my end”) (ll. 217-220). The painful irony of the situation, that Alessins is doing the opposite of what one should do in a marital chamber, which would be to found a family by fathering a child, is amplified both by Lesigne’s response to his statement and his mother’s reaction when she overhears this response. Lesigne cries out and the mother interprets this cry as the moment of sexual penetration: “Ot le la bele, si a jeté un cri; / Quide sa mere que il juast a li” (“The beautiful maiden heard this and let out a cry; / His mother believed that he was giving himself over to pleasure with her”) (ll. 221-222). Thus, the text reminds its audience of a husband’s and wife’s reproductive imperative while Alessins affords his wife the opportunity to take another husband, should she wish to do so.

Rather than deciding to remarry, she proclaims herself a widow due to Alessins' departure (l. 301), and chooses to remain faithful to him after his figurative "death," his flight from worldly life. In this way, the text may also be using her as an example for audience members who are either widows or widowers, encouraging them to enter into religious orders rather than to remarry. After all, their devotion to their loved ones might result in eternal marital bliss. That said, on the one hand, this may not seem so positive to those whose families chose their marital partners, if they are less than thrilled with their spouses. On the other hand, it might reinforce the importance of a marriage beginning with free, and not forced, consent from the parties being married. Nonetheless, in spite of Alessins' desire not to marry, and his somewhat forced consent resulting from his fear of angering his father, he achieves what seems to be a joyful spiritual union with his wife in the afterlife, where their souls remain together eternally. Thus, of the three familial models presented in Alessins' conversation with his wife – the traditional family, the purely ascetic model, and the spiritual marriage – the spiritual marriage model seems to be the text's preferred family structure for lay couples. Additionally, the text seems to promote the "spiritual family," a sort of hybrid family model where parents have one child, then abstain from sexual intercourse as if in a spiritual marriage. This family structure might permit couples to carry on their family lines while still avoiding lust and overattachment to the world, and to maintain their piety.

The family model presented in the text is not one in which the family line is perpetuated. It highlights the affection of parents for their child as an individual and not just as a reproductive engine or vessel for the perpetuation of the family line. Therefore, the "spiritual family" is a circular structure in which a single generation of parents has

one child, who then cares for and supports them in their old age. This family model highlights reciprocity because the child can provide economic, emotional, and spiritual support to his or her parents, much as they did for the child. Whether or not that child has children, the emphasis is not on reproduction or amassing worldly goods for perpetuity.

Overattachment to the world, to worldly things and beings, is Alessins' greatest fear and a dominant issue in the text, and the degree to which his family members are attached to the world is reflected in their laments. These laments function in several ways. First, as we have seen, they establish Lesigne's and Alessins' parents' family structure. Second, they hint that Eufemiens might feel partly responsible for his son's disappearance, when he regrets how Alessins' disappearance is caused by sin. Third, they serve their primary function, which is to show the magnitude of the family's loss, for both their loved one and their intended family structure.

The family's first lament following Alessins' departure functions in all three of these ways. We have already seen how it sets up their ultimate family structure. The second element specific to this lament is Eufemiens' lament of the role of sin. After learning of his son's disappearance and accepting Lesigne into his household, he says of Alessins: "Peciés le m'a tolu" ("Sin has taken him from me") (l. 456). Alessins' father may not be blaming himself for the loss of his son because he does not specify *whose* sin has taken Alessins from him. Nevertheless, it seems significant that the text attributes this line to Eufemiens and not to Alessins' wife. In the earlier *Vie*, the wife laments: "Pechét le m'at tolut. / E! chers amis, si pou vus ai oüt! / Or sui si graime que ne puis estra plus" ("Sin has taken him from me. / Ah, beloved, how little I have had you! / Now

I am as wretched as anyone can be,” Durling, *trans.*) (ll. 108-110). On the one hand, that Eufemiens, not Lesigne, bemoans Alessins’ loss due to sin in the *Roumans* might just be a device to make Lesigne seem more selfless because while she grieves for her loss, she does not blame anyone or anything for it. She understands and accepts, to some degree, that Alessins had to leave and pursue his religious vocation. On the other hand, it seems that Eufemiens understands that his excessive worldly attachment could be the sin to which he attributes his son’s loss, even if he is too blind to specifically identify this sin. The gravity of the sin is reflected in the amount of suffering that results from it.

Alessins’ family’s laments reveal the magnitude of their distress as they go into transports of grief, such as crying, destroying items in their home, fainting, throwing themselves about, and tearing at their hair. Alessins’ mother is the first to lament; she makes a statement in which she essentially strips herself of her given name, Boine Eurée, because her happiness transforms into sadness and despair. Just as the narrator first introduces her by repeating her name twice, she states twice that she is unhappy. During her introduction, the narrator calls her “Fille Flourent, o non Boine Eurée. / Bone Eurée, li père ot non Flourens” (“The daughter of Flourent, named Boine Eurée. / Boine Eurée, whose father was named Flourent”) (ll. 55-56). Her first lament has a similar repetitive structure, where chiasmus amplifies her distress:

Fius A[lessins], de ta dolante  
mere,  
Tu [m’]es fuis, dolante en sui  
remése.  
Le liu ne sai ne ne sai la  
contrée  
U jou te quiére; toute en sui  
esgarée.

Alessins, son, from your  
grieving mother,  
You fled from me; I am left  
grieving because of it.  
I know neither the place nor do  
I know the country  
Where I may seek you out; I  
am completely dismayed  
about it.

Ja n'ierc lié, biaux fius, si n'iert  
 tes pére  
 Se ne reviens en iceste contrée  
 (ll. 399-404).

Never will I be happy, dear  
 son, nor will your father,  
 If you do not return to this  
 country.

The repetition of “dolante” shows how her emotion overwhelms her. That “Tu m’es fuis” (“You fled from me”) is centrally located between the repeated adjective further emphasizes the overwhelming emotion. Her unhappiness replaces her name, and her lack of knowledge of her son’s whereabouts leaves her lost. The unknown traps her in her despair, as we can see in the chiasmic structure of her expression of her missing son’s whereabouts. As she says, “The place, I know not, nor do I know the country,” “le liu,” and “la contrée,” surround her repetition of her ignorance of the location, the “ne sai” that she states twice. This chiasmus amplifies her and her husband’s unhappiness, which will remain unless Alessins should return home.

While her mood, and seemingly, her name, transform, Alessins’ mother also destroys the decorations in the wedding chamber:

Vint en la cambre plainne de mariment;	She came into the bedroom full of distress
Si le despoille que n'i laissa nient.	And strips it down so she left nothing there at all;
N'i laisse paile ne nul cier garniment;	She leaves neither the rich silken sheet nor any valuable decorations.
Tost a tourné a grant duel son talent.	Her disposition has been completely given over to her great grief;
Par grant dolour se deжете souvent.	She often beats herself up in excessive grief;
Ains puis cel jour n'en fu lié granment.	After that day, she was never very happy again.

Vint en la cambre, toute l'a desparée: She came into the bedroom,

<p>Si l'a destruite comme ele ert la vesprée, Ostent les pailles et les courtines léés,  Sa grant ricoise a a grant duel tournée (ll. 406-415).</p>	<p>stripped everything down And she destroyed it as if it were nightfall<sup>40</sup> They remove the rich silken sheets and the broad curtains; Her great wealth had turned into great grief;</p>
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The wedding chamber is important because it is the location where Alessins should have continued his family line, but instead, his father's instruction to enter the room led to his departure. Furthermore, it is the place where Alessins asked his wife for her permission to leave. The room and its contents represent everything from which Alessins flees: worldly wealth and inheritance, the potentially sinful delight of sex with his wife, and starting a family.

Uitti harshly criticizes the mother's similar grieving and destructive tendencies in the Latin version of Alexis' Life, suggesting that "Whereas Alexis' mother gives vent to self-mortification and savage recrimination in her two *planctus*, the bride – though desperately grieved – obeys Alexis' implied injunction and plays out her part [to devote herself to God and stay with his family]" ("Paradigm, Legend, Meaning," 282). Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that Alessins' mother is still a woman who has lost her only child. The contents of the room are not the only components of the mother's "great wealth" which have turned into her "great grief." Alessins was also part of her wealth because he was the gift from God which made her a "Blessed One," as her name implied.

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<sup>40</sup> The *Vie*'s equivalent line reads: "Si l'at destruite cum s'ost l'ait depredethe" ("She has torn it to pieces as though an army had pillaged it," Durling, *trans.*) (l. 143). It seems that the *Roumans*' "nightfall" here refers to the darkness of night blotting out the sun.

Her son has now been replaced with the emptiness of not knowing where he has gone. As Kelly notes of the earlier *Vie*, “this chamber must now be emptied to reflect how bereft is the mother’s life without Alexis [...] This need to destroy her space expresses how powerful are its associations: she must make the space reflect the loss of meaning it once held for her” (86).

In the *Roumans*, it seems that the bedchamber has even greater significance as a direct participant in Alessins’ departure; it can, to some extent, be blamed for his flight. In the *Vie*, when the mother destroys the room’s contents, she merely states that it will never be decorated again: “ja mais n’estras parede” (“you will never be adorned”) (Durling, *trans.*) (l. 141). However, in the *Roumans*, just as he, his mother’s greatest “wealth,” is no longer present, the richly decorated room must be stripped of its finery because, as the mother says, she decorated it poorly: “‘Cambre,’ dist ele, ‘mal fuissiés atornée, / Contre ques nueces vous avoie parée! / Jamais en vous n’iert leëce trouvée” (“‘Bedroom,’ she said, ‘you were poorly adorned / For the occasion of what wedding did I decorate you? / Never will happiness be found in you!’”) (ll. 417-419). The arrangement of the room which will never bring happiness is linguistically linked to the transformation of the mother’s “wealth” into “grief” because her “ricoise [...] a [...] tornée” (“great wealth [...] turned”) (l. 415) into grief, while the bedroom “mal fuissiés atornée” (“[was] poorly adorned”) (l. 417). This play on words highlights the unhappy irony of the situation, since the decoration of the room was supposed to lead to the joyful consummation of Alessins’ marriage, while it resulted in the opposite. Overturning the room and destroying its contents not only vents the mother’s frustration; it also symbolically parallels the transformation of the family’s joy into sorrow. Alessins’



departure destroys his household, both in terms of his family and lineage and in terms of the physical space of the room in the home.

The destruction of the family line is the main focus of his parents' lament after Alessins dies, and although it is perhaps the moment when they seem most selfish in the text, it is important to keep in mind that they love him dearly because he is their son, and that the trajectory of his vocational path during his youth should have led to him continuing to be a knight and raising a family. Alessins' father and mother have similar laments: they both cry out that all that remains for them is grief, regret their blindness to his presence under the stairs, and bemoan the end of their noble family lines.

Although they might seem more selfish after Alessins' death than elsewhere in the text, their worldly ambitions for their son may not be bad in and of themselves, and their laments show that they sincerely love their son and were trying to do what they thought was best for him. Eufemiens acknowledges that sinning caused his blindness to his son's presence, so it is probable that he blames himself, in part, for the loss of his son: "E fius, dist il, 'que dels m'est demorés! / Com male garde ai fait sous mon degré! / Et jou pecière, com par sui avulés! / Tant l'ai veü c'ains ne sot aviser" ("Ah, son," he said, 'what suffering remains to me! / What poor treatment I gave you beneath my staircase! / And I, the sinner, how very blind I am! / I saw him so often, yet I did not know<sup>41</sup> how to recognize him!'" (ll. 1143-1146). Nonetheless, although sin has kept him from recognizing Alessins, and the text demonstrates that Eufemiens' sin is excessive attachment to the world and his son as a worldly being, attachment to the world and

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<sup>41</sup> "Sot" appears to be a tense error. In the *Vie*, the equivalent line reads, "Tant l'ai vedud, si nel poi aviser" ("I saw him so often, but I could not recognize him") (l. 395).

paternal love is not sinful if it is not excessive. As we have seen in Alessins' prayer before he leaves home on his wedding night, Eufemiens acted in what he believed to be his son's best interest.

He mentions Alessins' inheritance, but he seems more focused on the loss of Alessins himself; he amassed his wealth so that he could pass it on to his son because he expected Alessins to follow the same vocational path as all his ancestors:

<p>“Fils, qui seront mes grandes iretés,          [...]         Pour toie amour m'en iére mout          penés ;          Se tu vesquisses, t'en fusses hounérés.</p>	<p>“Son, what will become of my          great inheritance,          [...]         Out of love for you, I labored          very hard for them;          If you should have lived, you          would be wealthy with          them.</p>
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100 [102]

100 [102]

<p>“Blanc ai le cief et le barbe kenue;          Mes grans onors avoir retenues;          Je vous servoie, mais vous n'en aviés          cure.          Si grans dolors m'est hui cest jour          [v]enue!          Fils, la toie ame soit el ciel absolue!          [...]         “Toi couvenist lance et escu porter,          Espée çaindre comme tes autres pers,          [...]         Si fist tes pére et tous tes parentés.”          (ll. 1153-1172).</p>	<p>“I have a white-haired head          and a white beard;          I have retained my great          wealth;          I gave it to you, but you did          not care for it at all.          Such great grief has come to          me this very day!          Son, may your soul be          absolved in heaven!          [...]         “You should have carried a          lance and shield,          Strapped on a sword like your          other peers,          [...]         As did your father and all your          family members.”</p>
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At the center of the lament, Eufemiens admits that Alessins did not want the wealth that he had amassed for him. He then repeats that great sorrow has come to him and

expresses his hope that his son's soul may be in heaven. Such a line does not exist in the *Vie*'s equivalent lament (ll. 406-416), which indicates a shift in emphasis to greater paternal love in the later version. One might still question the degree to which Eufemiens' statement is selfish in the *Roumans* in that he grieves for his son because he is attached to him as a worldly being. In other words, when he says that great grief has come to him, it might also apply to the previous line; he grieves both that Alessins is dead and that he did not want the wealth that he had acquired for him.

Nonetheless, Eufemiens' grief can be compared to that which Ogden describes in her discussion of *La Vie de sainte Eufrosine* and Bernard de Clairvaux's *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum*. Ogden argues that "Although, at the level of the narrative, they criticize the grief [that results from earthly love] explicitly or implicitly as a lack of faith in God, [these texts] also suggest that it is worthy of compassion and that it indicates or produces a deeper understanding than human reason can attain alone" (114). Furthermore, Ogden explains that according to the texts' logic, "love itself is eternal, whether experienced by a soul for God or by one person for another. The carnal element of human love is changeable and causes grief: the way in which an individual responds to that sorrow determines whether the grief impedes or advances spiritual wisdom, or, in other words, whether it produces or destroys virtue" (123). Ultimately, we must understand that Eufemiens does not destroy his virtue through excessive grief, as the narrator states that the souls of Alessins' father, mother, and wife are all saved at the end of the text (ll. 1310-1314). The text implies that it is their love of Alessins which causes them to turn more ardently toward God. Therefore, it would seem that Eufemiens' incomprehension at his overwhelming loss is tied more to genuine paternal affection than

to a selfish desire for someone to inherit his wealth and continue his lineage. The text suggests that this is the case because his wish that his son's soul be in heaven punctuates the central *laisse* in this lament.

Alessins' mother's lament also mentions lineage, but again, it seems secondary to her expression of her love and concern for him. She says:

<p>“Fils A[lessins], de la toi[e] car tenre Si adoisaissees tout ton gentil lignaige. Se une fois a moi seule parlassees, Ta lasse mère si le reconfortasse[s], Qui-st si dolan[te], biaux fiels, buer i alasses.</p>	<p>“Alessins, son, on your gentle person Rested [the fate of] all your noble lineage. If you had spoken to me alone just once, You would have comforted your unhappy mother so much, She who is so aggrieved, dear son, you would have gone away rightly<sup>42</sup>.</p>
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108 [111]

108 [111]

<p>“E lasse mère, comme fort aventure, Que ci voi morte toute ma noureture!” (ll. 1193-1199).</p>	<p>“Ah, unhappy mother, what a painful event, That here I see dead all my dynasty!”</p>
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Although she expresses concern for the end of her family line, the mother focuses on how Alessins could have comforted her if only he had spoken to her once. As we have seen, he did speak to her, when he asked her forgiveness. However, he did not reveal who he was, nor did he comfort her. That she did not part ways with her son as she wished might

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<sup>42</sup> The *Vie*'s equivalent line reads: “Ki si'st dolente. Cher fiz, bor i alasses !” (“who is so unhappy! Dear son, you would have been so welcome!” Durling, *trans.*) (l. 450). Godefroy cites this line of the *Vie* under “bor,” giving “bien, heureusement, à propos, avec raison” (“well, happily, apropos, rightly”) as definitions (“bor,” adv.). Since “alasses” is the imperfect subjunctive for “aller” (“to go”), it seems more likely that the mother would be suggesting that Alessins would have gone away rightly or justly than that he would have gone away happily. In other words, he would have acted appropriately had he comforted his mother before he died.

be attributed to her sin of excessive worldly attachment; it caused her not to recognize him, at which she hints in a passage similar to the one in her husband's lament regarding his blindness: “‘E fiex,’ dist ele, ‘com me eus enhaïe! / Et jou caitive, com par sui avulïe; / Nel recounnui onques tant le veïsse” (“‘Ah, son,’ she says, ‘how you held me in such contempt! / And I, the unhappy one, how very blind I am; / I never recognized him though I saw him so often’”) (ll. 1185-1187).

There are two notable differences between her lament and her husband's that might make her seem more selfish than Eufemiens at this point in the text. First, Eufemiens seems to blame his own sin for his blindness; he refers to himself as “jou peçiere” (l. 1145), “I, the sinner,” whereas his wife calls herself “jou caitive” (l. 1186), “I, the unhappy one.” This reflects the mother's change in status from her initial identity as a blessed, happy woman, which related to her name, “Bone Eurée,” to merely a “mère caitive,” an unnamed, unhappy mother. It also seems to suggest that Alessins triggered his mother's status change and name erasure, whereas Eufemiens takes some responsibility for his situation, or at least to place responsibility on *his* sin rather than Alessins' actions. Second, whereas Eufemiens blames himself for treating his son badly while he was living under the stairs: “Com male garde ai fait sous mon degree!” (“What poor treatment I gave you beneath my staircase!”) (l. 1144), Alessins' mother suggests that he hated her: “com me eus enhaïe” (“how you held me in such contempt”) (l. 1185). Whereas Alessins' father regrets how he contributed to his son's suffering, Alessins' mother seems to hold her son responsible for her suffering<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Kelly suggests that for the mother in the *Vie*, “Her place is one of an attachment so strong that she cannot see her son as separate from herself. (The self-serving grief of Alexis's mother highlights by contrast the

If the parents assign any culpability to themselves, Eufemiens seems to do so more than Alessins' mother. This would make sense because Alessins runs away due to his undesired marriage that his father arranges. Regardless of whether Eufemiens blames himself for the loss of his son, Alessins' mother does not seem to consider herself at fault, except insofar as she did not recognize her son. Nor does the text seem to suggest that she might be at fault. Rather, Alessins' hard heart causes her unhappiness.

The mother's lament might respond to concerns of lay audience members. Much as the servants who were searching for Alessins told their innkeeper that no man could have so hard a heart that he would not cry, should he hear of Eufemiens' grief (ll. 487-488), the mother's comment that Alessins must have hated her seems to refer back to the idea that indeed, he had hardened his heart so much as to make himself callous enough not to cry for his family. Alessins' mother also requests help to bear the burden of her grief: "Signor de Rome, pour l'amor Diu merci; / Aidiés me a plaindre le duel de mon ami. / Grans est li dels qui sor moi est vertis" ("Lords of Rome, for the love of God's mercy; / Help me in mourning the loss of my loved one. / Great is the grief which has befallen me") (ll.1205-1207). According to the logic of the text, her blindness to Alessins' presence under the stairs was induced by her excessive love for him. God hid Alessins from her to prevent her from influencing him to return to worldly life. In spite of the mother's excessive love, the text seems to insist that its audience keep in mind that she has experienced her greatest possible loss. As she begs the people of Rome to grieve

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humble acceptance of the Virgin Mary, a Christian model of motherhood, as she faces her own son's death)" (107). It does not seem to me that the *Roumans'* mother "cannot see her son as separate from herself," but that she believes he has failed to fulfill his familial duties, including caring for his mother and carrying on the family line.

with her, is the text's audience not meant to feel sympathy for this poor woman who has lost her son?

Instead of sharing her grief, the people of Rome rejoice, and the pope, Innocent, accuses the family of excessive attachment to Alessins as a worldly being, which may appear to dismiss their feelings and suggest that familial affection is bad. However, Innocent may not be able to relate to their grief because Alessins' death delivers a savior to the people of Rome. The pope's rather insensitive comment seems perhaps harsher than its equivalent in the earlier *Vie* because the pope in the *Vie* criticizes not only the family, but any lamenting individual who may be present, whereas the pope's comment in the *Roumans* only targets the family's grief. According to the *Vie*:

Tant i plurat e le pedra e la medra,	(100.) So much did the father
	and mother weep,
E la pulcela, que tuz s'en allasserent.	and the maiden, that everyone
	grew weary from it.
En tant dementres le saint cors	Meanwhile all the lords
concreerent	prepared the holy body
Tuit cil seignor e bel l'acustumerent:	and clothed it in fine garments.
Com felix cels ki par fait l'enorerent!	How happy those who
	believed and honored him!
'Seignors, que faites?' ço dist li	(101.) "My lords, what are you
apostolie.	doing?" said the pope.
'Que valt cist crit, cist dols ne cesta	"What good is this cry, this
noise?	mourning, and this noise?
Chi chi se doilet, a nostr'os est il goie,	Some of you are grieving, but
	this is for us a source of
	joy,
Quar par cestui avrum boen adjutorie;	for through this man we shall
	have good help.
Si li preiuns que de tuz mals nos	So let us pray to him to deliver
tolget' (ll. 496-505).	us from all evil." (Durling,
	<i>trans.</i> )

Although the noblemen who are not part of Alexis' family and who are preparing the body are "felix," "happy," the pope's statement, "Chi chi se doilet, a nostr'os est il goie," applies generally to anyone who might be grieving at Alexis' death. They should not be sad because it will bring the salvation of all. Furthermore, that other noblemen participate in preparing the body seems to make the act of doing so less personal and specific to the immediate family. The *Vie* seems to emphasize how Alexis' body belongs to the general populace more than to his family because of the other people's involvement in the preparation of the body for burial<sup>44</sup>.

Grief in the *Roumans* is clearly attributed to Alessins' family, in a touching display of the intimacy of family life. As in the *Vie*, the parents and wife exhaust themselves in anguish; however, the simple elimination of the reference to the other lords preparing the body seems to emphasize the importance of the loss of a loved one, especially a child or spouse:

Tant i plourérent et li péres et li mere	Both the father and the mother cried so much,
Et la pucele que trestout s'i lassérent	And the maiden, everyone tired of it
Endementiers le saint cors conreérent.	While they prepared the holy body.

116 [120]

116 [120]

"Signour, que faites?" çou dist li apostoles.	"Lord, what are you doing?" the pope said this:
"Que vous ajue cil deus ne ciste cose?"	"How will this grieving or this noise <sup>45</sup> help you?"
Car par celui arons boine victoire" (ll. 1232-1236).	For by this one, we will have a holy victory."

<sup>44</sup> According to Campbell, "Alexis' body, being revealed as that of the man of God, becomes a gift passed from God to His Christian brethren" ("Separating the saints," 458).

<sup>45</sup> A. G. Elliott explains that "G. P. emends ["cose"], perhaps rightly, on the basis of *LAP* to *noise*" (150).



Although it may seem that the pope's disapproval of their grief criticizes familial affection, the text overall does not seem to do so. Instead, it is more likely that the pope does not understand their grief because although the parents have lost their son, the pope, as a "father" of the people, has now gained a savior for his "children." Whereas Alessins' mother's great joy that she experienced at her son's birth and the relief of her distress that she might not be able to have a child transformed into her great grief, his death, which brings her great grief and that of her family, makes the people of Rome joyous and heals their ailments.

Alessins, as a baby, was a gift from God to his parents and his mother's wealth. Now, in death, he has become a gift to the people and their wealth through his self-sacrifice. Campbell explains that the twelfth-century *Vie*'s Alexis chooses to participate in a celestial "gift economy" which transcends the worldly "economy" in which his parents attempt to participate through the extension of their family line by having their son married. Alexis' choice to divest himself of worldly goods and give himself over to God suggests "a form of gift-giving that will ultimately remove the Saint from involvement in the world and implicitly propel him into an economy that will yield spiritual rewards" ("Separating the saints," 454). Furthermore, she says, "The fact that renunciation operates as a form of gift means that tension is maintained between terrestrial and spiritual exchange networks [...] Alexis's body – as a symbol of precisely this form of renunciation – also functions within the relationship between God and his people, the Saint's body being offered to the public as a vehicle for the gift of divine revelation" ("Separating the saints," 457-458). Campbell's argument that the saint's Life

depicts a society which operates on principles of gift exchange is convincing; the alternative “family” of Christian believers receives the saint in a form of “gift exchange” that parallels the worldly “exchange” in which a noble family builds alliances with other nobles by joining their children in marriage.

To build on Campbell’s argument, the transfer of saints as “gifts” between celestial and terrestrial family structures occurs at moments of “birth.” The end of the saint’s human life represents his “birth” as a saint, so it makes sense that both of his “births” would result in happiness for someone. The family’s loss in favor of the people’s gain hints at the importance of sacrificing the individual for the collectivity: the larger Christian community must take precedence over the immediate family because they all form one family under God. Additionally, Alessins’ self-sacrifice and his family’s somewhat forced sacrifice will ultimately lead to everyone’s salvation and, more importantly, their “birth” into eternal life. Therefore, although the text seems to suggest that salvation and wellness of the collectivity is more important than that of the individual family, it does not seem to devalue familial love. Indeed, familial love can extend beyond the immediate family through self-sacrifice and charity.

In sum, although Alessins flees from worldly relationships, his interactions with his family and their laments depict several types of family structure, all of which seem to be presented as valuable, even if the text seems to suggest that either spiritual marriage or the “spiritual family” is preferential for lay couples. The Life presents a hierarchy of family structures, where the ascetic model, in which a divinely-inspired individual like Alessins withdraws from the world to devote himself to the worship of God, forming a “family” of God and Christian believers, seems to be of such a high order of perfection as

to be unattainable for most people. The spiritual marriage model, in which a husband and wife abstain from sex and serve God together, is also likely to be an unattainable model for most people, as a relationship akin to spiritual marriage is Alessins' and Lesigne's heavenly reward for their perfect fidelity to one another. Meanwhile, from the text's perspective, the "spiritual family," where parents have one child, then choose to abstain from sex to devote themselves to worshipping God, appears to be better than the traditional family. The "spiritual family" allows a couple to fulfill the reproductive imperative and then, when their child is grown, they can better focus on serving God and their community in other capacities, such as praying and doing charitable works. Finally, although a traditional family, where each generation marries and produces multiple heirs, is not explicitly depicted in the text, the Life hints that the traditional family can still be a good option for a family model, provided that people do not lose sight of God in pursuit of their worldly ambitions<sup>46</sup>.

Although Alessins attains sainthood by withdrawing from the world, his family members, especially his parents, may serve as better examples for secular audience members because they are good, pious, charitable, yet sinning Christians. They attain salvation partly due to Alessins' actions, but at moments when they may seem selfish as a result of their attachment to him, the text recalls ways in which they genuinely care about others, not only their son as the man they know, but also him in the guise of the anonymous beggar. The saint might be too much of an abstract example of piety for people to imitate, as Charles E. Stebbins suggests in his analysis of the separation scene

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<sup>46</sup> The text does not seem to reject the idea of families with multiple children because it emphasizes that Alessins is an only child, and thus his parents cherish him all the more (e.g. ll. 83-84, 485-486). It does not assert that having multiple children is negative.

between Alexis and his wife in another thirteenth-century version of the text, the one that is found in Paris, BnF fr. 2162. According to Stebbins, even if Alexis seems heartless, his calling to God necessitates his coldness toward his family: “The saint, like the epic hero, cannot be judged by the common yardstick and pressed into the common mold of mankind” (“‘Humanity’ of Saint Alexis,” 865). However, the saint’s family expresses emotions that seem significantly more realistic for people who have lost their loved one. Alessins’ parents, although they may have been addressed by critics less than Alessins himself or his wife, can be imitated much more readily than their son. They demonstrate that according to the logic of the text, anyone, including sinners who are overly attached to the world, can attain salvation, especially with the aid of a saint who can advocate for them to God.

The text’s depiction of Alessins’ parents demonstrates the importance of charity and its role in the “family” of the larger Christian community. The text also shows how adult children shape family structure, not only through their vocational choices, but also through their obedience, reverence, and loyalty. While Alessins obeys his father and marries Lesigne in spite of his wishes, which ultimately causes him to leave home, Alessins’ wife, who is left behind with the parents, takes his place as their only child. Through her loyalty to her husband, she helps to establish the “spiritual family” which is similar to the spiritual marriage relationship that she proposes to him on their wedding night. Overall, the text shows how interpersonal relationships result from giving – the parents give nourishment to their beloved son, who should, in theory, help them in their old age; Lesigne offers to serve her husband in a spiritual marriage, and when he refuses, she serves his family out of love for him; all the family members give alms to the poor;

Alessins sacrifices his lineage and inheritance, and ultimately himself, for the good of humanity. While self-sacrifice on the grand scale of Alessins' is unattainable for anyone but a saint, Alessins' parents' and wife's actions can be quite imitable for an audience that includes lay parents and children, and it seems that the text presents them in such a way that the parents and wife should serve as primary examples for audience members.

### Conclusion

In her analysis of the Bodleian Library's Can. Misc. 74, Campbell describes the texts bound within it that contain family conflict, including the Lives of saints Juliane, Alexis, and Eufrosine, as ones which "highlight the importance of renouncing the world as that which might compromise one's relationship to God and lead to sin" (*The Gift*, 206). I would argue that Lives like Juliane's may not depict the world and worldly relationships as simply hazards to one's relationship with God; rather, one's worldly relationships interact in complex, interconnected ways with his or her relationship to God. Although saints like Juliane, Cristine, and Alessins must renounce the world, they do so because they are extraordinary in their transcendent relationships with God. Their families, meanwhile, are often at the other end of the spectrum of worldly and heavenly relationships – they are overly attached to worldly people and possessions. The texts make it clear that excess worldly love is detrimental, and not only for the individuals who love excessively, but also for the recipients of this emotion, such as in the case of Cristine, whose parents abuse her<sup>47</sup>.

However, these excesses do not imply that familial affection is bad in and of itself, and in some ways, these secondary characters are just as imitable as the saints themselves, if not more so. The Lives draw parallels between worldly relationships and people's relationships with God such that they establish interconnected hierarchies of obedience and love. At the most basic level, parents love and care for their children,

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<sup>47</sup>Saints like Cristine suffer martyrdom by defying their parents, thereby achieving sanctity, so the degree to which they "suffer" is arguable. Their physical suffering leads to their eternal bliss. Although the martyrs' Lives do not suggest that their audiences will experience physical suffering on a scale of what the texts' protagonists must endure, the Lives hint that both physical and emotional suffering are unfortunate facts of human existence.

while the children love and obey their parents. The household serves as an example for people's relationships within the community at large and their relationships with God. Just as they obey their elders, they must be subservient to worldly authorities, including secular rulers like lords and kings, and religious leaders such as priests. All of their worldly love and obedience is subordinate to that which they owe to God, the ultimate Father, Lord, and King, but placing their love and obedience to God above their worldly obligations is not unproblematic.

The Lives of Juliane, Cristine, and Alessins bring to the fore some of the issues raised by the conflict between people's worldly love and obligations and their relationship to God. While Juliane seems to reject family and worldly marriage completely, her prayers and conversations with other characters draw parallels between her and her father and the Biblical family of Abraham and Isaac and betray concern for abandoning ancestral beliefs and filial disobedience. Alessins' prayers, thoughts about his family, and interactions with them similarly suggest that he is concerned about having left them and that he fears that the way in which he has treated them is sinful. As Juliane's prayer in which she mentions Abraham and Isaac can remind the text's audience of the value of family, Alessins' reading of his psalter refers back to the relationships between parents and children. Neither Juliane nor Alessins, though they do not want to marry, seems opposed to worldly marriage; Juliane hints that she would marry Eliseus, should he convert to Christianity, while Alessins notes that his father thinks that he is doing what is best for him by marrying him to Lesigne, and there is no indication that he would object to marriage if he did not believe that it would lead him astray from God. Alessins' parents and wife, although they are sinners who cannot tell

that the beggar under the stairs is the loved one whom they seek, are nonetheless good, charitable Christians. When the text refers to how they sin by loving him excessively, it also tends to include a reminder of their charitable nature. Alessins' wife Lesigne and his parents form a "spiritual family" out of love for him and God, and he and Lesigne are rewarded for their fidelity to one another in the afterlife by having a heavenly equivalent of a spiritual marriage.

As for Cristine, her parents' excessive love becomes like idol-worship. Although her mother replaces the figure of the demon in the dungeon who tries to get her daughter to obey Urbain and retain their family's ancestral beliefs, the mother elicits our sympathy. Like Alessins' father, she wants what she believes is best for her daughter. However, she is so blinded by sin and lost that she cannot be converted to Christianity, and as a result, she acts wickedly. Cristine's mother kills herself out of despair, committing the sin of death from excessive grief that Slojka identifies as Perceval's mother's in Chrétien's *Conte du grail* (70). Cristine's mother's sin is amplified because it is an intentional act of suicide, whereas Perceval's mother simply falls down dead.

Overall, the violent, abusive aspects of secondary characters who are like the pagan parents of Juliane and Cristine make them negative counter-examples for audience members. Their positive traits, such as Cristine's parents' love for their daughter, suggest that even at their worst, these characters are not all bad. Meanwhile, although parents like Alessins' are overly attached to the world, they are positive examples because they are good but sinning Christians. These fictional parents are therefore easier to imitate than the protagonists of the Lives in which they appear. This is to say that audience members may be able to more readily identify that which is positive, sympathetic, and



capable of being directly imitated in the family members of the saints than the audience members can determine in what ways to follow the examples of the exceptionally holy saints. I have focused on the parents in these Lives because critics like Nancy Vine Durling have tended to see their conflict with their children as “a generic given” (“Hagiography and Lineage,” 452), but their presence in their children’s Lives must be meaningful, or parents would not only be unnecessary additions to the texts but also significantly less prevalent in saints’ Lives on the whole. They can serve multiple functions: to make the saints seem more human, to provide audience members with behavioral models other than the saints themselves, to remind audience members of the importance of familial affection, and to cater to mixed audiences which likely include noble parents and children.

While it is impossible to know with certainty what kinds of audiences these Lives had, we can infer possible audiences based on some of their stylistic and linguistic elements. As I have indicated in the introduction, A. G. Elliott has demonstrated that *Li Roumans de saint Alessins* was likely composed for a lay audience because its style imitates epic literature (50). Additionally, it presents itself as a romance rather than a Life and its narrator intervenes during the scene where Lesigne receives the letter which describes her husband’s life to tell the audience that men must be loyal to their wives (ll. 1093-1100). While the audiences for *La Vie sainte Juliane* and *La Vie de sainte Cristine* can be inferred with less certainty, these texts also contain elements which suggest that they might have had lay audience members. For example, during the prologue to Juliane’s Life, the narrator tells audience members that because they cannot understand Latin, he will tell them her Life in the vernacular for their edification and entertainment:

“Vos ki latin apris n’avez, / lo plain romanz bien entendeiz; / ki l’entendrat parfitement, / l’anrme en avrat son salvement” (ll. 37-40). As I have previously mentioned, the text’s references to family and Juliane’s and Eliseus’ concerns about breaking with ancestral traditions and disobeying their fathers or father figures also hint at an audience which includes laypeople. Cristine’s Life, like Juliane’s and Alessins’, contains narrative cues that hint at an at least partially lay audience, in addition to the family interactions which I have examined. Gautier complains about people enjoying minstrels’ tales, such as *Renart et Ysengrin*, although their souls would benefit from saintly examples: “Mieux aiment a oïr ce que l’ame compere, / Si com Renart traï Ysengrin son compere / Ou une grant oïseuse, s’un menestrier leur dit, / Que de saint ne de sainte essample ne bon dit” (“They prefer to hear what the soul is punished for, / Such as how Renart betrayed his companion Ysengrin / Or a useless speech, if a minstrel tells it to them / Than to an example of a male or female saint or to a good tale”) (ll. 9-12). That the narrators in these Lives suggest that the texts are meant to provide good examples for married couples, those who cannot comprehend Latin, or those who typically find their entertainment in popular literature, bolsters the importance of the saints’ families’ roles as examples for these potential lay audience members.

Other possible audience members might include young nobles forced into the monastic vocation by circumstance. For example, sons may not be able to inherit their families’ estates if they have older brothers, or parents might not be able to afford dowries for their daughters. An audience of future monks and nuns would be more like that which Kristine E. Haney identifies for the earlier *Vie de saint Alexis*. She states that Alexis “was an enormously popular saint in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, notably in

the way his life was held up as an example for monks. In a sermon composed in 995 for the feast of Saint Alexis, Saint Adalbert of Prague (d. 997) exhorted his monastic audience to follow the example of a saint who detached himself from all human ties. Peter Damien (d. 1072) returned to this theme in his homily for the feast of Saint Alexis, where the saint is described as achieving near perfection” (149). The ways in which the thirteenth-century *Roumans* differs from the twelfth-century *Vie* not only hint at a different audience for the text but also reflect the changing attitudes toward marriage that were developing over the course of the late twelfth through thirteenth centuries. The *Roumans* places the relationship between Alessins and his wife at the fore, hand-in-hand with his parents’ relationship with them. The saint seems to achieve slightly less perfection than Haney notes in Peter Damien’s description, for Alessins describes himself as a sinner and exhibits sympathy for his family; meanwhile, the family seems more selfless than that of the *Vie*.

Overall, the thirteenth-century Old French and Anglo-Norman Lives of Juliane, Cristine, and Alessins that I have examined show a heightened sensibility to family and its role within the greater Christian community as compared to other versions of their Lives. In these thirteenth-century texts, the saints’ unattainable near-perfection is balanced by character depth that makes them more human and makes it easier for people to identify with them. At the same time, although their parents are negative examples at the opposite end of the spectrum of those who behave with extreme emotions – they demonstrate excessive worldly attachment as opposed to the saints’ transcendent love of God – some aspects of their character, if tempered by moderation, such as their parental affection, are imitable and positive. The texts use the saints’ parents as cautionary

examples against excessive love and grief due to attachment to worldly beings and things. Nonetheless, the Lives show compassion for the aggrieved characters like that which Ogden notes in *La Vie de sainte Eufrosine* (115). They also remind their audiences of the importance of filial love and duty, which are brought out by the saints' concerns about abandoning familial traditions, disobeying their parents, and treating their families poorly. Thus, the texts provide examples of model behaviors for both parents and children.

Ultimately, saints are superheroes whose perfect love of God and capacity to break their worldly attachments are not only unattainable for most people; they are also most likely undesirable. Most noble families would not want their heirs to completely abandon their worldly ties, nor would the church necessarily want them to do so, for it could be useful to have powerful patrons who continued to provide support for multiple generations. While it might not be possible to achieve saintly near-perfection, the secondary characters in saints' Lives, namely, the parents in Saints Juliane's, Cristine's, and Alessins' Lives, as well as Juliane's fiancé Eliseus and Alessins' wife, serve as other examples for audiences. They are not only negative examples insofar as their worldly attachment is excessive and sinful, and insofar as the pagan parents of Cristine and Juliane are wicked; as Ogden suggests, they are also secondary interpreters of the saints' actions (51). They act as "readers" for the text's audiences, to help the audiences react to the saints so that they can learn from the Lives and worship the saints properly. It is the parents' presence in their children's Lives that causes the saints to question their own disobedience, rejection of familial traditions, and how they treat their families. Through the families' interaction, the Lives provide various models for family and its place within

the community. Juliane's Life emphasizes a social hierarchy of obedience and filial love owed to parents, worldly authorities, and God. Cristine's warns against the irrational excesses of sinful attachment to worldly beings and things and hints at the importance of loving families where family members support each other. Alessins' provides several alternative familial models – the traditional family, the ascetic model, and the spiritual marriage and “spiritual family” models – and demonstrates the importance of charity, extending the family to the wider Christian community. Thanks to the saints' families, their Lives can serve as examples for lay as well as ecclesiastical and monastic audience members. Not everyone can be as perfect as a saint, nor should they be, but at least they can avoid being abusive like Affricanz, Urbain, and Cristine's mother, and they can be good Christians, maybe even better ones than Alessins' parents, even if they are sinners.

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