Intimate Politics: The Poetics of Social Engagement During the Hundred Years War

Rachel Carrie Geer
Lubbock, Texas

Bachelor of Arts in Literary and Cultural Studies
College of William and Mary, 2003

Master of Arts in French
University of Virginia, 2008

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Department of French

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Abstract

This project demonstrates that late medieval affective reading practices are an important tool for understanding the social aims of vernacular literature during the Hundred Years War period. Writers such as Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Gerson, and Christine de Pizan crafted imaginative representations of contemporary history and the body politic that elicited readers' affective engagement. In doing so, these writers invited readers into a more personal experience of the social and political upheaval of late medieval France. The first chapter centers on a theory of affective reading that takes shape in a number of works by the influential 15th-century theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson. In reflections addressed to both the university trained and the laity, Gerson demonstrates that affective experiences usually associated with devotional practice are in fact the result of a set of textual strategies. These include "clothing" one's own experiences and histories in those proffered by texts, transforming the words of others into personal scripts, and cultivating attentiveness to the rhetorical meaning of words. For Gerson, affective reading is both a personal experience and a mode of being in the world that performs important social functions. His theoretical reflections provide a crucial framework for the vernacular literary examples explored in subsequent chapters. Collectively, the chapters examine how these authors drew on devotional themes and literary techniques to cultivate readers' sense of personal implication in the public life of late medieval France. Going a step further, this study argues that as readers applied affective reading experiences to literary representations of contemporary France and the Hundred Years War, they learned to view reading as a form of social engagement.

Signature Page

Dissertation director: Deborah L. McGrady

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Second reader: Amy V. Ogden

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Third reader: John Lyons

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Fourth reader: Bruce Holsinger

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Introduction: Reading and Social Engagement in Late Medieval France

The late Middle Ages was a period deeply marked by the unfolding events of the Hundred Years War, the political intrigue and power struggles of the Great Schism, and the human devastation of repeated waves of plague.[1] In France, vernacular writing responded with urgency to this state of social and political upheaval. Guillaume de Machaut's *Confort d'ami* (1357), Jean Gerson's *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose* (1402), and Christine de Pizan's *Advision Christine* (1405) each offer imaginative representations of the social turmoil of contemporary France while also drawing on devotional themes and literary techniques. The primary motivation behind this study has been to explore how the devotional elements of these three literary texts intersect with their social and political aims. To examine this question, I foreground a late medieval theory of affective devotional reading that takes shape in a number of works written by the influential 15th-century theologian and chancellor of the University of Paris, Jean Gerson. Gerson reflected extensively on the experiences of devotional reading, its strategies, and its social functions in works addressed to both the university trained and the laity. His descriptions of devotional reading reveal experiences that are physical, emotional, and reflective. While the devotional words on a page do provoke natural seeming responses and engage familiar habits of reading, a successful reading ultimately depends on readers' ability to apply unique strategies and actively invest themselves in the text. These reading strategies include transforming the words of others into personal

[1] For an overview of the twists and turns of this period, see Jonathan Sumption's three volume work *The Hundred Years War*, as well as Christopher Allmand's *The Hundred Years War: England and France at War C.1300-c.1450*. R.C. Famiglietti's *Royal Intrigue: Crisis at the Court of Charles VI, 1392-1420* captures the specificity of France during this period.

scripts, revisiting a text at different life moments to shape personal experiences, inhabiting emotions proffered by a text, and cultivating attentiveness to the rhetorical power of words. Gerson's reflections allow us to ask how late medieval readers pursued and refined their emotional responses to texts, and, in turn, how books allowed readers to participate in feelings of fear, love, shame, desire, and joy in ways that made these feelings a part of public life. Gerson's efforts to encourage affective reading practices among the university trained and guide the laity toward a proper use of these textual practices hints at their wider application beyond the specific aims of devotional literature.

The process of shaping lived experience through such reading practices fostered a rich set of possibilities—and risks—for understanding the fundamental interdependence of personal and social realms. For Gerson, reading is very much a way of being in the world, whether for good or for bad. This study explores how the three literary works in question draw on devotional themes and literary techniques to encourage an affective approach to their imaginative representations of contemporary history and the body politic. In extending the affective knowledge of devotional reading practices to contemporary history, these authors—and their readers—ask probing questions about how books, when used as a self-reflective medium, can open up a space for the development of personal meaning within the context of the ongoing conflict and unfolding events of war. This study therefore asks questions about the affective labors performed by both authors and readers in imagining political and social processes as sites of personal meaning.[2] How do the devotional elements of these politically engaged texts

[2] For more on the idea of "affective labor" see Michael Hardt's essay, "Affective Labor." Hardt examines affective labor as a form of "immaterial labor" that works toward "the production and reproduction of affects, in those networks of culture and communication, collective subjectivities are produced and sociality is produced" (96).

allow us to appreciate both their literary and social aims, and the connections between them?

The subsequent chapters of this study explore how three vernacular literary texts put into practice the theoretical reflections explored in Chapter 1. The earliest of these literary texts, Guillaume de Machaut's *Confort d'ami* (1357), draws on affective reading strategies to bring to light the personal experience of Charles of Navarre's political misfortunes. The result is a consolatory poem that opens an intimate yet public dialogue about the personal experience of contemporary history well in advance of Gerson's theoretical treatment of the issue. Jean Gerson's *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose* (1402) uses allegorical form and eloquent rhetoric to help readers understand their role in creating affective communities and the impact of these communities on the social fabric of late medieval France. Advancing Machaut's reflections on political realities in the *Confort*, Gerson uses the *Traité* to propose reading as a form of personal politics that defines community. Christine de Pizan's *Advision Christine* (1405) connects the lessons of the *Confort* and the *Traité* by uncovering the intimate suffering of the body politic while also challenging readers to understand how reading implicates them personally in this political body. *Intimate Politics* argues that these texts teach readers to see the value in using reading to understand their own lives in relation to the community and the political realities of their time.

Terminology and Methodology

One of the central preoccupations of this study will be to assess the early role that reading played in shaping the intimate experience of contemporary history and the body

politic. With the term politics, I refer first in concrete terms to the series of battles and conflicts that plagued the period from 1337-1453, which has come to be known as the Hundred Years War. The key text in medieval French Studies on contemporary writers' responses to these events, Joël Blanchard and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler's *Ecriture et pouvoir à l'aube des temps modernes*, has fundamentally informed my own study, but my use of the term politics differs substantially from theirs. Blanchard and Mühlethaler's study derives from a Sartrian notion of the engaged writer who casts a critical eye on the exercise of power. For Blanchard and Mühlethaler, politics is "*le* politique" in French: the practice of government, the exercise of sovereignty, the person of the king.[3] Within the pages of *Ecriture et pouvoir*, we discover a vernacular literature in confrontation with the court and royalty—often in words that are muted and difficult to detect (193-96). For Blanchard and Mühlethaler, poetic engagement responds to politics-as-power with an equally powerful desire to propose criticisms and solutions that will alter the course of events.

The texts that figure in this study, however, are not interested in providing this kind of advice. Instead, they aim to elicit and expand readers' personal experience of community and contemporary history. My study enriches our understanding of the late medieval vernacular literary turn to politics by focusing on writers who were especially attuned to readers' affective experiences of books as a means of creating connections between the personal and the political. Herein lies the second, more complex significance I attribute to the term politics: that is, politics as the meeting point where

[3] Blanchard and Mühlethaler's use of the term politics to mean "power" is clear enough from the title *Ecriture et Pouvoir*, but it also comes to the fore in the early pages of their study, where they locate contemporary writers increasing political engagement in their development of the Mirror for Princes genre, which, as they note, is one of the oldest genres for reflecting on the exercise of power (7).

personal and public realms touch. The aims of the *Confort*, the *Traité*, and the *Advision* differ, but each of these texts query the intertwining of these two realms and value a public role for personal feelings. While they decline to provide answers to political problems or teach the ways of power, these texts nevertheless reveal the responsibility that late medieval thinkers felt toward the imaginative challenges provoked by contemporary events. These texts hold tightly to the sense that history and community are imaginatively impoverished if they are left devoid of personal engagement. For each of these writers, texts alone cannot fill this imaginative lacuna. Readers must also invest their personal histories and experiences in a text in order to bring to fruition the imaginative work begun by authors. In this sense, affective reading strategies are uniquely suited to responding to the imaginative challenges of the period because they create connections between personal and social realms. Where Blanchard and Mühlethaler trace the newly authoritative figure of the *poète engagé*, I track the affective labors performed by both readers and writers that helped build a political imagination.

This study goes beyond political engagement, either as Blanchard and Mühlethaler imagine it in the *poète engagé*, or as it is practiced in the autobiographical poetry of later writers such as Alain Chartier, Eustache Deschamps, Charles d'Orléans and Jean Regnier, each of whom recorded their personal experiences of war. Instead, my study examines specifically the creation of a poetics of social engagement as evidenced by the work of Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Gerson, and Christine de Pizan. I use the term "social engagement" to refer to the cultivation of intimacy between personal and public realms. In the *Confort*, this social engagement carries political weight by enabling a representation of the personal experience of the events of contemporary history. In the

Traité, affective reading itself becomes a form of social engagement and personal politics. For Christine, affective reading can create social engagement by remedying readers' failure to imagine the suffering of the body politic as their own experience.

To help readers realize their social engagement, these writers turn to the skills that their audience would have learned from affective devotional practice. The term "affect" is important in this context because it underscores the permeability and mutual construction of personal and social realms, which in turn enables social engagement through reading. Jean Gerson wrote extensively on this issue, especially as it concerned the reading practices and experiences associated with late medieval devotion. Jean Gerson stands out not simply for his unparalleled critical engagement with affective reading practices in this period but also because he represents a crucial medieval precursor to modern affect theory. In this study, I have tried to remain as close as possible to Gerson's understanding of the term affect while also drawing his reflections into conversation with the work of modern theorists such as Brian Massumi, Sara Ahmed, Eve Sedgwick, and others. Recent studies of the "affective piety" of the later Middle Ages have begun to draw out the semantic tradition that links late medieval affective practices with our modern conceptions of the term "affect."[4] However, these studies have largely ignored Gerson's reflections on the term and have focused instead on applying modern theories to medieval texts. Because these modern approaches foreground the physiological origin of feelings and emotions, they are particularly

[4] Anthony Bale's recent monograph, *Feeling Persecuted: Christians, Jews and Images of Violence in the Middle Ages* (2012) engages explicitly with the applicability of modern affect theory to late medieval affective piety (18-23). Late medieval affective piety has been a topic of rich scholarly engagement, and the vast literature on this topic cannot be summarized here. For an introduction, see Carolyn Walker Bynum's classic *Jesus as Mother* and Rachel Fulton Brown's *From Judgement to Passion: Devotion to Christ, 800-1200*.

applicable to late medieval Passion devotion. In this vein, medieval scholars draw on modern theory to enrich our understanding of how Passion devotion in particular emphasizes Christ's bodily suffering as a site of theological meaning, cultural symbolism, and intense, somatic experience for late medieval Christians.[5]

By turning to Gerson's theory of affect, however, we gain a perspective that incorporates late medieval penitential devotional practices more generally, not simply Passion devotion's unflinching engagement with the physiological. Gerson does value the palpable and somatic aspects of devotional reading, although these effects occupy a more unassuming place in his writing, almost as if he takes it for granted that a provocative word, image, or metaphor registers in the body as well as the mind. Yet Gerson's specific concern for the power of reading to build, circulate, and transform affect within the social realm resonates with a different aspect of modern theories that remains generally untapped by medievalists; namely, the politics of emotions. Drawing on Gerson's emphasis on the social importance of affect, we begin to understand how and why late medieval devotional practices connect so readily to a social engagement with the political realities of the period.

For Gerson, affect is a faculty of the soul that doesn't correspond directly either to the mind or the body because it is resides in the heart, an important organ for cognition

[5] In his introduction to his translation of Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi speaks of the "ability to affect and to be affected" as corresponding to "the passage from one experiential state of the body to another" (Massumi, *Plateaus* xvi). Similarly, Anthony Bale notes that in late medieval Passion devotion the physiological registers "love, longing, heat, thirst, and wounding […] query the distinction between mind and body; and this is why 'affect' can be a particularly valuable term" (19). Passion devotion can be thought of as a subset genre of a more general category of affective penitential devotion, whose many strategies and registers also question the distinction between mind and body, although perhaps not to the same extent as Passion devotion.

throughout the Middle Ages, and, for Gerson, a specifically experiential cognition.[6] According to Gerson, affect is a distinctly experiential means of apprehending that works in conjunction with "le desir, l'appetit, et la volonté de la personne" (7.1:19).[7] Much as desire, appetite, and will are faculties that simultaneously form the distinction between the experience of outside and inside, affect enables this distinction through touch, contact, and communication. Gerson's treatment of affect thus resonates in important ways with a particular aspect of modern theoretical treatments of the term, which emphasize affect as a means of understanding the social significance of emotions without espousing either an expressive view of emotions or a social constructionist view. As Sara Ahmed helpfully clarifies, the expressive view approaches emotions as a movement from inside out, while the social construction view approaches emotions as moving from outside in. As a result, both approaches implicitly maintain the stability and coherence of both the inside (personal) and the outside (social).[8] Affect, on the other hand, posits the experience of contact with others as that which gives shape to the realms that we distinguish as personal and social. In other words, affect focuses on how the experience of both "I" and "we" are shaped by and take the shape of contact with others (Ahmed 10).

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[6] In his popular devotional piece, *La Mendicité Spirituelle*, Gerson composes meditations and prayers, which he says readers can either "dire de bouche ou cuer le penser" (7.1:267). The mouth speaks, the heart thinks. For an overview of medieval attitudes toward the cognitive powers of the heart, see Saenger, "Books of Hours and the Reading Habits of the Later Middle Ages" 247-51.

[7] All citations of Gerson's works are taken from the standard ten-volume edition of his complete works, edited by Palémon Glorieux. The only exceptions are citations of Gerson's *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose*, which I have taken from Eric Hicks' more recent edition in *Le débat sur le Roman de la Rose*.

[8] See Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* 8-12. Throughout this study, I distinguish between the terms "feeling," "emotion," and "affect" as follows: feelings are sensations that have been "checked against previous experience and labeled," (Shouse 3), while emotions are the externalisation of these feelings. In other words, emotions are the social expression that we give to personal feelings. "Affect," on the other hand, is for Brian Massumi pre-personal and pre-conscious. Massumi explains affect as "each such [experiential state of the body] considered as an encounter between the affected body and a second, affecting, body" (Massumi, *Plateaus* xvi). Eric Shouse clarifies the distinctions as follows: "Feelings are *personal* and *biographical*, emotions are *social*, and affects are *prepersonal*" (2). My use of the term affect is inspired by these theoretical reflections, but I have tried to remain as close as possible to Gerson's understanding of the term.

Gerson's idea of affect similarly challenges the idea that personal and social experiences interact with one another from independently coherent realms. His emphasis on the permeability of personal and social realms through affective contact undergirds his reflections on how reading practices can function as a way of being in the world.[9]

For Gerson, books are a unique space for accruing the experiential knowledge of affective experience. In the opening rubric to his popular devotional piece, *La Mendicité Spirituelle*, Gerson tells readers what they will learn through reading this text: "Cy commence le secret parlement de l'omme contemplatif a son ame et de l'ame a l'omme […] pour recevoir lez aumosnez de grace et de vertus; et pour venir aussy a la science des affections" (7.1:220). In other words, reading the *Mendicité* will allow readers to cultivate their affective faculties. That readers learn this affective knowledge by sharing in the experiences of the text already codes it as social, but, as we will see in Chapter 1, Gerson also thinks of these reading experiences as means of social belonging.

The *Mendicité* foregrounds the affective work that happens in books as well as the intimate quality of this work. By establishing the meditations that follow as a "secret parlement," Gerson touches on the intimate quality of late medieval affective reading. Intimacy is a tone that runs throughout the texts that I study—from Machaut's unconventional decision to write to his patron, Charles of Navarre, with the deeply

[9] In contrast, studies that draw uniquely on the physiological and bodily aspects of modern affect theory tend to emphasize the personal dimensions of affect and its implications for the individual. For example, in *Feeling Persecuted* Anthony Bale writes that "using the terms of affectivity allows us to consider both the community's role in creating the individual (i.e. social constructionism) whilst, at the same time, valuing the individual's experience of feeling and emotion" (19). Affect does reveal the individual experience of a socially constructed being more than Judith Butler or Michel Foucault allow for. But affect theory—and Gerson as a precursor—also redirects the social constructionist focus on individual identities elsewhere, that is, toward the social. As Brian Massumi puts it, an affective approach to politics "would be a caring for the relating of things as such—a politics of belonging instead of a politics of identity, of correlated emergence instead of separate domains of interest attracting each other or colliding in predictable ways" (http://www.international-festival.org/node/111).

familiar address "amy" to Gerson's own use of Lady Chastity's testimonial voice in the *Traité* and Christine de Pizan's description of the female representation of France lifting her dress to expose her naked, trampled body. Intimacy often requires company: we understand our most private moments by virtue of the fact that we share them with and through another. What is truly remarkable about these works by Guillaume de Machaut, Jean Gerson, and Christine de Pizan is that they place intimacy at the very heart of an imaginative renewal of public experiences.

Because the texts focus on how readers make affective use of books, the term interpretation also becomes an important element of this study. I primarily use this term to refer to exegetical or scholastic approaches to texts that seek to elicit expert knowledge about the world or theological truths. A second, new definition of interpretation slowly crystalizes over the course of my chapters, one in which interpretation means focusing on one's experience of the text and drawing out its personal meaning. The late medieval period is an important moment in the history of interpretation because it is here that this second definition becomes a crucial concept for vernacular writers. In the humanist circles of Italy, writers such as Dante, Petrarch, and Bocaccio cautiously encouraged readers to apply exegetical practices to contemporary poetry. In their view, extending interpreting practices that were normally reserved for sacred scripture or ancient pagan texts could be justified through their poetry's claims for theological truths.[10] Within the context of the reformation, particularly in England, the relationship between lay and

[10] In a now infamous letter to Cangrande della Scala, Dante explains how to read the *Paradiso* according to the four levels of exegesis. Bocaccio later defends this use of religious exegetical interpretation for Dante's poem in his expositions on the *Commedia*. These interpretations have been the source of much scholarly inquiry. See Richard Hamilton Green's classic essay on the subject, "Dante's 'Allegory of Poets' and the Mediaeval Theory of Poetic Fiction."

professional interpretative practices became highly politicized.[11] The texts in this study engage fully with these questions: the *Confort* draws on contemporary debates surrounding the *sensus literalis*, while in the *Traité* Gerson extends affective reading practices into an interpretive framework for understanding the meaning of the *Roman de la Rose*. An interpretive gloss added on to one manuscript of the *Advision* proposes a series of exegetically-inspired interpretations that do not aim to uncover theological truths in the text as much as they offer readers a means of arriving at a deeper personal meaning.

On the other side of this historical moment of contestation over interpretive practices lies the persistent attitude that lay readers were incapable of interpreting texts, or, more precisely, that they only knew how to read literally. Clerics sometimes express this attitude explicitly, and vernacular texts often implicitly code it into their many attempts to instruct readers on how to interpret what they are reading.[12] Lay readers did have access to exegetical interpretive practices through the *Ovide moralisé* or other "allegorized" texts, but these works were mediated by another authoritative reader—the cleric or poet—who interpreted on behalf of lay readers.[13] The laity's maligned lack of exegetical or professional interpretive skills does not mean that their reading practices were in fact devoid of interpretation. Jean Gerson's involvement in the literary debate surrounding the *Roman de la Rose* provided a strong counter-argument to the notion that

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[11] For a review of the politics of interpretation during the reformation, see Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and Interpretation of Texts*.

[12] In Chapter 3, we will see ample evidence of Jean de Montreuil's attitude that the laity lacks the interpretive skills to properly understand the *Roman de la Rose*. Christine de Pizan's *Epistre Othéa*, which integrates allegorical interpretations into each of the text's vignettes, has often been discussed as a guide that was intended to teach readers how to interpret allegorically. See Rosemond Tuve, *Allegorical Imagery*. Similarly, Philippe de Mézières adds an interpretive gloss to explain the allegorical workings of his *Songe du Vieil Pelerin*.

[13] In *Reading Myth*, Blumenfeld-Kosinski uses Todorov's phrase "interpretive delirium" to describe the clerical mediation of the source text for readers in the *Ovide Moralisé* (90).

interpretation only existed as a professionalized skill that extended to a well-defined set of texts. Rather than drawing on exegetical or allegorical interpretation to uncover knowledge about God or the world, affective reading strategies focus on the personal experience of reading books. In this sense, late medieval devotional reading represents an early precursor to modern phenomenological approaches to literature, which explore the "affective attachments and cognitive reorientations that characterize the experience of reading a book" (Felski 11).[14]

Devotional reading focuses on readers' ability to engage affectively with the literal meaning of texts to understand their personal meaning. Gerson didn't invent the positive connotations surrounding devotional reading's lack of interpretive finesse, but he did eloquently name and esteem what affective strategies do to and for readers. Indeed, in Gerson's thinking, these textual strategies, devoid of the interpretive aim of uncovering expert knowledge about the world or God, are nevertheless worthy of being honed—where they may begin as a seemingly natural response to a text, they can also be cultivated, sharpened, and deepened. The *Confort*, the *Traité*, and the *Advision* each explore affective strategies as reenacted habits of reading as well as modes of inventive readerly investment in texts.

[14] Gerson's appraisal of affective reading practices resonate in interesting ways with what Rita Felski sees as a recent turn to "neo-phenomenology" in literary studies (18). Citing the "surge of interest in emotion and affect across a range of disciplinary fields," Felski posits that "critics are delving into the eddies and flows of affective engagement, trying to capture something of the quality and sheer intensity of attachments and orientations rather than rushing to explain them, judge them, or wish them away" (18-19). Felski is contrasting this neo-phenomenology with what she sees as the dominant "hermeneutics of suspicion" (18) among professional readers today. Gerson confronted a tradition of exegetical interpretation that was anything but "suspicious" and which sought instead to layer the most positive, Christian meanings over troublesome texts that were both sacred and pagan. Nevertheless, Gerson's emphasis on the reading experience does resonate with Felski's attention to a neo-phenomenological turn and adds an interesting historical perspective to her description of modern academic interpretive practices.

Review of Literature

Scholarship from the past two decades in French medieval studies has turned with an unprecedented enthusiasm to the late medieval period. While this scholarship often takes it as a truism that this period was deeply marked by war, there has been a relative absence of extended treatment of the ways literature engages with politics in a period so marked by conflict. In the controversial *Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919), Johan Huizinga provided a vivid account of late medieval society and literature, marked by war, driven to passion and despair, and unwilling or unable to sustain a regenerative reflection on the political nature of these conflicts. In *La Couleur de la Melancolie* (1993), Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet nuanced Huizinga, turning an attentive eye to the melancholic aesthetics of a late medieval culture that consumed a worn-out literary tradition and suffered the events of the war, only to reemerge with a love of books and a rejuvenated poetic material. Poetry, it seems, survives despite the history that surrounds it. Blanchard and Mühlethaler's *Ecriture et pouvoir* and Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski's *Poets, Saints, and Visionaries of the Great Schism, 1378–1417* have both illuminated how the vernacular writing of the late Middle Ages found inspiration and new authority specifically because of the events of the Hundred Years War and the Great Schism. Similarly, Daisy Delogu's *Theorizing the Ideal Sovereign: The Rise and Fall of the French Vernacular Royal Biography* argues that late medieval writers were able to use the genre of royal biography to theorize about the proper exercise of sovereignty. In their studies of the political aims of the literature of the period, these scholars focus on

asserting the new identity and role of authors, but they overlook the particular concern that these writers exhibit for how their readers might use their texts.

Having been attracted to studies of medieval devotional literature that have captured the imagination of primarily English scholars in the past decade, I turned a different gaze on the wartime literature of France and was struck by the overlap in the concern for readerly experience within both religious and political writings. Within English scholarship, the focus on devotional readers can be helpfully plotted along two different axes: studies of what texts do to readers and studies of what readers do to texts. Both of these perspectives have informed my understanding of affective reading experiences and practices, respectively. Along the first axis, Susan McNamer's study of how Passion devotions offered intimate, performative "scripts" for readers frames my argument about the rhetorical and narrative strategies that could invite readers to inhabit a text as their own. Jessica Brantley's work on the performative and interactive nature of a specific Carthusian miscellany, British Library Additional MS 37049, nuances McNamer's study by focusing on the devotional techniques that writers and manuscript makers used to encourage affective responses among readers beyond the specific strategies of Passion devotion. Brantley's work on meditational dialogues in particular has informed my understanding of Gerson's discussions of intimate conversations with books. Thomas Tentler's study of the theological motivations behind penitential practices highlights the real psychological relief that readers sought in their devotional practice. Anthony Bale's *Feeling Persecuted* nuances Tentler's study by engaging with modern affect theory to explore how the emotional and somatic responses readers could experience in their devotional meditations reinforced readers' Christian identities.

The second axis in English scholarship, which focuses more on how readers create devotional reading by doing things to texts, has been the subject of far less scholarly engagement. This is perhaps because such an approach departs from the dominant critical mode of examining devotional texts as evidence for historical religious practices. Rachel Fulton Brown's work helpfully illuminates the ways that early medieval monastic interpretive practices slowly accrued to transform the body of Christ into a site of singularly passionate experience. Sarah Beckwith has demonstrated how the late medieval obsession with the body of Christ transformed social and political relations in late medieval England. Beckwith's emphasis on the contested meanings of Christ's body is enriched by Mark Amsler's examination of the transgressive gestures that readers explored in their affective reading. Mary Carruthers' work on memory aids, meditational reading, and the processes of visualization in monastic reading practices has been particularly useful for understanding the skills that readers could be expected to bring to texts.

Running parallel to the English focus on devotional reading is a strong presence of scholarship on non-devotional reading practices. Paul Saenger and Brian Stock make clear the overlap of reading practices among different groups of readers (scholastic, devotional, secular) and several scholars thereafter have examined in depth these practices in vernacular texts and manuscripts. John Dagenais especially examined the ways that authors, readers, scribes, and manuscript contexts collectively determine the meaning of texts. From this account of a collective authorization of meaning, Dagenais explored how readers approached reading as an ethical function through which texts spoke directly to their lives. Roger Chartier's work details the historical specificity of

reading practices, arguing that a text's meanings come to light—and shift—according the social practices associated with books. Deborah McGrady has further explored these questions in her study of Guillaume de Machaut's efforts to manipulate what was recognized as the reader's powerful role in determining meaning and interpretation. Sylvia Huot examines the monumental manuscript tradition of the *Romance of the Rose* to uncover the attentive acts of interpretation that medieval readers and manuscript makers lavished on this poem—often resulting in very different appraisals of its meaning. These studies complicate the picture of pious, obedient readers that often emerges from critical assessments of devotional texts and manuscripts, even though the very same readers engaged with both of these kinds of manuscripts. My study builds on this work by highlighting the inventive skills that readers cultivated in devotional contexts that then enabled them to appreciate and work with experiments in applying affective reading practices to political writings.

Intimate Politics also regularly calls attention to manuscript contexts of the *Confort*, the *Traité*, and the *Advision* to explore how miscellanies can query our modern assumptions about the functions that these texts fulfilled for readers. Andrew Taylor's examination of these questions in *Textual Situations* argues for the important role that miscellanies could play in shaping perceptions of a text as well as in expressing readers' particular literary tastes and so too, McGrady develops this idea in competing treatments of Machaut's *Voir dit*. Developing this line of thinking, this study draws on manuscript evidence to examine the impact, real or imagined, of affective reading advice on audience.

Corpus and Chapter Synopses

This study opens with a consideration of Jean Gerson's synthetic treatment of what can be termed "affective reading." Jean Gerson (1363-1429) wrote extensively about the reading strategies and proper books that he considered necessary for a devotional reading experience. Gerson addressed these reflections to his university colleagues as well as to the laity in texts such as his sermon on the Feast of Saint Bernard ("Fulcite me floribus," 1402), the *Montagne de Contemplation* (1400), the *Mendicité Spirituelle* (1401), and his letters to the students at the Collège de Navarre (1400). Gerson's attentiveness to both reading strategies and texts suggests that such affective experiences were the mutual product of rhetorically powerful books as well as readers' desire and ability to invest themselves intimately in the aims of these texts. The first chapter in this study, "Devotional Literature and Affective Reading," examines how Gerson attempted to create a more binding relationship between affective reading experiences and devotional texts, in part by questioning the assumption that devotional texts acted unilaterally on ideal, pious readers. In these early fifteenth-century reflections, Gerson offers heady descriptions of the somatic and psychological effects of affective reading that match his ardent desire to encourage intimate contact and personally transformative relationships with the *right* books. Gerson explores how the intimacy of "clothing oneself" in the affective experiences proposed by texts shapes readers' sense of social being as well as their belonging to community. For Gerson, affective engagement with books becomes a unique space where readers value and weigh

the fundamental connections between personal feelings and social forms of being. Where this chapter sketches out a theory taking shape in late medieval France, the subsequent chapters provide concrete examples that frame Gerson's ideas on the social importance of affective reading. This approach allows us to see more fully the reciprocal exchange between the theoretical reflections of the famed theologian and vernacular literary texts and their readers.

Guillaume de Machaut's *Confort d'ami*, an intimate consolatory poem written for the imprisoned Charles of Navarre in 1357, explores the ways that affective reading can bring to light the personal experience of contemporary history. In this consolation piece, France's preeminent fourteenth-century court poet marries Old Testament biblical stories with lyric articulations of courtly desire, Boethian lessons about transcending the vagaries of fortune, and a Mirror for Princes. Chapter two of this study, "Affective Histories and Political Consolation in Guillaume de Machaut's *Confort d'ami*," uses this remarkable poem to trace the emerging connection between affective reading and the intimate shaping of political experience. Deploying a distinctively affective use of the *sensus literalis* of scripture—that is, the historical sense of biblical stories—Machaut opens the poem with a devotional reading experience, complete with a scripted, penitential prayer, that invites Charles to invest in the affective experiences of others. By mastering his feelings through these personal investments in the text, the poem offers Charles a renewed sense of engagement in the social realm that opens out onto the courtly rituals and Mirror for Princes of the later sections of the text. More importantly, affective experiences of the Old Testament figures introduce a language that expresses the experience of political suffering and imprisonment. This chapter explores how Charles'

investment in this language of suffering dignifies the importance of the personal experience of contemporary history. The poem's mysterious epilogue, scripted as Charles' response to the poem, opens an intimate yet public dialogue about the personal experience of political events.

The second literary text in this study, Gerson's *Traité contre le* Roman de la Rose (1402), seeks to engage readers more fully in the creation of affective communities. During the literary debate known as the *Querelle de la Rose* (1401-1402), Gerson's university colleagues accused him of misreading the *Rose*, and yet the allegorical form of the treatise and its impassioned rhetoric express a fundamentally different set of reading practices than those practiced by his colleagues, who defended the *Rose* by drawing on scholastic interpretive methods. Chapter three of this study, "Social Poetics in the *Querelle de la Rose*," has two main goals. The first is to explore how Gerson elevates affective responses to function as an interpretive framework for the *Rose*. The second is to understand how the *Traité* functions as a literary text that teaches readers how their intimate engagement with books creates a social space and determines community. Contemporaneous with his efforts to reform the intellectual life of the University of Paris, the chancellor's involvement in the literary debate evinces his growing concern about the overlap of devotional reading practices in secular literary contexts. Rather than simply condemning the *Rose*, the literary form of the *Traité* cultivates a different set of personal and affective responses to Jean de Meun's poem, including disgust, shock, and shame. As Lady Chastity speaks of the ongoing harm that she suffers in contemporary France at the hands of readers of the *Roman de la Rose*, she helps readers imagine their reading practices as a mode of being in the world that creates

communities. In this sense, the *Traité* enjoins readers to pursue social engagement through their affective relationships with books.

Just a few short years after her own involvement in the *Querelle de la Rose*, Christine de Pizan (1365-c.1430) picks up on the social engagement that Lady Chastity asks of her readers in the *Traité* to elicit a similar response to the suffering of a different female allegorical figure: Libera who represents the kingdom of France. One of Christine's most enigmatic and difficult texts, *L'Advision Christine* (1405) draws heavily on the devotional techniques of Passion meditational texts that so richly engaged readers in an experiential knowledge of Christ's pain in order to imagine the suffering of the political body of France. The final chapter of this study, "The Intimate Body Politic in Christine de Pizan's *Advision Christine*," considers the affective strategies at work in the *Advision* within the context of Machaut's emphasis on the personal experience of political events as well as the context of Gerson's desire to encourage readers to think of reading as a form of social engagement. This chapter explores how Christine engages her readers in an affective experience of the body politic and transforms the figurative representation of France into an intimate body that draws readers into an affective political community. In an explanatory gloss to the *Advision*, appended at a later date to the Ex-Phillips 128 manuscript, Christine offers an interpretation of the difficult figurative language of Part I of the *Advision* as a three-fold representation of the world, the kingdom of France, and the spiritual life of each individual Christian. She then challenges her readers to use this personalized interpretation as material for open-ended devotional meditation and interpretation. The remarkable aesthetic ambition of the *Advision*—which invites close, critical attention beyond simple heartfelt reactions to the

plight of France—significantly transforms the imaginative representation of France into a site of communal relations and politically significant reading practices.

Conclusions

The interconnectedness of public and personal realms may seem self-evident to modern readers. What may be less self-evident is that poetry can speak to contemporary politics. Jean-Paul Sartre famously banished lyric poetry from his defense of politically engaged writing in *Qu'est-ce que la littérature*. Many poets have rallied against the general assumption that poetry was not political. For example, the contemporary American poet Adrienne Rich spent a lifetime working to understand and articulate her poetry's relationship to contemporary politics. In many respects, she gives voice to the phenomenon I examine taking shape in these late medieval texts when she writes in the poem "The Blue Ghazals" that "the moment when a feeling enters the body / is political. This touch is political."[15] The works of late medieval writers, such as Alain Chartier, Jean Regnier, Charles d'Orléans, and Eustache Deschamps, who poignantly recorded their personal experiences of the Hundred Years War, testify to a long tradition of poetic expression of political issues.[16] But we also see writers like Machaut, Gerson and

[15] I have been most influenced by Adrienne Rich's *What is Found There: Notebooks on Poetry and Politics*, which she published in 1993. In a wonderful interview in "The Paris Review," given the year before her death, Rich explains the relationship between poetry and politics: "The split in our language between "political" and "personal" has, I think, been a trap. When I was younger I was undoubtedly caught in that trap—like many women, many poets—as a mode of conceiving experience. In 1969 I wrote, 'The moment when a feeling enters the body/ is political. This touch is political' ('The Blue Ghazals,' in *The Will to Change* [1971]). Writing that line was a moment of discovering what I'd already begun doing. Much of my earlier poetry had been moving in that direction, though I couldn't see it or say it so directly." (http://www.theparisreview.org/blog/2011/03/02/adrienne-rich-on-%E2%80%98tonight-no-poetry-will-serve%E2%80%99/. 3 June 2014. Web)

[16] This is not to suggest that this tradition begins with late medieval poets—there are equally important ancient, biblical, early medieval writers who participate in this tradition as well. Rather, the self-conscious preoccupation with literary responses to politics during the late medieval period show an important meta-engagement with these questions.

Christine de Pizan addressing directly this belief of the political as personal. This study is particularly concerned with these writers and a corpus that develops the framework that enabled the above-mentioned writers to transform so poignantly their personal political struggles into a communal rallying cry. The three writers studied herein were attuned to helping privileged readers use books and the creative texts they embodied as a space for imagining the fundamental connections between personal experiences, social engagement, and the meaning of contemporary political events. They give expression to Rich's emphasis on the physiological and physical experience while also offering instruction on how to discover the power of reading to transform lives and worlds.

Chapter 1—Devotional Literature and Affective Reading

Late medieval devotional texts often project their expectations of an ideal reader by explaining how the text should be used as a jumping off point for the spiritual practices of prayer and meditation.[17] In an effort to understand how these devotional texts helped late medieval Christians perform their spirituality, recent critical work has focused on the highly interactive relationship between readers and texts. By viewing devotional texts as evidence of historical religious practices, such studies have tended to assign texts exceptional powers to determine, shape, and produce interactive reading experiences.[18] The result is a binding relationship between the devotional content of a text and its meaning for an ideal reader. In this chapter, we will turn to one particularly influential late medieval theologian who feared that less than ideal readers risked misusing these devotional techniques.

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[17] On the unique practices of monastic reading (known as *lectio divina*) see Leclerq, *Love of Learning and the Desire for God* and Illich, *In the Vineyard of the Text*. Duncan Robertson's *Lectio Divina* gives an insightful reexamination of the resonances between modern reader-response theory and medieval monastic reading practices. Robertson studies the classical origins of *lectio divina* as well as its specific applications in the monasticism of the early and high Middle Ages. Robertson's proposed aims for his study resonate strongly with the aims of this chapter: "My belief is that our ongoing scientific and humanistic investigations of reading have not yet sufficiently taken the medieval religious experience into account; additionally, we have much of value to learn from a review of medieval theory and from a rereading of the texts that put theory into practice" (xi). On the relationship between spiritual practice and devotional reading in vernacular manuscripts, see Huot, "Polytextual reading" and "Inventional Mnemonics, Reading and Prayer." On the general practice of religious reading as a cultivated skill, see Griffiths, *Religious Reading: The Place of Reading in Religious Practice*.

[18] For example, Jessica Brantley's *Reading in the Wilderness: Private Devotion and Public Performance in Late Medieval England* offers an insightful study of the performative nature of Carthusian meditative reading based on a careful analysis of British Library MS Additional 37049. Brantley proposes to read the manuscript as evidence for "habits of thought that link reading with performance" (1). The proposed aim of her study requires her to focus largely on the ideal imagined reader of the manuscript. The result is an account of a highly interactive and performative use of the manuscript that nevertheless characterizes the text as acting unilaterally upon the reader.

Jean Gerson, the influential 15th-century chancellor of the University of Paris, wrote often about misapplying reading practices to texts. This chapter will explore this theme in the context of Gerson's addresses to students of theology, who failed to attend to the important cognitive and moral lessons of devotional texts, as well as his addresses to lay readers, who occasionally allowed their engagement with devotional texts to become pleasurably misguided. Many of Gerson's writings, including his sermon on the Feast of Saint Bernard ("Fulcite me floribus"), the *Montagne de contemplation*, his letters to the Collège de Navarre, as well one of his popular devotional pieces, *La Mendicité spirituelle*, evince the chancellor's sensitivity to the immense distance that could exist between a devotional text and a reader's engagement with it in a personally meaningful way. Yet within these discussions of devotional reading gone awry, Gerson also provides a language for these unique strategies as he sketches out the dilemma—as well as the promise—related to transferring these practices to a surprising variety of texts.

One of the fundamental aims of this chapter will be to show how Gerson's many reactions to bad readers helpfully distinguish between devotional reading, which is cultivated through specific texts and aims at a particular goal, and the practice of affective reading, which is a mode of engaging that a reader brings—or misapplies—to a text. Gerson articulates how devotional reading was the mutual product of both texts and readers, but his writings also illuminate the wide-ranging implications of affective reading strategies for late medieval vernacular literature. In his attempts to define and encourage affective approaches to devotional texts, Gerson describes this mode of engagement as a process of determining the personal meaning of a text by intentionally drawing out connections between readers' own lives and the affective experiences

proposed by texts. In this sense, not all books elicit such reading strategies, because not all books propose emotional experiences to their readers—one need only think of a university student's dry, scholastic commentary on Lombard's *Sentences* as a counter example. Yet Gerson's thoughts on rhetoric and the stirring of the passions tell us that there were many and various kinds of texts that could open up to intimate forms of affective engagement, and that their meanings were anything but fixed or binding for readers. As readers thoughtfully pursued the many rhetorically rich books—both in Latin and the vernacular—available in late medieval France, their moments of intimate and self-reflective reading opened up possibilities of individual transformation and social renewal that both intrigued and worried the chancellor. Because Gerson sought to both describe and define readers' affective engagement with books, his reflections serve as a useful theoretical starting point from which to explore the three vernacular literary texts in the subsequent chapters. These three texts offer concrete examples that frame Gerson's observations while simultaneously exploring how affective reading practices could extend to literature concerned with social and political upheaval of the Hundred Years War to help readers make intimate connections with what may have seemed unrelated to the personal. But first, we will traverse a fascinating moment in the history of reading, when the "anarchic" output of vernacular devotional literature (Hasenohr 210) beckoned some particularly unruly reading experiences.

Intimacy and Eloquence

Jean Gerson (1363-1429) came from a family of modest means and attended the Collège de Navarre in Paris, where his contemporaries, including Jean de Montreuil,

Nicholas de Clamanges, and Gontier Col, would become some of the great early humanists of the 15th-century Paris.[19] Gerson built an early reputation as an eloquent and moving preacher (Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity* 55), and in 1395, shortly after completing his doctorate in theology, he became chancellor of the University of Paris (*Early Works* 8). From this powerful position, Gerson wrote and preached prolifically both in Latin and French on the moral, theological, and political issues of his day. Throughout his writings, Gerson sought to reconcile personal experience with theological knowledge, particularly in *De Theologia Mystica*, written in two parts between 1405 and 1408 (*Early Works* 13). His approach to affective spirituality is characterized by an emphasis on penitential love of God (Tentler 46). Politically, Gerson was affiliated with the Duke of Burgundy, Philip the Bold, who had awarded to him a benefice at the church of Saint Donatien in Bruges. However, after the assassination of the Duke of Orleans in 1407 by the younger Duke of Burgundy, John the Fearless, Gerson wrote publicly against Jean Petit's defense of the assassination and quickly lost his privileges at the Burgundian court (*Early Works* 17). Gerson became further implicated in the political turmoil of the day when he left in 1415 for the Council of Constance to help reconcile the Great Schism. The chancellor would never return to Paris from Constance. With the fall of Paris in 1418 to English and Burgundian factions, Gerson found himself in exile while many of his colleagues lost their lives amidst the political turmoil.[20] He eventually settled in Lyon, where he composed poetry in Latin, a lengthy verse narrative of the holy

[19] Brian Patrick McGuire gives a thorough account of Gerson's early life in his introduction to *Jean Gerson: Early Works*. For more on the intellectual milieu of the Collège de Navarre, see Gilbert Ouy, "Le collège de Navarre, berceau de l'humanisme français."

[20] Jean de Montreuil and Gontier Col were both killed in the massacres accompanying the Burgundian taking of Paris in 1418 (Blumenfeld-Kosinski, "Jean Gerson and the Debate" 320).

family (the *Josephina*), and an endorsement of Joan of Arc, among a number of other texts (Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity* 55).

To better understand the role that affective approaches played in late medieval devotional reading, it will be useful to consider Gerson's distinction between the intellective and affective powers of the soul. Gerson explains this distinction in the many texts where he explores the two different ways of knowing God: speculative and mystical contemplation.[21] Gerson's earliest efforts at explaining these two kinds of contemplation appear in the *Montagne de Contemplation*, which he composed around 1400 and shortly before his return to university life in Paris after a period of convalescence in Bruges (*Early Works* 12). While he wrote the *Montagne* as an instructional manual for his sisters who were still living with his parents, it would become one of his most popular devotional pieces and enjoyed wide distribution (Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity* 210). In the *Montagne*, Gerson explains that the first kind of contemplation, which is speculative in nature, results in finding new theological truths. Gerson restricts this kind of contemplation to trained theologians who are well educated in the interpretation of Holy Scripture (7.1:18-19). The second kind of contemplation which Gerson distinguishes in the *Montagne de Contemplation* is mystical, and is of a less elitist strain than the first, since even the laity has access to this practice:

> Une autre maniere de contemplation est qui tient principalement a amer Dieu et assavourer sa bonté sans grandement enquerir plus clere congoissance qu'est celle de la foy qui leur est inspirée et donnée. Et a ce puent simples gens venir en laissant les cures du monde et en gardant leur cuer pur et net. (7.1:18)

[21] Key studies on affective religious experience as a hallmark of late medieval piety include Carolyn Walker Bynum's landmark monograph on the subject, *Jesus as Mother*, and Rachel Fulton-Brown's *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200.*

In this passage, Gerson brings to the fore the cognitive element of mystical contemplation, which is experiential in nature and results from an intimate savoring ("assavourer") of the goodness of God.

As Steven Ozment notes in his study of Gerson's two approaches to the understanding of God, "the doctrines of mystical theology are drawn from internal experiences in the hearts of the devout" (50). Whereas speculative contemplation draws on the intellective power of the soul and seeks the true, the mystical draws on the soul's affective powers and seeks the good (Ozment 52). For Gerson, the untrained laity are free to practice mystical contemplation with only basic doctrinal instruction but are warned to stay away from speculative contemplation. The university-trained theologians, however, are advised to never practice speculative theology without first passing through the affective wisdom of mystical theology that imparts a moral directive to their work. For Gerson, pure intellectual pursuit of truth is never the end goal of human cognition—intellectual inquisitiveness must always be accompanied with moral concern for the good (7.1:19). In this respect, mystical contemplation is valued as necessary for all, university trained and laity alike, to gain a distinct experiential knowledge of God.

Beyond the moral search for the good, mystical contemplation also produces what Gerson refers to as a "savoureuse science" (19) and which he defines in the *Montagne* as a form of knowing that stems from "l'affection, le desir, l'apetit, et la volenté de la personne" (7.1:19). This definition underscores the idea that affect is a means of relating to things outside of oneself, along with desire, appetite, and will. As such, affect does not correspond directly to feeling and functions more as a capacity for feeling. This definition of the affective faculties can be helpfully illuminated by modern reflections on

the term. In his introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*, Brian Massumi speaks of the "ability to affect and to be affected" as corresponding to "the passage from one experiential state of the body to another" (Massumi, *Plateaus* xvi).[22] In kind, the affective piety of the late Middle Ages focused on cultivating particular feelings, most often love, that would then move toward specific goals: love of God, love of Church, and remorse for sins, among others. What Gerson's definition brings to the surface, and what Massumi's statement clarifies, is that affect is not just a particular feeling oriented toward a particular object, but rather a capacity for emotional development, experience, and relation that has far-reaching implications for late medieval readers' involvement with texts.

Gerson wrote often about the role that affect and intellect played in the process of reading, especially as it concerned students of theology. Both mystical and speculative contemplation were best suited to distinct kinds of texts. For example, Gerson suggests Bonaventure and Aquinas for speculative study, while for mystical thought he focuses on Augustine's *Confessions*, Bernard's expositions of scripture, and various meditations and saints' Lives (2:34-5).[23] Of greater concern for Gerson, however, was the distinct methodology of these two kinds of reading, with each style resulting in quite different reading experiences regardless of the text studied. Throughout his life, Gerson admonished students and theologians not to be carried off by their speculative,

[22] Throughout my project, I have taken a cue from Brian Massumi's work to distinguish between the terms "feeling," "emotion," and "affect." Feelings can be understood as a subjective and qualified "fixing" of affective experiences (Massumi, "Autonomy of Affect" 88). Feelings are personal and biographical. Emotions on the other hand are a social projection or display of a feeling (Shouse 4).

[23] In *Authorship and Publicity*, Daniel Hobbins discusses this same reading list for the students at Navarre in terms of the creation of a "Canon of Great Books" (30-40).

intellectual pursuits to the neglect of the lessons and experiences that they could glean from an affective engagement with texts.[24]

In his efforts to encourage students of theology to supplement their university studies with devotional reading, Gerson elucidates how affective reading is a skill that students must intentionally cultivate alongside those of scholastic interpretation. In a letter written from Bruges in April of 1400 to the Collège de Navarre at the University of Paris, Gerson acknowledges that students will necessarily practice different styles of reading, but he is anxious to encourage them not to neglect a kind of reading that cultivates intimate relationships with texts, instead of merely using reading as a way to cull information:

> Est itaque nostra capacitas non modo finita sed perexigua et quae ad tot libros etiam utiles quote occurrunt evolvendos non sufficit. Quosdam in transitu raptim vedeamus quasi eos non penitus ignorasse satis sit, et eis fiat vale perpetuum. Aliis per vices utamur prout se dederit necessitas delectationisve congruitas. At vero quosdam familiares advocemus nobis assiduos et tamquam domesticos fidelissimos eos intra mentis nostrae cubilia, inter secreta quotidianaque colloquia jugiter collecemus. (2:32-3)[25]

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[24] For example, after offering affective reading suggestions for the students at the Collège de Navarre, Gerson writes, "in quibus est ardens lectio ad virtuosos impetus capescendos vehementer exstimulans. Tantummudo prius non elatus vel tumidus praestetur intuitus ubi speculationes altissimas, pulcherrimas atque saluberrimas subtilis, si simplex sit, studiosi oculus inveniet. Et errant profecto qui ista tamquam rudiora et facilia dicunt obstare subtilioribus agnoscendis dummodo tempore suo et mensurate retractentur" / "Here one finds devout reading and receives much encouragement to follow impulses of virtue. Only if one has not previously been carried off or inflated by one's understanding is it possible for the subtle eye of the attentive person in its simplicity to reach the most lofty speculation. This is something that is both desirable and salubrious. It is an error to say that these matters, being more banal or facile, block out our recognition of more subtle concerns, provided they are dealt with in the appropriate time and measure" (2:34; *Early Works* 181-2). See also "Condemning Scholarly Vices" in *Authorship and Publicity* 119-25.

[25] "And so our abilities are not only limited but minimal, and we do not have the capacity of interpreting so many books, even the useful ones, when they come our way. With some writers we can in passing quickly consider them, as if it were not right for us completely to ignore them, and then we can part from them forever. With others we at times make use of them in accord with our need for them or as we enjoy or find them appropriate. But some writers we should regularly call to our side in familiarity and place them like the most faithful servants within the chambers of our minds, amid its secrets and everyday conversations" (*Early Works* 180). I differ with McGuire's translation of the word 'authors' in this passage. The "quosdam" and "aliis" refer most immediately to the "libros" of the first line of the passage, although shortly before he also refers to "scripta" (2:32). Accordingly, Gerson writes that we call to mind books and writings as intimate friends, not authors or writers.

In this reflection on students' relationship to books ("libros"), Gerson distinguishes between some works that should be passed over quickly, others that they should absorb into their thinking, and a select few that are to be treated as our intimates ("familiares" and "domesticos"). In other words, students' relationships with certain books can and should surpass their more pedestrian reasons for consulting books, including the acquisition of passing familiarity, occasional pleasure, or a particular task at hand. This passage calls the students' attention to an entirely other relationship to be cultivated with books, where texts become intimate interlocutors in their internal conversations. Gerson distinguishes this style of reading in part by the interiority of the experience ("intra mentis nobis") and its intimate quality ("tamquam domesticos fidelissimos"), but he also characterizes it as an experience that unfolds over time. Thus some books should be frequented only once in order to be discarded, others occasionally as students find the need or desire, while a select few should be lived with, day in and day out, over a long period of time. Gerson undoubtedly has in mind a repeated exposure in which students fully absorb and memorize passages in order to draw on them at distinct moments and apply them to different life experiences.[26]

The time involved in this approach to texts underscores the intentional investment required by students as well as a more egalitarian relationship between text and reader, where both are altered through the process of affective contact. Books become domesticated and intimate while readers' lives and personal experiences become directly implicated in the text's aims and investigations. Gerson contrasts this relationship to scholastic approaches, where books remain somewhat beholden to the uses and desires of the students ("necessitas delectationisve congruitas"). Elsewhere in the same letter to the

[26] For more on the important role of memory in medieval reading, see Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*.

students at the Collège de Navarre, Gerson connects this mode of reading specifically to one of the three goals of university study—to seek out that which edifies, regulates, and forms the way of life of those who read (*Early Works* 181). This suggestion to attend to the moral and ethical elements of study may not surprise, but Gerson's description of the process reveals that such life-altering reading is not simply the product of a didactic text's morally rigorous content, but rather an intimate and affective attentiveness on the part of readers.

Imagining that the students will ask what texts merit such intimate and conversational reading, Gerson responds hesitantly:

> Si quis autem curiosus interrogare pergit qui vel quales libri sunt quos aliis praeponendos censuerim, respondebo me unicam et absolutam responsionem dare non posse; varietas siquidem studentium secundum aetatem, ingenium, mores et tempora aliud et aliud expostulat consilium. Hoc unum verumtamen Apostoli dictum maneat apud theologos alta mente repositum: plenitudo legis et finis praecepti est caritas seu dilectio. Cum igitur secundum exigentiam finis cetera debeant moderari, quidquid plus et immediatius caritatem aedificat plus legatur, memoretur, ruminetur, quatenus cum intellectus refectione affectus, ubi utique plus est meriti, e sapienta hoc est sapida scientia sicut adipe et pinguedine repleatur. (2:33)[27]

Gerson's hesitancy about offering specific suggestions encourages students to seek out texts that "contribute to the building of charity or love" and which refresh intellectual studies through affective "reading, remembering, and meditating." Although initially reluctant to do so, Gerson does of course go on to offer specific suggestions that respond to the purpose of building charity. As we saw above, this reading list included the *Lives*

[27] "If someone out of curiosity comes to ask which writers or what books there are that I think are to be preferred to others, I will answer that I cannot provide a single and definitive response. The variety of students according to age, intelligence, character, and the times requires different types of advice. But this one saying of the Apostle should remain set deep in the minds of theologians: the fullness of the law and the end of its precepts are charity or love (cf Rom 13:10). When, therefore, in accord with the requirement of an end, other things directly contribute to building charity should be preferred in reading, remembering, and meditating. This is the case insofar as the intellect is refreshed by affectivity, where indeed there is more merit. From wisdom comes this savory knowledge, as one is filled in a rich feast (Ps 62:6)" (*Early Works* 180).

of the Fathers, Augustine's *Confessions*, various holy meditations, William of Auvergne's *Divine Rhetoric*, and saints' Lives, and, as such, it departs from the typical texts associated with scholastic study.[28]

For Geneviève Hasenohr, that Gerson warns his colleagues at the Collège de Navarre not to scorn reading saints' Lives is a sign of Gerson's deep conservatism because he eschews any kind of doctrinal or ecclesiological dimension in reading suggestions (210). This is perhaps a slightly unfair interpretation, given that Gerson's suggestion for saints' Lives comes as part of a comprehensive reading list that addresses the various areas of study for the students, both moral and intellectual. Instead, the surprising nature of Gerson's suggestion to students of theology that they read saints' Lives crystallizes Gerson's efforts at reforming the teaching of theology at the university, where students rarely read such texts as part of their study. Given that two of the recommended texts—William of Auvergne's *Divine Rhetoric* and Augustine's *Confessions*—were particularly renowned for their combination of eloquent and moving

[28] Gerson reading list is as follows: "[…] spectant historiae sacrae in quibus fit recte viventium commemoratio, ut Dialogus Gregorii, ut ecclesiastica atque tripertita historiae, ut Collationes et Vitae Patrum, Confessiones Augustini et sacrae ipsius aliorumque meditationes; divina Rhetorica Guillelmi Parisiensis, legendae sanctorum et similia in quibus est ardens lectio ad virtuosos impetus capescendos vehementer exstimulans. […] Spectant nihilominus ad hoc mysticae divinarum scripturarum expositiones quales apud celebres sanctissimosque doctores plurimae sunt, quales apud Gregorium in Moralibus et Pastorali, quales apud Bernardum super Cantica, apud venerabilem Richardum in suo de contemplatione et aliis operibus satis nunquam admirandis, quales apud Guillelmum Parisiensem qui grato artificio speculativam cum similitudinibus moralibus absque confusione permiscuit" / "…uplifiting stories belong, in which living persons are justly remembered, such as Gregory's *Dialogues*, the *Ecclesiastical or Three-Part Histories*, the *Collations*, the *Lives of the Fathers*, the *Confessions* of Augustine, and the holy meditations of him and others, the *Divine Rhetoric* of William of Paris, the legends of the saints and similar writings. […] Mystical expositions of the divine scriptures also consider this subject. There are many of them from celebrated and most holy doctors, as with Gregory the Great in his *Moralia* and *Pastoral Care*, with Bernard in his *Sermons on the Song of Songs*, with Richard of St.Victor in his work on contemplation and other works that can never be admired to a sufficient degree, as well as with the work of William of Paris, who by pleasing artifice combined in a clear manner speculative matters with moralizing comparisons" (2:34; *Early Works* 181-2).

rhetoric with theological matters, Gerson seems to suggest that reading to "build charity or love" can be aroused by a text's rhetorical beauty.[29]

Gerson himself wrote extensively on the role that rhetoric had to play in the acquisition of affective understanding of God, and he was particularly concerned with reintegrating rhetoric into theological practice.[30] He dealt with the question of rhetoric directly in two texts, *De duplici logica* (1401-2) and *Centilogium de modis significandi* (1426). Drawing on Louis Kelly's observation that Gerson was the first to elevate rhetoric to a mode of signifying alongside the more traditional modes of logic and grammar, Hobbins points out that for Gerson, "while the grammatical mode of signifying distinguishes between what is suitable and what is unsuitable for speech, and the logical mode between what is true and what is false, the rhetorical mode (now following Cicero) moves to persuade, instructing, delighting, and stirring" (*Authorship and Publicity* 115). Hobbins further observes that the rhetorical mode is for Gerson "closer than the logical mode to patterns of speech in scripture and therefore essential to its interpretation, especially its moral, historical, and prophetic material" (*Authorship and Publicity* 115). In other words, because Gerson elevates rhetoric to a mode of signifying, it is no longer simply a form of expression, but also an important ingredient in the sharpening of interpretive practices. When applied to the interpretation of the moral, historical, and prophetic material of scripture, rhetoric asks how such texts move, touch, and shift

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[29] Gerson was well aware of Augustine's stance on the use of rhetoric in theology, articulated most clearly in *On Christine Doctrine*. Gerson also appreciated the saint's use of elegant rhetoric throughout his works: "Augustinus plane tibi reclamat, tum expressissimis verbis ibidem (4 *De Doctrina christiana*, in ipso operis vestibulo), tum factis operum suorum tantis eloquencie viribus elaboratorum" / "Augustine gives a clear retort to you not only in the most explicit words there (Book Four of the *De Doctrina christiana*, at the beginning of this part of the work) but also in the deeds of his works elaborated with such a force of eloquence" (Hicks 174; McWebb 360-3). William of Auvergne's *Divine Rhetoric* focused on the importance of rhetoric in both preaching and prayer (*Early Works* 45).

[30] See Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity*, Chapter 4: "Literary Expression: Logic, Rhetoric, and Scholarly Vice."

readers' moral engagement with the world more than it interrogates the truth claims of such texts.

In *De duplici logica* (1401-2), Gerson explains at greater length how rhetoric speaks to and encourages a specific affective knowledge:

> Dicta est idcirco logica haec esse necessaria ad scientias morales quia ad effectus concitandos generandosque si boni sunt, aut ad sedandos aut compescendos seu tollendos si mali reperiantur, logica praecedens non sufficit. Illa enim inquirit tantummodo veritatem speculativum; ista autem prout est adeaquatio quaedam ad affectum seu practicum intellectum. (3:58)[31]

Because rhetoric corresponds to and speaks to affect, eloquent texts transform readers through an intimate stirring of the passions. Gerson places tremendous weight on the idea that such texts derive their meaning from a reader's responsive feelings. This emphasis on the personal meaning produced through rhetoric doesn't replace other strategies of interpretation, which would instead seek to reveal the "truths" about God, the Church, or the world spoken by the text. Rather, the personal value and meaning of a text runs alongside these truth-seeking ("inquirit veritatem speculativum") interpretive practices, privileging instead the stirring of "good passions" or the quieting of "evil passions." This stirring of passions highlights the significance of intimate contact with a text, in which words pull at the reader through persuasive and delightful rhetoric, and the reader touches back by thinking about their life experiences, feelings, and selves through the words of the text.

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[31] "Therefore, this logic [i.e., rhetorical] is said to be necessary to the moral arts because the first logic is insufficient to stir and produce good passions, or to quiet, check, or remove evil passions. For that [first] logic seeks merely the truth of things as truth in correspondence of the thing understood to the speculative intellect. But this [second] logic (does so) as a correspondence to the affect or the practical intellect"(tr. Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity* 116). Daniel Hobbins discusses this passage in terms of the "vital link" in Gerson's thinking between rhetorical persuasion and the stirring of passions.

Gerson developed this idea of close contact between eloquent texts and readers in the learned, explicit writings that we have seen up to this point. However, these same ideas also reappear in Gerson's poetic reflections during his political exile from Paris, which lasted from 1418 until the end of his life. In *De Laudibus Elegie Spiritualis* (circa 1422-25), Gerson defends his own desire to compose poetry in a verse dialogue between two characters who debate the relative dangers and merits of poetry. The exiled poet character eventually trumps his adversary's claim that poetry is a foolish waste of time by illuminating the consolatory function of verse. Early in the dialogue, the poet defends verse for its ability to "strike and pierce" (24), thus echoing Gerson's earlier emphasis on rhetoric that stirs the passions. The poet in *De Laudibus Elegie* also contends that verse invites the kinds of intimate conversations of devotional reading that Gerson discusses in his letters to the Collège de Navarre:

> Frenant ne vaga sit metra mentem, plurima paucis
> Artant et prestant esse sui memores.
> Plus sensus, plus lucis habent, plus ordine pollent
> Versus, si cor eis cum studio dederis. (lines 15-18)[32]

The eloquence of verse arouses the readers' attention and memory, even as readers draw more sense and meaning out of their heart's ("cor") dedicated study of the poem's rhetoric. Regardless of what it may or may not reveal about the world, poetry consoles because of the dedication, attentiveness, and personal transformation that readers find within the aesthetic thickness of its verses.[33]

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[32] "Verses discipline the mind so that it will not wander, channel several matters into a few [words], and stay in the memory better. If you dedicate yourself to studying them, verses become more meaningful, clearer; their order makes them more powerful" (Roccati 372-3).

[33] In "Touching Singularity: Consolation, Philosophy, and Poetry in the French *Dit*," Sarah Kay makes an intriguing argument about how the poetry—as opposed to the prose—in Boethius' *Consolation* allowed readers to "experience contingency, to be exposed to the passions and pathos" (36). In other words, poetry consoles in part because it deepens feelings and experiences, not simply because it allows one to master

De Laudibus Elegie further asserts the consolatory function of poetry as the poet himself is rehabilitated over the course of the dialogue. Early in the debate, the poet expresses the isolation of political exile as he quibbles over the value of poetry. To the adversary's question, " 'Ast meliora potest flendi quoque tempus et etas / Et quis hoc evo scire poemata vult?' " (lines 31-32), the poet responds:

> "Que meliora potest exclusus ab omnibus exul
> Officiis? Sed nec carmina flere vetant."
> Nocte Deus dat, ait Iob, carmina, rex tribulatus,
> Misit, ait, Dominus carmen in ore novum.
> Rara nimis fateor poesis modo, sed cano celis,
> Forsitan et veniet tempus amicitius. (lines 33-38)[34]

Beginning from his own experience of political exile, the poet hopes that while singing to heaven, a better time will come. By the end of the poem, the two characters that debate the merits of poetry merge into a unified voice that contemplates and expressively rewrites the allegorical representation of spiritual marriage from the Song of Songs. In the final lines of the poem, the poet arrives at a very different sense of the present tense, one that fulfills the hope of the earlier lines:

> Quo rapimur, quo nos, elegia, pertrahis? Euge,
> Conclauit video spiritualis amor
> Iam sileas, olim veniet spatiosior hora,
> Nunc satis a labiis te liberasse malis. (lines 97-100).[35]

Inflamed with love, both poet and poem can rest in the silence of spiritual union that both fills the heart and exceeds words (lines 95-96). The emotional movement from isolation

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them or sublimate them. This consolatory function will be an important element of my exploration of Machaut's *Confort d'ami* in the next chapter.

[34] " 'But the time and age of lamentation can be better occupied; and who, in this age, wants to know poems?' 'What better things can an exiled man do, excluded from all responsibilities? On the contrary, the poems are not an obstacle to lament. Job, unfortunate king, says: at night God gives poems, the Lord has sent a new song into my mouth. I admit: poetry is now far too rare, but I sing to heaven, and perhaps a better time will come' " (Roccati 373-4).

[35] "To where are we ravished? Where, elegy, do you lead us? Fine! I see that spiritual love has enflamed us. Now be silent, a greater hour will come, now it is enough to have freed you from those who speak evil of you" (Roccati 376).

and poetic hesitation to mystical union relies on the rhetorical power of the Song of Songs as well as the poet's ability to pull the text into and transform his experience of political exile. As the poet writes out his personalized exegesis, the poem makes a claim for the power of reading—and writing—to transform the experience of history.

Through this practice of reading and writing, the poet thus alters his relationship to his own historical experiences. Both reader and text are repositioned as the Song of Songs begins to speak intimately to the poet's exile, and the poet in turn is swept up into the poem's expression of spiritual love. In this sense, we can understand Gerson's suggestion to university students that they converse with texts as an intimate contact with the affective states proposed by the text. The personal transformations that occur through this method of reading enable a building of charity, which then translates directly into a moral engagement with the world.

Gerson's reflections on the healing power of lyric plays out in one of his most literary sermons, delivered to the Collège de Saint Bernard on August 20th, 1402. In this sermon, Gerson adopts the voice of Saint Bernard himself to admonish students to cultivate intimate relationships with certain texts. Gerson "could not take it for granted that his audience was actively reading Bernard" because of the particular emphasis on scholastic study at the institution (McGuire 132), and so he elaborates more fully on the cognitive, experiential knowledge that can be gleaned through affective engagement with a text. Gerson's Bernard describes how students were being trained, writing: "Docebantur illic sedulo adolescents et senes cum junioribus de rebus quaerere, disputare, libros revolvere, verum a falso acute secernere" (5:328). But he also notes that

"in his totus mergebatur intellectus, sed affectus procul erat" (5:328).[36] Gerson stresses the importance of affective approaches to texts, which he reveals are often neglected in scholastic study. While responding to what he imagines to be the students' objection to this criticism of scholastic study, Gerson's Bernard explains that an affective approach to a text produces a distinct form of understanding:

> Non vos sic abducat, oro, vel ignavia et secordia vel amor solius illustrandi intellectus quod neglectus sit affectus; quem sicut maxime respicit virtus et meritum, ita praecipue colendus est. Atvero dicetis: nos certe ad studendum positi sumus, nos ad scripturas intellegendum; haec est nostra vocatio. Hoc non nego nec reprobo, fratres; nihilominus testimonium perhibeo vobis quale positum est in epistola mea Ad fratres de Monte Dei quod Scripturas Sacras nullus unquam plene intelliget qui non affectus scribentium induerit. (5:334)[37]

Gerson's insistence in this passage that students will fail to fully understand Sacred Scripture unless they adopt (literally, clothe themselves in, "induerit") the affective position offered by the text suggests that there is a marked relational aspect to this mode of reading. By investing the text with an eye to affective engagement, readers are able to experience in turn the affective state proposed by the text. The experiential knowledge that results from relating to a text in this way corresponds to a special, full understanding ("plene intelliget") of the text that deeply informs readers' personal sense of being in the world.

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[36] "The young men and the older men along with the youths were painstakingly taught in that place to ask questions, to engage in disputations, to consider books, to discern with acuteness truth from falsity […] the intellect was immersed in all of these things, but the affections were far away" Translations are mine, based on Brian Patrick McGuire's translation ("Languishing with Love" 137).

[37] "Nor should love of illuminating intellect alone, to the neglect of affectivity, compel you. It is especially in terms of virtue and merit that you are to concentrate affectivity. Perhaps you will say: We have been placed here in order to study, to understand the scriptures. This is our calling. I do not deny or disapprove of this activity, brothers. Nevertheless, I bear testimony to you, as expressed in my letter *To the Brothers of Mont Dieu*, that no one ever fully understands who cannot place himself in the affectivity of the writers" (*Early Works* 141). I differ with McGuire's translation of "scribentium" as writers, and have instead translated it as "writings."

Gerson's own adoption of Bernard's voice in the sermon elegantly showcases how such affective engagement alters both text and reader.[38] Gerson rarely gives direct quotes from Bernard's text in the sermon, opting instead to write intimate meditations for Bernard in which the saint addresses himself to God or converses with his soul. Gerson's own familiarity with Bernard's writing provides the expressive tone and language for his descriptions of the saint's spiritual experiences, with the result that the sermon is a composite text that is both Gerson's and Bernard's. Gerson clothes himself in the emotional possibilities of Bernard's writing, and in turn expresses himself in a new voice, one that also appeals to the feelings and experiences of the students at the Collège de Bernard.

In the same sermon on the Feast of St. Bernard, Gerson encourages the students to value the unique insights afforded by affective experience. Emphasizing the physical sensations by which spiritual love manifests itself, Gerson writes:

> Quis praeterea negaverit quin amare sit quoddam sentire, quoniam et amor insuper quaedam spiritualis existat perceptio? Sentire vero cognoscere est non minus quam videre, et saepe tanto amplius et certius quanto tactus et gustus ab objectis suis perceptiori et jucundiori actuatione moventur. (5:334)[39]

Students involved in the pursuit of theological knowledge may not be able to see God, but Gerson reassures them that if they pursue affective knowledge of him, they will quite

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[38] In a discussion of one of the particularly moving meditations included in the sermon, Brian Patrick McGuire illustrates how the 15th-century chancellor appropriates the 12th-century saint's voice: "Gerson here almost transforms his text into poetry, for he repeats words such as *debeo*, *millesies*, *anima mea*. One thinks of Augustine's *Confessions* and even of Anselm of Canterbury's first meditation, on the state of the soul, but the intellectual and linguistic background for this rich passage is in Bernard himself, for his *On Loving God* frequently has the first person address from to God that Gerson uses here. […] Gerson shows remarkable talent in approximating Bernard's style and argument without simply repeating his text" ("Languishing with Love" 146).

[39] "Who then can deny that to love is to feel something, since the spiritual love that comes from above also exists as a form of sensation? To feel is to know, no less than to see, and often such sensation is all the fuller and more certain than when touch or taste are moved by their objects in terms of sensation or actualization" (*Early Works* 141).

literally sense his love. Yet Gerson's epistemological assertion that to feel is to know ("sentire vero cognoscere") fixates less on whether such knowledge is true or how it can be known than it does on what such knowledge *does* for the students. Affective knowledge doesn't replace other means of knowing God, rather it provides a qualitatively different experience of this knowledge, one that offers feelings of fullness and certainty ("amplius et certius").

Gerson's interest in affective knowledge centers on the way that it performs distinct, transformative tasks for readers that are quite different from the tasks performed by the constant questioning, debating, and uncovering of truth in scholastic inquiry.[40] Steven Ozment notes that in Gerson's writing on mystical theology, "there is an attainment and stabilizing of one's relation with God, while speculative theology alone leaves one restless and unsettled" (53). Affective knowledge is the practice of attaining stability, fullness, and certainty that enables a moral engagement with the world. In other words, it is the *qualitative* nature of such knowledge that enables moral engagement with the world, not simply the ethically rigorous "truths" that it teaches. This suggests a second aspect of the strongly relational quality of affective reading. Thus far, we have considered how Gerson describes affective reading as a way of relating to and interpreting texts as personal scripts. This second element of fulfillment and transformation—to feel and to experience is to know with certainty—enables another form of relation through new forms of engagement with the world. Gerson's emphasis throughout his writing on the moral ends of affective knowledge stems from the fact that

[40] Eve Sedgwick explores this performative aspect of knowledge in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*. In the chapter "Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading," she writes: "What does knowledge *do*—the pursuit of it, the having and exposing of it, the receiving again of knowledge that one already knows? How, in short, is knowledge performative, and how best does one move among its causes and effects?" (124).

it is a practical form of knowledge that is acquired through the experience of doing.[41] This is what Mark S. Burrows calls the "most characteristic of Gersonian concerns: namely, the union of knowledge and piety [...] where what one learns *per theologiam* must be 'transmitted' (*traducat*) through 'constant rumination' to the heart and to the performance of (good) deeds (*in affectum cordis, et exectutionem operis*)" (137). As readers perform the affective labor of experiencing texts, their newly acquired knowledge is most fully realized in its outward expression.[42] Affective knowledge begins and ends with relating. By doing the work of affective reading, readers are able to do things differently in the world. This is precisely why Gerson's surprising recommendation for devotional reading to the students at the Collège de Navarre responds to both their personal moral edification as well as their training as preachers (*Early Works* 181). Gerson's *Sermon on the Feast of Saint Bernard* showcases the contiguous relationship between reading and preaching—where rendering a text as a personal script in turn opens up new spaces for social relation and sharing of emotions.

The cascading set of affective relationships between Bernard, Gerson, and those who hear the sermon can be helpfully understood through modern theories of affect and emotion, which stress the notion of "contagious belongings to this world" (*Affect Reader* 4). Such modern approaches often forgo the interiorized and subjective quality of emotions to focus on the diffusion of feelings as a means of social belonging (*Affect Reader* 8). Indeed, the notion of "contagious belongings to the world" responds to one of

[41] Steven Ozment notes that affective knowledge results in "actively conforming to what it knows" through "consistent allegiance to the Aristotelian principle that only by working well does one become good" (53).
[42] Accordin to Hobbins, Gerson "embraced rhetoric—not Ciceronian rhetorical theory as an end in itself—but a more practical rhetorical emphasis in preaching. […] Gerson emphasized rhetoric because of its ethical dimension in moral theology, its power to stir the passions. […] Gerson often found opportunities to rebuke the literary and intellectual practices of modern schoolmen. Bad reading practices, he believed, had led to bad writing practices" (104).

the peculiarities of late medieval devotional writing, which so often aims at helping readers borrow emotions and inhabit the religious experience of others. In *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*, Sarah McNamer underscores the idea that devotional texts invited readers to inhabit distinct affects when she argues that medieval meditational texts are "intimate scripts" that "are quite literally scripts for the performance of feeling—scripts that often explicitly aspire to performative efficacy" (12). McNamer grants extraordinary power to these devotional texts as "mechanisms for the production of emotions" (12) that deftly construct the subjectivities of their readers. Gerson's discussion of affective reading supplements McNamer's emphasis on performative subjectivity by focusing on the contagious sharing of emotions instead of their production. For Gerson, affective reading is more than the reproduction of feelings. Rather it is a practice that *renders* a text a personal script in ways that highlight the social aspects of feeling.

For university students, intimate, conversational reading should be a form of social engagement because of the ways that it informs their preaching.[43] Gerson himself was renowned for his eloquence, and his sermons were highly regarded for their ability to grip and move audiences. D. Catherine Brown cites multiple references to Gerson's reputation as an eloquent preacher: "Gerson was praised by a chronicler who wrote of his always preaching 'elegantly and eloquently.' Another chronicler commented on his vernacular funerary oration on January 1415, in honour of Duke Louis of Orleans: the Chancellor preached 'si parfondement et haultement que plusieurs docteurs en theologie et autres s'en esmerveillerent'" (23). For Gerson, the ability to preach movingly came as

[43] D. Catherine Brown notes that Gerson's theology is remarkable for how it "constantly keeps before his students' minds their future role as spiritual guides of the people" (1).

the direct result of one's own ability to be moved and cultivate an affective understanding of God. Affectivity thus carries with it important social roles, because it is a way of knowing that is made through practice and working. It is a knowledge possessed through contact—both touching and being touched—and so it constantly relates the interior self to the social self. As readers transform their personal experiences through those offered by books, they shape their way of being in the world. When Gerson shifts his discussion of affective reading to the radically new context of lay readers, it is precisely this capacity for shaping social selves through intimate experience that creates a new set of risks and possibilities for affective reading.

Reading the Affective Vernacular

If Gerson worries that university students cut themselves off from experience through their scholastic pursuits, his concerns about bad lay reading practices are of a distinctly different order. In the lay context, the chancellor worries that non-university readers are too easily affected by the experiences proposed by texts, and that they too often indulge in the wrong kinds of books. Gerson wrote extensively about lay affective reading in his vernacular treatise on mystical contemplation, the *Montagne de Contemplation*. In this treatise, Gerson focuses on describing how devotional reading aims at changing a person's emotional disposition toward both life experiences and God. In a particularly evocative passage, Gerson explains:

> Souvent advient que la personne vient a un sermon ou a une lecon d'un livre, qui sera triste ou froide ou travaillée de temptacions; et soudainement ne verra l'eure que entre les parolles qu'elle orra ou lira ou regardera, prendra une liesse et sainte chaleur, et de ses temptacions delivrée se sentira. (7.1:24)

In this passage, the reading of scriptures, saints' Lives, or sermons triggers a departure from quotidian concerns to a devotional mindset. A devotional state of mind is not something that the reader brings to a text, but rather the result of an encounter with a text that has the unexpected effect of halting time and generating warmth, peace, and detachment. Gerson's description evokes the palpable effect on the body as readers move from "froide" to "sainte chaleur," and the process is rich with the mystery of the unnoticed moment ("ne verra l'eure") when sadness gives way to joy. This unnoticed moment recalls Massumi's discussion of the pre-conscious nature of affective experience, specifically the "mystery of the missing half-second" when the body absorbs "impulses quicker than they can be perceived"—perceptions which are "smoothed over retrospectively to fit conscious requirements of continuity and linear causality" ("Autonomy of Affect" 89). For Gerson, affective reading experiences include an important element of pre-conscious and sensory absorption of the text, which is aided by the presence of a prior affective disposition—the readers in this passage encounter devotional texts when feeling cold, sad, and worked over by relentless temptation.[44] Gerson's description of the effects of affective reading touches on the complex nexus of disposition, personal history, place, and body that coalesce to create an immediate and sensory reaction to a text. Just as Gerson is thoughtful about the prior affective disposition of readers in this passage, elsewhere he is attentive to the literal places of

[44] Sara Ahmed nuances Massumi's pre-conscious definition of affect by pointing out that "Before we are affected […] things are already in place that incline us to be affected in some ways more than others" (*Promise of Happiness* 231).

devotional practice by suggesting going to a church for prayer and finding a quiet room for meditative reading.[45]

To better appreciate how affective reading touches on readers' disposition, personal history, place, and body, we can turn to Gerson's immensely popular devotional work, *La Mendicité Spirituelle* (1401). *La Mendicité* asks readers to imagine themselves as beggars who plead for spiritual goods, and it often circulated as a pair with his *Montagne de Contemplation* (1400), which Gerson had composed the year prior (Hobbins, *Authorship and Publicity* 210). In the *Montagne*, Gerson offers various suggestions for how to enter into a meditative state, one of which he develops at particular length: to think of oneself as a beggar (7.1:48-50). He then goes on to say that he has been meaning for quite some time to write such just such a text:

> J'ai piecha sus ceste matiere en faire une oroison en guise d'un povre qui demande son pain de huys en huys, ou en guise d'un quereur de pardons, ou de ceulx qui sont en chartre, ou qui quierent non mie pour euls mais pour les hospitaulx. Car souvent une personne treuve mieus sa devotion en priant pour aultrui que pour soi et y pourfite moult. (7.1:49-50)

The *Mendicité* thus makes a fitting pair with the *Montagne*, because it puts into practice many of the reading techniques that Gerson discusses there. The idea that a reader "treuve mieus sa devotion en priant pour aultrui" gestures toward the interplay between intimacy and social experience that will become a major point of focus in the *Mendicité*.

The *Mendicité* is divided into two parts, the first of which is a dialogue of "le secret parlement de l'omme contemplatif a son ame et de l'ame a l'omme" (220), where the reader is encouraged to think about the reasons why they may have felt frustrated in

[45] "Je respon que tous lieux sont bons a prier Dieu. Touteffoiz les eglises et lieux sains sont a ce plus ordonnés" (*Mendicité Spirituelle*, 7.1:234). In the *Montagne de Contemplation*, Gerson writes: "A aulcuns plaisent mieux les lieus segrez des bois ou des foretz ou des desers; aux aultres soufisent les segrés des champs; as aultres les lieus secres des eglises ou de leur hostel, quant il se mettent telement qu'il ne voient aultrui et on ne les voit" (7.1:33).

the past when praying. The dialogue then guides readers to recall the beggars whom they have seen asking for alms in public and to pattern their devotion after the way that these beggars behave. In the second part of the text, the dialogue format disappears and gives way to "oroisons diverses et meditacions que fait l'ame en guise d'un povre mendiant qui se pourchasse et quiert son pain" (220), where the reader adopts the rhetorically rich first-person voice of the prayers and meditations as their own.

In the intimate dialogue ("secret parlement") of the first section, the contemplative man instructs his soul on how and why to think as a beggar. As the man offers advice, the soul often responds in ways that remind the man that the two are intimately bound in the same human fate: "Homme, mon hostelain, qui avec moy y es gettés hors de ton premier pays, et sommes ensamble en la chartre obscure et doloureuse de ce present exil, je cognois bien, helas, que je suis povre, malade, emprisonnee, blecee et navree, nue, sans vesture et si n'ay riens" (221). The intimacy of this conversation, in which each voice expresses a distinct perspective and yet is bound within the same person allows Gerson to explore the psychological complexity of feeling torn between conflicting desires and the divisive experience of wanting something but lacking the discipline to attain it. The opening dialogue of the *Mendicité* documents with remarkable honesty the frustrations of devotional practice, as the soul laments feeling unfulfilled, confused, and bored: "[…] je desire souvent moult de choses que je ne rechoy mie. Et se je parle en desirant, si ne trueuve je qui me responde, et trop peu souvent ou nyant je m'aperchoy que secourue je soye. […] je ne scay souvent qui m'est bon ou mauvais […] je suy tantost lasse et ennoyee de sainctement desirer, si n'ay point perserverance" (222). This dialogue doesn't script emotions for readers as much as it encourages them to fill in

the text by thinking about their previous devotional experiences and to consider why they lacked meaning, fulfillment, and intensity, even despite readers' good intentions and desires. This opening dialogue expects readers to summon their feelings and memories, but it also intensifies and heightens them through rhetorical embellishment: "je suis povre, malade, emprisonnee, blecee et navree, nue, sans vesture et si n'ay riens" (221). Even if readers had been feeling some of these things, the text pushes and extends the way they conceptualize their own sense of suffering. Readers' affective engagement with the text thus occurs as they fill out the text with their personal experiences, but it also opens them to the aims of the text. For example, the man invites the soul to reconsider her frustration by explaining that prayer is misguided when it seeks to change God's disposition. Instead, prayers should be a process of transforming one's emotions: "Nous prions Dieu non mie pour le mouvoir mais pour esmouvoir nous maismes a devocion et avoir pitié de nous […] Quel ton desir sera, tel le trouveras; non mie pour sa [Dieu] mutabilité, mais pour la tienne" (223-4). Prayer—and in this case, reading the *Mendicité*—performs the consolatory work of moving, shaping, and shifting one's desires until one achieves a state of peace and stability.

In the second section of the *Mendicité*, the two voices of Soul and Man collapse into a first person expressive voice that readers are explicitly invited to inhabit as their own. Following Susan McNamer, we can think of these prayers and meditations as "intimate scripts," that teach readers how to feel across an astonishing variety of affective states—reverence, fear, desire, compassion, jealousy, shame, and joy, to name but a

few.[46] But the prayers and meditations also invite readers to add in their prior feelings, thus rendering each text a personal script. To this end, each prayer and meditation has a heading to help the reader select a passage based on their particular need or emotional state. One meditation, for example, has the heading: "Meditacion de l'ame quant elle se sent en prosperité temporellement et espirituellement, pour rendre graces a Dieu" (268). Through the process of reading, the reader makes the meditation personal by thinking their present sense of prosperity through the emotions of thankfulness and humility proposed by the text. In the second to last meditation, which has the heading "Meditacion de l'ame selon les deux estas ou elle se trouve, maintenant hors de devocion, et puis en devocion. Et les signes de soy cognoistre" (275), the reader learns to recognize the devotional nature of prior experiences through the descriptions offered in the meditation. This process of affective engagement, in which readers invest their emotions and experiences in the text, enables a reading experience that is truly transformative, as emotions shift and expand to conform to those of the prayers and the meditations.

Yet within each of these prayers or meditations, the emotions are not static. Rather each text functions as a small, dramatic vignette in which emotions develop, surge, and resolve, much like in a sonnet or virelai. In one meditation, for example, the soul expresses joy and surprise when she is visited by God's presence, only to enter a state of lamentation when she finds that he quickly leaves. The soul then sends a prayer to ask him back before she finally comes to the realization that it is her desire that she must quiet and check in order to be at peace (277-79). The eloquence of these texts embeds the desire to pray and meditate within the words themselves, pulling readers

[46] At the end of the first section of the *Mendicité*, Gerson lists "vingt manieres d'affections" (238-40) that purify and soften the soul in preparation for mystical meditation, most of which reappear in the prayers and meditations in the second part of the text.

deeper into their devotion as they read. The *Mendicité* calls on readers to engage intimately with its complex emotional developments as a shared practice of conforming to the affective experience of mystical contemplation. The text thus highlights the social circulation of emotions by proposing a first person voice that can be shared by many, as well as by asking readers to create connections between their feelings and those proposed by the text.

The contagiousness of these emotional connections plays out quite naturally in the *Mendicité* through its insistence that mystical contemplation leads to expression through the social practice of prayer, both in the presence of others and on behalf of others (236). Similarly, readers' exploration of the affective stances opened up in the *Mendicité* also informs their sense of social status. Early in the dialogue, the soul complains that begging "semble moult honteux quant au monde et deshoneste, en especial a parsonne de noble lignage et d'extraccion haulte" (225). The man then instructs the soul as to her true poverty in spiritual goods, although he also encourages her to think of her new-found destitution as a novel form of social identification. The man tells the soul to think of herself as belonging among the beggars that she sees in public and to literally go pray in their company (236). If she is unable to do this, she should at least pray on their behalf and ask them to pray for her, because spiritual goods circulate in an economy much like that of material goods: "Car se j'ay pais et suerté temporele, se j'ay mez necessitez pour gouverner le corpz sans griefment ou continuelement labourer, ce vient, aprez la grace de Dieu, du labour et par l'oeuvre d'autrui, tant par les princes comme par ceulx qui sont de maindre estat; maiz aussy le doy je panser des biens espirituelz" (236). In other words, the benefits of individual prayer and devotional practice contribute to a shared spiritual

economy. Gerson's many discussions of affective reading strategies illuminate how this economy circulates spiritual goods as well as the social practices and intimate experiences that produce them.

Gerson's discussion of the important social aspects of devotional reading in the *Mendicité* correlates to his exuberant descriptions of such reading in the *Montagne* and elsewhere. Together, the *Mendicité* and *Montagne* evince the extent to which Gerson wanted to promote affective reading as a social practice for the laity. In giving words to the experience of affective reading, Gerson aims to infuse devotional texts with an increased value that would orient readers' response toward them in future moments of devotional reading. Sara Ahmed, who examines the cultural practices of emotions in *The Cultural Politics of Emotions* (2004) and *The Promise of Happiness* (2010), emphasizes the importance of the orientation of bodies as well as their objects of affection in triggering emotional responses (*Happiness* 34). In writing about devotional reading, Gerson aims to invest texts with a positive value that will in turn inflect readers' immediate, natural-seeming responses to them.

Gerson's efforts to increase the positive value of devotional texts and the practice of affective reading among both students and the laity also reveal how these texts and reading practices functioned as what Ahmed identifies as *objects* of affect.[47] For Ahmed, affective objects circulate as social goods, which in turn enables them to create affective communities:

> We align ourselves with others by investing in the same objects as the cause of happiness. […] the social bond is binding insofar as feelings are deposited in the same object, which may then accumulate value as happy or unhappy objects: a

[47] I am following Ahmed's use of the term "object": those things, material and immaterial, at which we aim and direct affect.

> group may come together by articulating love for the same things, and hate for the same things. (*Happines* 38)

This explanation of how objects of affection engage individuals socially illuminates Gerson's concern about the larger ramifications of the laity's intimate reading. As we will see, the laity's affective reading practices involve the same kinds of "contagious social belonging"—where readers render texts as personal scripts—that Gerson identified in his writing to the university. But for students, this contagious belonging plays out primarily within the realm of expression and practice—most notably in their preaching—so that their intimate reading experiences connect directly to their professional and social roles. For lay readers, reading practices could not be expressed directly through social and professional roles, although Gerson did encourage lay readers to channel their transformative reading experiences into personal acts of charity and prayer for others. Although Gerson doesn't necessarily forsee how the social roles of the laity could be conditioned by reading practices, he does nevertheless think of these practices as important for the formation of community.

For example, in his "Sermon sur la Passion" (1403), Gerson reminds his audience that their inclusion in Christian community relies in part on their ability to respond emotionally to Christ's passion:

> N'est pas le coeur plus dur que n'est pierre, le coeur, dy je, d'humaine creature qui ne se fent par compassion, par penitence et contriction en remembrance de ceste mort […] Prens honte en toy, o durete trop dure et inhumaine de coeur humain. Prens honte en toi qui es la coulpe de ceste mort si tu n'en deulx et pleures, quant tout rien qui n'en a coulpe s'en esmeut et s'en trouble (7.2:513).

In his shaming of those who do not align their emotions with an outpouring of compassion to Christ's suffering, Gerson goes so far as to exclude them from the status of

being human; or, stated more positively—feeling compassion for Christ is a way to express one's humanity. Gerson's insistence on the humanity of his audience's emotional response is of course a rhetorical strategy meant to emphasize the extent of Christ's human suffering, but it also reminds us that his body was an important site of social meaning for medieval Christians.[48] Yet for Gerson, social inclusion and exclusion depend as much on the individual's ability to respond emotionally as it does on Christ's body itself. Or, to draw on the language of Ahmed's affective objects, Christian community coalesces when individuals align their emotional responses toward Christ's body. Thus while the laity's reading experiences lacked the professional expression that was available to students, they nevertheless carried an important element of social engagement.[49] Gerson's insistence on the specificity of affective reading strategies, in which texts become personal scripts, adds a fascinating layer to the social practice of emotions because it underscores the ways that social engagement can be experienced intimately. The social ramifications of such intimacy will play out in Gerson's own *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose*, in which the chancellor directs his readers' attention to books as affective objects to show how reading creates community. Similarly, in the *Advision Christine*, Christine de Pizan's intimate portrayal of Libera, a female allegorical figure of the kingdom of France, creates an affective community that coalesces around the body politic.

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[48] Sarah Beckwith has explored the social meaning of the Passion devotion in *Christ's Body: Identity, Culture and Society in Late Medieval Writings*.

[49] While I have drawn on Gerson's Passion sermon to show how affective communities formed around Christ's body, this is also a phenomenon of reading: Gerson's sermon participates fully in a culture where Passion devotion was often pursued through devotional books. Gerson's sermon was also popular reading material: "We know, for instance, that six copies of Gerson's famous Passion sermon of 1403 (*Ad Deum vadit*) belonged to ecclesiastical owners, while eleven belonged to lay owners. These lay owners spanned a wide social range: the dukes of Burgundy and Bourbon and the queen of France, lower-ranking nobles and courtiers, a medical master, and two widows, including Jeanne de Velle, a middle class widow form Tournai who died in 1434" (Hobbins, "Public Intellectual" 1328-29).

Aesthetic Mutability

Gerson's understanding of the social ramifications of lay reading also surfaces in his concern for a perceived lack in appropriate reading materials for the laity or, worse, the misapplication of such reading strategies to the wrong texts. He sought to address the social repercussions of intimate reading by encouraging a more binding relationship between affective reading practices and devotional texts. His description in the *Montagne* of the enchanted reading experience that mysteriously turns sadness to joy suggests a strong link between reading materials and reading experience because it directly follows a specific lay reading list of devotional texts, including scriptures, saints' Lives, and sermons. Throughout the *Montagne de Contemplation* and elsewhere, Gerson goes to great lengths to offer reading recommendations for those pursuing mystical contemplation, and he himself wrote a hefty *oeuvre* of devotional and didactic texts in French for the laity. In the *Montagne de Contemplation*, while attempting to offer reading recommendations for his sisters, Gerson expresses frustration about the lack of texts available to the laity.[50] He does recommend Holy Scriptures and saints' Lives, which he says should be read in the same intimate, conversational style that he described to the students at the Collège de Navarre: "Et aussi le merite des sains et sainctes desqueulx on list les parolles et avecques les quels on parle et recoit on leur parlement,

[50] In the *Montagne*, Gerson explains that many of the source texts for his thinking on mystical contemplation, such as Richard of St. Victor or Henry of Suso's *Horlogium sapientiae*, are too difficult for the laity and so they won't be useful for providing them guidance (7.1:46-47). Other texts, such as the *Stimulus amoris*, William of Auvergne's *Rhetorica divina*, and St. Anselm's prayers and meditations, lend themselves more readily to lay reading, but Gerson believed incorrectly that these texts had not yet been translated into French (7.1:47-49). For Geneviève Hasenohr, Gerson's lack of awareness of the great output of vernacular religious literature in France during the 15th-century is symptomatic of "the great ignorance which the French clergy, even the best informed, had of the proliferating but anarchic literacy output in the vernacular, which was often for private use" ("Religious Reading" 210).

vault et ouevre a ceste devotion" (7.1:24-25). We can also think of Gerson's prolific production of vernacular devotional and instructional texts as an attempt to fill a lack in the number of appropriate texts available to the laity.

The perceived lack of supplemental reading material for the laity, combined with Gerson's efforts to fill the gap, point to Gerson's belief that there was a serious issue that needed to be addressed. This very point is developed in in his *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose*, where Gerson writes that devout texts compete with secular texts for the attention—and affection—of readers: "Nous veons que bonnes, saintes et devotes paroles, paintures et escriptures, esmeuvent a devocion, come disoit Pitagoras: pour ce sont fais les sermons et les ymages es esglises; trop plus legierement, par le contraire, les mauvaises tirent a dissolucion" (Hicks 68). Devout texts face off with other "mauvaises" texts, including the *Rose*, with both competing to push and pull their readers—either into devotion or dissolution. In essence, diverse texts with distinctive values and intentions offer up affective possibilities to their readers.

Elsewhere in the *Traité*, Gerson speaks of the effects of reading the *Rose* in ways that recall his description of the warming and enchanting effects resulting from mystical contemplation of devotional texts: "Jeunes gens donques nices et volaiges, que feront eulx a ung tel livre—mais ung tel feu!—plus enflammant que feu grigoys ou que fournaise a voirre? Au feu, bonnes gens, au feu!" (Hicks 74). In Gerson's evocative description, the book itself is likened to a fire, whose intensity heats and exacerbates the flames of lust and recalls the fire of Hell, which stands in stark contrast to the peaceful "sainte chaleur" that readers experience through devotional texts. Gerson's attentiveness to specifying and even writing texts that engender a devotional mindset evinces a worry

that affective reading modes are occasionally applied to the wrong kind of text, where words tug at readers' hearts, leading them toward the wrong object of affection.

Yet, even when the appropriate text has been selected, the reader seeking mystical contemplation can misuse affective reading practices. In the *Montagne de Contemplation*, Gerson warns against those who allow their reading to become less a form of devotion and more a form of affective inquisitiveness:

> Li aultre en montant sentent aucunefois grant fain espirituelle d'oyr la parolle de Dieu, puis le voellent oir ou lire; de quoi avient qu'en lisant trop si arrestent et prennent illecques refection plus que le droit ou que l'eure ne requiert, tant qu'il s'oublienta monter selonc leur commenchement. Vrai est que d'aultre part telle refection souvent pourfite, et est necessaire, en especial au comenchement ou quant on la prent par mesure et en tendent tousiours a monter; c'est quant on quiert plus en lisant devotion que science. (7.1:44)

As the reader invests a text with their attentiveness and intention, they experience a comfort ("refection") that can easily slip into a sense of pleasure as they forget and lose track of their initial devotional goals. The experience of comfort remains deeply important for devotional activity, but readers must learn to recognize the moment when their engagement with a text has strayed from an affective understanding of God and becomes instead a leisurely, pleasurable acquisition of new knowledge ("science"). This passage articulates with particular clarity the intimate interplay between the intentions of the reader and the power of texts—even the most devout texts—whose beauty and novelty the reader may pursue with too much affection. The skillfulness of devotional reading lies in the ability to simultaneously submit to the affective possibilities afforded by the text and guide oneself through with steadfast attention to the object of affection—God—without becoming desirous of the text itself. Gerson's warning about readers' ability to transform laudable reading into a sinful preoccupation infers an important

observation about affective reading: whether done correctly or not, whether taken with the appropriate seriousness or not, it is always engaged reading to the extent that it always has ethical repercussions for the individual and the society.

In Gerson's brief description of what lies on the other side of affective reading gone amiss, he focuses his attention on the particularly intimate qualities of the experience. In his description, we discover that the reader can become entirely absorbed ("s'oblienta") and consume any sort of text gluttonously ("prennent illecques refectoin plus que le droit ou que l'eure ne requiert"). The excessive consumption of a given text thus verges on the voluptuous as the reader lingers too long in the pleasure of reading ("trop si arrestent"). Gerson explicitly cautions against affective reading experiences that can overwhelm and distort even the most devout texts. For example, he recommends against reading devotional works that talk of spiritual marriage, lest they accidentally lead the untrained reader to think about carnal marriage:

> Vrai est que ceste matiere est bien haulte et asses dangeureuse a tenir au comenchement de sa conversion. Car quant on cuideroit penser a mariage espirituel on glisseroit liegierement en la souvenance de mariage charnel. (7.1:47)

These texts are thus dangerous for the laity not simply because the textual content can misguide attention to the wrong kind of marriage, but because the easy slip into remembrance of earthly marriage would be an affective, experiential meditation that could lead to reflection of desire and sexual arousal.[51] In other words, this type of affective reading can lead to readers making inappropriate connections between their personal feelings and lives, and those of the text.

[51] According to D. Catherine Brown, texts and images are for Gerson an important means for pursuing a sinful arousal of "present pleasure" (154).

The misguided creativity that can occur when texts are interpreted as intimate scripts allows readers to infer personal meanings from subjects that would otherwise seem quite unrelated. For example, Gerson cautions in the *Montagne* that those who have lived a long life of sin cannot possibly hope to suddenly give themselves over to mystical contemplation, because "quant il cuideroient penser a Dieu et avoir pures oroisons en secret et en oiseuseté, ils penseroient lors plus tost et plus habundanment a leurs maises inclinations et devendroient pieurs" (7.1:27). The sheer intimacy of affective reading, in which readers open their lives up to texts in hopes of conforming to their lessons, can in fact have quite the opposite effect of transforming texts into springboards for personal exploration and development. This misguided development is, in this passage, simply a question of becoming worse ("devendroient pieurs"), but the following chapters will explore how Gerson and his contemporaries also reverse this affective connection so as to allow people to begin to feel differently about the events happening around them that may have seemed quite unrelated to the personal. Even as affective reading strategies spill out beyond the boundaries of devotion and its specific moral directives, such reading strategies continue to carry with them a productive tension between intimacy and social belonging. As we will see, it is precisely this resonant tension that late medieval writers put to work in the distinctively affective responses to the politics of the Hundred Years War.

Conclusion

This chapter has given an account of the crucial theoretical framework that Jean Gerson brought to the reading practices of both the university trained and the laity.

Gerson's reflections are particularly illuminating because they describe both the experience of affective reading as well as its strategies. Weaving together the chancellor's reflections on reading in the various texts explored in this chapter also allows us to appreciate the particular social functions that Gerson accorded to affective reading practices. This chapter has shown that for Gerson, affective engagement with books calls on habits of reading as well as inventive readerly investment in a text. Such reading is a personal experience, a set of strategies, and a mode of being in the world. For Gerson, affective reading strategies include pursuing intimate dialogues with books, inhabiting the experiences proffered by texts, transforming the words of others into personal scripts, repeatedly investing one's own experiences and histories in the aims of a text, and cultivating attentiveness to the rhetorical power of words. Gerson describes the palpable effects of affective reading, as well as the release from mental agitation, attainment of certainty, and the desire, lingering pleasure and comfort that readers experience. He further emphasizes how books circulate emotions in ways that highlight the interdependence of social and personal realms. For Gerson, reading is very much a way of being in the world and an important means of creating affective communities.

Chapter 2—Affective Histories and Political Consolation in Guillaume de Machaut's *Confort d'ami*

In the last chapter, we saw how Jean Gerson provided a theoretical framework for devotional reading that emphasizes how affective strategies allow readers to draw personal meaning out of a text by intimately inhabiting the experiences that it proposes. Gerson's efforts to encourage affective reading practices among the university trained and guide the laity toward a proper use of these textual practices hints at their wider application beyond the specific aims of devotional literature. This chapter will turn its attention to Guillaume de Machaut's *Confort d'ami* (1357) as a concrete example of such a wider application of affective reading strategies. By the early years of the 15th century, when Gerson composed many of the texts studied in Chapter 1, vernacular writers such as Guillaume de Machaut had already begun to explore how affective reading strategies could allow readers to consider contemporary events from a more personal perspective. Machaut's engagement with many of the same affective strategies we saw in Chapter 1 allows us to catch a glimpse of the mutual influence that courtly, religious, and university milieux exercised upon one another. Similarly, Gerson's perception of the tremendous social risks and possibilities of using texts to make connections to the experiences of others shows the likely influence of contemporary poets on the chancellor's thinking. In particular, Guillaume de Machaut's remarkable attentiveness to his courtly readers' experiences of books allowed him to experiment with using the affective lessons of devotional reading to render contemporary political events as sites of personal meaning. This chapter argues that the *Confort* teaches readers that using affective strategies to

shape their personal experiences through those of others creates a stronger sense of implication in a larger field of contemporary political upheaval. The *Confort* teaches readers that affective reading is a form of social engagement when it allows them to imagine the political as personal.

Machaut wrote his *Confort d'ami* in 1357 as a consolation piece for Charles of Navarre, who had been imprisoned by King John II after a series of complicated political clashes between the two. The poem offers a dazzling variety of exempla and bits of comforting advice, ranging from Biblical to Ovidian, as well as an abundance of literary tropes that run the gamut from *contemptus mundi* to courtly love and moral advice for princes. The *Confort* is a four thousand line *dit* that is organized around three main sections. The first section concentrates on a series of Old Testament figures who are unjustly accused, imprisoned, or tortured only to be miraculously saved by divine intervention on account of their remarkable faith. In the second section of the poem, Machaut offers a loose set of practical recommendations to Charles about his situation and political status before moving onto a Boethian-themed meditation on Lady Fortune, as well as several Ovidian tales that emphasize the sustaining power of hope. The third and final section offers a litany of examples and advice for princely conduct in the style of a Mirror for Princes. The poem closes with a somewhat mysterious twenty six line epilogue that registers a reply by the prince in which he laments his suffering and begs for further consolation.

While Guillaume de Machaut (c.1300-1377) has often been viewed as either a preeminent court poet or as courtly cleric, recent scholarship has focused on expanding our understanding of the ways in which he addresses contemporary social events and

draws on a wide range of philosophical, historical, political, and scriptural sources.[52] Yet in many ways, his refined and playful poetry seems to hail from an entirely different milieu and era than the stern, politically anxious poetry of Eustache Deschamps, Christine de Pizan, and Alain Chartier. In their important study of these 15th-century *poètes engagés*, Joël Blanchard and Jean-Claude Mühlethaler emphasize the increasingly critical eye that writers brought to bear on royal power and the practice of government and war. According to Blanchard and Mühlethaler, Charles the V's commissioned translation of Jean of Salisbury's *Policraticus* in 1372 marks an important turning point for engaged political writing. The king's interest in vernacularizing the practical norms of government found in *Le Policratique* opened up a new, engaged role for poets, who could increasingly speak to the realities of political process in addition to their more traditional depictions of exemplary and ideal rulers (15). According to Blanchard and Mühlethaler's timeline and literary themes, Machaut can only represent an early predecessor to these *poètes engagés*. Yet Machaut's *Confort d'ami* deals in many of the same reflections that Blanchard and Mühlethaler uncover in 15th-century engaged poetry. The *Confort* draws on Old Testament examples to admonish the prince against abuses of power and instructs him to attend to his own salvation and morality before then delving into the practical advice in the Mirror for Princes that closes the poem.[53]

As eager as Machaut is to instruct Charles in the ways of princely conduct, the *Confort* is first and foremost a consolatory poem that hopes to speak to his patron's

[52] For an overview of this recent scholarship, see McGrady and Bain 3-4.
[53] In his introduction to the critical edition of the *Confort*, Barton Palmer points out that this poem is unique in Machaut's oeuvre because it is an early example of later, 15th-century politically engaged writing (xxxiii). Anne Walters Robertson sees a similar kind of political engagement in several of Machaut's late motets that directly address the siege of Reims in 1359 and malign the lack of leadership among France's nobility (189-223).

experience of political misfortune and imprisonment. The *Confort* is one of two consolatory pieces that Machaut composed for princes who were taken captive during the unfolding events of the Hundred Years War. He would write the second, *La Fonteinne Amoureuse*, for Jean de Berry just three years after completing the *Comfort d'ami*. These two consolation pieces experiment with strikingly different tones, themes, and literary structures to offer aid and comfort to their readers. In particular, the *Confort* draws heavily on Old Testament stories and dispenses with the narrative framing of a diegetically staged poetic voice[54] to offer an intimate direct discourse that speaks with remarkable honesty to the reality of Charles of Navarre's imprisonment. The *Confort* thus diverges from modern conceptions of late medieval engaged poetry by directing its attention toward the personal experience of politics. Less a critical reflection on the flawed political conduct of 14th-century France, the *Confort* instead turns a sympathetic gaze toward the personal, emotional, and physical toll of political misfortune. In this sense, the *Confort* nuances our understanding of politically engaged literature as it underscores the importance that authors accorded to their readers' experience of contemporary events. In *Controlling Readers: Guillaume de Machaut and his Late Medieval Audience*, Deborah McGrady has established Machaut's particular attentiveness to his readers' increasing desire for intimate engagement with their books and their powerful role in determining the meaning and interpretation of his texts. This chapter builds on McGrady's illuminating study of Machaut's desire to control his readers' literary experiences by examining how the *Confort d'ami* opens itself to a more active

[54] In "Le clerc et l'écriture : le *voir dit* de Guillaume de Machaut et la definition du dit" Cerquiglini points out that "Le dit est un discours qui met en scène un 'je', le dit est un discours dans lequel un 'je' est toujours représenté" (159). The *Confort d'ami* lacks precisely this kind of narrative structure that places the '*je enonciateur*' inside the poem.

role for Charles of Navarre in creating a personal experience of and engagement with political writing. In this sense, the *Confort* represents an important corrective to Blanchard and Mühlethaler's study of later 15th-century engaged poetry by emphasizing the importance of readerly experience for its precursors.

This chapter will focus in particular on Machaut's turn to sacred literature, where courtly readers were accustomed to finding comfort, consolation, and instruction. By infusing this familiar material with the kinds of affective strategies that we saw in Chapter 1, the *Confort* proposes a distinct experience with this sacred material that pulled readers into an personal understanding of political misfortune. Until recently, scholars have tended to regard Machaut's engagement with sacred material largely in terms of his courtly and literary preoccupations.[55] Anne Walters Robertson has recently reassessed the importance of Machaut's position at the cathedral of Reims for the meaning of his motets. For Robertson, the specific religious and liturgical milieu of Reims can explain how many of his motets fulfilled mystical, devotional, and liturgical uses while also addressing political concerns. The *Confort*, which Machaut wrote in 1357 after he took up permanent residence at the Reims cathedral in 1350,[56] offers a compelling example of a text whose sacred material no doubt springs from the poet's new surroundings but nevertheless reveals how the poet maintained a constant eye to the courtly and political concerns of his intended reader. The interplay of affective and political experience in the *Confort* nuances Robertson's somewhat totalizing view, in which Machaut's residency at

[55] For example, in her study of the juxtaposition of sacred and profane sources in *Allegorical Play in the Old French Motet*, Sylvia Huot argues that "the motet, constructed around similarities in the language and iconography of sacred and profane love, subordinates spiritual difference to literary equivalence" (191). Huot settles on the term "parody" to describe the literary dynamic that resolves the inherent tension between sacred and profane, particularly in Machaut's motets.
[56] McGrady and Bain 3.

Reims singularly determines the meaning and function of his texts. Rather than aspiring to a higher spiritual meaning, the *Confort* willingly embraces and experiments with the ways that devotional reading can bring its affective lessons to bear on secular, political experiences.

Most Machaut scholars, when they address the Biblical sections of the *Confort*, have either interpreted them as examples meant to inspire Charles' faith in God or as veiled affirmations of Charles' political innocence or guilt, based on typological correspondences between the 14th-century prince and the Biblical characters.[57] Machaut's repeated insistence on his method of translation of the Old Testament stories—taken directly from the Latin and done according to the letter—does in some sense occasion such figural interpretations by invoking the *sensus literalis*, or the literal or historical meaning of scripture. The literal rendering of these Old Testament figures, each of whom suffers unjust treatment at the hands of tyrannical rulers, resonates strongly with Charles' own imprisonment at the hands of John II while also offering inspiring hope in God's ability to enact justice. But Machaut's distinctive, affective use of the *sensus literalis* also moves beyond these figurative correspondences to invite emotional connection to the historical suffering of Biblical figures. Reading the Biblical stories affectively enables much of the consolatory richness of the *Confort d'ami*, which engages with the physical, political, and emotional ramifications of Charles' imprisonment instead

[57] The most in-depth studies of the *Confort* include Barton Palmer's introduction to the critical edition, as well as his article "Guillaume de Machaut and the Classical Tradition: Individual Talent and (Un)Communal Tradition." See also Martha Wallen's in-depth study of the poem, "Biblical and Mythological Typology in Machaut's *Confort d'Ami*." Other recent studies include Sylvia Huot's "Guillaume de Machaut and the Consolation of Poetry" and Sarah Kay's "Touching Singularity: Consolation, Philosophy and Poetry in the French *dit,*" both of which deal extensively with the Ovidian and Boethian sections of the *Confort* but do not discuss the Biblical portions of the text.

of asking him to transcend suffering through a salvific process of detachment from the world.

Machaut's later 15th-century readers seem to have particularly appreciated the poem's ability to draw on the affective lessons of devotional reading to address political conduct. Two fifteenth century manuscripts, Bern, MS. A95.10 and BnF, MS. fr. 994 contain nearly identical excerpted versions of the *Confort* that eliminate the Boethian and courtly sections, as well as the Old Testament stories that speak more directly to the specifics of Charles' imprisonment, in order to focus on two components of Machaut's text: the story of Susanna's faith and prayer amidst trying circumstances and the final Mirror for Princes section. BnF, MS. fr. 994 further emphasizes the devotional aspects of the *Confort* by combining the poem with other religiously themed texts, including Jean Le Fèvre's *Respit de la Mort*, translations of an Office of Holy Orders and a coronation ceremonial, and Jean Brisebarre's *Tresor Nostre-Dame*.[58] This 15th-century manuscript ask us to confront a legacy for France's preeminent court poet that sought to integrate one of his most distinctive *dits* into a later combined tradition of politically and devotionally engaged poetry that responded with urgency to the upheavals of the Hundred Years War.

By drawing on the affective lessons of devotional reading to dignify and recognize the emotional and personal ramifications of Charles' political misfortunes, the *Confort* attests to a vernacular literary culture of experimentation with the affective reading strategies that Gerson would describe approximately fifty years later. In recognizing the personal experience of the conflict between Charles of Navarre and John II, the *Confort* fills a lacuna in the public imagination of contemporary history. This

[58] For a complete description of BnF fr. 994, see Geneviève Hasenohr's edition of Jean Le Fèvre's *Respit de la Mort*. For information on Bern A95.10, see Lawrence Earp, *Guillaume de Machaut : A guide to Research*.

imaginative renewal of the political as personal occurs through the mutual labor of poet and readers. The full personal meaning of the *Confort* crystallizes through readers' inventive investment in the text. In the conclusion to this chapter, we will explore how the mysterious epilogue to the *Confort* records the response of at least one reader—either real or imagined—that has fully absorbed the poem's affective lessons while also resisting its lessons of devotional solace. This response unfastens affective experience from devotional practice to discover a highly personal language for the experience of political misfortune. This intimate public dialogue between poet and reader underscores the extent to which reading can be a means of social engagement that connects readers to other readers as well as authors. In this sense, Machaut's *Confort d'ami* looks forward to Christine de Pizan's efforts to engage her readers in a deeply personal experience of the suffering of the body politic in the *Advision Christine*.

Consolation and the *Sensus Literalis*

In order to appreciate Machaut's affective use of the Old Testament stories in the *Confort*, we will first turn to his distinctive take on late medieval literal exegesis. The poem's opening suite of Old Testament stories feature the prophet Daniel aiding in the deliverance of various righteous figures who are unjustly accused or imprisoned. In the closing summary to the Biblical section, Machaut lists his examples as follows: the deliverance of Susanna, the miraculous safety of the three youths in the fiery furnace, Daniel's tale of survival in the den of lions, and the imprisonment and release of King Manessah. Martha Wallen proposes an organizational framework of "accusation and liberation" for this collection of Old Testament stories in the *Confort* (191), since the poet

explains how each story functions as an example that should inspire Charles to take hope about his own situation of imprisonment. Machaut repeatedly tells his reader that he has translated these stories closely from the Latin, without adding or inventing anything. When introducing the suite of Biblical examples, Machaut focuses specifically on the truth-value guaranteed by his direct translations:

> Si que amis, sans rien controuver,
> Par exemples te veuil prouver,
> Qui son contenu en la Bible
> Et qui sont a nous impossible,
> Qu'adès cils qui en Dieu se fie,
> S'il a raison de sa partie
> Et s'il aimme, sert, et honneure,
> Adès son fait vient au desseure. (lines 45-52)

Machaut seems to erase his own poetic craft from the telling of these stories, because, "sans rien controuver," the stories speak directly to Charles on their own. As the word of God, these stories are apparently powerful enough to console Charles without any intervention on the part of Machaut. Machaut's self-effacement before his sources is undoubtedly a poetic conceit, but he also insists throughout the *Confort* on his close translation methods, often closing his examples with statements such as, "Ensi comme je l'ay leu/ Et que trouvé l'ay en escript/ En la Bible ou il est escript" (lines 644-46). In part, this insistence on close translation serves, as Barton Palmer suggests, to "prove the moral the poet draws and establish the relevance it possesses for Charles' circumstances" ("Introduction" lix). Yet Machaut's dependence upon an un-mediated Biblical text also points to the particular kind of exegesis that he practices. Machaut introduces the example of Daniel in the lion's den by saying, "Encor vueil .i. exemple mettre/ Qui est vrais, et selonc la lettre" (lines 661-2). Machaut's translation, done according to the letter, depends on the exegetical *sensus literalis*—that is, the literal interpretation of

scripture. When Machaut introduces the prayer of the Old Testament King Manesseh, we learn that this form of exegesis, enriched by poetry, does more than guarantee the truthfulness of the stories. It also determines Charles' ability to use and draw personal meaning from them:

> Encor veuil j'.i. exemple mestre
> En rime, si pres de la lestre
> Comme je porrai bonnement
> Pour manifester clerement
> Qu'avoir doit chascuns s'esperence
> En Dieu et toute sa fiance. (lines 1353-1358)

For Machaut then, the poetic crafting of these stories poses no threat to a literal, historical rendering. Rather, if Machaut succeeds at his poetic rendering ("comme je porrai bonnement"), the full import of the example will be both clearer and personally compelling ("Qu'avoir doit chascun s'esperance"). Through Machaut's poetic renderings of the literal sense of scripture, the stories open to an intimate reading experience for Charles.

Machaut's poetic craft thus enriches and fulfills the literal meaning of scripture. According to the four traditional levels of exegesis, the literal sense, also known as the historical sense, distinguishes itself from the allegorical, the anagogical, and the tropological interpretations, all three of which traditionally belonged to the spiritual senses.[59] That Machaut's poetry seems to disappear before the power and truth of his literal translations while also dramatically amplifying, excerpting, and tailoring the Biblical stories to Charles' political misfortunes may seem somewhat contradictory to modern readers. Given that the *Confort* expects Charles to find edification in these Old

[59] The classic source for the history of medieval exegetical practices is Henri de Lubac's *Medieval Exegesis*.

Testament stories, we might have expected Machaut to accomplish this task by drawing on the moral allegories of tropological exegesis.

A brief example of a tropological rendering of the Susanna story by Pierre Bersuire (c.1300-1362) will help clarify how a literal rendering of the same story in the *Confort* allowed for a more personalized lesson. Pierre Bersuire's *Reductorium morale super totiam bibliam*, written for use by preachers, offers allegorical moralizations of both Ovidian and Biblical stories. In Bersuire's explanation, Susanna represents the soul, while the water in which she bathes is likened to a fountain of devotion, Daniel is a priest, and the lustful judges who spy on her represent the world and the devil (Staley 48). As Lynn Staley explains Bersuire's lesson, "the moment Susanna sends away her maids for soaps and unguents, she is left vulnerable because she is alone and hence without attendant virtues. Daniel 'liberates her' from the dangers of solitude" (48). In Bersuire's tropological rendering, allegory provides the framework through which Susanna's story comes to represent an important—if somewhat impersonal—moral lesson.

In contrast, Machaut closes his literal rendering of Susanna's story with explicit instructions about how readers should use Susanna as point of self-reflection:

> Si qu'amis, tu te dois mirer
> En ceste exemple et remirer
> Com Susanne fu accusee
> Et comme elle fu delivree
> N'autre remede n'i savoit
> Fors qu'en Dieu s'esperence avoit. (lines 417-422)

Machaut explains that this is a story for self-reflection ("te … mirer") and that readers should admire ("remirer") the means by which Susanna was delivered ("comme elle fu delivree"). The poet thus directs Charles to take hope from the specific details of Susanna's story—how she was illegitimately found guilty as well as the means of her

deliverance. Instead of finding an explicit lesson, readers find themselves in the story. To banish any doubts that the prince might have about this, he reminds him that he has translated it as closely as possible from the Latin. Tropology was thus not the sole means of accessing moral lessons within scripture, as Henri de Lubac explains while identifying a "twofold tropology" within scripture. Lubac points out that certain portions of the Bible function like "pure soft wool" and need not have their literal sense purified in order to proffer moral lessons. Other Biblical passages are more like flax and must be dried out and purified through allegorization before they become morally edifying (130).[60] In sharp contrast to Bersuire's interpretations, the Biblical stories in the *Confort* offer just this sort of "soft wool" lesson by drawing on a sense of history that eschews any kind of figural layering or allegorical interpretation to produce meaning. In the *Confort*, Susanna is quite simply a historical person—an innocent woman who was unjustly accused and exonerated. Machaut's many additions and subtractions to the Biblical stories serve to heighten and enrich the historical interest of the *sensus literalis*, much in the same way that a bible story could be amplified in a mystery play for dramatic purposes without altering the sense of historicity at work in the play.[61]

Machaut was certainly not alone in his historical amplifications to Susanna's story—indeed, other contemporary versions of her story help illuminate the subtle

[60] Lubac cites Gerhoh of Reichersberg to explain the difference between the two moral senses of scripture: "It can also be said that some of the examples of the ancient fathers are wool, some are flax. For something like pure, soft wool is found in those of their deeds that are proposed to be imitated just as they have been done and written, e.g., the faith and obedience of Abraham, the piety of Joseph, the meekness of Moses, the humility of David, and the like, in which the simple morality is acceptable even if no allegory is sought. But those that are said by way of allegory, e.g., that Abraham had two sons […] and that Jacob had two sisters for wives and their slave girls as concubines, and the like, are to be dried out like raw linen and purified in many ways, so that once the carnal element of the sense of the letter that killeth has been removed, only the life-giving and edifying spirit may be accepted within them" (130). For the original citation of Gerhoh of Reichersberg, see *L. de laude fidei* (*Op. in.*, I, 226).

[61] For example, the late medieval mystery play, *Le Mistère du Viel Testament*, maintains a decidedly historical interest in Susanna's story, even though it invents new characters, including Susanna's children, as well as many new conversations between Susanna and her husband.

flexibility afforded by literal exegesis, as well as the distinctiveness of Machaut's tailoring. Where other amplified, literal versions of Susanna's story portray her as an idealized example of female chastity and fidelity to one's conscience, Machaut reworks the historical meaning to pull her story forward into Charles' personal experience of history.[62] For example, in the late 14th-century *Mesnagier de Paris*, a guidebook for domestic conduct written for young married women, Susanna functions as an exemplary model of female chastity. The moral of the story focuses on Susanna's response to the corrupt judges at the moment that they illicitly proposition her. The *Mesnagier* recites Susanna's response to this proposition twice—once during the narration of the story, and then once again while reinforcing the lesson:

> […] et est bien prouvé qu'elle estoit bien remplie de la vertu de chasteté quant elle dist ceste parolle aux faulx jugeurs: "J'ayme mieux cheoir en voz mains comme es mains de mes ennemis et mourir sans faire pechié devant Dieu Nostre Seigneur." O femme plaine de foy et de grant loyauté, qui cremoit tant Dieu et le pechié de mariaige enfraindre qu'elle vouloit mieulx morir que son corps vilainement atoucher! (138).

In this story, Susanna functions as an inspirational example to be imitated through the cultivation of virtue, although not in an entirely literal sense—presumably the young women who read the *Mesnagier* were not meant to literally desire death over defilement. Rather, Susanna's example inspires because, like Lucretia, she hyperbolically pushes virtue to its most extreme endpoint. The version of Susanna's story in the *Mesnagier* also maintains a strong monitory function, as the husband-narrator concludes by expressing

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[62] In her overview of the literary and exegetical tradition of this Biblical story, Lynn Staley notes that Susanna usually functions either as a model for chastity of fidelity to one's conscience and faith in divine justice (46-7). Staley concentrates primarily on a third use of Susanna's story, one that focuses on due legal process. Machaut's version, however, focuses more on the personal corruption of the judges as historical people than it does on proper juridical procedures. For more on the legal interpretations of Susanna's story, see Kornbluth 43-8 and Buc 89.

strong approval for what he believes to be a continued Jewish practice of stoning to death those wives who are unfaithful to their husbands (140).

Christine de Pizan briefly recounts a similarly hyperbolic account of Susanna in the second section of the *Cité des Dames*. Although spoken in a softer, more encouraging tone, the lesson remains the same: Susanna is an inspirational example of female chastity because she preferred death over a loss of virtue (181). Like many saints' Lives, the lessons gleaned in the *Mesnagier* and the *Cité des Dames* have less to do with a literal imitation of conduct and more to do with taking inspiration from the heroic deeds of others and God's presence in human history. These representations of Susanna as a hyperbolic but inspiring model of female chastity illuminate the subtle inflections available to a literal reading of Biblical stories. While both the *Mesnagier* and the *Cité des Dames* draw on literal interpretation, they focus on her exemplarity more than her historicity. This interest in exemplarity helps explain the residual metaphorical quality present in these two versions of Susanna's story, where she functions first and foremost as a timeless representation of virtue. As readers compare their personal cultivation of virtue to hers, they make parabolic inferences about their own chaste conduct from Susanna's fidelity.

Such metaphorical expansions to the literal letter of scripture became a sight of intense debate in 14th-century exegesis.[63] Nicholas of Lyra (c.1270-1349), a near

[63] In the 14th century, exegetes sought to re-work the boundaries between the literal and spiritual meanings of scripture, such that the literal sense came to encompass much of the figural meaning that had previously been reserved for the higher levels of interpretation. This emphasis on literal exegesis has been a topic of rich scholarly engagement, beginning with Smalley Beryl's influential *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages* (1964). For a useful overview of the scholarly work that has enriched and challenged Smalley's study, see the introduction to Mark Hazard's *The Literal Sense and the Gospel of John*. For a helpful overview of the medieval debates surrounding the *sensus literalis*, see Rita Copeland's "Rhetoric and the Politics of the Literal Sense in Medieval Literary Theory" and the introduction to Kantik Ghosh's *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and Interpretation of Texts*.

contemporary of Machaut's, was perhaps the most influential and widely read of these literal-minded exegetes. As Mark Zier notes, "the 14th century witnessed yet another transformation of Biblical studies, epitomized by the work of Nicholas of Lyra, that not only shifted the focus of literal/historical interpretation, but even changed the basic understanding of the relationship between the historical interpretation and the spiritual" (173). Nicholas of Lyra wrote two Biblical commentaries, the first of which was the *Postilla litteralis* (ca. 1322-1331). This commentary, known primarily for its insistence that the literal sense be the basis for all interpretation, was an immediate success after its completion in 1331 and was widely read thereafter. It appeared on Jean Gerson's suggested reading list for the Dauphin and was one the first Biblical commentaries to be printed alongside the Bible in Nuremburg in 1481.[64] In 1338 Lyra added a moral interpretation to his commentary, the *Postilla moralis*. Lyra is perhaps most famous for having created the concept of a double literal sense, whence his two commentaries, one literal and the other one based in the literal but nevertheless abstracted to a moral level. While remarking upon Lyra's unique insistence on the historical sense of scripture in the *Postilla litteralis*, Phillippe Buc notes:

> […] a zealous desire to derive from the Scriptures, or write into them, practical norms for government. Independently of their ethical stature, morally ambiguous figures can provide positive examples for good measures in the realm of politics. In other words, the *Postilla Litteralis* constitutes almost an avatar of a genre, the Mirror of Princes, which flourished in the 13th and 14th centuries. (85)

In other words, Lyra's keen interest in the literal sense of the Old Testament produced two different kinds of lessons. On the one hand, Biblical figures provided timeless moral lessons through a process of metaphorical inference, as with Susanna's virtuous example.

[64] For more on Gerson's reading suggestions to the Dauphin, see Buc 109. For the print history of Lyra's Biblical commentary, see *Nicholas of Lyra: The Senses of Scripture* 11.

On the other hand, Old Testament stories could offer historical lessons that were independent of their moral import and which offered concrete models for princely conduct.

Here we can rejoin Machaut and his emphasis on Charles' use of the Biblical stories that hinges on his own act of close, literal translation. The *Confort* reveals a similar interest in the historical lessons of the Old Testament, because, unlike the stories in the *Mesnagier de Paris* and the *Cité des Dames*, the *Confort* engages readily with its Old Testament figures as historically specific people whose affective responses to the workings of worldly injustice recast Charles' own experience of political misfortune. In this sense, Machaut dallies with the 14th-century exegetical fascination with the *sensus literalis*, epitomized in the work of Nicholas of Lyra, at the same time that he maintains a keen eye on the rhetorical richness of poetry and its consolatory powers.[65] Machaut takes leave of Nicholas of Lyra and his focus on historical modes of conduct in the Old Testament, for the work of these two writers is fundamentally different in nature: Lyra wrote Biblical commentary, and Machaut here writes to comfort and console.[66]

Machaut's work is not simply to show conduct, but rather to convince Charles to adopt such conduct in the hopes that it will bring him solace. Machaut's suite of Old

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[65] While it is not my intention to show a direct relationship between Lyra's Biblical commentary and the *Confort*, Ernest Hoepffner does point out in the introduction to his edition of the poem several places where Machaut seems to have borrowed from Lyra's *Postilla*: "Il y a bien, dans le *Confort*, quelques détails qui se trouvent dans les *Postilles* de Nicolas de Lyre: ce dernier insiste sur le fait que la main mystérieuse ne fut visible qu'au roi Balthazar; Darius reconnaît immédiatement la ruse des ennemis de Daniel, etc.; mais les divergences ne manquent pas: ainsi l'interprétation des paroles de l'enfant Daniel est toute différente" (page V). Whether or not Machaut drew directly on this particularly commentary for his rendition of the Susanna story, he was familiar with Lyra's work.

[66] Beryl Smalley's makes an interesting claim about the radically literal-minded nature of late medieval devotional culture: "By a wonderful reversal, the mystery of the elect means to St. Francis, not the mystical, but the strictest literal understanding of Scripture. Similarly, in their meditations, the friars seek to share in the sufferings of Christ. The ideal is not new, but it gains ground in the 13th century. Reading is giving way to devotions, which signifies a more historical approach to Scripture. What is evoked by the crib, the rosary, the crucifix, is the Gospel in its literal sense" (284). While the *Confort* isn't a devotional text, it does maintain an interesting relationship to this kind of literal experience of scripture.

Testament stories works less to instruct Charles for future princely conduct, aiming instead to explore the present-tense ramifications of his isolation and imprisonment through stories about the suffering and hopefulness of others. Machaut's poetic crafting of these histories thus provides a powerful antecedent to Jean Gerson's call for a greater appreciation of the rhetorical meaning of the moral, historical, and prophetic material of Holy Scripture. In Chapter 1, we saw how Jean Gerson believed that the rhetorical mode was essential for understanding these Biblical passages because their truest meaning lies in their ability to stir readers' passions. In the following section, we will see how Machaut creates just such an affective approach to history in order to move his imprisoned reader to a consolatory experience of penance.

Affective Histories

To explore Machaut's distinctive approach to history, I will focus on the initial examples in the text that prepare Charles and other readers to pursue an affective relationship with Biblical stories in the *Confort*. Of all the Old Testament examples that appear in the *Confort*, the figure of Susanna most forcefully illustrates the kinds of affective histories that Machaut draws out of the literal sense. Most often associated with female chastity, Machaut reworks this unlikely model for a 14th-century prince into a compelling empathetic character whose suffering at the hands of her enemies corresponds closely to that of the prince. In both the Vulgate and the *Confort*, the narrative of the story remains the same: one day while bathing in her husband's garden, two corrupt and lustful judges spy on and then proposition Susanna.[67] When she refuses to give in to their

[67] In the following sections of the chapter, I will often compare Machaut's versions of his Old Testament stories to the Clementine Vulgate Bible. Machaut himself tells us that he has drawn his stories from the

wishes, the judges publicly bear false testimony against her by saying that they have witnessed her committing adultery with a young man who conveniently managed to escape just at the moment the judges happened upon the lovers. Susanna is condemned to death by the very judges who have accused her until the prophet Daniel, who is still a small child at the time, miraculously intervenes and manages to prove that the judges have falsely accused Susanna (lines 73-426).

Machaut's rhetorical flourishes and amplifications serve primarily to refine and enhance to the emotional weight of the story. Some of these amplifications occur within the various moments of direct discourse, as when Daniel pronounces an invective against the false judges and goes so far as to call them "lis faus dampné" (316). Later, Machaut's Daniel reminds the judges that while they have betrayed justice toward Susanna, God's justice is incorruptible and, as a result, they will suffer the terrible consequences of their actions (lines 368-70). Daniel then promises the judges a much more thorough vengeance than death, saying:

> Tu mens, voir! Pour c'apparillier
> Voy l'angle de Dieu sans doubtance
> Qui tient l'espee de vengence
> Dont en .ii. pars te partira,
> Ne jamais ne se partira
> Se soiez vous mors et peris
> En biens, en corps, en esperis. (lines 386-392)[68]

In this passage, the poet amplifies the Vulgate version's promise of death by naming the sword "vengence" and detailing the full extent of the judges' destruction through the

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Bible when he says "Par exemples te vueil prouver / Qui sont contenu en la Bible" (lines 46-47) and "Dou latin ou je l'ay veu" (line 415).

[68] The Vulgate version reads as follows: "Dixit autem ei Daniel: Recte mentitus es et tu in caput tuum: manet enim Angelus Domini, gladium habens, ut secet te medium, et interficiat vos" / "And Daniel said to him: Well hast thou also lied against thy own head: for the angel of the Lord waiteth with a sword to cut thee in two, and to destroy you" (Dan 13:59). All Biblical citations are taken from the Clementine Vulgate, and translations are from the Douay-Rheims.

emphatic repetition "en biens, en corps, en esperis." Machaut's additions turn readers' attention toward the complete and utter destruction of these corrupt judges in order to underscore both the gravity of their deeds and the depth of Susanna's plight.

Many of Machaut's rhetorical additions also inflate the judges' capacity for lust and rage, thus heightening the sense that Susanna suffers not simply from injustice, but from an abuse of power. Describing the judges' lust for Susanna, Machaut adds:

> Li vieillart plein d'iniquité,
> Si qu'en ordure et en vilté,
> En ardeur, en concupiscence,
> Par desir, par fole plaisance
> Furent puis pour l'amour de li
> Tant lor pleu et abelly. (lines 111-16)

Driven by desire and anger, these judges abuse the power they possess and violate the laws "qui droit regle et ligne, / Et qui fu de Dieu beneoite / Pour ce qu'elle estoit juste et droite" (lines 362-64). In the *Confort*, the judges intentionally distort their powerful position, by using fear and threats ("par cremeur et par manasses," line 373). As such, they become Susanna's "mortels annemis" (line 202), not simply the accidental actors in a predictable story of human fallibility. Where the *Mesnagier* and *Cité des Dames* focus on Susanna's irreproachable chastity, the *Confort* transforms her into an empathetic character who suffers at the hands of powerful figures who abuse their position according to their whims. Susanna emerges as an empathetic character through the poem's active vilification of the judges, who contrive against those who love and trust in God.

Machaut's efforts to cast the judges as Susanna's enemies would have undoubtedly resonated strongly with Charles and other contemporary readers, many of whom saw John's actions as an abuse of power. As Barton Palmer notes in his study of the historical circumstances surrounding Charles' imprisonment, "Somewhat

inexplicably, John never publicized his reasons for arresting Charles […]; this contributed to the feeling, shared by the poet and many others, that the arrest was a miscarriage of justice that would be corrected by proper legal procedure" ("Introduction" xxi). Taking this a step further, I would argue that Machaut's representation of the judges as Susanna's personal enemies—not simply fallible human beings who are the agents of injustice—also works to invite other readers besides Charles into the text. Much in the same way that David's complaints about his enemies in the Psalms could apply to the personal experiences of others, the intimate enmity between Susanna and the judges gives meaning to readers' own histories of difficulty.

The late medieval mystery play *Le Mistère du Viel Testament* crafts a similar sense of sympathy with Susanna's character by dramatically aligning the audience in anger toward the false judges. Like the *Confort*, the *Mistère* maintains a decidedly historical interest in the story, such that Susanna appears not as an example of virtuous chastity, but rather as a tragic character who barely escapes a particularly corrupt judicial system. The explicit lesson in the *Mistère* against false testimony becomes emotionally meaningful to the audience precisely because the play conjures Susanna as a highly believable and sympathetic character. To accomplish this, the play imagines Susanna in her role as mother and wife by inventing children as well as conversations between Susanna and her husband that do not appear in the Vulgate. Susanna appeals repeatedly to her husband and children to save her because she has been wrongly accused, and her many tearful goodbyes deepen the tragedy of condemning an innocent mother and wife to death. The repeated refrain of her goodbye, "A mourir je suis condampnée, / Povre suis et habandonné. / A dieu, mon mary, mon seigneur" (lines 41394-41396), call on the

audience to feel pity and sympathy for her character. The dramatic contrast between the corruption of the judges and Susanna's pathetic plight finds resolution in the final scene of the *Mistère*, where the bystanders in the play violently stone the judges to death. The play weaves its explicit lesson against false testimony into this scene as repeated refrain that punctuates the extended violence: "Un juge doit craindre sa conscience" (line 41840). This lesson takes on emotional weight for the audience, whose sympathies unite fully with Susanna as they enjoy and oversee the vengeance enacted against her enemies.

Where the *Mistère* cultivates the audience's sympathy for Susanna through amplified direct discourse and the violent enactment of justice, the *Confort* does so by carrying forward the intimate poetic voice from the poem and integrating it fully into the narrative of Susanna's story. Machaut opens the *Confort* with the remarkable lines "Amis, a toy donner confort/ Ay maintes fois pensé moult fort" (lines 1-2), thus announcing an aesthetic for the poetic voice that is decidedly intimate in tone. A few lines later, the poet conscientiously underscores this tone by asking permission to address Charles with the surprisingly familiar term *amy*: "Sire, et se je t'apelle amy,/ N'en aies pieur cuer a my;/ Car bien scez que tu yès mes sires" (lines 21-23). The distinct narrative structure and emotional tone of the *Confort* anticipates the affective literary cultures described by Jean Gerson, where intimate, conversational reading experiences enable readers to transform their personal histories. By integrating the poem's intimate address into the narrative of Susanna's story, Machaut encourages readers to create affective connections and imagine themselves as Susanna—beyond a mere sympathy for her plight. This intimate narrative voice makes for a very different lesson than the violent desire for justice against false testimony that the *Mistère* cultivates.

For example, in both the Vulgate and the *Confort*, Susanna speaks a lament upon learning of her death sentence. In the Vulgate, the narrative voice succinctly moves forward with the story after her lament by noting that God heard her voice, "Exaudivit autem Dominus vocem eius" (Dan 13:44).[69] Throughout the Vulgate version, the narrative voice retains this impersonal and detached tone. In the *Confort*, however, the poet pauses after Susanna's lament to meditate on her plight:

> Diex li peres ne voloit mie
> Oublier sa serve et s'amie
> Endurer, voloir, ne souffrir
> Son corps tel martyre offrir
> Sans raison nulle et sans desserte;
> Eins fist pour li miracle aperte,
> Et de fait oy sa priere,
> De cuer faite et d'amour entiere.
> Car einsi comme on la menoit
> A sa mort, li pueples venoit
> Veoir la dure destinee
> De la lasse desconfortee. (lines 273-284)

Not only does this passage heighten the sense of injustice by conjuring the image of a martyr who is tortured despite being entirely blameless ("sans raison nulle et sans desserte"), it also quietly relocates the lesson about God's intervention in the world to the level of narrative. Instead of extrapolating the lesson that readers should have hope in God's intervention based on the miraculous events of the story, Machaut here recasts the story's events as the direct consequence of God's intentions ("li peres ne voloit mie") and his specific concern for Susanna ("oublier sa serve et s'amie"). By shifting God's involvement in the world to the level of narrative, historical events become an intimate point of contact with God, where those who serve him can experience the fulfillment of their requited love.

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[69] "And the Lord heard her voice."

This poetic flourish also grants the narrative voice extraordinary insight into God's intentions, such that the poet seems almost to address Susanna herself and console her by offering reassurance about God's love for her. In the closing words of her lament, Susanna appeals to God as "Mon cuer, m'amour, et ma fiance" (272). In the very next lines, the narrative voice responds to this address by intimating God's intentions toward "sa serve et s'amie" (274). The proximity of this response, both within the text and in tone, mimics a dialogue between the narrative voice and Susanna. Yet the narrative voice also always speaks to the readers. This brief foray into God's intentions thus allows the narrative perspective to situate readers in close proximity to Susanna, both of whom receive the poet's consoling words. The slippery narrative voice helps readers understand how to inhabit affectively Susanna's position.

At the end of the Susanna story, the poetic voice reinforces Charles' understanding of his proximity to Susanna by speaking on behalf of those who witness her miraculous deliverance. Slipping into these bystanders' mindset, the narrator explains why they give praise:

> Adont toute la compaignie […]
> Se prirent Dieu a mercier,
> Qui biens et corps et ames garde
> A tous ceuls qui sont en sa garde,
> Et qui en li ont leur fiance,
> Vraie, ferme, et bonne esperence. (lines 393-402)

In this amplification, the narrative voice reveals how those who witness the events of the story understand their own position in relation to Susanna's. The bystanders respond to the miraculous deliverance as an act of God's love that will similarly deliver them. The bystanders' response models how Charles should interpret the story in relation to himself. In other words, the intimate poetic voice in the *Confort* not only calls upon Charles to

sympathize with Susanna's plight—as in the *Mistère*—but to go further and create an affective connection with her experiences.

Spoken in an intimate, conversational address, Susanna's story offers a compelling personal example of someone who, in the face of a frightening abuse of power, finds solace (and ultimately deliverance!) by praying to God. The full significance of readers' affective connection to this Biblical history crystallizes in the two moments where Susanna speaks for herself, offering lyric meditations on her suffering as well as her attainment of solace through prayer. The *Confort* maintains the two moments where Susanna speaks in the Vulgate, once just after the judges proposition her and she says she prefers death before committing sin, and the second when she learns of her fate and laments to God about her innocence. As we have come to expect, the *Confort* amplifies the emotional quality of Susanna's words. Unlike Susanna's pitiable words in the *Mistère*, however, her lamentations in the *Confort* invite readers to recognize their own emotional strife through Susanna's. In the first instance of direct discourse, the poet prefaces her words by describing her anguish: "Quant Susanne les entendi, / S'ame et son corps a Dieu rendi; / For pleure, gemist, fort se plaint, / Et dist, en gettant .i. grant plaint" (lines 161-164). Not the calm martyr of the Vulgate, Susanna appears here terrified, crying, and so unsure of her fate that she commends her body and soul to God.[70] Machaut then recounts her words as follows:

> De toutes pars me tient engoisse
> *Qui mon cuer destreint et engoisse*
> Se ce fais, je sui a Dieu morte,
> Et, se dou faire me deporte,
> De vos mains ne puis eschaper,

[70] Lynn Staley points out that Susanna is often valorized for her stoic passivity and martyr-like faith that God's justice will triumph (46-48). Machaut's acknowledgement of her suffering makes her a much more relatable character.

Car c'est mie per a per.
Mais miex vaut en aventure
Estre de vos mains, de pechié pure,
Que par pechié mon Dieu offendre,
S'aim mieus cest aventure attendre.
(lines 165-176, italics indicate Machaut's additions to the Vulgate)[71]

The three lines that Machaut adds to this speech echo his portrait of a woman wrought by anguish. He increases attention to Susanna's feelings of anguish ("mon cuer destreint et engoisse"), her sense of powerlessness ("c'est mie per a per"), and her deep uncertainty about her fate ("aventure"). The Confort's enriched rendering meditates on Susanna's emotional strife in the face of bewildering circumstances, thus acknowledging and dignifying the affective importance of her less than stoic response.

In the second instance of Susanna's direct discourse, Machaut goes much farther in his amplifications to create a lyric prayer of solace, which he then invites readers to imitate. The Vulgate records Susanna's words as a lament, but Machaut frames them specifically as a prayer, beginning with his description of her physical disposition: "Quant Susanne son jugement / Vit, et sa mort apertement, / A houte vois, sans detrier, / Les mains jointes, prist a crier" (lines 253-56). Hands joined in supplication, Susanna offers the following prayer:

'Sire Diex, qui es pardurables,
Justes juges et raisonnables,
Tu scez les choses reponnues,
Les alees et les venues;
Tu congnois des cuers et les pensees,
Einsois qu'elles soient pensees,
Tu scez tout einsois qu'il soit fait.
Tu scez que je n'ay riens meffait

[71] The Vulgate reads as follows: "Ingemuit Susanna, et ait: Angustiae sunt mihi undique: si enim hoc egero, mors mihi est: si autem non egero, non effugiam manus vestras. Sed melius est mihi absque opere incidere in manus vestras, quam peccare in conspectu Domini" / "Susanna sighed, and said: I am straitened on every side: for if I do this thing, it is death to me: and if I do it not, I shall not escape your hands. But it is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (Dan 13:22-23).

> Et que malicieusement
> Ont tesmoingnié et faussement
> Li faus juge qui m'ont jugie,
> *Par qui le corps pers et la vie.*
> *Dous sires, qui tout scez et vois,*
> *Oy ma priere, enten ma vois,*
> *Qu'en toy est toute m'esperance,*
> *Mon cuer, m'amour, et ma fience*.
> (lines 257-272, italics indicate Machaut's additions)[72]

In the Vulgate version, Susanna's lament appeals to God's omniscience in order to proclaim her innocence. In contrast, Machaut's rendering transforms her lament into a prayer ("Oy ma priere") that builds on the idea that God is all knowing and all seeing by adding the lines, "Tu congnois des cuers et les pensees, / Einsois qu'elles soient pensees." This addition emphasizes God's divine providence over Susanna and recalls the celebrated opening verses of Psalm 138:

> Domine, probasti me, et cognovisti me; Tu cognovisti sessionem meam et resurrectionem meam. Intellexisti cogitationes meas de longe; semitam meam et funiculum meum investigasti; Et omnes vias meas praevidisti, quia non est sermo in lingua mea. Ecce, Domine, tu cognovisti omnia, novissima et antiqua. Tu formasti me, et posuisti super me manum tuam. (1-5)[73]

Calling on the consolatory tone of this Psalm, Susanna's words register the comfort that she takes from God's knowledge of her innermost thoughts. Her prayerful request "Oy ma priere, enten ma vois" pleads for the consolation of God's intimate attentiveness to her voice. Susanna's voice can only echo what God already knows, and yet her

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[72] Exclamavit autem voce magna Susanna, et dixit: Deus aeterne, qui absconditorum es cognitor, qui nosti omnia antequam fiant, tu scis quoniam falsum testimonium tulerunt contra me: et ecce morior, cum nihil horum fecerim, quae isti malitiose composuerunt adversum me" / "Then Susanna cried out with a loud voice, and said: O eternal God, who knowest hidden things, who knowest all things before they come to pass, Thou knowest that they have borne false witness against me: and behold I must die, whereas I have done none of these things, which these men have maliciously forged against me" (Daniel 13:42-43).

[73] "Lord, thou hast proved me, and known me: Thou hast know my sitting down, and my rising up. Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off: my path and my line thou hast searched out. And thou hast foreseen all my ways: for there is no speech in my tongue. Behold, O Lord, thou hast known all things, the last and those of old: thou hast formed me, and hast laid thy hand upon me."

speaking—and his listening—fulfills divine love. By framing her lament as prayer that recalls the lyricism of Psalm 138, Susanna allows readers to speak her words as their own, much as prayers and Psalms were borrowed for individual devotional practice. In this sense, the *Confort* recalls Gerson's discussion of affective reading from Chapter 1, because readers render Susanna's prayer an intimate script by investing her words with their own afflictions and search for solace.

Furthermore, by framing her words as a prayer, Susanna's lament functions as a speech act that enables her to be an active participant in her life story. Machaut follows Susanna's prayer with the narrative of God's intentions that we have already seen, in which the poetic voice says that God "fist pour li miracle aperte,/ Et de fait oy sa priere" (lines 278-9). As such, Machaut encourages readers to understand Susanna as the hero of her own story, saved as much by her cultivation of "esperence" and practice of prayer as by God's intervention. We have already seen how the closing lesson to this story instructs readers to use Susanna as point of self-reflection ("te mirer") and to admire ("remirer") the means by which Susanna was delivered ("comme elle fu delivree"). While it is clear that God was the agent behind her miraculous acquittal, the passive construction of this passage ("fu delivree") and its emphasis on "esperance" suggest that Susanna was also saved by her own hope and faith. In other words, the poet invites readers to create an affective connection with Susanna's story and to meditate self-reflectively on how her prayers both acknowledge the emotional strife that she suffers and yet offer solace in the very act of expression. In this sense, Susanna's story helps Charles reflect on his own power to mitigate his suffering in a situation where he may feel powerless.

As a coda to these reflections on Susanna's story, we can turn to the second Biblical story in the *Confort*, which similarly thematizes the solace that readers can find in the act of prayer. This second example tells the story of the three youths, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who are thrown into a burning furnace after refusing to worship a golden statue that the king Nebuchadnezzar has ordered everyone in his kingdom to adore. As the three youths are thrown into the blazing fire, they are miraculously kept safe from harm:

> Mais li feus qui tout art et robe
> N'empira le corps ne la robe
> Des Juis qui furent enmi
> L'ardant feu et de Dieu ami. (lines 587-590)

Already safe, the three youths then begin to joyously praise God:

> Eins demenoient joie et feste
> Sans sentir le chaut, ni l'odour
> Dou feu, ne de sa grant ardour.
> Dedens la flame benissoient
> A haute vois Dieu et looient
> Chascuns par lui et tous ensamble. (lines 592-597)

Like Susanna, the three youths respond to their experience of suffering through prayer. They praise God out of gratitude for their safety, but the act of praise is also marked by joyousness ("joie et feste") that exceeds the sheer facts of their deliverance. If this formula seems familiar, where suffering in the body is transformed into spiritual pleasure, Machaut nevertheless re-orients this *contemptus mundi* trope into a more sustained interest in a genuine reduction of physical suffering. An angel will soon appear to extinguish the furnace's flames with a pleasing, cool breeze, but for the moment the three youths remain in an interesting position of moderate discomfort. They are saved from death, but the fire persists all the same, and the narrative voice registers its heat and odor

as if to remind readers that the youths sing "a haute vois" *despite* being in the middle of a burning furnace. In this sense, Machaut amplifies the Vulgate's lexicon of suffering by finding a middle ground of manageable pain that lies somewhere between mortal death and pure spiritual bliss. The joyfulness of the youths' prayer, which exceeds their need for safety, works within this in-between space as a source of pleasure amidst discomfort.

Once the angel arrives to extinguish the furnace with "un vent dous et couvenable / A tout corps humain, delitable" (lines 607-8), the youths once again break into joyful prayer:

> La chanterent une loange
> De Dieu le pere avecque l'ange
> Qu'on claime 'Benedicité.'
> On l'a maintes fois recité
> Et encor recite on souvent
> A matines en maint couvent. (lines 613-618)

Threading the actions of the three youths of the Old Testament through to the practice of devotional ritual, the prayer of the Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego continues to be sung by Charles' own contemporaries, most of whom (we can safely assume) had never experienced the flames of a furnace.[74] This connection to contemporary devotional practice is important because it determines readers' relationship to this ancient moment of prayer. In this story, Machaut withdraws from the close, affective connection that we saw in the Susanna story and instead encourages readers to make inferences from the Biblical history. Like those who sing the "Benedicité" in convents, Machaut's readers may not have experienced anything remotely similar to what the three youths undergo.

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[74] The youths' final prayer is known as "The Song of Three" and is "a hymn calling all of creation to the praise of its creator. Each verse begins with 'Bless the Lord' and ends with the refrain 'Sing praise to him and highly exalt him forever'" (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* 583). The song bears resemblances to Psalms 136, 148, and 150 and was incorporated into medieval liturgy, where it was known as *Benedicite*. The prayer still serves as a part of Roman Catholic priests' obligatory morning devotion as an occasional replacement for the *Te Deum* (ibid).

Yet in casting the youths' prayer as a response to manageable suffering, Machaut suggests that song and prayer can provide real solace.

In Machaut's rendering, the lesson to be gleaned from the story of the three youths has less to do with trusting God to save his servants and more to do with the palpable effects of prayer and its ability to mitigate the experience of suffering, especially as it is enacted upon the human body. In Machaut's rendering, the youths' act of praise causes God to offer them comfort and release from the experience of suffering:

> Pour conforter les jouvenciaus
> L'avoit Dieus envoié des ceaus,
> Si que si bien les conforta
> En tel confort leur aporta
> Que la flame et le feu estaindre. (lines 601-605)

The triple repetition of the word "confort" in this passage underscores the story's concern not with deliverance, but with mitigating suffering. The lesson that Machaut gives at the close of the story reinforces this point by offering the example of their conduct as a means of finding consolation within the moment of suffering:

> Pour ce li grant et li meneur
> Doivent en lui prendre confort,
> Car nuls n'a si grant desconfort,
> Se son cuer et s'amour ne le conforte
> N'avoir ne puet homs confort tels
> Come d'estre de li confortés.
> Si qu'amis, se ton cuer li portes
> Et en s'amour te reconfortes,
> Saches qu'envers tous t'aidera
> Confortera, portera. (lines 650-60)

As in the preceding passage, the rhyme falls heavily on the words "confort," "reconfort," and "desconfort." The language of the lesson replicates the language of consolation that the youths experience in the fire, thus emphasizing the lesson that prayer is itself a source of consolation, not merely because of its hoped for effects in terms of divine intervention,

but in terms of the way that it directs the attention of the heart. By turning their hearts toward God ("se ton cuer li portes"), readers will experience the comfort of prayer. This lesson anticipates Jean Gerson's discussion of the palpable effects of affective reading, which warms the heart and turns sadness to joy within the space of a mysterious, unnoticed second. Machaut's attentiveness to the bodily effects of prayer enables him to respond to Charles' real experience of imprisonment, where he was, by all accounts, "often harshly treated, in effect tortured during his captivity" (Palmer, "Introduction" xxi). While Machaut does not include a translation of the youth's "Benedicite," the song is in fact a celebration of all of God's material creation (Dan 3:52-90). The "Benedicite" is thus a fitting prayer to speak both of and to the materiality of experience. While the story of the three youths does not offer the same kinds of affective use of history as the Susanna story, it does offer an important lesson on the value of prayer that prepares readers for the following Biblical stories, in which Machaut translates the entirety of King Manessah's prayer for readers to adopt as their own.

Penance and Worldly Consolation

Up to this point, we have seen how Machaut deepens readers' use of the *sensus literalis* of Old Testament scriptures to engage them affectively in Susanna's experience of suffering and prayer, as well as his more parabolic example of the material benefits of prayer in the story of the fiery furnace. Following these two stories, the poet gives an account of Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall to Belshazzar, as well as the story of Daniel being thrown into the lion's den by King Darius. The final Biblical story recounts the repentance of King Manessah when God causes him to be imprisoned by his

enemies as a lesson against worshipping false idols. The stories of Belshazzar and Manessah, which become increasingly critical of the abuses and vices of these powerful Old Testament kings, are difficult to reconcile with the poet's repeated insistence on Charles' innocence, and, as a result, they have given rise to very different critical interpretations.[75] For example, Barton Palmer interprets Belshazzar as a representation of King John II ("Introduction" xxxix-xl), while Martha Wallen interprets this Old Testament king as a veiled critique of Charles himself (202). These two interpretations draw on the parabolic, metaphorical use of the *sensus literalis* that we saw in the opening section of this chapter, because they both read the historical Biblical figures as representations of contemporary persons.[76]

However, Machaut's affective use of the literal sense in Susanna's story can helpfully illuminate a quite different function for these negative examples of failed Old Testament kings. Rather then interpreting these figures as representations of 14th-century persons, we can understand them as affective tools designed to help Charles better understand his own experiences and find solace. In this section, we will see how Machaut invites Charles into a princely penitential reading experience that culminates in the prayer of Manessah. That the stories of these failed Old Testament kings build toward a penitential reading experience can be justified by the fact that Machaut leaves them out of the list of examples that he provides at the close of the Biblical section of the *Confort*. Before moving on to the more courtly, Ovidian examples and the final Mirror for Princes section, Machaut pauses to summarize the examples that he has just provided

[75] In the opening lines of the Confort, Machaut tells Charles: "Et par ma foy, quant a ton fait,/ Je croy que tu n'as riens meffait" (lines 17-18).
[76] As Palmer states, "the application of Old Testament stories to Charles' situation thus means that the reader must construct, in some way, correspondences between two 'histories,' one Scriptural and the other personal" ("Introduction" xxxvi).

for Charles (lines 1567-1610). Machaut lists only four stories: Susanna, the three youths, Daniel in the lion's den, and King Manessah. In other words, Machaut specifically leaves out the story of Daniel's prophetic interpretation to Belshazzar from his list of examples, despite the fact that the story occupies nearly three hundred lines of verse (lines 661-954). Furthermore, the story of Belshazzar does not receive the kind of concluding lesson as do the other Biblical examples. Instead, Machaut closes the story of Belshazzar by noting simply that "Chascuns voit bien que Daniel / Porte la science divine / En son cuer et en sa poitrine" (lines 952-954) before quickly moving on to the next story: "Après ce roy Daire regna" (line 955). While Belshazzar's downfall undoubtedly served a monitory purpose against the abuse of power for 14th-century politics, Machaut declines to privilege this use of the story. Instead, Machaut plays on the slipperiness of the intimate narrative voice in the *Confort*—as we have already seen in Susanna's story—to create an affective reading experience for Charles that prepares him for the penitential prayer of Manessah. As we will see, penitence represents a unique strain of Christian consolation that opens up to a moral engagement with the world and, as such, differs markedly from a Boethian withdrawal from worldly cares.[77]

[77] Machaut was deeply indebted to the *Consolation of Philosophy*, particularly in the *Remède de Fortune* and the *Confort d'ami*. At one point, the poet even suggests that Charles consult Boethius if he wants to know more about the true nature of his fortunes (line 1904). This directive to look elsewhere for Boethius' lessons suggests that the *Confort* will offer consolation from a different vantage point. Critical studies have engaged thoughtfully with Machaut's willingness to adapt and depart from his Boethian model in the *Confort*. Sylvia Huot argues that Machaut refashions the Boethian model of transcendent consolation—from which the muses are famously banished—to include a consolatory role for poetry that enables access to "transcendent perfection" and "absolute goodness" ("Consolation of Poetry" 27). Sarah Kay and Barton Palmer are less convinced that the poetry of the *Confort* follows a Boethian sense of transcendence. For Palmer, the *Confort* contains a strong anti-Boethian emphasis on injustice and a moral interpretation of history, in which misfortunes can be taken "either as the sign of divine displeasure or the outward form of inner depravity" ("Individual Talent" 254). Yet Palmer further notes that Machaut also argues precisely the opposite perspective in the more directly Boethian meditations on Lady Fortune, such that the *Confort* ultimately flaunts its lack of a coherent consolatory message and subverts any sense of closure ("Individual Talent" 260). For Sarah Kay, "not only are the particular and contingent not transcended," but the very

The move to penitence begins with Machaut's opening description of Belshazzar, where he offers a portrait of the powerful king that is hardly flattering: "[...] qui fierement regne,/ Car il estoit poissans et riches,/ Tous autres ne prisoit .ii. miches" (lines 668-670). One evening, while Belshazzar enjoys a luxurious dinner, he witnesses a mysterious hand tracing the words "Mene Tekel Upharsin" (line 701) on the wall. Belshazzar calls on Daniel to interpret the meaning of the strange words, and the prophet explains at length how the words spell out the king's downfall. Machaut expands substantially on the Vulgate version of Daniel's prophecy, in which the three words written on the wall each receive only one line of prophecy. While Belshazzar is not the first powerful, tyrannical, and proud king to appear in the Biblical stories in *Confort*, he is the first such "bad" king to figure as the protagonist in his own story and not merely as an auxiliary who enacts the unjust torture of innocent souls. Departing dramatically from the "accusation and liberation" model of the other Biblical examples, Belshazzar instead offers the image of a prince who provokes his own misfortunes through his pride and lack of faith in God. Indeed, his political downfall is thoroughly moralized as God's punishment for his misbehavior: "Et Diex li moustra clerement/ Que c'estoit a son dampnement" (lines 691-92).

Interestingly, Barton Palmer notes that Machaut's heavily amplified and moralized sense of history in this story works "to transform Daniel's speech from an interpretation or explanation of the mysterious writing's significance into a sermon based on this dark text" ("Introduction" lxv-lxvi). While Palmer does not extend his reflections on the sermon-like nature of Daniel's prophecy further than these brief remarks, he does

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existence of poetry "depends on experiencing the vagaries of fortune, not on remedying them" ("Touching Singularity" 33-4).

obliquely call attention to the importance of direct discourse in this story. In his study of the relationship between exegesis and preaching, Gilbert Dahan probes the difference between commentary, with its emphasis on explaining the various literal and spiritual senses of scripture, and preaching, with its emphasis on the "actualisation, application à soi-meme" of scripture (562). Discussing the kinds of moral lessons that can be drawn from the literal sense of scripture, Dahan emphasizes the distinction between the parabolic lessons of literal commentary and a more intimate use of the literal sense, in which the words of scripture speak directly to readers. As we have seen, this is precisely the approach to scripture that Machaut uses in the Susanna story. For Dahan, preaching sometimes makes use of the idea that scripture is an intimate direct discourse to Christians because this enables a personal realization and application of its lessons (562).[78] In this sense, preaching can function as a direct discourse to an audience that itself stems from a conversational reading of scripture. Dahan's remarks thus recall Gerson's insistence on the conversational element of affective reading and his encouragement to the students at the Collège de Navarre to approach reading as a dialogue with books, as well as his own approach in adopting Bernard's voice for his "Fulcite me floribus" sermon. Even more than in the Susanna story, Machaut plays with the flexibility of the narrative voice in the story of Belshazzar to allow Charles to engage in this kind of affective, conversational reading and to understand Daniel's prophecy as a

[78] Dahan writes, "Pour prendre un exemple facile, quand, commentant *Gn* 12, 1, où Dieu s'addresse à Abram, *Va-t-en de ta terre, de ta patrie et de la maison de ton père*, Hugues de Saint-Cher affirme : « *Hoc dicit Dominus praeletis, clericis, claustralibus, qui per Abraham bene designatur, quia sunt electi a Deo* », il ne met pas en branle un schème rhétorique fondé sur une comparaison, « *de meme qu'*Abraham a été invité par Dieu à quitter sa terre, *de meme* vous, prélats, clercs et moines, laissez derrière vous tous vos attachements matériels » ; on serait alors au niveau de la moralité, comme on tire une morale d'une fable de La Fontaine. Il s'agit de tout autre chose, d'une parole considérée comme réellement, directement, personnellement adressée au prélats, clercs, et moines visés par Hugues, qui sont sommés de prendre pour eux le message divin dans sa matérialité" (562).

direct address to himself. Machaut then takes this affective application of scripture a step further in the prayer of Manessah, encouraging Charles to speak the words as his own.

Our understanding of the affective importance of the Belshazzar story thus depends on a close examination of the narrative voice. Within the expansive amplifications to Daniel's prophetic interpretation, delivered in the first person to Belshazzar (lines 731-932), Machaut allows the intimate direct discourse of the narrative voice in the *Confort* to take possession of Daniel's voice. The prophetic speech often self-consciously recalls the fact that it is addressed to a specific and intended audience, as with "Balthasar, tu qui es ses fils," (line 829), or "Roys, se j'ay bien retenu," (line 865). The repeated insistence on the addressee mimics the moments of direct discourse that appear elsewhere in the poem at the close of the stories, when Machaut directly addresses Charles. In other words, the narrative voice of the *Confort* fuses with Daniel's, such that the poet addresses the prince at the same time that Daniel speaks to Belshazzar.

Adding to the seamless layering of poetic and prophetic voices, Daniel often delivers the same lessons to Belshazzar that Machaut dishes up for Charles elsewhere in the poem. For example, Daniel preaches to Belshazzar about the perils of a prideful ignorance of one's creator:

> Pour l'orgueil qui te conchia
> Et conchie de jour en jour
> Quant en toy fait si lonc sejour,
> Qui ne peut nullement souffrir
> Que tu ailles ton cuer offrir
> Au vray dieu qui fist tout le monde. (lines 908-913)

Later in the *Confort*, Machaut delivers a very similar lesson to Charles on the dangers of a prideful forgetfulness of God's divine providence over his servants:

> Si que tu as ton creatour

Mis en oubli pour ton atour,
Pour ta grandeur, pour ta richesse,
Pour ton pooir, pour ta noblesse,
Et ne l'as mie tant servi
Qu'aies sa grace desservi. (lines 1847-1852)

This passage, directed at Charles, recalls the repetition of possessives spoken to Belshazzar ("Ton corps, ton honneur, ta puissance," etc.), but it also replicates the lesson that pride and power are a prime hindrance to love of God. The thematic similarity of these lessons delivered to both Charles and Belshazzar at different moments in the poem works to construct both kings as powerful rulers whose fortunes are imperiled by the sin of pride. By co-opting the direct discourse found elsewhere in the poem, as well as by delivering similar lessons from within both sets of direct discourse, Machaut uses Daniel's prophecy to Belshazzar as a moment to speak a harsh invective against the abuses of power to Charles.

The purpose of this harsh direct discourse can undoubtedly be interpreted as a criticism of 14th-century politicking, either by John II or Charles of Navarre. However, such interpretations also underestimate the specific literary workings of narrative voice and the emotional ramifications of having such a terrifying invective spoken directly to a prince who already suffers the real effects of political downfall. In this sense, it can be helpful to appreciate how Machaut temporarily allows Charles to inhabit this Old Testament personage so as to explore fully the catastrophic emotional consequences of political downfall, all the while maintaining the key distance of Charles-as-Belshazzar. This is precisely what the Belshazzar story provides for Machaut that his other moments of direct address to Charles do not: a prophetic, imaginative vision of utter destruction that is both political and personal. Not only is Belshazzar overthrown and killed the very

night of the Daniel's prophecy (lines 946-48), the prophecy itself offers a dark, blow by blow account of the total destruction of Belshazzar's kingdom. Daniel tells the king that he will die and his soul will be damned (lines 914-15), that his kingdom will be divided among his enemies (lines 920-25), and that God's vengeance will be limitless in its fulfillment:

> Se tu m'entens bien, il sommet
> Ton corps, ton honneur, ta puissance,
> Ta gloire, ta magnificence
> Ton roiaume, ta dignité,
> Et toute ta felicité
> A mort et a destruction. (lines 888-893)

The shared intimacy of the direct discourse and the proximity between Charles and Belshazzar enables Machaut to engage the imprisoned prince in hypothetical speculation, in which the prince imagines himself as Belshazzar and feels the emotional ramifications of his terrifying downfall.

Daniel's prophecy for Belshazzar, based on real sins that engender real consequences, differs markedly from Machaut's diplomatic refrain with respect to the actual politicking of both Charles and John II. We see a glimpse of this restraint when Machaut tells Charles:

> Tu es pris de tes annemis,
> Mais trop as estroite prison.
> Si croy que c'est sans mesprison,
> Car attrais n'ièss pas de nature
> Que faire doies mespresure,
> Au mains tele ne si notable
> Com pour estre en lieu si grevable,
> Ja soit ce que nature enseingne
> Qu'homme ne soit qui ne mesprengne. (lines 1651-1660)

According to Machaut, the question of Charles' political innocence or guilt is a slightly hazy one—if Charles has done something, it wasn't really *that* wrong ("Au mains tele ne

si notable"), and John II's response is perhaps justified but exaggerated.[79] These questions are ultimately irrelevant, however, because all human beings sin ("Qu'homme ne soit qui ne mesprengne"). Addressing the prince as a fallible human being, Machaut delivers Daniel's "dark sermon" to Charles in order to engage him in the experience of utter political and personal annihilation. By absorbing Belshazzar's downfall as his own, Charles is able to respond emotionally to his own situation. Or, to put it differently, this story works to awaken, dignify, and recognize the intimate experience of political misfortune. The key to this recognition of this intimate experience is that Machaut also shifts these feelings into the moral territory of human fallibility, thus offering Charles the means to find strength, resolve, and solace in a situation that otherwise threatens to overwhelm the prince in "merencolie" (line 1769).

We may perhaps marvel at Machaut's attempts to comfort Charles by rousing his feelings of fear and loss, even as his patron already suffers political humiliation and harsh treatment. In stark contrast to the rough, emotionally bruising texture of Daniel's prophecy, Machaut exhorts Charles elsewhere in the *Confort* to smooth over his feelings to create a perfect princely facade. If the prince is badly treated, the poet instructs him to behave as follows:

> Je te pri, n'en moustre courrous.
> Et si n'en fai samblant ne chiere,
> Car s'on veoit a ta maniere
> Que fusses mas et desconfis,
> Pis t'en seroit, j'en sui tous fis,
> En .iii. manieres ou en .iiii.

[79] Charles had certainly committed his fair share of questionable actions: he had John II's close ally Charles of Spain murdered in his bed, and at the time of his capture he was plotting with the Dauphin to overthrow John. At the time of his arrest, Charles had already done penance for the murder of Charles of Spain, and many believed John's capture of Charles to be unjustified and a breach of justice (Palmer, "Introduction" xliii). In theory, then, Charles had already been absolved of guilt for this action, and John never publicly claimed that he imprisoned Charles on grounds that he was suspected of plotting treason with the Dauphin (xxxvii).

Car ne te pues si bien esbatre
Come en ce qu'on te voie ferme
En lieu si vil, ne si enferme. (lines 1738-1746)

Not only is Charles to maintain a princely mien of complete composure, he is to take a secret delight ("Car ne te pues si bien esbatre") in frustrating his captors. The contrast between Charles' comportment and the affective reading experiences proffered by the poet suggest that if outward composure is a political tactic, then the manuscript page becomes a site of intimate recognition of and mastery over the feelings evoked by the experience of suffering. Machaut's "dark sermon" enables Charles to rework his feelings into a penitential fear of God and then to find resolution in the prayer to Manessah. For Machaut's other courtly readers, Belshazzar's story no doubt provoked a different reading experience. For these readers, Belshazzar's vices may have functioned more as a mirror through which to examine their consciences—an important first step to the practice of penance (Tentler 114)—before arriving at the penitential prayer of Manessah, and ultimately, the Mirror for Princes that closes the *Confort* as a whole. For Charles, however, the Belshazzar story falls with a slightly different weight, because it underscores and deepens what he already experiences.

If the harsh invectives spoken to Belshazzar appear to offer rather cold comfort to the imprisoned prince, it can be helpful to remember that for medieval Christians, penitence performed important consolatory work. In his classic study of late medieval approaches to the penitential practice and theology, Thomas Tentler points out that expressing contrition for one's sins springs from a sense of hopefulness in God's love, just as God expresses his love of mankind through the remission of these sins (348). According to Tentler, confession and penance thus fulfill an important consolatory

function, in addition to their more evident disciplinary ones. Furthermore, penance need not be motivated by a preexisting guilt for sins because it is an experiential practice that also aims to produce such feelings, even when there is a lack of cognizance of specific sins which need be confessed (Tentler 121).[80] In other words, regardless of Charles' specific guilt or innocence, penance was always available to him as a source of consolation. Like Machaut "roughing up" Charles through Belshazzar's experiences, Jean Gerson stresses throughout his work that penitential meditation is a means of softening one's heart and honing one's affective faculties.[81] Penance could thus be a process of uncovering and experiencing sorrow even as it promises a real resolution to these feelings. As Thomas Tentler observes, penance and confession aimed at a deliverance from psychological and bodily suffering: "Just as the cure of bodily disease makes a patient feel better, so the cure of sin makes the penitent feel better psychologically. Furthermore, the benefits offered go beyond the mere assurance that someone who takes the cure of penance will stop sinning and therefore have no more reason to feel anxiety. The greatest promise is that confession is the place of healing" (157-8). Penitential consolation differs from Boethian themes by addressing and dignifying emotional distress as a source of renewed moral engagement with the inevitable ebbs and flows of worldly existence. By recasting Charles' political misfortunes in terms of Belshazzar's fallibility, Machaut gives recognition to the prince's affective response to suffering while also offering him access to a means of real solace.

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[80] To make this point, Tentler quotes from the *Sylvestrina* : "[...] it is entirely proper for someone who does not have sorrow and displeasure for his sins to go to the Sacrament of Penance so that he can arouse these emotions" (121).

[81] Penitential love of God is one of the most defining aspects of Gerson's theology and pastoral work. To cite but one example, in the *Montagne de Contemplation*, he suggests to his sisters that they read the *Stimulus Amoris*, one of the most popular Passion meditations, as a way to arrive at the proper affective state for mystical contemplation (7.1:47).

The *Confort* cannot offer the sacramental efficacy of being absolved of one's sins and reconciled with the Church through confession to a priest. Instead, Machaut's poetic crafting of King Manessah's penitential prayer moves through the stages of penance as a series of emotional stances. The prayer begins with an expression of fear and love of God (lines 1453-98) before moving on to a lamentation of suffering (lines 1499-1508) and ending with confession of sins (lines 1509-29) and a resolution to love and serve God (lines 1530-36). Machaut proposes the prayer for Charles's own use by creating close parallels with the prince's imprisonment: Manessah is suddenly bound and captured by the king of Syrians, and, without any sort of trial, is taken to a very dark prison: "Et puis on l'ala habergier / En une chartre moult obscure, / Pleinne de puour et d'ordure" (lines 1412-14). The next line of the poem shifts dramatically from a past tense narration of the events to the present tense ("Or verra" line 1415), creating a suspenseful moment of subjective crisis as the poem continues:

> Or est Manassès en prison
> Si pres qu'onques ne fu pris hon
> Plus fort ne mieus emprisonnez,
> N'estre ne puet desprisonnez
> Se Dieus ne le fait proprement,
> Car c'est par son commandement.
> Si muse, pense, et se retourne,
> Et sa pensee en maint tour tourne,
> Mais riens n'i vaut le retourner.
> Et li couvient son cuer tourner
> Et sa pensee en autre tour
> S'il veust issir de ceste tour.
> Einsi pense, muse, et retournoie
> Mais il couvient qu'a ce tour noie
> Les ydoles qui bestourné
> Ont son scens et si mal tourné
> Que ja sans mort n'en tournera
> Se sa pais a ce tour ne ra. (lines 1421-38)

In this passage, the narrative voice falls intimately into the king's obsessive, searching thoughts as the verses themselves spiral tightly around the rhyme "tour" and the poem slowly uncovers Manessah's realization that he must give up his devotion to false idols in order to find peace. Machaut's subtle image of a man winding through his thoughts works within a compact vocabulary where "issir de ceste tour" means both release from the physical space of enclosure and escaping from the endless turning over of thoughts in the mind. Manessah's realization of his path of exit—turning his heart in another direction ("son cuer tourner / Et sa pensee en autre tour") toward prayer—releases both reader and king from the momentary confines of the dramatic, psychological suspense of this passage.

Machaut draws on this kind of doubled imagery within the prayer itself as well, as when Manessah laments his suffering to God:

> Ma grant iniquité me mainne,
> Qui monteplie sans sejour,
> Ad ce que de nuit et jour
> Sui loiez et enchaainnez,
> Pris, conclus, destruits, et minez
> Si que je n'enten respirer
> N'a peinne puis je souspirer. (lines 1502-8)

For other readers, the bonds of sin would have perhaps seemed more metaphorical, but for both Manessah and Charles, physical chains are just as real as psychological ones. Indeed, for these two imprisoned kings, the materiality of imprisonment determines and produces their heavy, weighty thoughts. Manessah is of course physically freed from prison after his supplication to God, but the solace that he finds at the end of his prayer, "recongnoissant son delit" (line 1541), seems almost more real than his abrupt release: "il [Dieu] oy sa priere / Et la recut en tel maniere / Que de prison le deslia" (lines 1543-45).

The lessons of Manessah's prayer are entirely human, both in terms of his less than miraculous release and in terms of its aims—to seek solace within the moment of trying circumstances. Given that Machaut couldn't hope to promise that God or anyone else would free Charles, the prayer's focus on psychological release is perhaps a tactful recognition of the limits of consolation. Yet the doubled language of imprisonment recognizes the experience of suffering even as it hopes to offer release through the expression of prayer. In this sense, these eighty-three verses of prayer fulfill the lessons from the stories of Susanna and the three youths in the furnace, allowing a sense of release in words spoken "En parfaite devotion / Des plours de son cuer arousee, / Et de parfons soupirs sevree" (lines 1538-40). Even as the prayer can only really hope for some psychological relief, it nevertheless gives expression to Charles' suffering, becoming an intimate script for his experience of imprisonment. After the prayer of Manessah, the *Confort* confidently moves on to its more Boethian and Ovidian tropes, refining Charles' courtly mien before closing with a litany of advice on princely conduct. Yet the affective histories of the poem's Biblical opening reappear in an enigmatic twenty-six line epilogue to the poem, in which the prince's voice dramatically speaks an emotional response to the experience of imprisonment.

Conclusion

Throughout the opening section of the *Confort*, Machaut presses affective reading experiences, anchored in stories drawn from the Old Testament, into a recognition of the personal experience of political events. Because the poem hopes to resolve the emotional upheaval of political misfortune through the exercise of prayer, it posits devotional

practice as a source of worldly consolation. In a similar vein, Philippe de Mézières' *Livre du Sacrement de Mariage* proposes a somewhat disturbing meditation on Christ's crucifixion as a sacrificial marriage bed for the comfort of women who are unhappy in marriage. For these writers, devotional literature's attentiveness to affective experience could speak with particular clarity to the intimate and personal undercurrents of difficult life experiences. In this sense, writers such as Mézières and Machaut attest to the rich vernacular devotional literature that occasioned Gerson's later call for a renewed rhetorical appreciation of the affective and moral lessons offered by scripture. Yet even as writers such as Machaut and Mézières turn affective reading toward the intimate cure of worldly cares, they maintain, like Gerson, the inherent devotional aims of such experiences: the *Confort* closes its Biblical section in penitential prayer and the *Livre du Sacrement de Mariage* is ultimately a well-wrought, if somewhat bizarre, Passion meditation. As we saw in Chapter 1, however, Gerson was well aware that reader's affective engagement with texts could often exceed its devotional aims, and the mysterious epilogue to the *Confort* offers an intriguing anticipation of at least one reader whose emotional response exceeds the devotional lessons of the text.

The twenty-six verses that appear at the end of the *Confort* follow the somewhat contradictory rubric, "Explicit le Confort d'amy" (line 3979) and begin with an address in the first person to "Aimy." These lines represent the prince's response to both poem and poet, as the response builds out of the poem's presumed "explicit." The question of whether or not Charles of Navarre actually authored these lines remains unresolved.[82]

[82] There are varying critical responses to the question of whether or not Charles of Navarre actually authored this epilogue in response to the *Confort*. See Earp, 218. As Barton Palmer observes, "indisputably, Machaut—acting as editor of his texts—decided to place this poem after his own, so he is its authorizer even if he is not its author" (xxxii). More important to this chapter are the ways in which the

Regardless of whether Charles authored them, this epilogue introduces an interesting reply to the intimate tone of the *Confort* by ending each verse in an exclusive rhyme with the word "amy." The epilogue is worth citing in its entirety here:

> Explicit le Confort d'amy
> Qui esveilla le cuer de my
> Es tenebres ou il dormi,
> Et au resveillier dist: "Aimy!
> Que ne suis pas partis par mi
> Quant j'ay si longeument gemi
> Et tant plouré et tant fremi,
> Que le gros de l'uef d'un fremi
> N'ay receu par saint Fremi
> De joie en plus d'an et demi!
> Et encore ont mi anemi,
> Que j'ay moult doubté et cremi
> Et a qui j'ay tant escremi
> Q'le cuer en ay entumi
> Mon b mol de be fa be mi
> Mis en b dur. Amis, tu m'i
> Pues bien aidier, par saint Remi,
> Car comme fol et esturmi,
> Com forsené et esrami,
> M'ont par maintes fois esturmi.
> Pour ce te requier, alume y,
> Car goute n'i voy, desturmi.
> Mon triste cuer et desdormi,
> Et je te promet que tuit mi
> Annemi seront avec mi,
> Pour qui maint soupir ay vomi. (lines 3979-4004)

Speaking as the voice of the heart, the epilogue shows that the prince has deeply absorbed the affective lessons of the *Confort*. His heart is awakened and pained, in full recognition of the extent of his suffering ("j'ay si longeument gemi / Et tant plouré et tant fremi").

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various manuscripts of the *Confort* fold this epilogue into the reading experience of the poem as a whole. For example, BnF fr. mss 9221 (E) leaves a space of six lines between the final line of the poem ("Et s'aler n'i vues, ne m'en chaut" 3978) and the beginning of the epilogue. Yet this manuscript folds the epilogue into the poem as a whole both visually and textually by incorporating the same historiated letter as the other sections of the poem and by adding a second "Explicit le confort d'amy" at the end of the twenty-six lines. BnF fr. Mss 22545-6 (F-G) follows a similar format to mss 9221. In contrast, BnF fr. Mss 1584 (A) includes a rubricated "Explicit confort d'amy" before adding on the epilogue, thus distinguishing these lines of verse as independent from the text of the *Confort*. The abridged versions of the *Confort* (BnF fr. Mss 994 and Bern A95) does not include the epilogue at all.

The heavy repetition of the rhyme draws attention not only to the intimate address to "amy" but also to the personal experience of this pain, as it constantly drags poetic attention back to the subject ("mi"). The heart speaks the sorrow it has experienced over the past year and half, but it also registers the continued experience of suffering. The prince's heart has been awakened to find his situation unchanged ("Que ne suis pas partis par mi") and the continued presence of his enemies ("Et encore ont mi anemi") with whom he constantly struggles ("a qui j'ay tant escremi"). The wounds to the heart, evoked by this image of sword combat, cause it to harden, moving from a soft, musical "b mol" to a hard "b dur." The complicated imagery of musical notation and the heart hardening into its wounds suggest that the prince is casting about for a new song that speaks to the present tense experience of unresolved suffering.

In a truly remarkable reversal, the epilogue draws on and echoes the Old Testament idiom of the *Confort* to express its sustained grief while also unfastening the expressions, images, and tone of this idiom from its sacred intentions. The epilogue's intimate adoption of the poem's Old Testament idiom can be helpfully illuminated through a comparison of the many images it shares with Psalm 37, the third of the seven penitential psalms.[83] The Psalmist's lament opens with a meditation on his suffering, including the verse "Cor meum conturbatum est, dereliquit me virtus mea, et lumen oculorum meorum, et ipsum non est mecum" (Ps 37:11).[84] This verse echoes through to the prince's call to the poet to light the shadows ("tenebres") which keep his heart from

[83] The penitential psalms were an important part of the sacrament of penance as well as a popular element of private devotion, and they were often included in Books of Hours. Christine de Pizan's *Sept Psaumes allegorisees* are a vernacular translation and gloss of these Psalms. While Machaut does not include the text of Psalm 37 in the *Confort*, it is reasonable to assume that Charles was knowledgeable of its language and themes. For more on the importance of the seven penitential Psalms, see Claire Costly King'oo, *Miserere Mei: The Penitential Psalms in Late Medieval and Early Modern England*.

[84] "My heart is troubled, my strength hath left me, and the light of my eyes itself is not with me."

seeing: "Pour ce te requier, alume y, / Car goute n'i voy, desturmi." Furthermore, the Psalmist's insistence on the exhaustion he feels from his anguish ("dereliquit me virtus mea") reappears in the epilogue's language of emotional fatigue: "entumi," "esturmi," and "desdormi." Just as the poet's heart complains of the unresolved torment he suffers from his enemies, so the Psalmist cries to God against his enemies, who continue to reign over him: "Inimici autem mei vivunt, et confirmati sunt super me: et multiplicati sunt qui oderunt me inique" (20).[85] As the prince reworks the psalmodic idiom for his own expression of political suffering, he reveals the extent of his affective adoption of the Old Testament histories in the *Confort* as his own.

Unlike the Psalm, however, the epilogue doesn't direct its anguish to God. Instead, these twenty-six lines erupt in a lyric answer to the poetry of political suffering in the *Confort* by speaking the prince's unresolved grief back to the poet in rough, psalmodic verse. In this sense, the epilogue ignores Machaut's repeated lesson in the *Confort* to resolve the expression of anguish through the exercise of prayer. Instead, the prince turns his words toward the poet himself, exhorting him to further rouse, ignite, and awaken "Mon triste cuer et desdormi." This final appeal to the poet follows with an enigmatic promise that seems to joined to the heart's arousal: "Et je te promet que tuit mi / Annemi seront avec mi/ Pour qui maint soupir ay vomi." This unpolished, guttural expression of grief and promised engagement with his enemies contrasts with the musical notation "be fa be mi" that characterized the heart's hardening into "b dur." Instead, the prince's sighs recall the Psalmist's animal-like groan: "rugiebam a gemitu cordis mei" (9).[86] In contrast to the solace that the Psalmist seeks in God's intimate heeding of his

[85] "But my enemies live, and are stronger that I: and they hate me wrongfully are multiplied."
[86] "I roared with the groaning of my heart" (9)

cries ("Domine, ante te omne desiderium meum, et gemitus meus a te non est absconditus," 10),[87] the prince's sighs remain firmly rooted in the world, speaking to poet and enemy alike. The strange palpitations of the closing epilogue thus speak with particular urgency to the kinds of social engagement that Jean Gerson both admired and feared as a natural outpouring of affective reading. The *Confort d'ami* eloquently attests to the immense importance and relevancy that France's preeminent court poet accorded to readers' abilities to use affective strategies in order to open up an imaginative space that would connect political events to personal experience. Moving beyond Machaut's penitential consolation, the epilogue's poetic, secular response to the *Confort* testifies to the unexpected and unresolved responses that readers could bring to writers' experimental adaptations of the intimate lessons of devotional reading. As we will see in the following chapter, Jean Gerson was fully aware of the laity's ability to draw unexpected personal lessons from vernacular literature, and nowhere was it more disturbingly on display than in the enthusiasm surrounding one of the 14th century's most revered books, *Le Roman de la Rose*. In his *Traité contre le* Roman de la Rose, Gerson extends Machaut's concern for readers' experience of contemporary history to show readers how affective engagement with books is a way of being in the world that directly impacts the social fabric of contemporary France.

[87] "Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee" (10).

Chapter 3—Social Poetics in the *Querelle de la Rose*

Between the years 1401 and 1402, several Parisian intellectual luminaries—Christine de Pizan, Jean Gerson, Pierre and Gontier Col, and Jean de Montreuil—exchanged letters as they debated the literary merits of a poem composed in the vernacular over a hundred years earlier, the widely read *Roman de la Rose*. This epistolary debate, which focused on Jean de Meun's continuation to Guilluame de Lorris' portion of the *Roman de la Rose*, has come to be known as the "Querelle de la *Rose*." By tacitly asserting that a community of professionalized readers skilled in scholastic models of textual interpretation could read correctly and effectively the work, those in support of the poem argued for its unquestionable moral fiber.[88]

But for both Christine de Pizan and Jean Gerson, the belief that readers were equipped to interpret this work for moral improvement was fraught with unlikely assumptions. In her response to Jean de Montreuil's now lost treatise in support of the *Rose* and her various letters to the Col brothers, Christine de Pizan engaged readily with the literary terms put forth by these university-trained readers, thus establishing her authorial reputation as a knowledgeable woman of letters.[89] But Christine's greatest preoccupation concerned how the poem affected readers of all different stripes, from

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[88] Jean de Montreuil repeatedly accuses those who condemn the *Rose* of bad reading practices: "[…] et quod molestius ferendum est, male visum perscrutatumque et notatum, ignominiose despiciunt nostre correctores, execrantur et impugnant" / "[…] and yet—what is more disturbing to bear—our censors despise him shamefully, curse and impugn him who they have poorly seen, examined, and noted" (McWebb 209).

[89] In *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women: Reading beyond Gender*, Rosalind Brown-Grant has shown the learned quality of Christine's arguments in the Querelle. In her article "Reading for Authority: Portraits of Christine de Pizan and Her Readers," Deborah McGrady also argues that Christine's description of her own reading techniques in the context of the Querelle "show her mastery of the advanced rapid reading skills that Paul Saenger has associated with late-medieval highly literate communities" (155).

ladies who blushed at its lascivious language to husbands who might read it as a justification for domestic violence.[90] While the initial exchange of letters about the Roman de la Rose had remained a relatively private affair, Christine addressed her concerns to a wider public when in 1403 she sent a well-chosen selection of these letters and introduction explaining their importance to Queen Isabeau de Bavière and Guillaume de Tignonville, Prevost of Paris. In doing so, Christine helped bring this literary debate to an audience beyond the exclusive readership envisioned by the supporters of the *Rose*, one that she expected to weigh in on the moral and ethical problems of the poem.[91] Having called on her privileged readers to join her in protesting this work, Christine's later writings continued to respond to and refute the claims of the *Rose* by offering French secular literature an alternative tradition of positive and exemplary tales about women.[92] In doing so, Christine responded to the literary and imaginative failures in what she considered to be a morally bereft poem.

Jean Gerson joined Christine in working to bring the problematic nature of the *Roman de la Rose* to a wider public. As we saw in Chapter 1, Gerson was frequently preoccupied with encouraging and guiding readers in appropriate practices for pursuing intimate and personally meaningful relationships with books. Yet he is most well known among literary scholars of the "Querelle" for using his authority to censure the *Rose* from

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[90] In her letter to Jean de Montreuil, Christine writes, "Et dont que fait a louer lecture qui n'osera estre leue ne parlee en propre forme a la table des roynes, des princesses, et des vaillants preudefemmes—a qui convendroit couvrir la face de honte rougie?" (Hicks 20). In her letter to Pierre Col, Christine says she has heard of a jealous husband who beats his wife while citing passages from the *Rose* (Hicks 140).

[91] In *The Master and Minerva: Disputing Women in French Medieval Culture*, Helen Solterer shows how Christine transformed this private literary debate into a public affair by sending the epistles to the Queen, and, in doing so, highlighted the social importance of literature. Deborah McGrady has further shown how Christine sought to encourage a more conscientious reading public through her intervention in the *Querelle*. See McGrady's "Reading for Authority: Portraits of Christine and Her Readers."

[92] Christine composed the *Cité des Dames* around 1405, just a few years after the end of the debate. Because of its thematic emphasis on positive examples of women, it is often thought of as a product of Christine's frustrations in the Querelle. See, for example, Badel, *Le Roman de la Rose au XIVe siècle*, page 162.

being read or even discussed. Where Christine expresses concern for the ignorant husbands and naïve princesses who were ill-equipped to read the *Rose* for their moral improvement, Gerson is especially concerned that his university-trained opponents claimed that the more dubious parts of the poem in particular were examples of social satire that could provoke deep moral reflection. In December 1402, he addressed a letter to Pierre Col (*Talia de me*), who was a canon at Notre Dame during the same period that Gerson also held an appointment there (Hicks xvi). In this letter, Gerson sought to put an end to the epistolary exchange by pointing out the morally and theologically dubious nature of Pierre Col's arguments one by one before definitively requesting that all discussion of the *Rose* come to a halt: "Postremo cessent ioci, frater optime et melioris cause patrocinio dignissime; taceat interim libido vel vincendi vel garriendi. Veniamus ad rem seriam religiosamque" (Hicks 174).[93] This uncompromising reminder that the *Roman de la Rose* was entirely undeserving of either reading or discussion reappears in even stronger terms in Gerson's more public statements against the *Rose*, particularly in his famous *Poenitemini* sermon series. In a sermon delivered in December 1402 just after his letter to Pierre Col, Gerson provocatively ponders whether reading "livres esmouvans a luxure" (McWebb 364) should be considered a mortal sin. He then goes on to suggest that confessors require penitents to burn or shred their copies of Ovid, the *Roman de la Rose*, select writings by Matheolus, and any ballades and *rondels* that are too "dissolues" (McWebb 364). In attempting to suppress the *Rose* in lay and clerical milieux alike, Gerson seems to question his colleagues' assumption that any reading community was capable of properly interpreting such a poem.

[93] "Finally, let the jokes stop, my best brother, more deserving of a better cause to defend; may the desire to conquer or to talk nonsense be still in the meantime. Let us proceed to a more serious and religious matter" (McWebb 363).

As much as Gerson's repressive statements bear the mark of the disciplinary authority of his position as chancellor of the University of Paris, they also belie his anxiety about how best to deal with what he considered to be a pressing social problem—the ever-increasing circulation and appreciation of the *Roman de la Rose* among a variety of reading communities. In the *Poenitemini* sermons, Gerson can only suggestively wonder whether reading Jean de Meun's poem, not to mention Ovid or Matheolus, was not perhaps an act of the mortal sin of lechery—but the fact remains that these books were all widely read in late medieval France. Similarly, though Gerson may have wished that every reader would destroy their copies of these works upon requirement by their confessors, he probably realized that the total destruction of this vernacular poem was the stuff of chancellors' fantasies.[94]

Christine de Pizan and Gerson understood that the *Roman de la Rose* presented a problematic knot of jurisdictional questions: what was the best way to bring the morally dubious nature of this poem to the public, which public was to be concerned with such questions, and what measures should be taken to mitigate the effects of the *Rose*? One thing was clear to the chancellor: it was willfully ignorant of the situation at hand to complain about lay readers' lack of interpretive skills or, alternately, to believe that a well-defined set of professional readers could read the poem with no moral repercussions.

The first wave of scholars to address the literary debate over the *Roman de la Rose* often explained Gerson's authoritarian intervention into the quarrel as a lack of

[94] In his letter to Pierre Col, for example, Gerson briefly relishes the thought of being the sole remaining possessor of Jean de Meun's poem: "Ecce coram Deo quia non mentior, et per si quid in me est cui dare fidem dignum ducis affirmo si solus esset liber actoris tui michi proprius, valens mille libras et amplius, ego prius darem eum flammis rapacibus exurendum quam venderem taliter publicandum" / "Behold, before God I assert, and if you find anything in me worthy of trust, I affirm that if I owned the sole copy of that author's book, and it were worth a thousand pounds and more, I would rather give it over to be burned by hungry flames than sell it so that it would be made available in such a way" (Hicks 172; *Early Works* 219).

appreciation for the terms of secular poetry, due largely to his particular religious preoccupations that centered on repentant affectivity.[95] More recently, alongside a deepening appreciation for the importance and innovation of Christine de Pizan's arguments in the quarrel, critics have more favorably judged Gerson's own role, arguing that the chancellor of the University of Paris did in fact appreciate the literary terms of the debate, but that the two opposing camps simply didn't agree as to whether or not the *Rose* actually lived up to accepted forms of literary decorum.[96] This chapter bridges the conflicting perspectives of scholarly assessments by arguing that Gerson's interest in repentant and affective spirituality, treated in Chapter 1, largely determined his interpretation of the *Rose* and thus set him apart from his opponents.[97] This chapter will move beyond the early appraisals of Gerson as a dogmatic moralist to argue that his reflection on the *Rose*—in his *Poenitemini* sermons, his letter to Pierre Col, and his *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose*—evinces Gerson's belief that readers were experiencing inappropriate pleasures in studying the text because they cultivated an affective strategy rather than maintaining a learned approach that was sensitive to the presumed satire of

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[95] For example, in his *Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives*, D.W. Robertson characterizes Gerson as a "zealous reformer" and Christine de Pizan as an "irate woman" and argues that both writers were essentially anti-humanistic (364). John Fleming takes a similar position in *The 'Roman de la Rose': A Study in Allegory and Iconography* when he argues that Gerson was "the first modern critic of the *Roman*, the first person to whom it must patiently be explained that Jean de Meun was a 'true catholic, the most profound theologian of his day, versed in every science which human kind can grasp'" (47, Fleming is quoting Gontier Col's appraisal of Jean de Meun).

[96] See Brown-Grant 28-9. Similarly, Alastair Minnis writes in *Magister Amoris: The* Roman de la Rose *and Vernacular Hermeneutics*, "Jean [de Meun]'s friends and foes alike drew on one and the same corpus of literary theory, the product of late medieval scholasticism, as found in the commentaries on classroom authorities" (210).

[97] Christine McWebb's *Debating the* Roman de la Rose*: A Critical Anthology* has shown that the *Roman de la Rose* generated discussion and debate in many different contexts, and that our understanding of the *Querelle* has been determined largely by Christine's astute efforts to control the reception of the debate and define its parameters in her collected works. This chapter builds on McWebb's efforts to widen our understanding of the Querelle by placing Gerson's *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose* within the context of his larger efforts to reform reading practices at the University and define those of the laity. Religious scholars and historians have tended to pass over his *Traité* as an obvious extension of his pastoral concerns, while literary scholars have neglected to take account of the imaginative form of the *Traité*, which is quite surprising within the context of Gerson's other vernacular writings.

the text. In contrast to defenders who asserted a scholarly mode of reading when approaching the *Rose*, Gerson implied that readers were far more likely to adopt these affective strategies because the poem invited this kind of intimacy. For Gerson, such intimate approaches to the *Rose* posed a grave moral threat to readers, who understood the poem as an erotic first-person expression of amorous pursuits. Within the process of trying to explain readers' affective responses to the *Rose*, Gerson begins to explore an affective interpretation of the poem.

Instead of berating these readers for their incompetence, however, the figure of Chastity in the *Traité* redirects their affective responses to the *Rose*. The second part of this chapter will thus consider how the imaginative form of the *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose* allows Gerson to move beyond the specific interpretive questions surrounding the content of the *Rose* to focus instead on the poem's readers. Following the lead of Christine de Pizan and others, Gerson's *Traité* uses a fictive, literary mode to respond to Jean de Meun's famous poem. Rather than rewrite or replace the *Rose*, the *Traité* dramatizes the reading experience of the public as a courtroom battle between Lady Chastity and the Foolish Lover.[98] The moving rhetoric of the courtroom lawyer, Eloquance Theologienne, pulls readers toward the plaintiff Chastity, helping them to redirect their affective responses to the *Rose* toward feelings of shock and shame. While the final verdict either for or against the *Rose* remains unspoken in the *Traité*, Chastity evocatively embodies the far-reaching social consequences of readers' affective

[98] Other famous literary re-writings of the Romance of the Rose include Pierre d'Ailly's *Jardin de l'ame amoureux* and Guillaume de Deguilleville's *Pelerinage de la vie humaine*, which was written as an explicit response to the *Roman de la Rose*. See Christine McWebb's *Debating the Roman de la Rose*, which seeks to provide "a global and comprehensive picture of the kinds of reactions evoked by this work" (xi). McWebb helpfully includes literary responses to the *Rose* in addition to the *Querelle* documents and reactions by a variety of other contemporary readers.

relationships with the *Roman de la Rose*. The result is an imaginative literary text that affectively alerts readers to the larger social implications of their relationships with books.

Affect and Interpretation

For Gerson, many if not all of the pernicious effects of the *Roman de la Rose* arise from the troubling proximity between the poet's first person narration and the character of the lover in the *Rose*.[99] Written as an allegorical dream vision, the *Traité* imagines that Jean de Meun, the narrator from the second half of the *Roman de la Rose*, is re-baptized as Fol Amoureux, and put on trial in the Court of Christianity. By putting the figure of Fol Amoureux on trial, Gerson suggests that readers were more likely to identify affectively with this lover than they were to analyze the meaning intended by the distant real author.[100] Where Jean de Montreuil and Pierre and Gontier Col defended the *Roman de la Rose* as a deeply moral work of social satire, Gerson argues that many readers

[99] Gerson's alignment of the lover and the narrator was not the predominate interpretation among his contemporaries—or at least those who articulated their reactions to the *Rose*. For those defending the poem, the poet's voice could not be aligned exclusively with that of the *amant* because the cacophonous assembly of allegorical figures suggests an ironic distance between the poet and his various personages. Despite these contemporary defenses of Jean de Meun's satirical intentions, a long history of literary criticism has often celebrated the *Roman de la Rose* in precisely the same terms through which Gerson condemned it: "His [the poet's] investigation of the Garden is increasingly inflected by desire, however: not the desire for moral clarity, political knowledge or spiritual redemption, but a sensual desire stoked by the sounds, colours and textures of the Garden. […] the decisive intervention of Cupid turns the poem into a set of love teachings, followed by the narrative of an attempted love quest, in which the poetic narrator is no longer the detached observer but the protagonist" (Huot, *Dreams of Lovers and Lies of Poets* 11).

[100] Throughout this chapter, I have avoided the term authorship because it ambiguously implies both a historical person who writes *and* a performative situation. As we will see, Gerson heavily emphasizes the way the *Rose* comes to life for individual readers, and so I have chosen to use the term "signature," because it expresses this performative mode of representation more precisely. In the collection of essays and conversations *L'Oreille de l'autre*, Derrida discusses how the authorial signature is both immanent in the text (ie, idiom and style) and transcendent to it (appended to it). Throughout the *Traité*, Gerson will argue that it is formally impossible to distinguish between the narrator (identified as Jean de Meun in the second half of the *Rose*) and the figure of the lover. For Gerson, the term Fol Amoureux allows a crucial conflation of the narrator and the lover. To state it simply, Fol Amoureux is Gerson's name for the author as perceived by the audience—or what we would call the authorial signature within the *Rose*.

lacked the interpretive to skills to read it in such a way, and, as a result, they enjoyed the poem as an intimate, first person expression of amorous pursuits. The narrative framework of the trial thus exposes an essential fact that Gerson's university trained colleagues ignored in their scholastic interpretations of the poem: that readers who lacked such training most easily related to the poem through their initial affective reactions, and that these responses had real social consequences.

That Gerson's interests lie in excavating affective reading experiences rather than scholastic ones becomes immediately clear in the opening lines of the *Traité*. The narrator explains therein how one morning, in a moment of wakeful reflection, his heart was transported to the Court of Christianity where the trial against Fol Amoureux was to take place: "Par ung matin n'a gaires en mon veillant me fut advis que mon cuer ysnel s'envola—moienans les plumes et les esles de diverses pensees--, d'ung lieu en autre, jusques a la court sainte Crestienté" (Hicks 59). Gerson's flight of heart signals that the *Traité* resulted from the ruminations of the heart and hence Gerson's distinctive approach to the *Rose*, where the fate of the poem belonged to the jurisdiction of affect, not of intellect. In Chapter 1, we saw how many of Gerson's writings, including his letters to the Collège de Navarre, the *Montagne de Contemplation*, his sermon on the Feast of Saint Bernard ("Fulcite me floribus"), and the *Mendicité spirituelle*, sought to elicit and expand readers' awareness and practice of affective reading strategies. Within many of these same works, however, Gerson also discussed the moral and social dangers that result from readers misapplying these strategies to the wrong texts or allowing them to become sidetracked from devotional aims. In the *Traité*, Gerson valorized an affective approach to the *Roman de la Rose* because he believed that scholastic interpretations focused too

exclusively on an intellectual pursuit of the poem's satirical meaning and neglected to account for the emotions and pleasures that readers experienced while reading it. For Gerson, an affective approach is thus the most apt and supple reading of the *Rose*, but it can also easily become a dangerous one when performed by readers. Within the imaginative trial at the Court of Christianity, Gerson aims to move his readers from feelings of desire and intimacy with Fol Amoureux to feelings of shock, disgust, and shame.

Once the narrator has briefly described the scene at the Court of Christianity and its presiding judge, Canonical Justice, he tells how the constable Conscience steps forward to read the eight crimes that Chastity accuses the foolish lover of having committed against her. At this point, the court lawyer, Eloquance Theologienne, takes over the task of trying the case and addresses himself directly to Fol Amoureux before turning his words against those who defend him. In his opening address to the *amant*, Eloquance Theologienne seizes on the fact that the narrator of the *Roman de la Rose* famously refers to himself as a *fol amoureux* and uses this self-identification to justify forever branding him accordingly: "cil qui porte en son front le tiltre escript de sa condampnacion? Voire! De sa condampnacion: ne me resgardés ja! Il se porte par vostre dit meismes pour ung fol amoureux" (Hicks 70). While calling oneself a foolish lover could potentially be a form of self-condemnation, Eloquance Theologienne argues that the narrator also behaves as one ("il se porte") throughout the poem, such that his signature as a Fol amoureux becomes both a proud proclamation of his nature and a tip-off to readers that the poem is a description of his amorous experiences. Throughout the *Traité*, Eloquance Theologienne refers to the narrator of the *Rose* solely as Fol amoureux,

which effectively reorganizes the parameters of the literary debate around a single major point of contention: Jean de Meun's intentions. Is the *Rose* a lascivious description of seduction and conquest signed by a lover-narrator or a satirical mockery of foolish pursuits composed by a repentant author?

In a letter from late summer 1402, Pierre Col took particular issue with the indictment of Fol Amoureux in the *Traité* and displaced Gerson's accusations: "Je demande a dame Eloquance se cest argument tent a blasmer estre fol amoureulx, ou a blasmer le livre de la *Rose* pour ce qu'un qui fut fol amoureulx l'a fait" (Hicks 92).[101] Col pursues his incisive question by arguing that if Gerson puts Fol Amoureux on trial in order to condemn *being* a foolish lover, then he is in complete agreement with the *Traité*. Col then argues that Jean de Meun would similarly agree with Gerson by pointing out several passages from the *Rose* where de Meun deplores being a foolish lover (Hicks 92-3). According to Col, the *Rose* aims to show by negative example how very foolish it is to be a lover, and it is clear that for Jean de Meun, "le [livre] fist pour monstrer la grant folie qui est en Fol Amoureux" (Hicks 93). Col then moves on to the second portion of his question—whether Gerson condemns the *Rose* for being a text that presumably celebrates sexual conquest because it was crafted by a foolish lover. To respond to this point, Col argues that by the time he composed the *Rose*, Jean de Meun had already repented of any youthful follies he may have committed: "quant il fist ce livre de la *Rose* il n'estoit plus fol amoureux, ains s'en repantoit de l'avoir esté" (Hicks 94). As such,

[101] Eloquance Theologienne seems to have suffered from a bit of gender trouble. In the *Traité*, Gerson refers to the figure using the masculine pronoun "il." Pierre Col, however, consistently refers to the figure as "Dame Eloquance Theologienne" and "elle." I will refer to Eloquance Theologienne as a masculine figure.

Jean de Meun ranks among an illustrious coterie of repentant lovers turned writers in the service of God:

> Mais si l'argument tant a blasmer le livre de la *Rose* pour ce qu'un qui fut fol amoureux l'a fait, je me merveille commant dame Eloquance ne fait premierement ses conclusions contre Salmon, David et aultres folz amoureux qui furent trop devant Meung, desquelz les livres sont meslés en la sainte Escripture et les paroles ou saint mistere de la Messe. (Hicks 94)

As pointed out by Alastair Minnis, Pierre Col is probably thinking of St. Bonaventure's commentary on Ecclesiastes, where he defends Solomon's moral failings by arguing that "this work was written not by a sinner but by a man who regretted his sins" (*Commentary Tradition* 32).

Recent studies of the *Querelle* by Minnis and Rosalind Brown-Grant have thoughtfully elucidated the important role that late medieval academic approaches to literary theory played in the arguments set forth by Jean de Montreuil, the Col brothers, and Christine de Pizan concerning Jean de Meun's biography. For example, in *Christine de Pizan and the Moral Defence of Women*, Brown-Grant argues that medieval *accessus ad auctores*—the formal prologues to both sacred and secular works that were largely associated with scholastic, university study of texts—was the agreed upon standard by which both sides of the debate judged the *Rose* (30). Such prologues, especially in the 13th century, formally introduced the work by focusing on various aspects of the text, including the life of the author (30).[102] Extending work done by Minnis on medieval ideas of authorship, Brown-Grant points out that the "question of whether authors' own moral lapses diminished their learning and authority was hotly debated in academic prologues, particularly after the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries when commentators

[102] For an overview of the *accessus ad auctores* tradition, see Minnis, *Authorship*, 19-25, or the classic article by E.A. Quain, "The Medieval *Accessus Ad Auctores*."

began to focus attention on the author as a fallible human being rather than just as God's mouthpiece" (32). Brown-Grant cites Christine's use of Jean de Meun's life actions (or at least, what Christine imagines them to be) as evidence that Christine was a knowledgeable reader who skillfully manipulated the tradition of scholastic prologues to condemn the *Rose*.

Perhaps by dint of the fact that Christine and Gerson were united in their steadfast opposition to the *Rose*, both Minnis and Brown-Grant fold Gerson into their thoughtful reevaluation of Christine's role in the debate.[103] For Brown-Grant, "Gerson emphasizes Jean's moral failings by persistently identifying him with the chief protagonist of the *Rose*, whom he refers to as Fol Amoureux" (33). Gerson is of course not indifferent as to Jean de Meun's potential failings, and he does acknowledge that the author's questionable morality probably carries some weight in explaining the problematic nature of the *Rose*: "dommage fu que fole jeunesse ou aultre mavaise inclination deseu ung tel clerc a tourner nicement et trop volagement a tele legiereté reprovee son subtil engin" (Hicks 66). Differing from Christine, however, Gerson did not depend on biographical details as an interpretive framework through which to condemn the poem.[104] In his letter to Pierre Col (*Talia de me*, dated October 1402), the chancellor is uncompromising in his response to this very question: "[...] non enim personas sed scripta, quisquis illa

[103] Alastair Minnis writes in *Magister Amoris*: "Jean [de Meun]'s friends and foes alike drew on one and the same corpus of literary theory, the product of late medieval scholasticism, as found in the commentaries on classroom authorities" (210).

[104] In contrast, Christine makes explicit reference to what she imagines to be Jean de Meun's lascivious life when she writes in her letter to Jean de Montreuil, "Mais vrayement puis que en general ainsi toutes [femmes] blasma, de croire par ceste raison suis contrainte que onques n'ot accointance ne hantise de femme honnourable ne vertueuse, mais par pluseurs femmes dissolues et de male vie hanter—comme font communement les luxurieux--, cuida ou faigny savoir que toutes telles feussent, car d'autres n'avoit congnoissance" (Hicks 18). Later in the same letter, she refers to "la grant charnalité, puet estre, dont il fu remply" (21). While she does make several other critiques of the *Rose*, she regularly falls back on biographical details from Jean de Meun's life as the motivating rationale for her interpretations.

confecerit, infamus" (Hicks 170).[105] Thus where Montreuil and the Col brothers would defend a morally and socially acceptable message for the poem by reassuring us as to Jean de Meun's intentions as a repentant lover, Gerson insists on evaluating the poem as is, regardless of who wrote it.[106] Gerson's emphasis on texts ("scripta") in this retort recalls his letters to the students of the Collège de Navarre that we saw in Chapter 1. In that letter, Gerson suggested to students that they converse intimately with books and writings that "build charity." This conversational mode of reading focuses on how a quotidian intimacy with books can build potentially life-altering meaning from texts. Like his rejection of authorial intention with regards to the *Rose*, this conversational reading prioritizes the effects of literary experience over the pursuit for hidden or implied meanings or authorial intentions. By naming Fol Amoureux the defendant—not Jean de Meun—in the fictional trial of the *Traité*, Gerson puts the book itself on trial and implies that it is the book's effects on many, varied readers that determine the meaning and value of the *Roman de la Rose*.

Within the *Traité* itself, Gerson raises the question of the distinction between the author and his signature by first addressing Fol Amoureux as if he were Jean de Meun: "Et se tu, Fol Amoureux—puis qu'ainsy te vuelt on nommer--, se tu avoies repantance en ta vie de mains dis (lesquelz tu avois fais en ta jonesse par vanité), pour quoy les lessoies tu durer? Ne devoient eulx pas estre brullés?" (Hicks, 67-68). At this point—still early

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[105] "We are not accusing persons but the writings themselves, whoever composed them" (*Early Works* 218).

[106] As Pierre Yves Badel notes in his study of the 14th-century reception of the *Roman de la Rose*, "Gerson refuse de débattre des intentions de Jean de Meun, mais il juge un texte à ses effets" (427). Badel locates Gerson's anxiety about the effects of the *Rose* in the poem's morally questionable and potentially heretical content (450-8). Gerson does of course object to the *Rose* on the grounds of its questionable moral content, but critical studies of Gerson's involvement in the debate have often neglected his focus on its representational strategies and their affect on readers.

in the trial— Eloquance Theologienne addresses the historical Jean de Meun's responsibility for his various texts by making reference to his *Testament*, in which the author repented of having written certain vain writings in his youth. Yet the effect of this passage is somewhat disorienting, as Eloquance Theologienne uses direct, present tense discourse to address the persona of a fictive lover in place of the historical author, deceased for nearly a century, to ask him why he didn't burn his own writings. A fictive narrator enacting such self-censorship is of course impossible, and so it would seem that in this passage Gerson simply uses the label Fol amoureux as a veiled means of referring to the person Jean de Meun. Over the course of the narrative, however, Eloquance Theologienne will ultimately relegate the author to his grave while increasingly focusing on the vivid presence of his signature, Fol Amoureux.

Eloquance Theologienne recognizes the possibly jarring effect of speaking in present-tense direct discourse to a dead person when she says:

> Je vouldré bien, au plaisir de Dieu—lequel representés ycy, dame Justice—que l'aucteur que on accuse fust present en sa persone par retournant de mort a vie: ne me seroit ja besoing de multiplier langaige ne d'occuper la court en longue accusacion; car je tiens en bonne foy que ynellement, volentiers et de cuer il confesseroit son erreur, demanderoit pardon, crieroit mercy et paieroit l'amende. (Hicks 66)

Indeed, the whole problem of the *Rose* would be quite a bit easier to settle if Gerson could address Jean de Meun directly, as he is quite sure that the author would immediately confess the errors of the poem. A bit later, in a sigh of defeat, Eloquance Theologienne succumbs to the pointlessness of his prosopopeiac speech: "Mais, bel ami (je parle sans cause a toy, qui n'est pas ycy)" (Hicks 68). At this moment in the trial, Eloquance Theologienne decides to leave aside any more consideration of the person Jean de Meung, although the trial against Fol Amoureux continues on for quite a bit

longer. In reminding readers that the author is dead and gone while continuing to indict Fol Amoureux, the text enacts the separation of the historical author from his signature. In this sense, the *Traité* foregrounds a choice to leave behind the world and person that created the *Rose* to concentrate instead on the literary present and the world that the poem projects before itself.[107]

Gerson thus rejects scholastic theories of authorial intention as an interpretive framework for the poem, and instead focuses his attention on how readers relate to Fol Amoureux. In particular, Gerson worries that Jean de Meun's university training enables a complex authorial signature that performs both a foolish dedication to unbridled amorous pursuits and a distinctly clerical mastery over his readers. Gerson repeatedly returns to the idea that Jean de Meun has taken advantage of his clerical status to craft an authorial signature that invites a master-disciple relationship with readers:

> Helas! Bel amy et subtil clerc! Et n'estoient donc assés folz amoureux au monde sans toy mettre en la tourbe? N'y avoit il qui les menast et aprist en leur soties sans ce que tu te donnasses leur capitainne, ducteur, et maistre? [...] trop veult estre blasmé qui se diffame et prant l'office d'ung diffamé; pour vray, tu estoies digne d'autre maistrise et d'autre office. (Hicks 67)

This lengthy meditation on the power relations at play between authors and readers continues for several more lines, as Gerson persuasively suggests that Jean de Meun's clerical vocation plays out within the poetry of the *Rose* as an important facet of his authorial signature.

For Gerson, the clerical aesthetic of the *Rose* appears in the dangerous mix of true doctrine with exhortations to lechery:

> Encores y a pis: car afin que plus subtivement il deceust, il a mesley miel avec venin, succre avec poison, serpens venimeux cachiés soubz herbe vert de

[107] I am drawing on Ricoeur's distinction between the world behind the text and the world projected before the text in *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences*. Gerson plays heavily on the ambiguity between the two.

> devotion: et ce fait il en assemblant matieres diverses, qui bien souvent ne font gueres a son propos si non a cause dessusdicte, et pour ce qu'il fut mieulx creu et de plus grande auctoritey de tant que il sambleroit avoir plus veu de choses et plus estudié. (Hicks 63)

In this passage, Jean de Meun's theological training doesn't function as an interpretive framework that is external to the poem and which guarantees a proper interpretation. Rather, Jean de Meun's university training plays out within the poetry of the *Rose* itself as it enables a potent mixture of good and bad doctrine. For the chancellor, Jean de Meun's biography becomes a significant factor in the meaning of the text only in so far as his university training imports a learned quality to his poetry, which in turn becomes part of the powerful effect of a signature that is both recklessly amorous and decidedly erudite. As readers are pulled into the poem's "herbe vert de devotion," they open up to a trusting and intimate master-disciple relationship with Fol Amoureux. By focusing on how the authorial signature Fol Amoureux affects readers, Gerson breaks with scholastic interpretation and the notion that the *Rose* is a collection of useful knowledge and a healthy dose of social satire whose over-arching moral message can be guaranteed by reference to the author's biography.

Instead, Gerson offers literary analysis that attempts to light upon how the figure of Fol Amoureux unifies what appears to be a disparate and contradictory text and offers an intriguing glimpse of what we might call "affective interpretation." In Chapter 1, we saw how affective approaches to texts could be cultivated and honed, or, alternately, misapplied and left to become pleasurably distracted. In the *Traité*, we can see how Gerson expanded these approaches into an interpretive framework through which he explained how readers understood the *Rose* to be an erotic first-person narrative of amorous experience. At this point, it is worth remembering just how much Gerson's

distinctive interpretation differed from his contemporaries. Jean-Yves Badel observes that in the 14th century, "le *Roman de la Rose* n'a généralement pas été l'objet de lectures qui visaient son 'intention,' son unité de sens, sa cohérence globale" (135) and that readers predominately thought of the *Rose* as "une collection de sentences" (263).[108] There were, however, responses that focused on a more unified, global meaning of the *Rose* as a "miroir de vie humaine," especially Guillaume de Diguilleville's *Pelerinage de la vie humaine* (Badel 263). Because both sides in the *Querelle* argued so heatedly about the meaning of the *Rose* and Jean de Meun's intentions, we can assume that Jean de Montreuil, Gontier and Pierre Col, and Christine de Pizan each thought of the poem as a unified whole. The pro-*Rose* factions argued that it was a morally astringent overview of the *varietas* of the human condition: "un mirouer de bien vivre, exemple de tous estas de soy politiquement gouverner et vivre religieusement et saigement" (Hicks 21).[109] Christine disagrees as to Jean de Meun's intentions, but she ultimately thinks of the poem in the same terms, which is why she is willing to admit that "je ne reppreuve mie *Le Rommant de la Rose* en toutes pars, car il y a de bonnes choses et bien dictes sans faille" (Hicks 21). Christine objects to many of the things said in the *Rose*, but she doesn't necessarily interpret it as an erotic first person narrative. Gerson saw the *Rose* as just that, which perhaps explains why he fantasized about having every single copy of the poem destroyed and argued that those passages that seem off topic from Fol Amoureux's pursuits were simply stylistically ill-conceived digressions.[110] Within the context of the debate, Gerson's affective interpretation of the poem would seem almost idiosyncratic,

[108] Sylvia Huot reaches a similar conclusion in *The Romance of the Rose and Its Medieval Readers*.
[109] This is Christine's summary of Montreuil's lost treatise in support of the *Rose*.
[110] "[…] et ce fait il en assemblant matieres diverses, qui bien souvent ne font gueres a son propos" (Hicks 63).

except that the chancellor insists throughout the *Traité* that a wide variety of readers, lay and clerical alike, do in fact experience the *Rose* in just this manner.

In order to fully appreciate Gerson's affective interpetation of the *Rose*, a brief review of Jean de Montreuil and the Col brothers' claims that this is a work of satire will be useful. In several of his correspondences in Latin, Jean de Montreuil famously refers to Jean de Meun as "satiricum illum perseverum magistrum Johannem de Magduno" (Hicks 38).[111] In another one of his letters in Latin, Montreuil offers a literary analysis of the satirical nature of the *Rose*, accusing those who condemn it of being inept readers: "qui de personatuum varietate non discernunt, seu notant quibus passionibus moveantur aut induantur affectibus, et quem ad finem quave dependentia aut quamobrem sint loquuti, nec quod demum satirici is instructor fungitur officio, quo respectu plura licent que aliis actoribus prohibentur" (Hicks 42).[112] In positing the satirical aim of the *Rose*, Montreuil interprets a distance between Jean de Meun's authorial intentions and the passionate speeches made by his characters. Similarly, Pierre Col argues that "maistre Jehan de Meung en son livre introduisy personnaiges, et fait chascun personnaige parler selonc qui luy appartient: c'est assavoir le Jaloux comme jaloux, la Vielle comme la Vielle, et pareillement des autres. Et est trop mal pris de dire que l'aucteur tiengne les maulx estre en fame que le Jalous, en faisant son personnaige, propose" (Hicks 100). Col's insistence on the bad reading ("mal pris") of those who take the Jaloux's

[111] "this most resolute satirical poet Jean de Meun" (McWebb 213).
[112] "They don't discern the various characters, and they fail to take notice of the passions that motivate them, which affections they adopt (literally "are clothed in"), nor the ends, the causes, and the circumstances of their speeches; finally, they misunderstand the satirical task that this moralist gave himself, for whom many make allowances that are prohibited to other authors" (my translation, which builds on the modern French translation by Eric Hicks).

misogynistic rant seriously points to tacit assumptions about right and wrong reading that lie just beneath the surface of many of the arguments in the debate.

In his review of satirical rhetoric and interpretation, Frederic Bogel points out that the "traditional view of the rhetorical situation of satire [...] can be figured as a triangle with the satirist at one point, the satiric object at another, and the reader or dramatic audience at the third" (2). Bogel further argues that "the alleged clarity of satire's norms of judgement" creates a complicity between readers and authors as they unite against the object of satire: "the satirist is set in opposition to the satiric object, and the audience is at once unproblematically aligned with the satirist and sharply distinguished from the object of satire" (Bogel 2-3). Pierre Col expects precisely this kind of alliance between author and reader when he argues that "L'en ne doit pas prandre ainssy les mos a la letre, mais selonc les mos precedans et l'entendement de l'aucteur" (Hicks 99). Throughout the debate, both Montreuil and the Col brothers regularly defend the more outrageous portions of the *Rose* by pointing out that readers should align themselves with Jean de Meun's satirical distance from his various allegorical figures.

This notion of complicity between author and reader and their shared distance from the object of satire stands in stark contrast to Gerson's explanation of the intimacy the exists between readers and Fol Amoureux. A satirical reading of the *Rose* is of course entirely plausible, and Jean de Meun's authorial reputation often rested on just such an appreciation of his text.[113] Yet what troubles Gerson about the *Rose* is the extent to which the text fails to express the tacit, agreed upon norms of judgment that would, in

[113] Jean de Meun's reputation as *provocateur* and satirist seems to have been solidly in place by the time that Honoré Bouvet wrote his *Apparicion Jehan de Meung* in 1398 (Hult 18).

theory, guarantee a satirical reading of the poem. At one moment in the *Traité*, Gerson gives an example of just how ambiguous the satire of the *Rose* could be for lay readers:

> Ung dissolu mauvais fera et dira toute lubricité qui se peust trouver entre home et fame devant une pucelle en disant: 'Ne fay pas ainsy come tu nous vois fere, ainsy et ainsy; regarde bien!' sera tel a soustenir? Certes non, quar chasteté, renommee, oeul et la foy n'ont point de jeu, et sont choses trop de legier a blecier et corrompre." (73)

Gerson likens Fol Amoureux to the "dissolu mauvais" who gives moral instruction by gleefully engaging in that which he is bound to repudiate, while the reader is the "pucelle" whose innocence and ignorance makes her the worst student—or perhaps the best, depending on the perspective—for this pedagogical method. Even if she grasps the lesson that she should not follow her teacher's example, she is already less of an innocent maiden for having learned this lesson, and she is forever changed by what she has seen. In drawing out the pleasure that the "dissolu" experiences while performing what he simultaneously repudiates, Gerson draws attention to the complex kinds of identification, intimacy, and pleasure that can exist between the satirical poet and his object of satire. Questioning the reputed "clarity of satire's norms of judgement," Bogel observes that often satire does not *reveal* a stable object of mockery as much as it works to create it out of someone or something that is "sympathetic even as it is repellent—something then that is *not alien enough*" (41). Gerson teases out this very ambiguity, where satire can sometimes combine pleasure and proximity with repudiation, to underscore just how much satire demands a metaengagement with the text. It is a mode of interpretation that requires a critical apparatus and training to which many lay readers (and non-lay as well) would not have had access. That Gerson believed lay readers to be incapable of understanding satire is clear enough from the figure of the innocent and ignorant

"pucelle," but many of the defenders of the *Rose* suggest a similar attitude toward lay reading skills by attacking Christine and others for not reading thoughtfully enough.[114] Where Montreuil and the Col brothers blame the readers for failing to discover the proper meaning of the text, Gerson blames the author for failing to guide a diverse audience with varied reading skills.

The "pucelle" in this passage could have perhaps been better trained to recognize the higher satirical meaning of the lascivious scene playing out before her. Yet Gerson upholds her presumably ignorant response to the scene: if the maiden were to abandon herself to enjoyment, Gerson would no doubt argue that she had the right reaction to the wrong kind of lesson. For the chancellor, there is no room for satirical play: "sera tel a soustenir? Certes non, quar chasteté, renommee, oeul et la foy n'ont point de jeu." This utter rejection of satirical play stems in part from Gerson's belief that satire can't adequately explain the role that affect plays in this scene. The "pucelle" would hypothetically respond in a purely affective manner—either pleasure or shock. But Gerson also questions the affective state of the supposedly satirical teacher. Claiming that he is teaching a moral lesson, the debauched teacher denies his own experience of pleasure. This dramatic vignette thus subtly implicates those who defend a satirical reading of the *Rose* by questioning the role of enjoyment and desire within even the most analytical, learnèd approaches to texts. To put it simply, satire requires training and metaengagement with a text in order to transform a primary affective response into a more distanced one. On the other hand, affective reading does quite the opposite and delves headlong into this initial response to a text.

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[114] Montreuil accuses the anti-Rose factions of being bad readers, saying that they read the poem too hastily (Hicks 39) and that they are incapable of understanding it (45).

In another passage of the *Traité*, Gerson develops at greater length how the ambiguous satire of the *Rose* creates too much room for affective responses. To the argument that Jean de Meun, much like Solomon and David, uses foolish words in order to show the fool's madness, Gerson responds:

> […] je voulroie bien que ce Fol Amoureux n'eust usé de ces personnaiges fors ainssy que la sainte Escripture en use, c'est assavoir en reprouvant le mal, et tellement que chascun eust appercue le reproche du mal et l'aprobacion du bien, et—qui est le principal—que tout se fist sans excés de legiereté. Mais nennin voir." (Hicks 74)

In other words, there simply isn't enough clarity as to how readers should position themselves and whether they should maintain a satirical distance or cultivate an affective intimacy with respect to Fol Amoureux.[115] That Gerson wished that the *Rose* offered more guidance about what constituted a licit or illicit reading may not surprise. Yet Gerson's final remark, "qui est le principal—que tout se fist sans excés de legiereté," implies that there is something else at play in the poem that makes it implausible that readers will arrive at an entirely licit, satirical reading. Gerson seems at slight pains to distinguish between the biblical use of foolish speech and that of the *Rose* as he argues that Jean de Meun's poem has a nebulous yet consistent tone of frivolity that muddies any potential didactic pretensions. This excessiveness and frivolity of the poem may be difficult to pin down, but it opens up important affective possibilities for readerly intervention in the creation of the poem's meaning.

Gerson immediately follows his observation about the poem's frivolous tone with an explanation of its meaning for the text as a whole: "tout semble estre dit en sa persone;

[115] Brown-Grant points out that one difference between the two sides of the debate is a fundamental disagreement over whether readers are capable of deciphering the distance between author and character (49). According to this view, the problem of misinterpretation lies in readers' lack of skills, not in the text's lack of clarity. What I have hoped to show is that by focusing on the text's lack of clarity, Gerson actually valorizes the importance of readerly interventions in the text, whether they are skilled or unskilled.

tout semble estre vray comme Euvangille, en especial aux nices folz amoureux auxquelz il parle" (Hicks 74). The excessive frivolity of the *Rose* doesn't necessarily spring from a vacuous or flighty subject matter, but rather from an overarching perspective that unifies the disparate parts of the poem into a coherent world. Gerson's understanding of the poetic possibilities opened up by the frivolity of the *Rose* enables him to largely sweep aside much of the lengthy debate over whether Jean de Meun's allegorical figures adhere to standards of literary decorum. While Gerson is most certainly concerned with questions of literary decorum and whether or not certain figures, especially Reason and Nature, speak as they should according to their persona in the *Rose*, he is more directly concerned with how the text opens itself up to a process of identification between readers and the figure of the lover. In this sense, it matters little whether Lady Reason speaks reasonably, or the Jealous husband jealously when the overall frivolity of the poem makes it clear that it is Fol Amoureux who is master of the games. Furthermore, the unified perspective of the poem, enacted through its overarching frivolous tone, determines readers' relationship to Fol Amoureux. Because the whole poem appears to be his, the readers' relationship to the text becomes intimate and conversational: like a gospel, the text reads like a letter written to each reader ("auxquelz il parle") as it preaches the ways and mysteries of the faith to those already inducted to the ranks of the "nices folz amoureux." Even those not yet indoctrinated will fall under the sway of the poem's persuasive frivolity: "tout enflamme a luxure, meismement quant il la samble reprouver: neis les bien chastes, s'ilz le daingnoient estudier, lire, ou escouter, en vaurroient pis" (Hicks 74). The mood of the poem, which enflames even in those places

where its words express reproval, opens up creative possibilities for readers to reinvent themselves as literary lovers.

Desiring the *Roman de la Rose*

Having used the trial against Fol Amoureux to dramatize how readers seek out affective intimacy with Jean de Meun's poem, Eloquance Theologienne turns his attention to the present tense readers of the *Rose*: "je tourneray toute ma querelle contre ceulx qui [...] quierent, soit a tort, soit a travers, soustenir—non pas soustenir, mais alaidir et acroistre!—ta vanité" (Hicks 70). But if Gerson is now blaming misguided readers in lieu of the author, then the figure of Fol Amoureux in the *Traité* becomes intriguingly complex. Not merely a nickname for Jean de Meun, Fol Amoureux also functions as something more than the personification of an abstract vice. As Gerson's name for the author's signature, Fol Amoureux possesses a remarkable amount of human agency, but it is ultimately the poem's readers that exercise and enact this volition. Indeed, the term "fol amoureux" comes to define and unify the community of those who read and cherish the *Rose*. For example, Gerson accuses Jean de Meun of joining the ranks of those who are identified only by their status as foolish lovers: "Et n'estoient donc assés folz amoureux au monde sans toy mettre en la tourbe?" (Hicks 67). The narrator of the *Traité* describes how the courtroom itself fills with these throngs: "Lors veissés, a une grant tourbe et une flote de gens sans nombre, josnes et vieulx de tous sexes et de tous ages, qui—sans garder ordre, a tort et a travers—vouloient, l'ung excuser, l'autre le deffendre, l'autre le loer" (Hicks 64). The individuals that make up this disorderly throng behave according to their being—"sans garder ordre, a tort et a

travers"—so that their foolishness infuses their mannerisms and they become what they read.

Having turned his attention to the courtroom crowded with those who cherish Fol Amoureux, Eloquance Theologienne abandons his direct discourse to the defendant and refers to him in the third person from this point on, yet the tone of his rhetoric remains the same as he addresses the crowds who defend him: "Et quelle ignorance de vous, o biaux amis!—mais quelle fole oultrecuidance de vous, lesquelz je voy et oy ycy parler, de vous qui voulés excuser de toute folie ou erreur cil qui se condamne" (Hicks 70). The foolishness of the *Rose* rubs off on its readers, whose "fole oultrecuidance" clouds their ability to see the sheer folly of defending a poet who himself proclaims his foolish nature. Having turned his "querelle" against the readers of the *Rose*, Eloquance Theologienne's rhetoric smoothly transitions without noticeable distinction because, in effect, he continues to address Fol Amoureux as a chorus of readers-turned-lovers. Fols Amoureux is a powerful poetic voice—"tout semble estre dit en sa persone"—to which a distinctly collective voice responds: "Mais j'entens bien ce que vous murmurés ensemble" (Hicks 74). Furthermore, as readers join the chorus of foolish lovers, they lay possessive claim to the poem and collectively authorize its interpretation, such that Eloquance Theologienne can provocatively question the chorus: "Et vostre livre fait il ainsy?" (Hicks 77). The possessive "vostre livre" deliberately blurs the distinction between Fol Amoureux and his chorus and reconfigures the book as a communal object. The collaborative possession of the book emhasizes how readers appropriate the text's meaning by following and imitating Fol Amoureux and recalls the chancellor's discussion of the continuum of emotional experience between readers and texts that is

made possible by affective engagement. As the crowd grows and murmurs as one, we also have a vivid image of how the text reproduces endless Fol Amoureux.

We can more fully appreciate the interpretive ramifications of Fol Amoureux's choral voice by delving into the affective possibilities opened up by another equally collective voice in the *Traité*, that of the plaintiff, Chastity. By allowing Chastity to voice her accusations against Fol Amoureux, Gerson introduces an element of personal testimony that fundamentally changes the readers' moral and affective implication in the stakes of the literary debate. The notion of an allegorical character offering personal testimony shocks because, as an imaginative rendition of an abstract virtue, she is presumably incapable of suffering the real harm to which she testifies. But chastity is a particularly intimate virtue, one that requires active cultivation in both public and private spheres by all Christians.[116] As an allegorical character, Chastity thus enlists the sympathy, identification, and participation of readers. Pierre Col understood perfectly how the allegorical representation of chastity bears upon readers' real obligation to actively cultivate this virtue. Parodying Gerson's logic, he argues that were *Rose* truly a danger to readers' chastity, their consciences would have pricked them long before the *Traité*'s allegorical Conscience arrives to read out Chastity's accusations: "Or resgardés quel promoteur que de Conscience, qui laisse dormir une cause l'espace de cent ans!" (Hicks 111). Yet in mocking Gerson's notion that the *Rose* gnaws at the consciences of

[116] Chastity was one of the seven spiritual virtues expected of all medieval Christians, whether married or celibate. D. Catherine Brown characterizes Gerson's attitude toward chastity as follows: "The monastic ideal of chastity has left more than a trace on Gerson's moral teaching. Men and women may of course marry, but […] marriage is an inferior status to virginity, and even within marriage a rigourous ideal of chastity is demanded. Outside of marriage Gerson's moral code requires total chastity, in thought, word and action. No concessions are made here. For the unmarried lay person, as for the secular and religious clergy, the monastic ideal of chastity still stands. The sexual appetites must be kept under the strict control of reason and will, and this means they must be allowed no outlet whatsoever outside marriage. […] there is a way out of total chastity--'chaste' marriage" (168)

readers, Col tacitly acknowledges the relationship between Gerson's allegorical figures and their real enactment in the world. As an allegorical representation that maintains an intimate connection to the daily lives of all Christians, Chastity's voice easily becomes choral in the *Traité*. Though she speaks in the first person, she speaks on behalf of many and—if readers align their sympathies properly—in a chorus of many.

In her eight accusations, Chastity mentions harm done to women, men in religious orders, and others that she believes to have been wronged by Fol Amoureux. One passage in particular, however, underlines the fact that in speaking for others, her voice becomes composite: "Il giette par tout feu plus ardent et plus puant que feu gregois ou de souffre: feu de paroles luxurieuses a merveille, ordes et deffendues [...] par quoy sont arses et bruslees mes belles maisons et habitacions et mes temples sacrés des ames humainnes" (Hicks 61-2). While maintaining a constant eye on the larger consequences of her own threatened status, Chastity speaks as the victim of Fol Amoureux's crimes, which he perpetrates specifically against her. Yet Chastity also underscores the fact that any harm done to her ripples through a whole panorama of human souls, and that in speaking her victimization, she speaks for many. As the plaintiff in the trial against Fol Amoureux, Chastity thus brings collective suit against the *Rose*.

This passage also serves as a clear example of how Chastity expresses her accusations without drawing on the discourse of scholastic interpretation, and instead uses a testimonial style that gestures toward that of a *complainte*. The narrator of the *Traité* introduces this new emotional register by describing Conscience's reading of the accusations as follows: "ceste complainte pitable de Chasteté la tres belle, la tres pure, qui onques ne daigna neiz panser aucune villainne ordure" (Hicks 60). The narrator here

evokes the rhetorical mechanisms of the late medieval *complainte*, which plays on the affective responses of readers by juxtaposing past glory with a present state of desolation or defilement.[117] Conscience introduces Chastity as the superlative "tres belle" and "tres pure," who is threated by "villainne ordure." To further this sense of a "complainte pitable," Chastity similarly insists in each of her eight accusations that Fol Amoureux wrongs her personally through his actions against others. By speaking as a victim who suffers harm from the *Roman de la Rose*, Chastity introduces an element of emotional intimacy that had previously been unavailable to either side of the debate over the literary merits of this vernacular poem.

Christine de Pizan makes many of the same accusations against the *Roman de la Rose* that Chastity does, but the 15th century *auteure* carefully avoids the kinds of emotional intimacy that Gerson offers Chastity. While Chastity speaks about the personal harm she has experienced, Christine distances herself from her personal investment in condemning the *Rose*. For example, she explains that while she advocates on behalf of women, she does not do so *because* she is a woman, but rather because she believes it to be right the thing to do. She explains this stance in her letter to Jean de Montreuil:

> Et ne croiéz, chier sire, ne aucun autre n'ait oppinion, que je die ou mette en ordre ces dites deffences par excusacion favourable pour ce que femme sui: car veritablement mon motif n'est simplement fors soustenir pure verité si comme je la scay de certaine science estre au contraire des dictes choses de moy nyées. Et de tant comme voirement suis femme, plus puis tesmoignier en ceste partie que cellui qui n'en a l'experience, ains parle par devinailles et d'aventure. (Hicks 19)

In other words, Christine is quite willing to draw on her experience as a woman as a source of knowledge for the sake of argument, but she maintains that her motivation for

[117] For more on the formal aspects of the *complainte*, see Poirion 415-26.

becoming involved in the debate is an impartial desire for truth and to advocate for those who may have suffered personal harm from the misogynist and sensual language of the *Rose*. This is not to say that Christine didn't feel personally implicated in the debate—undoubtedly she did—but rather that she specifically chooses not to express her arguments in these kinds of testimonial terms. To this end, she does not mention feeling personally afflicted by the *Rose*, and only occasionally does she remark upon her experience of reading the poem, as when she admits in passing to Jean de Montreuil that she didn't read the *Rose* in its entirety: "Vray est que pour la matiere qui en aucunes pars n'estoit a ma plaisance m'en passoye oultre comme coq sur brese: si ne l'ay planté veu" (Hicks 13).[118] The vivid imagery of a cock hopping lightly over burning coals implies that like Gerson, Christine recognized the danger of engaging too closely with the *Roman de la Rose* and that she conscientiously resisted being seduced and drawn in by the text.

Gerson himself expresses a similar sentiment when he writes to Pierre Col that he refuses to re-read the *Rose* in order to better understand it: "Vide quantum afficiar, ymmo vero non afficiar ipsum relegere, non quidem ex ignorancia sicut tu reputas—quamquam in me multa sit--,sed pro mea et aliorum conscienta" (Hicks 172).[119] In refusing to engage seriously with the text of the *Rose*, Gerson finds himself in a bit of a quandry: he wants to argue that the poem creates intimate and affective relationships with its readers, but he doesn't want to re-read the poem or offer in-depth analysis. Engaging any more deeply with the poem would risk endangering his conscience and potentially inciting

[118] McGrady reads this as a sign of Christine's professionalized reading habits ("Reading for Authority" 155). We can also contrast Christine's distanced disposition in the Querelle with the opening scene of the *Cité des Dames*, where she writes about how despondent and conflicted she feels after reading a series of misogynist texts (Semple 110).

[119] "See how much I am willing, or rather how I am not at all willing, to reread it. This attitude does not result, as you think, from ignorance, even though I am very ignorant, but comes from my own conscience and that of others" (*Early Works* 219).

more curiousity among readers.[120] The figure of Chastity, however, discloses the possibility of engaging with the *Roman de la Rose* through an approach based on affect instead of satire. As readers feel along with Chastity the shame done not simply to her but also inflicted upon themselves, they discover an affective approach to the poem that rivals and replaces their intimacy with Fol Amoureux. Like the "pucelle" who we encountered earlier in the *Traité* and who would presumably respond affectively to the lecherous scene playing out before her either in shock or with desirous excitement, Chastity offers readers an alternative affective response to the *Rose*. Through Chastity's "complainte pitable" and Eloquance Theologienne's rousing defense of her case, readers discover new feelings toward the *Rose*, only this time they experience shame, outrage, and disgust. By cultivating this alternative reading, the *Traité* effectively aims to manipulate readers so that they would chose not to read the *Rose* so as to avoid its demeaning effects.

Chastity's intimate emotional tone represents but one element of the larger rhetorical strategy at play in the *Traité*, which Gerson signals through the name of his porte-parole, Eloquance Theologienne. As his name suggests, this figure offers arguments whose strengths rest on their eloquent persuasiveness and their ability to sway the emotions of those in the Court of Christianity, including the readers of the *Traité*. The name Eloquance Theologienne also bears a unique connection to Gerson himself, who, as

[120] Pierre Col accuses Gerson of inciting more desire to read the *Rose* through his allegorical *Traité*: "ou par aventure faingnés vous blasmer le dit livre pour cause de l'essaucer par esmouvoir les escoutants les paroles a le lire" (Hicks 109).

we saw in Chapter 1, was well known for his eloquent sermons and who wrote often about the need for reintegrating eloquent rhetoric into the practice of theology.[121]

Throughout his arguments, Eloquance Theologienne relies on rhetorical questions and direct discourse, addressed to either the figure of Fol Amoureux or the throngs of his supporters, to stir feelings against the *Roman de la Rose*. In one passage, the persuasive force of Eloquance Theologienne's rhetoric recalls Cicero's invective tone in his celebrated speech against Catiline: "O Dieu! O sains! O sainctes! O devote court de crestienne religion! O les meurs du temps present!" (Hicks 76).[122] If this rhetoric seems slighlty overblown to modern readers, it is worth remembering that the *Traité* responded to what Gerson perceived to be a difficult jurisdictional problem: the chancellor needed a form of suppression that would not incite more curiosity about a poem that was already widely diffused and much beloved by both lay and clerical readers. For Gerson, the response to this problem was to create a text that didn't simply censure the *Rose*, but instead sought to turn readers' toward Chastity as a more compelling object of intimate and affective attention. Gerson makes this objective clear at the end of the *Traité* when Eloquance Theologienne explains how his arguments should be pleasing to the multiple audiences at the Court of Christianity: "Si est ma demande a Dieu plaisant; a vous, dame

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[121] D. Catherine Brown notes that Jean de Montreuil, one of the key defenders of the *Rose*, wrote in a letter to Nicolas de Clamanges, dated to 1400, that Gerson and Jean Courtecuisse (1353-1423) were the "two stars of sacred eloquence in the Parisian church" (23). Brown further notes that, "in a letter to Guillaume Fillastre, Montreuil went further, calling Gerson's sermons incomparable, because of the way they gripped and moved the audience. Montreuil declared that he would go to Rheims to hear Gerson preach rather than hear any other orator of renown who happened to be preaching in a church nearby" (23). Montrueil's connoisseurship of the sermons of 15th-century Paris opens a window onto the persuasive rhetoric that Gerson brought to bear on the literary debate surrounding the *Rose* through the figure of Eloquance Theologienne.

[122] In *Master and Minerva*, Helen Solterer argues that Christine's "accusation against defamatory literary language […] arraigns Jean de Meun's *Rose* before the general public, requiring its response in turn" (151-2). According to Solterer, Christine understands the social significance of literary language through its function as a form of public discourse (156). Gerson, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the social implications of literary intimacy.

Justice, raisonnable; a toute vostre court, agreable; et aux folx amoureulx—tant y reclaimment il a present—tres prouffitable et amoureuse, et quant ils seront garis, sera tres plaisant et delitable" (Hicks 87). In other words, God will be pleased, Canonical Justice will agree with the reasonable nature of the request, and the chorus of "folz amoureux" will, somewhat humorously, fall in love with the idea. Once these readers are cured of their passion for the *Rose*, they will remain lovers in search of all that is "plaisant and delitable"—although they will presumably seek out the pleasures of Chastity, not of Fol Amoureux. In this sense, the compelling eloquence of the *Traité*, heralded by the character of Eloquence Theologienne, responds in kind to the ways that Gerson imagines the *Rose* to sway and move its readers. The stirring rhetoric of the *Traité* calls on readers—lay and clerical alike—to assess more honestly the pleasure they seek in reading the *Roman de la Rose*. Gerson does not ask readers to deny affective engagement, pleasure, and intimacy in reading, but rather to own up to the fact of this undeniable aspect of reading the *Rose*. Gerson then asks readers to take this desire for pleasure and place it elsewhere, in other texts.

The rhetoric of Gerson's *Traité* did not go unnoticed, either by Pierre Col or by other contemporary readers. For example, in his letter addressed to Christine de Pizan and Eloquance Theologienne, Pierre Col remarks that Gerson's allegorical porte-parole "propose mal son fait principal et emprant mauvaise querelle en la faisant maintenir et parler par la maniere que les maistres de rethorique ont baillié en leurs livres, ce qui n'appartient a dame Eloquance Theologienne, come dit saint Augustin ou quart livre de *Doctrine crestienne*" (Hicks 111). Not only has Gerson chosen the wrong style for expressing his argument ("propose mal")—this style also provokes an unnecessary

atmosphere of "querelle." According to Col, this style works badly precisely because it mixes rhetoric with the practice of theology, a tactic that Augustine supposedly prohibits in *On Christine Doctrine*. Gerson, however, is uncompromising in his response to Pierre Col: "Animadvertes, crede michi, non esse factam iniuriam tirannicam Eloquencie si eam theologie sociaverimus" (Hicks 174).[123] This response evokes the complexity of Gerson's condemnation of the *Rose* through the use of eloquent rhetoric in the *Traité*. Gerson's emphasis on the powerful affect of both the *Rose* and the *Traité* testifies to the different ways that rhetoric can make or unmake readers, by either calling them toward their higher selves or miring them in a downward spiral of pleasurable self-discovery. In this sense, the allegorical figures of Fol Amoreux and Chastity function as opposite sides of the same coin, with both playing on their readers' bookish desires.

The important place that Gerson accords to rhetoric in the *Traité* comes to the fore at the close of the trial in the fictional Court of Christianity, where readers are confronted with an inconclusive verdict against the *Roman de la Rose*. After hearing Eloquance Theologienne's rousing speeches against Fol Amoureux and his throngs of followers, the narrator-dreamer abruptly awakes from his dream vision before Justice Canonique can render a verdict (87). As a result, readers are left to determine their own verdict with respect to Fol Amoureux. Certainly, the combination of Eloquance Theologienne's rhetoric and Chastity's "complainte pitable" (60) don't appear to leave readers much choice regarding their decision whether or not to read the *Rose*. Yet given Gerson's definitive statements concerning the *Roman de la Rose* in his letter to Pierre Col and the *Poenitemini* sermons, we might have expected something different at the end of the

[123] "You will see, believe me, that we do not do injury to eloquence in joining it to theology" (*Early Works* 220).

Traité. Adrian Armstrong explains this lack of verdict slightly differently, arguing that it constitutes a highly tactical move designed to close down any possibility of Jean de Montreuil or the Col brothers respoding in a similar fictive, juridical mode.[124] Yet Gerson undoubtedly intended for the imaginative form of the *Traité*—a dream vision pastiche of the *Rose* itself—to reach an audience beyond the select group of intellectual elites who had participated in the epistolary debate.[125] Furthermore, the *Traité* most often circulated in manuscripts where it was far removed from the other letters and documents associated with the debate.[126] Given Gerson's efforts to reach this wider audience with Eloquance Theologienne's impassioned rhetoric, the surprising lack of verdict at the close of the *Traité* serves to displace Justice Canonique's jurisdiction over the *Rose* to an intimate decision made in the hearts and minds of each reader. The silence at the end of *Traité* effectively relocates the Court of Christianity, and the final jurisdiction regarding the *Roman de la Rose*, to each individual reader.

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[124] "The absence of an explicit verdict constitutes a tacit challenge to Jean de Meun's defenders, to state the case for the defence and refute the arguments of Eloquance Theologienne, if they dare. It is perhaps unsurprising that Jean de Montreuil and the Col brothers declined to take up the challenge by continuing the juridical fiction. To do so would entail playing Gerson at his own game, on a playing field which would be anything but level. How could one hope successfully to defeat a personification of Christian rhetoric without calling one's orthodoxy into question? Gerson's technique of avoiding final resolution, then, forces his opponents into either adopting a literary form which would work to their disadvantage, or ignoring that form and appearing to be spoilsports'" ("The Deferred Verdict" 12-13).

[125] Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski makes the point that Gerson's decision to write an allegorical vision in the vernacular effectively mimics the form of the *Rose* itself, thus indicating Gerson's desire to reach a specific intended public that "extended much farther than the circle of proto-humanists we have encountered so far, all of whom were knowledgeable in Latin" ("Jean Gerson and the Debate" 333). Daniel Hobbins' work on Gerson's extensive experimentation with the format of the treatise as a medium for engaged public intellectualism further confirms that Gerson intended the *Traité* as a document for a wider public than simply those involved in the epistolary debate. On Gerson's development of the treatise as a genre, see Hobbins, "The Schoolman as Public Intellectual."

[126] In the following section of this chapter, I will discuss the manuscript tradition of the *Traité* at greater length.

Gerson further illustrates how the *Traité* should turn readers' affective attentions to other books as he describes the narrator's departure from the scene at the Court of Christianity:

> Eloquance ot fenie quant je n'aperceu l'eure que mon cuer ravola come il estoit voley; et sans rien oir de la sentence, je me trouvay en mon estude a la vespree […]. La trouvay bien aultre matiere pour mon cuer occuper, que plus ne fust ainsy volage: et fu la matiere de la Benoite Trinité en unité divine et simple, puis du Saint Sacrement de l'autel, etc. (Hicks 87)

Like readers of the *Traité*, the narrator has just witnessed the dramatic trial against those who defend and cherish the *Rose*. As body and heart reunite ("je me trouvay") in study ("estude"), the narrator describes how he feels calm and less flighty ("plus ne fust ainsy volage") and so he is able to turn his heart toward "bien aultre matiere." Having witnessed how the act of reading created throngs of Foolish lovers, the readers, along with the narrator of the *Traité*, now see that in turning to other, better books they constitute a community and a readership. The personal decision not to read the *Rose* is also a question of personal morality, but Gerson consistently foregrounds the notion that such a decision is also a form of social engagement.

We can appreciate how the lack of verdict in the *Traité* emphasizes both the intimate and social ramifications of reading the *Rose* by turning to some of Gerson's later reflections on this very topic in his letter to Pierre Col. In this letter, Gerson justifies his appeal to the Court of Christianity in the *Traité*, saying:

> Tandem vero ego te nunquam, o christiana curia, animo lesi neque verbo. Tu non omnia potes delicta corrigere fateor: alioquin quid divine iusticie in futuro servaretur? Sufficit in multis redargucio per leges et edicta communia: sicut contra simoniam, furta, homicidia, adulteria, ita contra hanc contagiosissimam male loquendi vel scribendi licenciam, presertium ubi publicus accusator invenitur nullus." (Hicks 170-2)[127]

[127] "Finally, O Christian court, I have never harmed you in intent or word. You cannot correct all crimes, I admit. Otherwise there would be nothing reserved for divine justice in the future. It is sufficient with

Where Pierre Col doubts that the *Rose* should be of concern to Chastity or the Court of Christianity, Gerson assures him that in fact the poem represents a grave moral problem that concerns both. Yet even as Gerson justifies his turn to this ephemeral and idealistically imagined Court of Christianity, he also problematizes the gesture by pointing out the fact that it could never possibly adjudicate everything. In an ideal world, the Court of Christianity could name and adjudicate all that was right and wrong. But this kind of utopian jurisdiction could not exist on earth, because if it did, it would replace the role of divine judgement. Instead, "laws and public ordinances" ("leges et edicta communia") must trudge through the details of the many wrongs committed daily against and between people to decide who has been wronged or what laws have been transgressed. In fact, "this most contagious laxity in speaking or writing what is evil" ("hanc contagiosissimam male loquendi vel scribendi licenciam") presents an interesting case study, because it concerns crimes committed by one person against another—presumably writer harms reader—and so it should be adjudicated like other transgressive actions, such as murder, theft, or adultery. Such words and books are not acts that *happen*, but are instead repeated, diffuse, and wide-scale ("contagiosissimam") offenses against individual souls. The relationship between texts and readers thus mimics a crime committed by one person against another, but the materiality of books and their inevitable circulation make them more of a social problem than an individual crime. With no public accuser to step forward to speak of the harm they have suffered at the hands of Fol

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many offenses that laws and public ordinances oppose them, as with simony, theft, homicide, adultery, and so too against this most contagious laxity in speaking or writing what is evil, especially when there is no public prosecutor to be found" (*Early Works* 219).

Amoureux ("presertium ubi publicus accusator invenitur nullus"), Gerson must invent Chastity's collective voice to bring suit against the book.

The complexity of Gerson's appreciation of the intimate and social dynamics of reading books can help explain the puzzling silence of Justice Canonique in the *Traité*. In a text that so heavily emphasizes the collective voices of Chastity and Fol Amoureux, the figure of Justice Canonique remains noticeably silent, uttering not a single word in the entire *Traité*. Gerson both summons Justice Canonique and silences her because, while the licentious content of the *Rose* lies within her purview, the social effects of the book's material circulation must be adjudicated within the hearts of the many individual readers who have access to the book.

In her important study of the rise of literary censorship in England, Deborah Shuger argues that the logic of early modern literary censorship borrows heavily from canon law's emphasis on intentions over actions.[128] Shuger notes:

> In his important monograph on early modern continental jurisprudence, Udo Walter points out that during the Middle Ages canon law had had relatively little impact outside the church courts. It was only in the 15th century, with the reception of Roman law as current throughout the Holy Roman Empire, that canon law began to began to infiltrate and significantly inflect secular justice. The eminent medieval civilian Bartolus of Saxoferro had distinguished civil from canon law *iniuria*: 'the canonists give more weight to intent than the act, but we [civilians] more to the act than the intent [canonisti magis considerant animum, quam actum: sed nos magis actum, quam animum].' (105)

[128] The censure of heretical books was of course entirely within the jurisdiction of canon law—as evidenced by the fate of Marguerite Porete—but heresy was never one of the charges officially levelled against the *Rose.* Gerson does flirt with the idea that the *Rose* and its supporters walk a dangerous line with heresy when he writes to Pierre Col that "Tu vero tibi nunc attende quale precipicium paraverit attemptata tractacio materie theologice. Dicis itaque quod puer biennis aut triennis sit in statu innocencie. Hec est heresis Pelagii, quam asserens pertinaciter hereticus est censendus" (Hicks 164) / "But consider now the precipice onto which you have ventured in dealing with theological matters. You say that a child of two or three years is in the state of innocence. This is the heresy of Pelagius, for which one is to be judged heretical if he asserts it with obstinacy" (*Early Works* 214).

The canonical emphasis on intention over action resonates with Gerson's near ambivalence to Jean de Meun's actions as historical person, which he matches with an almost obsessive focus on the malicious effects of the poem itself. Gerson turns to the fictional Court of Christianity precisely because the *Rose* is not an act committed by one person against another—it is instead a diffuse and distinctly public problem committed against the collective Christian virtue of Chastity. In other words, the intentions that the Court of Christianity will adjudicate are those of the readers who so passionately engage with the poem, and not those of the author.

Books, Intimacy, and Social Being

Gerson's emphasis on the social implications of readers' desire for books resurfaces throughout the *Traité*. While imagining Jean de Meun's excuse for not having destroyed the *Rose*, Dame Eloquance wonders whether this is perhaps because the author could no longer control his own book's circulation: "tu diras par aventure que tu ne fus pas maistre de ravoir ton livre quant il fu publié; ou par aventure te fu il amblé sans ton sceu ou autrement; je ne le say" (Hicks 69). Jean de Meun's inevitable lack of control over his textual body allows Gerson to focus on the literary present that carries with it a distinct concern for the material circulation of texts. Indeed, it often seems that the most damning aspect of the *Rose* is not the content itself, but the materiality of the book: "et n'est pas content des injures dessusdictes s'il les a publiees de bouche, mais les a fait escripre et paindre a son pouvoir, curieusement et richement" (Hicks 63).[129] A bit later in

[129] Gerson returns obsessively to the notion that the pernicious effects of the *Rose* are notably worse by virtue of the materiality the text: "Dittes moy, vous, beaulx amis, estes vous tant effrontés et peu sachans que vous jugissiés que tel home on ne pugniroit mie? Que on le soustenroit, oyroit et excusseroit? Et plus encores, se oultre les parolles il envoyoit livres ou paintures!" (Hicks 73).

the *Traité*, Gerson bemoans the fact that Jean de Meun failed to realize the expansive borders of the community of readers that will define the meaning and importance of his text: "au fol on doit monstrer sa folie; et plus quant il est saige et fait le fol; et plus se c'est ou tres grief mal d'ung grant pais et en la destruccion villainne de bonne meurs" (Hicks 71). For Gerson, it is precisely because Fol Amoureux exists only in books that he continues to speak, vividly and persuasively, to an ever-widening circle of readers in this "grant pais."

The manuscript tradition of the *Traité* suggests a reception history in which readers appreciated the fact that Gerson's text addressed the social implications of reading more generally, not simply the specifics of the literary debate. While the *Traité* played an important role in the later stages of the debate in that it provoked responses by both Pierre Col and Christine de Pizan, the texts itself was rarely included in manuscripts that contain other documents from the *Querelle*. In fact, the *Traité* appears in only manuscript with other debate epistles (BnF fr. 1563),[130] The *Traité* also appears in seven other manuscripts that contain no other documents from the debate.[131] These seven manuscript witnesses pair Gerson's *Traité* with a French translation of Boethius' *Consolation de Philosophie* (Montpellier H368), a collection of anonymous devotional texts (BnF fr. 1556), and a collection of French devotional texts all by Gerson (BnF fr. 24839). These manuscripts evince a reception history in which the *Traité* was prized by

[130] BnF fr. 1563 is a unique collection of *Querelle* documents, in part because it includes Gerson's Traité, but also because it contains a complete copy of the *Roman de la Rose* along with letters from Pierre Col—many of which Christine had left out of her own dossier. Because this manuscript contains the only dossier to incorporate both Gerson's text and letters from Pierre Col, Eric Hicks makes the following observation concerning BnF fr. 1563: "Tout semble indiquer en effet que ce troisième dossier a été constitué par un partisan du *Roman de la Rose*, et qui plus est, dans l'entourage immédiat de Pierre Col" (Introduction, LXIV).

[131] For information on the eight manuscripts that include Gerson's *Traité*, see: http://jonas.irht.cnrs.fr/consulter/oeuvre/detail_oeuvre.php?oeuvre=11572

contemporary readers for its literary and affective merits, not simply as an admonition against reading the *Roman de la Rose*. In one particular manuscript of the *Traité*, BnF nouv. acq. fr. 10059, Eloquance Theologienne's speech is punctuated with explanatory rubrics which often emphasize the eloquence of the passages, such as "Cy fait mention eloquant de plusieurs grands maulx" (fol. 4v). This manuscript pairs the *Traité* with several other contemporary literary and devotional texts, including Christine de Pizan's *Epistre Othéa* and her *Heures de contemplation sur la Passion*, as well as Guillaume de Tignonville's translation of the *Dits des philosophes*. In a manuscript that seems so little concerned with the particulars of the literary debate over the *Rose*, the inclusion of Gerson's *Traité* speaks to the ways that readers valued the text for its more general reflections on the nefarious influence that bad books could have on both people and society.

This concern for the wide-spread social effects of reading and the material circulation of texts resurfaces in one particularly striking passage in the *Traité*, where Gerson offers a fascinatingly murky portrait of Fol Amoureux as a staple literary figure of classical mythology who also folds seamlessly into contemporary French politics:

> Qui craventa jadis par feu et flanme Troye le grand? Fol amoureux. Qui fist lors destruire plus de cent mil gentilz homes, Hector, Achilles, Priaint et aultres? Fol amoureux. Qui chassa hors jadis de Ronme le roy Tarquinius et toute sa lignie? Fol amoureux. Qui oublie Dieu et sains et saintes et paradis et sa fin? Fol amoureux. Qui ne tient compte de parens ou d'amis quelconques ou de quelconque vertus? Fol amoureux. Dont viennent conspiracions civiles, rapines et larressins pour fole largesse nourir, bastardie ou suffocacion d'enfans mors nés, haynes aussy et mort des maris, et a brief dire tout mal et toute folie? C'est par fol amoureux. (Hicks 70-71)

In this passage, the figure of Fol Amoureux pushes beyond the parameters of literary representation as it grows into a trans-historical force of human nature that is as

responsible for the fall of Troy as it is for contemporary civil unrest and abortions of unwanted pregnancies. There is nothing unusual in the move to portray human vice through allegorical figures, but there is something different at play here than in a *Psychomachia*-style dramatization of the battle for the human soul. Rather than an allegorical representation aimed at vivifying and envisioning abstract vices and virtues, the slip between Paris's storied lust for Helen and contemporary social ills belies a somewhat surprising suppression of the distinction between representation of vice and its real enactment.

For Gerson, Fol Amoureux exists in the realm of fiction, yet his narrative role provokes actual events in the real world. The rhetorical force of this passage lies in its subtle destruction of the literary pleasures of classical mythology, where the sublimity of "cent mil" fallen heroes, including Hector and Achilles, and the tragic destruction of "Troye le grand" become banal acts of sacrifice in the name of foolish lust. Yet this banality plays out its own ugly tragedy in the staggering violence of the Trojan War and the fall of the Roman Empire, which are recast as the entirely avoidable consequences of human folly. This suggestion of war and political instability echoes through to the end of the passage, with its insistence on the "conspiracions civiles, rapines et larressins" that result from Fol Amoureux's presence in contemporary France. Before arriving at these political aftershocks, however, Gerson carefully leads his readers through the logical progression by which the personal becomes political. Thus the figure of Fol Amoureux first forgets his personal relationship with God and the saints, then neglects responsibilities to family and friends, before finally violating a fully social and political space. This passage suggests that for Gerson, Fol Amoureux exists as much in literary

representation as he does in the real enactment of community—because the act of reading functions as an indispensable place for thinking through the connections between self and others.

Speaking from Experience

Gerson's *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose* begins with the premise that ordinary readers felt invited to enjoy the poem as an erotic narrative of amorous pursuit and conquest. Gerson then validates these affective responses by offering sustained analysis of how the poem encourages such intimate engagement. In doing so, Gerson invested affective approaches with substantial interpretive weight. Through the figure of Chastity, Gerson further offered readers an alternative affective response to the *Roman de la Rose* and drew attention to the social ramifications of literary intimacy. We have no doubt missed the innovative nature of Gerson's approach to poetry because of the repressive force with which he applies affective analysis to the *Rose*. Gerson himself may not have realized the full implications of his approach to the poem. In this sense, Pierre Col is perhaps one of Gerson's most perceptive readers, as he pushes the logic of the chancellor's arguments to their extreme and suggests that if indeed the poem is the lyric expression of amorous pursuits that Gerson claims it to be, then perhaps Fol Amoureux is particularly well positioned to speak authoritatively, not as a learnèd cleric, but as a *lover*. A.J. Minnis points out that Col's response to the figure of Fol Amoureux in the *Traité* subtly shifts from exonerating Jean de Meun as a repentant lover to implying that the author's past amorous experiences actually grant him greater authority (*Magister Amoris*

247).[132] In his attempts to respond to Gerson's distinctive interpretation of the *Rose*, Pierre Col ends up arguing that Jean de Meun's affective experiences also grant him authority, not just his theological training. This argument sits uncomfortably with Gerson, because, as we saw in Chapter 1, the chancellor exerted considerable effort validating the important moral, social, and personal insights afforded by affective experience.

Gerson's response to Col's argument for amorous authority adroitly deflects the issue by instead focusing on Jean de Meun's professional responsibilities:

> Dicis id quod te scripsisse miror si non pudet et penitet te: amator, inquis, insanus solus bene iudicat de huiusmodi viciosa […] quasi videlicet oporteat omnes qui de viciis recte incorrupteque iudicaturi sunt ut eisdem prius viciis corrumpantur. Longe aliter est: nullus de viciosis operibus fert iudicium perversius quam ipsi talium febrili egritudine aut letali morbo 'corrupti et abhominabiles facti in studiis suis.'" (Hicks 164)[133]

In this passage, Gerson focuses heavily on the professional tasks of the trained theologian—to discern and judge. Col, on the other hand, remains focused on the poetry of the *Rose* and how the author's amorous authority makes for better praise of Reason--"de tant qu'il congnut mieux la folie qui est en fol amour par experience, de tant desprisa il plus et loua Raison" (Hicks 94). Gerson abruptly turns his attention back to the historical person Jean de Meun to remind Pierre Col that his task as a trained theologian could not have possibly benefitted from this particular affective lesson. For Col, it seems that repentant amorous experience makes for better poetry, while Gerson focuses solely

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[132] Col argues the point as follows: "Je dy que maistre Jehan de Meung, puis qu'il fut fol amoureux, fu tres fermes en raison: car de tant qu'il congnut mieux la folie qui est en fol amour par experience, de tant il desprisa il plus et loua Raison" (Hicks 94).

[133] "You say—and I am amazed that you have written such a thing without being ashamed or repentant—you say that the foolish lover alone judges well concerning such a harmful and even insane Passion. […] It is as if it is necessary that all who are to judge rightly and incorruptedly first must be corrupted by the same vices. It is quite different; no one bears a more distorted judgment about evil deeds than those who are corrupted by this feverish sickness and lethal illness. They are made abominable in their deeds (cf. Ps 13:1)" (*Early Works* 215).

on how affective experience translates into social and professional roles. The fact that Gerson accords little importance to the expression of personal experience begs an important question: what was the purpose and role of communicating such experiences with a larger audience through the written word?

Gerson's response to this question can perhaps be uncovered through the figure of Chastity, who does speak of the personal harm that she has suffered from the collective sum of readers-turned-foolish lovers.[134] Yet even as Chastity speaks emotionally, she encloses her voice in the format of eight formal accusations against Fol Amoureux instead of airing her woes at length. Far more of the *Traité* is occupied by Eloquance Theologienne's impassioned rhetoric. In this sense, the *Traité*'s masculine theological figure is tasked with drawing out the full moral weight and social importance of Chastity's "complainte." Chastity's dependence on Eloquance Theologienne recalls one of Gerson's descriptions of the difference between affective and speculative knowledge in the *Montagne de Contemplation*. In this text, Gerson writes, "Li medecins congoissent la nature des maladies, et mieulx souvent que li malades; mais quant a sentir la douleur et la savourer, c'est cler que li malades en sentent plus et scevent, non mie par raison mais par espreuve" (7.1:19). The distinction between the affective and intellectual knowledge is equivalent to the different understandings that patients and doctors possess about the same disease. Where the patient can only experience pain, the doctor is able to diagnose, heal, and console. This passage thus codes the expressive possibilities for each kind of knowledge: the "malades" seem to suffer in silence, lacking the words that the doctor

[134] Jean de Meun was of course not a literary figure like Chastity, and so the implications of their "affective expression" are quite different. However, given Gerson's emphasis on the performative effects of Jean de Meun's authorial signature in the *Rose* as well as his exploration of the role that Chastity and Fol Amoureux play in the real world, this distinction is slightly more hazy than it may seem.

supplies to help them name the "nature" of their disease. In many ways, the *Traité* replicates this patient-doctor dynamic, as Eloquance Theologienne diagnoses the larger social ramifications of Chastity's demeaned state. But Chastity does voice her collective suffering in the *Traité*, however briefly, thus opening an important social role for such expression. In the *Advision Christine*, Christine de Pizan gives even greater weight to this kind of collective expression through the powerful figure of Libera, who fully understands both the nature of her disease and the depth of her suffering.

Chapter 4—The Intimate Body Politic in Christine de Pizan's *Advision Christine*

In Part I of Christine de Pizan's *Livre de l'advision Christine*, the autobiographical narrator encounters a crowned noble lady named Libera, whose complaint about the mistreatment she has suffered at the hands of her children occupies most of this first section of the text. During a moment of particular lyric intensity, Libera raises the panels of her dress and demands that Christine gaze intently at her beaten and sunken body, as she commands, "O amie, voy cy, voy cy la supellative des douleurs!" (26). This injunction to look upon the superlative suffering of an allegorical female figure echoes the words of Jerusalem in the Book of Lamentations as she describes her destruction: "O vos omnes qui transitis per viam, attendite, et videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus!" (Lm 1:12).[135] However, this extraordinary exclamation would have been much more familiar to late medieval Christians as those uttered by Christ, as in the Passion meditation composed in 1398 for Isabeau de Bavière, where he exclaims "O vous tous, qui passés par / la voye, regardés si est douleur semblable a la / moye!" (*Passion Isabeau* 3033-3035). Many centuries of exegetical tradition had interpreted Jerusalem's lamentations as a prophetic vision of Christ's words on the cross, thus paving the way for the omnipresence of this exclamation in late medieval Passion devotion (Bestul 46).

Christ's borrowing of Jerusalem's words produces a fundamental shift in the aesthetic import of such a powerful invocation to gaze upon the monumentality of communal suffering. While Jerusalem can only gesture toward a figurative sense of suffering, Christ invokes the gaze of medieval Christians from within a real historical body. Late medieval Passion devotion will take this plea to new levels of intense visual

[135] "O all ye that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow [...]."

scrutiny of Christ's bodily suffering, as it was represented in both images and meditational texts that sought to recreate the scene of the crucifixion in readers' minds.[136] In contrast, descriptions of Jerusalem's suffering express the moral and spiritual implications of her downfall: "Vigilavit jugum iniquitatum mearum; in manu ejus convolutae sunt, et impositae collo meo" (Lm 1:14).[137] Much as the robes of Boethius' Lady Philosophy are shabby from neglect and torn from having been snatched to pieces by too many years of superficial philosophizing, the description of Jerusalem's fallen state remains pointedly figurative. Jerusalem's suffering thus incites feelings of sorrow through her rhetorical lyricism, and she will be remembered in the complaints of countless allegorical figures, particularly in late medieval poetic representations of France and the Church by Philippe de Mézières, Eustache Deschamps, and Alain Chartier. Christ's bodily suffering, however, remained a site of singular affective engagement for late medieval readers as it was recreated in thousands of devotional images and texts.

In this contrast between figurative and affective representations of suffering, Christine de Pizan surprisingly chooses the latter's embodied and literal depictions of pain in order to craft her allegorical representation of France. Immediately following

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[136] Late medieval mystery plays fully exploited the dramatic possibilities of this ubiquitous utterance. When Christ pronounces them from the medieval stage, he ruptures the theatrical frame and directly addresses spectators, asking them to look upon his crucified body. Perhaps most well-known to modern readers are where these lines appear in the York Mystery Cycle when Jesus says:

> All men that walk by way or street,
> Take tent ye shall no travail tine.
> Behold mine head, mine hands, and my feet,
> And fully feel now, ere ye fine,
> If any mourning may be meet,
> Or mischief measured unto mine. (220)

[137] From the Douay-Rheims translation: "The yoke of my iniquities hath watched: they are folded together in his hand, and put upon my neck."

Libera's command to look upon her suffering, Christine offers a remarkable visual description of her damaged body:

> Adonc la tres venerable princesse haulce le pan de sa vesteure et a moy desceuevre le nu de ses costez disant: 'Regarde!' Lors, ma veue tournee celle part, comme j'avisasse les costez blans et tendres par force de presse et de deffoulement noircis et betez et par lieux encavez jusque aux entrailles, non mie tranchiez de coups d'espee maiz froissiez par force de grans foules. (26)

As Christine witnesses Libera's mangled body, the diectic imperative "voy cy, voy cy" is as much directed at the narrator as it is to the readers of the *Advision*. The descriptions of the blackened and sunken marks on Libera's body directly show that this damage has been done by the sum of her children and not by the sword, and is first suggested in the text visually, not discursively. As the meaning of the body unfolds through the collective gazing of both Christine and her readers, it becomes increasingly clear that this is not simply an allegorical body that expresses figuratively, but rather a body much like Christ's, whose very physicality, in all of its damaged details, must be explained.

Liliane Dulac interprets Libera's body differently, arguing that while there is a certain realism to the image, the bodily details remain resolutely in the service of allegorical representation ("Corps Souffrants" 316).[138] To better appreciate the affective strategies of Libera's body, it may be helpful to think of her as an experimental allegorical figure who appears amidst a suite of dense, nearly impenetrable images that are quite distinctive within Christine de Pizan's corpus. The *Advision* is divided into three separate sections, and scholars have largely focused on the rich autobiographical details that surface in Part III of the text, as well as the overt political criticisms that

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[138] Dulac does, however, observe that in some of Christine's other texts, she uses images of bodily suffering for non-allegorical purposes particularly when dealing with the effects of sin on the body and soul together (319). As we will see, Christine forces this type of reading in the appended explanatory gloss for Part I of the *Advision*, where she explains that Libera represents the kingdom of France as well as the individual human soul.

Christine proffers throughout the text.[139] These autobiographical and political themes resonate with many of Christine's other works, but Part I of the text, in which Libera appears, has been the subject of far less attention. This is no doubt in part because of the difficulty of its imagery and their departure from more recurrent themes in Christine's other works. Among the more striking images to appear in Part I, there is a massive giant whose head reaches into the sky and whose belly encompasses the circumference of the earth, his name "CHAOZ" written across his forehead (12-14), as well as description of two golden butterflies that rise out of a swarm of wasps before transforming into two noble birds of prey, one of which is struck down by a violent wind (23-24). Christine herself celebrates the difficulty and novelty of these images—perhaps somewhat defensively—in an explanatory gloss for Part I of the *Advision*. Christine adds this gloss to remind readers that although the images may "appert aucunement obscure" (3), there is much to be gained from them: "souventefois soubz figure de metaphore, c'est a dire de parole couverte, sont muciees maintes secretes sciences et pures veritez" (3).[140] The complex representational strategies of Part I, which flirt with allegory, organological metaphor, and visual imagery, help illuminate the experimental, affective possibilities afforded by Libera's allegorical body. Amidst these other restless and vivid images,

[139] For an overview of the scholarship on these two aspects of the *Advision*, see Liliane Dulac and Christine Reno's synopsis in "The *Livre de l'Advision Cristine*" (199-214).

[140] In many ways, the images of Part I are most recognizable within the tradition of mystical writing, and the fact that Christine calls this her "vision" makes this connection to mystical writing even more convincing. In *God and the Goddesses*, Barbara Newman cautions against the distinction between "authentic" mystical visions and "literary" fictional visions, proposing instead the categories of "ephiphanic" and "heuristic" visions. She explains that "An epiphanic vision can be defined as a spiritual or imaginative experience, often mysterious and unexpected, whose meaning can be teased out by meditation, theological reflection, and exegetical practices such as allegoresis. A heuristic vision, on the other hand, is a rhetorical means to explore the implications of an idea and express it more vividly" (300). Newman further notes that these two kinds of vision often co-exist in the same text. This is a productive model for understanding the complexity of Part I of the *Advision*, as well as the function of its explanatory gloss.

Libera's damaged body resonates with the processes of decay and renewal that Christine visualizes in Part I.[141]

We may not automatically think of allegorical figures as being particularly empathetic or easy to identify with on a personal level. Gerson's portrayal of Chastity in the *Traité* as a sympathetic figure who intimately implicates readers in the harm she suffers offers an intriguing example of cultivating a personal relationship with an allegorical figure—all the more so because Gerson means for Chastity to mirror the affective relationships that he believes readers cultivate with the figure of the lover in the *Rose*. Within the context of the challenging representational strategies of Part I of the *Advision*, Libera's experimental allegorical body pushes the boundaries of such affective relationships. In this chapter, I will argue that Christine de Pizan experiments with the allegorical limits of Libera's body in order to draw on the plasticity of Christ's constantly recreated body. Specifically, Christine exposes Libera's body in order to draw on the devotional techniques of Passion meditational texts that so richly engaged readers in an experiential knowledge of Christ's suffering. In doing so, Christine draws her readers into an affective experience of the body politic, thus transforming the figurative representation of this collective body into a site of communal relations and practices. In the first part of this chapter, I will focus on the intimate experience of Libera's suffering, which poignantly echoes Machaut's language of political suffering in the *Confort d'ami*. The second part of this chapter, I will examine how Christine appends the explanatory

[141] Daisy Delogu notes a similar tension between organological metaphors and allegorical representations of political communities in many of Deschamp's poems: "The proliferation both of organological metaphors of the body politic and of allegorical representations of the kingdom as a mother constitute different, though related, attempts to refashion ideals of royal rule and conduct such that kingdom could continue to exist and to function, even in the absence of the king" (61). See "Figuring the French Body Politic," in her forthcoming book *Power, Gender, and Lineage in Late Medieval France: 'Douce France' and the University of Paris, 'fille du roy'*.

gloss to Part I of the *Advision* at a later date in order to challenge her readers to understand Libera's suffering as fully their own through a more personalized devotional interpretation of the text. This gloss powerfully reimagines allegorical interpretation as a means for both personal transformation and social engagement. Through these affective interpretive practices, Libera's body becomes a locus for affective community in ways that recall the lessons of Gerson's *Traité contre le Roman de la Rose*.

Reading and Writing the Body

Composed in 1405 during a period of intense literary output, the *Advision Cristine* is the last of Christine de Pizan's allegorical works. Having produced the monumental *Mutacion de Fortune* two years prior, she had also recently completed her *Cité des dames,* the *Livre des trois Vertus*, and the *Livre des fais et bonnes meurs du sage roy Charles V*. Within the framework of a prose dream vision, the *Advision* recounts the three stages of a journey completed by the autobiographical narrator, Christine. In Part I, Christine recounts how Christine journeys from birth to the moment where she meets and converses with Libera. This noble lady's lengthy complaint occupies the rest of Part I and passes through three main stages: a narrative of Libera's origins and exploits, the revelation of her present woes, and an apocalyptic vision of her future. In the second section of the *Advision*, Christine moves into a university milieu where she encounters Dame Opinion, who schools the narrator on the dangerous factionalism and ultimate uncertainty of philosophical learning in the universities. Philosophy will later be rehabilitated in the third and final section of the *Advision*, where Christine walks into a brightly-lit contemplative space and voices her own complaint to Dame Philosophie, who

transforms into Dame Théologie over the course of her efforts to comfort the lamenting narrator.

Before examining the devotional strategies at work in Christine's portrayal of Libera's body, it will be useful to remember that Christine was no stranger to devotional writing. Many of her religious works fall into more recognizable devotional genres, such as her prayers, glossed penitential psalms, and a Passion narrative.[142] Christine used several of these religious works to address contemporary events in the Hundred Years War, thus bending devotional experiences to the aid and comfort of readers in difficult political circumstances.[143] Christine's more traditional religious works echo the consolatory lessons of the *Confort d'ami*, in which Machaut repeatedly exhorts Charles of Navarre's to turn to prayer as a source of comfort during his difficult life experiences. That Christine de Pizan was adept at exploiting devotional writing in response to worldly upheavals becomes clear in Part III of the *Advision* itself, in which Lady Philosophie—in the end revealed to be Dame Théologie—administers Boethian-style comfort to the lamenting narrator, ultimately concluding that human happiness can be found in abandonment of worldly cares in favor of personal contemplation of the Trinity and the truths of Christianity (140). The devotional tenor of Part I, however, differs markedly from this final section's meditation on the abstract beauty and truth of the Trinity. Instead, Part I draws on devotional techniques that are anchored in the literalness of

[142] For more information on Christine's devotional works, see Maureen Boulton, "'Nous deffens'" (215-227).
[143] For example, Maureen Boulton points out that Christine's *Sept psaumes allégorisés* are innovative in the sense that they "embraced the entire social structure of the French kingdom, even as it reflected on the humanity of God" ("'Nous deffens'" 221). Both the *Epistre de la prison de vie humaine* and the *Heures de contemplation* addressed women readers who suffered greatly from political upheavals (223). See also Suzanne Conklin Akbari's reading of Christine's biography of Charles V as an example of what she calls "devotional allegory." ("Devotional and Political Allegory" 283-313).

suffering bodies, the experience of penitence, and the forging of affective bonds between members of a community.

This emphasis on the communal and political surfaces in Part I through Christine's use of Passion devotion techniques. Discussing the social implications of Passion devotion more generally, R.N. Swanson has argued that "because the Passion's requirements and message affected links between humans as well as between God and mankind, Passion devotion might be exploited for purposes which apparently have little connection with spirituality" (27). Because Passion devotion focused so heavily on Christ's humanity and the effects of sin on a corporeal body, it became a medium for cultivating personal feelings of compassion, guilt, and love—feelings that could then inform ethical action toward other human beings.[144] These personal transformations occur as readers vividly imagine how their individual sins add to Christ's suffering. The meditative reader watched as the effect of sins, committed in and through their own body, took visual form on Christ's body (Barratt 61). Yet this intimacy is also collective because Christ suffers on the Cross for all of humanity's cumulative misdeeds. Even as there is an intimate relationship between the body of the sinner and Christ's, there is also always a communal element that asks Christians to think of their compassion—and wrongdoing—as fundamentally relational (Mueller 200-1). In this sense, Passion devotion is deeply social not simply because it transforms individual ethical behavior, but also because it asks readers to imagine their sins in relation to the Christian community. Jean Gerson succinctly explains this relational nature of both sin and compassion in his

[144] In *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*, Sarah McNamer argues that Passion meditations "had serious, practical work to do: to teach their readers, through iterative affective performance, how to feel" (2).

widely read sermon, the *Ad Deum vadit*, spoken before the French royal court on April 13, 1403:

> Tu repliqueras icy et diras que j'argue tres bien si Jhesus estoit mort pour toy sauver seulement. Mais nenni; il est mort pour tout l'humaine lignaige, pour tous hommes passes, presens, et avenir. [...] Il t'a rachete, c'est certain, si a toi ne tient, et t'a rachete aussi parfaitement comme s'il eust souffert pour autre quelconque que pour toi. Puis donc qu'il t'a fait ce bien icy parfaitement et souffisammment, vouldrois tu bien qu'il n'eust fait le pareil a quelconque autre homme, fust a ton pere, fust a ta mere, fust aux autres de ton lignage? Jamais tu ne seroies si felon, envieux ou mal avaricieux que tu le voulsisses. [...] Si appert clairement, o devotes personnes, comment nous tous, en particulier et en commun, devons toujours par penitence, de ce deuil avoir remembrance. (7.2:455)[145]

Gerson's rhetorical question—"Did Christ not die in order to save me in particular?"—emphasizes the collective implications of individual sin, as well as the all-encompassing nature of his grace and compassion. It is precisely this relational quality of Christ's bodily suffering that enables Christine de Pizan to extend Passion devotion techniques to Libera's laments about the mistreatment endured at the hands of her children.

Libera's complaint occupies the largest portion of Part I of the *Advision*, beginning with Christine's encounter with this crowned noble lady, who instructs her to "apreste parchemin, ancre, et plume et escrips les parolles yssans de ma poitrine" (16). Libera then describes her triumphal beginnings as a golden plant, transported from Rome to flourish in a new land, where she is cultivated by both good and bad "gouvernemens" (20). In the next section of the complaint, Libera shifts to the present tense, and in a sustained moment of lyric intensity, describes the wrongs done to her by her children, lifting her dress to expose her damaged body. At this point, the dialogue between Christine and Libera moves into an architectural space, as Libera requests that Christine

[145] Gerson's *Ad deum vadit* was a sermon on the Passion delivered at the Church of Saint Bernard in Paris on Good Friday of 1403, but copies of the text circulated widely throughout the 15th and 16th centuries. As Maureen Boulton points out, "the presence of copies of this sermon in six different private libraries attests to its success as a devotional text" (Maureen Boulton, "Burgundian Devotional Manuscripts" 262).

peer through the windows of a prison to witness the deplorable captivity of the three virtues Reason, Justice, and Chivalry. Libera then explains that a "vent de perdicion" blows throughout her lands, threatening especially the "tres puissans qui sont logiez es haulz dongions de ma terre recevant le vent de perdition" (32). After this section, the complaint transitions to the third and final part, where Libera uses a future-oriented apocalyptic tone to explain how the prophecies of the Old Testament show that God will punish the vices in her land.

In the following pages, I will argue that in the second section of the complaint, which focuses on Libera's damaged body and the imprisoned virtues, Christine draws heavily on devotional literary techniques of dramatic dialogue and visual description to invite her readers into an affective reading experience. By foregrounding this affective experience of Libera's lamentation, Christine departs from similar depictions of France as a suffering mother-widow figure from this period. For example, earlier versions of France's complaint by Eustache Deschamps are formatted almost entirely as lyric poetry, and thus while they feature direct discourse, they lack a true dialogic partner.[146] Deschamps' lyric effusions thus recall Jerusalem's lamentations in that they incite compassion and pity through first-person emotional outpourings, not through sustained descriptions of physical damage. In Alain Chartier's later interpretation of this topos in

[146] In their notes to Part I.14, lines 23-58, Christine Reno and Liliane Dulac point out some of Christine's sources for this image of a suffering allegorical female figure:"La mère meurtrie que dépeint Christine s'inscrit dans la tradition des dames éplorées telles la Philosophie de Boèce (I, prose I), la Nature d'Alain de Lille dont la robe est déchirée (*De Planctu Naturae*, prose I, prose IV; *PL* 210, 437 et 452), la Rome "vedova e sola" de Dante (*Purg*. VI), l'Eglise de Philippe de Mézières (*Le Songe du Vieil Pelerin*, I, p286-87), et la France meurtrie d'Eustache Deschamps (*Ballades*, t. I, 141, 159, 164; t. II, 255; t. III, 337). La tradition se prolongera avec Alain Chartier dans la figure de la France du *Quadrilogue Invectif*" (155). For an overview of the allegorical representations of France as a female figure, see Lilliane Dulac, "La représentation de la France chez Eustache Deschamps et Christine de Pizan," Thierry Lassabatère, "La personnification de la France" (483-504) and Daisy Delogu's forthcoming book *Power, Gender, and Lineage in Late Medieval France: 'Douce France' and the University of Paris, 'fille du roy'*.

the *Quadrilogue invectif*, France speaks her complaint to her three children—namely the people, the nobility, and the clergy—who are also personified in the text. In the prologue to the *Quadrilogue*, Chartier explains that in having France speak to each of the three estates of society, he expects each reader to identify with one of them:

> Et je, meu de compassion, pour ramener à mémoire l'estat de nostre infelicité et a chascun ramentevoir ce qui lui en touche, ay composé ce petit traictié que je appelle *Quadrilogue*, pour ce que en quatre personnages est ceste oeuvre comprise, et est dit *invectif* en tant qu'il procede par maniere d'envaissement de paroles et par forme de reprendre. (5)

As in Deschamps' poetry, Chartier's readers are the presumed interlocutors of France's lamentations, although in the *Quadrilogue* they are relegated to a substantially more passive role than readers of lyric poetry, as their responses are scripted into the text itself. Although they do so in different ways, both Deschamps' and Chartier's renditions of France's lamentations thus erase the presence of the poet/narrator as interlocutor and instead expect the complaint to be spoken to a reader outside the text. Both of these late medieval writers thus draw on the rhetorical forcefulness of political and courtly *complaintes* that recall Jerusalem's laments and move readers to compassion through their lyric expressions of grief.

While in the *Advision* much of Libera's lengthy complaint uses a "langaige angoisseux" (25) similar to Deschamps and Chartier to move readers to feelings of pity and fear, Christine also turns to the devotional techniques of dramatic, quasi-theatrical dialogue and descriptive visualizations in order to craft a heightened affective reading experience. Christine first develops this section of the complaint into a dramatic dialogue by insistently foregrounding her own role as privileged witness to Libera's suffering. She occasionally questions Libera or offers her comfort, and often interjects with descriptions

of her own reaction to the things she sees, as when she writes, “Comme femme foible remplie de merveilleuse pitié, comme pasmee et couverte de larmes, quant parler pos, pris au mieulx que scoz a conforter la desolee” (26). The dialogic framework of this portion of the complaint allows Christine to transcribe her own visual experience of this pain and suffering. It is precisely during the moments of Libera’s greatest lyric intensity that Pizan highlights the intimacy of the conversation between Libera and Christine, thus positioning readers as spectators, not interlocutors. For example, Libera exhorts Christine to cry along with her, based on the closeness of their relationship, saying, “ ‘[...] pleures avec moy par vraie amistié, pitieuse de veoir les jours de ma tribulacion!” (26). Later, when Christine encourages Libera to continue talking, it is on grounds of their familiarity: “Et ne vous soit estrange de dire a moy vostre familiere et privee les faultes de vos porteurs” (26). In other words, readers witness an intimate conversation between two familiar women. While explaining how her children have hurt her, it is clear that the complaint alludes to the readers, but Libera never loses sight of Christine in her efforts to impress the experience of her suffering upon her privileged and intimate friend. This decision to structure Libera’s lyric complaint as a dialogue that is addressed to another figure in the text and not directly to the reader allows Christine to exploit the full dramatic possibilities of the reader’s position as witnesses to an almost theatrical spectacle.

Christine further enhances the theatric quality of the dialogue by creating a sense of architectural staging. Critics such as Jessica Brantley and Seth Lerer have posited a distinction between scenic and unscenic dialogues—that is, those that are spatially located or not—as well as a distinction between horizontal dialogues where each speaker

is of the same social or religious standing, and vertical ones, where one speaker has greater authority (Lerer 47 and Brantley 213). Christine accomplishes a horizontal dialogue by emphasizing the familiarity between the two women. The scenic staging is realized by the spectator's viewpoint. When lamenting to Christine that her ladies in waiting—the three virtues, Reason, Justice, and Chivalry—are being held captive by several hag-like vices, Libera invites Christine to peer through a window: " 'que mieulx me croies, veuil que le sens de ta veue ait experience du vray de ma parole.' Adonc, comme elle ouvrist une petite fenestrelle, me dist: 'Regarde les prisonniers'" (27-28). This passage reiterates the spectator position of the readers, as they witness Christine peering into the window. Her gaze enables a visualizing of images of suffering.

This dramatic quality of the dialogue heightens its affective impact by shifting the rhetoric from expressing grief to one of showing and describing pain in ways that recall Passion narratives. In both the *Advision* and many Passion meditations, readers are expected to play the role of spectators and experience the suffering of another as if they themselves were present at the scene. In Christine's own Passion meditation, which she composed some fifteen years after the *Advision*, she both imagines herself at the event of the crucifixion and invites her readers to do the same. Foregrounding her presence beside Christ, she writes "Helas! mon doulz Sauveur, et s'il a en moy goute d'amour, ne dois je desirer contemplativement que je y eusse esté en presence, et que, adonc te oyant dire ces piteuses paroles, tantost je feusse sailly sus: 'Veez me cy present, mon Seigneur!'" (64).[147] In this passage, Christine clarifies that her presence at the scene is made possible

[147] Citations of Christine de Pizan's Passion meditation are taken from the article by L. Dulac and E. Richards, "Affective and Cognitive Contemplation in Christine de Pizan's *Les Heures de contemplacion sur la Passion de Nostre Seigneur Jhesucrist.*" *Les Heures de contemplacion* remains unpublished, although Liliane Dulac and René Stuip are preparing an edition, forthcoming from Honoré Champion.

by the mechanisms of meditation and contemplation ("desirer contemplativement"). She also invites her readers into this same act of meditative presence by developing their visual experience of the scene: "Considerés le et ung pou ycy vous arrêtez, le voyant par grant compassion sur celle croix mort et pâli pour nous" (63). Christine's presence at the Cross, made possible by meditative reading, becomes a model for her audience so that they experience a similar devotional presence.

Christine is of course not alone in placing herself at the events of the crucifixion, as numerous devotional texts stage the events of the Passion in this manner. In many cases, readers interpolated themselves into the emotional experience of the Passion by focusing on the presence and reactions of Mary at the Cross. Rachel Fulton-Brown has convincingly shown that Mary's emotional outpourings to Christ's suffering were a model for devotional responses to meditations on the Passion. She argues that because Christ's pain was potentially incommensurable as he suffered for all human kind, Mary's pain was a more approachable point of entry for experiencing the events of the crucifixion: "Accordingly, it was her [Mary's] pain that provided the model for compassionate response to Christ's pain, her pain that taught Christians what it was like to have seen Christ die on the Cross" (199). Christine places herself in a Marian role in *Les Heures de contemplacion* both by modeling an emotional response and by framing this response as an act of meditative reading that is equally available to her audience. Echoing once again Mary's role in the spectacle of the crucifixion Christine insists in the *Advision* on her privileged intimacy with Libera and details her own tearful response to seeing the lady's damaged body. Readers of the *Advision* understand the gravity of Libera's suffering as well as their own affective engagement with the scene through

Christine's role. In Libera's words, Christine is her "compaigne de […] deuil," (26)—and Christine's readers are urged to join the company of Libera's mourning friends.

Louise D'Arcens has given an insightful discussion of the ways in which Christine's lachrymose persona in many of her works augments her political authority through its connection to Mary's emotional outpourings at the Cross (201-26). In her overview of this Marian author persona, D'Arcens does not discuss Christine's role in the *Advision*, despite the fact that tears play an important role in both Christine's understanding of Libera's suffering as well as her readers access to this experience. D'Arcens's omission of this example can perhaps be explained by the fact that Christine substantially revises the tearful nature of her Marian role in the *Advision*. In those texts studied by D'Arcens, Christine expresses herself in a manner similar to Mary—*as if* she were Mary. In contrast, Christine is Libera's intimate interlocutor—instead of crying as Libera, she cries with her.[148]

The specific reworking of Christine's Marian role in the *Advision* can be helpfully understood through the variety of empathetic Marian roles that were available to medieval devotional writers. As Thomas Bestul has argued, male writers often wrote devotional texts by imagining themselves as the interlocutors, scribes, and mediators of Mary's crippling, often mute emotional response to her son's death (123). Devotional texts composed by men, rather than women, often give Mary a much larger presence in Passion scenes, although they tend to augment her role in order to emphasize "her great

[148] As Libera's complaint progresses, Christine specifically uses her role as intimate interlocutor to shift out of her Marian role—even going so far as to tell Libera to stop crying because it doesn't befit her stature and isn't becoming (36).

physical weakness, immobility, and muteness" (Bestul 123).[149] Imagining that Mary is overcome by grief and unable to speak on her own, these writers interrogate the suffering mother and then speak on behalf of Mary about her experiences. For example, in the *Ad Deum vadit*, Gerson often directs questions to Mary about her feelings at particular moments, as when he writes "O piteuse mere, est icy la doulce nourriture que vous faisiez à votre benoit fils Jhesus? Sont ce icy les tres chastes baisers, les devots embrassements que vous lui souliez faire?" (466). These questions allow Gerson to briefly inhabit Mary's role at the Cross as he imagines what might have been her feelings, words, and response. There is a long tradition of this style of questioning and speaking on behalf of Mary, and Gerson no doubt had in his mind the "Lamentation on the Blessed Virgin" of one of his favorite authors, Saint Bernard. In the "Lamentations," Bernard specifically uses the act of writing down Mary's responses to his questions as a way to inhabit her experiences. Speaking to Mary in the "Lamentations," Bernard writes:

> Yet I beseech you, pour out for me those tears which you had at his passion, and, so they might flow more copiously, let us exchange words with each other concerning the passion of your son, my lord and my God. Tell me, I beg, the true sequence of events, you who are virgin and mother of the highest trinity. She responded: "What you seek inspires compunction and is very sorrowful; but because I have been glorified, I cannot weep. You, however, write with tears those things which I have pondered with great pain. (Bestul 169)

While Christine does share Libera's tears, she also portrays herself questioning Libera, comforting her, and writing down her complaint, much as Gerson, Bernard, and others shared Mary's lamentations as devout interlocutors and writers. As Libera instructs Christine to "apreste parchemin, ancre, et plume et escrips les parolles yssans de ma

[149] Susan McNamer has recently revised this understanding of Mary's emotional role at the cross, arguing that "to perform compassion [...] is to feel like a woman" (3) and that her hysterical tears can be seen as a nascent vernacular ethic of protest to the destruction of human bodies, and thus an early expression of the peace movements in the 15th century (see Chapter 5).

poitrine" (16), the narrator occupies precisely this kind of Marian role, where writing becomes a way to imagine, inhabit, and share with readers Libera's intimate experiences. Like these devotional writers who question Mary to draw out their own visions of her experiences, Christine goads Libera to continue speaking when she falls mute from grief (36). Christine may well have taken on this more masculine kind of Marian role because it allows her to direct Libera away from her emotional outpouring toward the chastising and apocalyptic tone that characterizes the final portion of the complaint. I will more fully explore this shift in Christine's role and Libera's tone in the second part of this chapter, where I argue that even as Christine seeks to engage her readers affectively in Libera's suffering, she does not pretend that tears alone can accomplish the reform of a kingdom.

Once Christine has created this privileged role for herself within Libera's complaint, she is able to draw on devotional visualization techniques as a way to invite readers into a meditational reading of Libera's body. Mary Carruthers has written extensively on the crafting of mental visual images in monastic meditational practices.[150] She argues that these images were used to further the mnemonic purposes of the texts, as well as to engage the monks in slow, ruminative reading in which they actively participated in fleshing out the images that were suggestively described in the texts.[151] Similarly, Christine invokes this mental picture making by presenting her encounter with Libera's body to readers' own visualizations, both through the use of diectic discourse

[150] In particular, see *The Craft of Thought* 116-170.

[151] The participatory element of this meditative reading is a central tenet of *The Craft of Thought*. To give an example, when discussing Quintillian, she writes, "Like Augustine after him, Quintillian also supposed that a mental picture would vary in its specifics from one individual to another [...] he assumes that each person's mental 'picture' will likely contain details that are not even in the author's words: an audience member seems to see 'not merely the actors in the scene...but even to imagine to himself other details that the orator does not describe.' The emphasis is not on faithfully 'illustrating' the words, as we might demand, but on making some 'picture' in order to feel, to remember, and thus to know" (131-2).

("voy cy, voy cy" and "regardez") and the ensuing lengthy description. The kind of interior visualization discussed by Carruthers represents a general style of monastic reading that undeniably marked late medieval Passion devotion with its participatory and imaginative reading. As Laurelle LeVert explains, late medieval Passion meditations "[create] a mental image which is entirely subjective and which enables one to be present as both a participant and an observer in the unfolding drama" (73). Christine draws on these participatory Passion descriptions and invites her readers to flesh out Libera's body by offering suggestive details. The passage we saw at the beginning of this chapter is worth revisiting in order to fully explore its visual elements:

> Adonc la tres venerable princesse haulce le pan de sa vesteure et a moy desceuevre le nu de ses costez disant: 'Regarde!' Lors, ma veue tournee celle part, comme j'avisasse les costez blans et tendres par force de presse et de deffoulement noircis et betez et par lieux encavez jusque aux entrailles, non mie tranchiez de coups d'espee maiz froissiez par force de grans foules. (26)

By telling readers that Libera lifts her dress up far enough to show her sides and belly ("costez" and "entrailles"), Christine suggests that she exposes the entire lower portion of her body without actually describing it in its entirety. Undoubtedly a gesture of modesty on Christine's part, this suggestive exposure of Libera's lower body nevertheless invites readers to imagine a more fully damaged body. Furthermore, Christine also describes Libera's body as sunken down to her bowels "par lieux," thus leaving the extent of the beating and trampling deliberately open and allowing readers to fill in all of the places that are marked and bruised.[152] By crafting an image with just enough detail, Christine

[152] In this sense, the *Advision* recalls Carruther's discussion of Prudentius' violent allegorical battle between the vices and virtues, the *Psychomachia*. Carruthers writes, "Prudentius' images are painted for the mind's eye. Effort is made not to overwhelm the student with detail: the narrative details are few but they are particularly vivid and specific. This accords with a basic technique of making such images: one must be careful not to overwhelm the mental eye with an excess of images" (*Craft of Thought* 148).

thus invites her readers to engage meditationally with Libera's body and linger over it, filling it in imaginatively.

This kind of suggestive image making may seem at odds with many accounts of the Passion, which are obsessively precise in narrating the beatings and nailing of Christ to the cross—even going so far as to describe how his wounds dried with bits of clothing stuck in them. However, different kinds of images are available to devotional Passion texts, such that the technical and precise physiological descriptions often fade out of view in the more meditational moments of the text. Indeed, it is worth noting that Passion narratives, even if they are more generally understood as meditational texts, often alternate between narration of the events and meditational moments, which are sometimes signaled by rubrics in the text. For example, in a Brussels manuscript containing several Passion meditations including Gerson's *Ad Deum vadit* (B.R. 09081-09082), an anonymous text gives the following rubric just after recounting the death of Jesus: "Cy parle d'une moult notable contemplation ou salutaire meditation sur le mistere de la tres doulloureuse passion de nostre doulx saulveur et redempteur jesus" (fol. 76v). This devotional Passion text thus articulates a moment of meditation as distinct from the more narrative sections. Similarly, in the *Passion Isabeau*, the narrator offers a relatively precise account of the flogging of Jesus:

> [...] les autres ce estoient chainetes de fer, et
> au bout de chacune y avoit petis crochets de fer
> trenchans et agus affin que a chacun coup emportassent
> a soy ung lopin de la char de Jhesus. Si
> vont ces deux fors hommes atout ces escourgees
> commencier a fraper, et frapoient et refrapoient,
> puis l'un, puis l'autre, puis tous deulx ensemble. (lines 2578-2584)

These lines emphasize the exact kind of instrument used, the chunks of flesh taken off, and the narrative sequencing of each strike. However, the author then stops his narrative account and offers a meditation, as signaled by these instructions to the reader:

> Et en ce pas yci doit toute creature chretienne
> qui a goute de sentement recuillir toutes
> ces pensees et penser bien cordialement et regarder
> des yeux de son coeur son Dieu et son seigneur mis pour
> soi en si povre estat. (lines 2585-2589)

This meditative moment in the *Passion Isabeau* invokes the slowness of Carruther's account of monastic reading, and while the meditation that follows continues to focus on the exact same visual description of the beating of Christ, it withdraws from the narration of actions and the minutiae of details and instead offers something akin to a composite image or panoramic *vue d'ensemble*:

> [...] Pensons comment ces
> fors bateurs en frapant et en refrapant
> renouveloient, coup sur coup, plaie sur plaie,
> ouverture sur ouverture, et dessiroient toute
> celle tendre chair! (lines 2602-2606).

The description of physical suffering arrests the reader by providing an image that slowly takes form through cumulative blows, a process over which the reader's gaze can linger without being swept along by narrative. Christine creates a similar meditative image by suggesting a full body for readers to flesh out, but also by rendering the repeated damage done to Libera's body in an evocative image of accumulated blows. To render the cumulative effect of the blows that have been enacted upon Libera, she insistently chooses the adjectival use of the past participle: "noircis," "betez," "encavez," and "froissiez," thus lightening the effect of past tense narration to focus on the present tense state of Libera's body. Christine's crafting of this image thus invites much the same

meditative reading experience that her readers would have been accustomed to finding in a devotional text.

Christine's use of these devotional techniques has several important implications for the *Advision* as a politically engaged text. If much of the devotional nature of the complaint surfaces in its ability to engage readers in processes of visualization, Christine quite succinctly connects these visual elements to a distinct purpose, that of giving access to experiential knowledge. Before giving visual descriptions of both Libera's exposed body and the scene of the imprisoned virtues, Christine stresses that in witnessing these things, she understands through experience. Thus as Libera prepares to lift her dress, she says to Christine: "Et que experience te face certainne de la verité de mes narracions, non obstant ma beauté, de prime face regarde et avise les plaies de mes costez et de mes membres" (26). In other words, Libera could continue to narrate her woes at length, but she decides to expose her body in order to impress her suffering upon Christine in a qualitatively different way. She insists on the same sort of experiential lesson when she asks Christine to peer through the window at the imprisoned virtues: "veuil que le sens de ta veue ait experience du vray de ma parole" (27). In the visual description of the sadly mistreated virtues that follows, Christine—and, as a result, her readers as well—experience a sense of sorrow for the figures of Reason, Justice, and Chivalry in their captivity. In distinction to the visualization of Libera's body, Christine does not relate their bodily suffering in detail and instead focuses on the injustice of their imprisonment. For example, she describes how Chivalry rests her head in Lust's lap, who puts her to sleep by caressing her head and singing lullabies. Chivalry repeatedly tries to rouse herself when crowds come to shout in her ear and bang on her shield, but Lust pulls her

back down by the neck and again lulls her to sleep (28-9). The experience that Libera seems to want to impress on Christine at this point is not so much shared compassion in their suffering as it is a sense of pity and anger on their behalf. Christine's response to this scene differs substantially from the tears with which she greets Libera's body, as she exclaims in anger, "Et je, qui veant celle faulse solicitude ne me pos me taire, dis a ma maistresse: 'Dame, pour Dieu, me dictes comment s'appelle cest ennemie de vertu!'" (30). Different experiential lessons can be learned from the two distinct moments of witnessing Libera's body and the imprisoned virtues. The varying amount of descriptive detail and narrative explanation creates a distinction between these two scenes of visualization. She structures the scene of Libera's body with enough detail to invite her readers to linger over it, but leaves it as a true image, without much narrative development beyond straightforward description. The scene of the virtues, however, involves the narration of movement and action, and thus invites far less, or perhaps a different kind of, imaginative involvement on the part of readers.

Much has been made of Christine's experiential epistemology, but we have failed to notice how succinctly she connects this mode of understanding to the specific processes of meditative reading and visualization techniques. The *Advision* in particular has often been appreciated as a text whose primary concern is one of articulating different epistemological stances. For example, Thelma Fenster explores the points of contact in the *Advision* between experience as a way of knowing and theoretical speculation, which is acquired through book learning and clerical discourse (214).[153] Similarly, both Earl Jeffrey Richards and Benjamin Semple have argued that Christine reclaimed a new kind of philosophical discourse for herself by opposing embodied experience as a means of

[153] Mary Anne Case makes a similar argument in "The Authority of Experience."

understanding to the more theoretical and speculative discourses of clerical culture.[154] These discussions of Christine's experiential epistemology helpfully elucidate the rise of opposing theories of knowledge in the late Middle Ages and Christine's self-fashioning as an authoritative voice, but they rarely consider how she incorporates such experiential learning into her imaginative writings for the benefit of her readers. Furthermore, we have yet to appreciate how extensively she draws on devotion, in both her own reading techniques and the reading experiences she crafts for her readers, as a privileged source of experiential knowledge. Because devotion is itself the practice of cultivating personal experience of the revelatory truths of Christianity, it possesses a sophisticated set of rhetorical devices to help Christians learn by experience. For Jean Gerson, ever the proponent of engaging in penitential experiences, devotion is an indispensable step to understanding difficult, speculative knowledge. As D. Catherine Brown explains in *Pastor and Laity in the Theology of Jean Gerson*:

> The most interesting and comprehensive vernacular discussion of mystical union is the 1402 sermon on the Trinity. [...] Up to this point the sermon has taken the form of a dialogue between Soul and Reason, but now a new character appears, Devotion or Loving Contemplation. Devotion, says Gerson, can learn the secrets of the Trinity more perfectly, profoundly and intimately than can reason. 'Love enters where knowledge stays outside.' (193)

Throughout his writings on mystical theology, Gerson emphasizes the role of affective devotion as an epistemological necessity for understanding the theoretical concepts of theology. Christine, however, pushes one step further than Gerson and applies this devotional hermeneutic to the abstract concept of the body politic.

Within the realm of late medieval devotional reading, Passion meditations are particularly clear about how they expect the process of visualization to result in an

[154] Semple articulates this tension in the *Advision* with particular clarity in "The Critique of Knowledge as Power" (119). See also Richards50-51.

experiential understanding of the meaningfulness of the crucifixion. In the same meditational section of the *Passion Isabeau* that we have already encountered, the author stresses the importance of lingering on the images, writing "vescy/ choses bien a penser et bien a empraindre / en nos cuers non pas en pensant ne en courant,/ mais bien a loisir et a longue pensee" (lines 2613-2616). Staying with this image and meditating upon it is thus an act that allows the image to be taken up into the heart of the reader ("empraindre en nos cuers"). In his *Ad Deum vadit*, Gerson returns repeatedly to the idea that he hopes to soften the hearts of his audience by asking them to remember the crucifixion with him: "Et tu quiconques as cueur piteux et devot et religieux, mets a present devant les yeux de ta pensee, en la clarté de la vrai foy l'image et la piteuse semblance de notre Sauveur Jhesus qui tellement est lie pour toi" (467). Similarly, in the *Montagne de Contemplation* Gerson offers a laundry list of available methods for entering into such affective thought processes. Among the various methods he proposes, Gerson pauses to pay particular attention to Passion meditation: "Et un docteur plus nouviel, en un livre qui se nomme l'esguillon d'amour, tient et traite ceste maniere, et par especial de la passion Jhesucrist, et monstre comment tout y est trouvé" (47). Here, Gerson valorizes one of the most influential Passion meditations of the later Middle Ages—the *Stimulus Amoris*—in terms of the epistemological, experiential possibilities that it offers. Devotional texts constantly recommended thoughtful and intense meditation on the Passion in these terms: as a prime means for softening the heart and gaining a full experiential sense of what the Passion meant for the salvation of each Christian. Discussing the affective usefulness of meditational picture-making in monastic contexts, where it was known as *compunctio cordis*, Carruthers writes, "as the praxis of meditation developed, *compunctio cordis*

became elaborated in a variety of 'ways' to induce strong emotions of grief and/or fear, including an emotion-filled imagining as one recites or chants the Psalms, the Passion, and other suitable texts; strongly emotionally reflection upon one's sins and sinful state; and the specific tasks of remembering Hell and remembering death in vigorous detail" (103). We have often been accustomed to thinking of these kinds of "emotion-filled imaginings" solely in terms of the devotional ritual and the spiritual aims of medieval religiosity. However, these affective responses were readily available to late medieval writers as a distinct way of knowing that could be adapted to less patently religious contexts. Christine's deployment of the meditational techniques of Passion narratives in order to engage her readers in an affective, experiential lesson of Libera's suffering testifies to the rich experiential epistemology of late medieval devotional practice as well as its applicability in other contexts.

Christine draws on Passion meditations in particular to craft Libera's complaint because this body, like Christ's, suffers the cumulative blows of many people's wrongdoings—she is "froissiez par force de grans foules." Furthermore, just as Christ's body represents all of humanity, Christine explains in the prefatory gloss that the figure of Libera expresses "la terre," "l'ame raisonable," and "France" all at once (7). In turning to the techniques of the Passion to engage her readers with Libera's suffering, Christine also fundamentally unmoors this devotional experience from the immediate concerns of late medieval religiosity. Yet, because Libera's body is not Christ's, she cannot be a true object of devotion. Because she lacks the theological ability to redeem humanity, her suffering is not capable of beauty as was Christ's. Readers cannot gaze upon her suffering to the point of her total destruction, because there would simply be no

meaning in her death. In this sense, Libera requires recovery. After having witnessed her body, Christine describes her own distress and her response to Libera: "[...] adonc moy toute esmarie, considerant le nouvel cas piteux et non honnorable, que a mere tant venerable telz bleceures fussent procurees par ses porteures, en disant: "Dame, pour Dieu, couvrez cheus!" (26). Where Christ's body remains perpetually exposed for the visual scrutiny and salvation of late medieval Christians, Libera settles her dress and carries on with the difficulty of her experience. Withdrawing from this moment of intimate disclosure, Libera launches into the final portion of her complaint, in which she speaks a long chastisement of her children and a prophecy of the evils to come if they do not change their course. Christine, however, is not quite done with Libera. In an explanatory gloss that she appended at a later date to one manuscript of the *Advision*, Christine significantly deepens her readers' affective engagement with this captivating crowned lady.

Recovery and Penitential Relief

In this explanatory gloss, added on in a separate gathering at a later date to manuscript ex-Phillipps 128, Christine extends and complicates readers' implication in Libera's suffering by explaining that Part I of the *Advision* can be put to explicit devotional use.[155] Through this somewhat surprising gloss, Libera definitively parts ways with other allegorical representations of France by contemporary writers such as Eustache Deschamps and Alain Chartier because, as Christine explains in the gloss, Libera is not simply a representation of the kingdom of France, but also of "l'ame

[155] See the introduction to their critical edition of the *Livre de l'advision Cristine* (Champion 2001), where Reno and Dulac point out that the gloss appears in a separate 'cahier' and was added on later to the text They believe the gloss to be written in Christine's hand (XLI).

raisonable" and "la terre." This interpretation of Libera as a unitive figure for three different bodies accords more generally with the interpretive framework that Christine proposes in the prefatory gloss, where she explains that "la fiction de cestui livre se puet alegorisier triblement, c'est assavoir assimiller au monde general, qui est la terre, aussi a homme singulier et puis au royaume de France" (6). Ultimately, it is Christine's re-casting of Libera as *also* a representation of the individual human soul that opens the *Advision* to a true devotional use, not the affective strategies of Libera's body, which itself cannot be an object of devotion.

The most direct injunction to use the text devotionally appears after Christine has already explained that the image of Libera speaking her *complainte* to the narrator can be understood as either France speaking to Christine, the Earth speaking to Lady Righteousness, or the soul speaking to Reason (7). Following up on this explanation, Christine then glosses the dense figurative language of the complaint, explaining that Libera's description of her past as a flourishing golden plant represents either the early beginnings of Christianity on earth or the history of France up through the reign of Clovis. To explain the third interpretation of this image, which relates to "l'homme singulier," she states rather simply, "Item ce puet estre ramené a meditacions de l'ame devote" (8). The explanation that this image can be used for meditational purposes draws on the general schema of the "l'homme singulier" interpretations in the gloss, which offer descriptions of man's spiritual nature and the various states of devotional practice rather than the kinds of prescriptive and moralizing lessons that readers of Christine's oeuvre might more readily expect. Other glosses, such as "Item ce puet segnefier l'omme ja entré en perseverence de vertu qui ja sent la douceur de contemplacion" (7) or "Item, puet

segnefier l'ame et le corps ensemble" (10), reveal the extent to which treatment of the "homme singulier" easily invites such explicit instructions to use this section of the *Advision* as a devotional meditation.

We have perhaps failed to notice the instructional nature of the gloss "ce puet estre ramené a meditacions de l'ame devote" because the verb "ramener" is a remarkably polyvalent term that in some ways makes it unclear whether Christine instructs her readers to interpret the text as a mere representation of lamentation or as a text that speaks for and applies to her readers' own souls and which is therefore appropriate for their devotional meditations. In the introduction to their recent edition of *Le livre de l'advision Christine*, Liliane Dulac and Christine Reno note only four verbs that Christine uses to gloss her vision: "segnefier, exposer, prendre, et entendre" (lxxvi). In the pages that follow I will argue for the additional inclusion of the term "ramener" based on the specificity of Christine's use of this verb in the gloss, as well as the significant interpretive possibilities that it opens up for the *Advision* more generally. Christine makes use of the verb "ramener"three times, and in each case it is in order to elucidate the personal interpretation of Libera's lament, which, according to this gloss, represents the soul speaking to Reason. Here are the three examples where Christine uses this term:

> "Item tout ce puet estre deduit et ramené a l'ame et vie humaine selon perfection de vertu" (8).
>
> "Item ce puet estre ramené a meditacions de l'ame devote" (8).
>
> "Item, tout ce se puet ramener a homme singulierement" (9).

According to the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français*, "ramener" has many different definitions, with meanings ranging from "to bring back," "to restore," "to join," "to return to an anterior state," "to remind someone of something," "to represent something

to one's memory or mind," and "to apply one thing to another thing" (*DMF*, my translations). Given the polyvalence of the term "ramener," we could potentially propose translations such as "Likewise, this can be brought back to the meditations of the devout soul," or even, "this can be presented to the meditations of the devout soul." Because "ramener" signifies both applying interpretation *to the text* and applying the text *to oneself*, it challenges us to collapse the distinction between interpretation and other uses of the text that require personal reflection and reform. The peculiar alchemy of this term comes out most clearly in Part II of the *Advision* when Lady Opinion offers a lengthy meditation on first causes, which are in fact translations of Aquinas's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. In one particular passage, Christine renders Aquinas as "[…] car nulle chose n'est ramenee d'imperfait a perfait ou de puissance en fait, se non par aucun ens parfait, c'est a dire aucun chose etant de fait perfaicte" (73). For Christine, the verb "ramener" possesses the grammatical power to achieve the ontological shift between potentiality and actuality. If we extend this same functionality to Christine's use of the verb in the gloss, then the instruction "puet estre ramené a meditacions de l'ame devote" realizes a qualitative change in the interpretive status of the text, transforming this reading of the *Advision* from one of representation to one of use.

Two recent English translations of Christine's explanatory gloss illustrate the difficulty of deciphering the representational claims of the term "ramener." One translation renders this line as "It can moreover be *applied to* the meditations of the holy soul" (tr. Reno, emphasis added), while the other renders it as "likewise, this can *refer to* the meditations of the devout soul" (tr. McCleod and Willard, emphasis added. 15). To some extent, the distinction between "referring to" and "applying to" creates a false

dichotomy, because, as we have seen in the previous chapters, devotional reading focuses specifically on the personal application of what is represented in the text. These two translations crystalize the distinction between exegetical interpretive models, which seek to uncover the meanings of figures, and devotional reading, which concerns itself primarily with the literal level of the text and its applicability to the reader. In devotional meditational texts, readers intuitively understood representations of the soul as a mirror for their own spiritual instruction and use. As an example, we could think back to Jean Gerson's *Mendicité spirituelle*, in which a man converses with his own soul, or many of Gerson's prayers, which also script the soul's words to various intercessors and saints.[156] Given the currency of this sort of dialogic representation of the soul in meditational texts, the reminder to use the text devotionally in the gloss seems almost redundant. The devotional use of Libera's complaint draws on the general schema of the "individual man" in the gloss to tend toward a spiritual nature. Even when Christine explains this individual interpretation in places where she does not use the functional verb "ramener," the meanings nevertheless indicate devotional practice. For example, she explains that "Item ce puet segnefier l'omme ja entré en perserverance de vertu qui ja sent la douceur de contemlation" (7) and "Item, puet segnefier l'ame et le corps ensemble" (10). Perhaps readers would have intuitively understood the devotional implications of Libera's complaint, were the text of the *Advision* itself more obviously a devotional dialogue of the soul. As it stands, however, this portion of the text looks a lot more like one of Eustache Deschamps's lyric portrayals of France as a weeping mother and widow. In

[156] For example, there are these opening lines from a prayer by Gerson to Saint John the Evangelist: "Arreste toy, mon esprit, arreste toy, demeure. Voy qui te suit, qui te huche et appelle. Pour quoy refuy tu ton salut? Jusquez a quant seras tu miserable, fuitif par l'orrible desert, par la forest tenebreuse, sterile, seche et hideuse des vanités mundaines et des espinans cures terriennes?" (Ouy, "Trois prières" 33).

using the prefatory gloss to ask her readers both to interpret this complaint as their soul in dialogue with Reason and then to use the text devotionally, Christine demands a significantly more personal interpretation of the figure of France than Deschamps, Chartier, and others. In the conclusion, I will explore the larger implications of this coalescence of interpretive process and devotional experience. First, I would like to examine how this devotional function of the text enables a shift toward a more explicitly penitential language in the closing sections of Libera's lament and fundamentally alters the political aims of the text.

By asking her readers to understand Libera's body as the sufferings of their own soul, Christine changes readers' relationship to her pain from one of experiential involvement to one of penitential self-examination. Whereas the dramatic scene of bodily exposure allowed readers to gain an affective understanding of the ways that they have trampled and defiled Libera's communal body, the gloss enables them to further reflect on how they also inflict damage on themselves when they harm the body politic. The gloss thus activates the relational aspect of sin, where wrongdoings harm both self and community. Penitence is the sacramental act of reconciling Christians to both God and the community of believers, and penitential devotion focuses on bringing believers to recognize their state of double alienation from both self and community. As J.J. Mueller explains:

> Reconciliation is heard in the words of forgiveness by the Church through the priest. The priest's words of absolution and gesture of extending the right hand over the penitent's head signify both (1) the forgiveness of sins and (2) the reacceptance into the ecclesial community. These two aspects are always connected because sin alienates us from God and damages the relationships within the Church community. (200-1)

If sin and penitence seem like strong words for discussing the wrongs done against Libera's body, Christine herself repeatedly uses the word "pechier" (47) in Part I of the *Advision*. What is truly remarkable is that Christine reimagines the relational aspects of Christian sin with respect to a new collective body beyond Christ's or the Church—that of the body of the kingdom of France. Enabling a penitential relationship to such a novel communal body has important ramifications for the political commitment of the *Advision*, because it asks readers to pursue personal transformation as a means of renewing the kingdom.

Readers' increasingly penitential relationship with the body politic also surfaces in the later portions of Libera's complaint. In these later moments, Libera shifts from expressing her grief to expounding Old Testament prophetic visions of the destruction that God will inflict upon her children because of their many vices. Christine herself initiates this shift by adopting the fully masculine aspect of her Marian role and pushing Libera to explain further why she fears for her children. Seeing Libera exhausted and overcome by her lamentations, Chrisitne writes: "Ainsi souspirant par semblant de grand douleur dist ceste complainte la tres honnouree princesse. Et quant ces choses ot dictes, comme femme lasse et de deuil surmontee, couverte de larmes si que parler plus ne pot, se taysoit coye" (36). Responding to Libera's disabling feminine grief, Christine asks Libera to explain at greater length an Old Testament prophecy which she had begun explaining before falling silent: "Ha! Dame tres redoubtee et digne, comme il n'appartiegne a la haulteur de vostre force monstrer la tendreur des femmenins coraiges, laissiez en paix larmes non propices a vostre constance et plus avant me dictes de ce que touché avez" (36). Unlike the Sabine women referred to by Libera when revealing earlier

her damaged body who used both body and tears to make peace, Christine insists that tears will not suffice to enact the necessary social reforms.[157] Libera describes a "vent de perdicion" (32) that blows through her lands, infecting her children with the disease of vice, particularly those who reside higher up in their towers (32). Drawing on examples of God's righteous punishments in the Old Testament, Libera prophesizes that the same divine justice will be enacted upon her children (33-49). Just as Machaut portrayed Belshazzar's terrifying downfall to Charles in order to provoke a penitential fear of God, Libera's prophesies present the terrifying consequences of sin and vice. But where Belshazzar's downfall was both personal and political, the apocalyptic tone of the Advision remains resolutely focused on collective destruction of "la generation perverse qui en lieu de dens usent de glaives" (38). The penitential feelings provoked by these prophesies recast individual reform as a personal politics that aims at renewal of the community.

The shift that Christine initiates also changes readers' relationship to Libera's motherly body. Whereas Libera initially exposed her body to emphasize how much she has suffered at the hands of her children, in this final apocalyptic section Libera imagines a very different relationship between her body and her children. In a striking image of childbirth as a struggle between the death of the mother and life of the child, Libera reminds the people of France that she both fears for their punishment and longs for the rebirth that will follow:

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[157] Libera describes the Sabine women just before lifting her dress: "Mais comme la royne et toutes les dames piteuses de l'effusion du sang de leurs maris, peres et parens, eschevelees, a pleurs et cris, se venissent fichier entre les batailles lors qu'assembler devoient [...] ains par reverence espargnees, ot oyes en pitié leurs voix femmenines, qui leurs cuers contraigny mesmes ou champ a faire paix" (26). Needless to say, the fate of Libera's body when faced with the hordes of her children was quite different than that of the triumphant Sabine women.

> Mais tout ainsi que la femme encainte, laquelle non obstant le desir de veoir le fruit de son ventre hors de soi sauveté, ressogne la douleur du temps de l'enfantement, pareillement, non obstant la joye de l'esperance du bon repareur a venir que Dieu m'a promis, je ressogne le mal par ou convient que je passe ains que g'y aviengne. (40)

Where penitential language asks Christians to long for the difficulty of the experience because it will ultimately heal them, this passage compares the pains sinners to the difficulties of childbirth, and penance becomes the literal means by which bodies are born into reconciliation to self and community. Libera can thus reimagine her own body as a penitential body, where the chastisements of her children are her own birthing pains. The penitential quality of Libera's body reaches its full height in the closing words of the complaint. Here she calls for her children to pity her not because of her own suffering but because in weakening her body, they deprive themselves of their own nourishment: "comme loyaulx et vrais enfans veuillent avoir pitié de leur tendre mere, de qui encore le lait leur est neccessaire et doulce nourriture, mais veuillent si espargner ses doulces mamelles qu'ilz ne la succent jusqu'au sang" (50). Libera's body thus becomes a site not only of suffering, but also of care for the self and community. If her body cannot be a devotional object in the same way as Christ's, this penitential understanding of the connection between her body and the reader's body enables her to become the means by which France will find redemption. In this sense, Libera elegantly expresses her own potent performativity as a representation of a collective body when she exclaims, "Dieux! Quel compaignie et quel couple Avarice et Fraude! Mais de leurs ordes mains *libera nos domine*!" (46). Echoing the famous litany and prayer "libera nos domine," Libera plays on her own name as the means by which France will be freed from the grips of vice. Suzanne Akbari has identified how Christine uses a "language of apocalypse," in the

Advision to describe the social ills of France in the early 15th century and how this language could easily be adapted to the expression of social reform ("Apocalyptic Vision"). We can more fully appreciate the means of this social reform through the devotional uses of the gloss, which enable social reform by engaging readers in a penitential relationship to Libera's suffering.

The Slow Revelations of Reading

If, as Gerson explains it, penitence and devotion lay the affective groundwork for the a speculative encounter with God, then we can read Christine's tri-partite journey in the *Advision* as the passage through penitence and affective devotion in Part I, continuing through the necessary period of study in Part II toward the final arrival at the longed for contemplative space of Part III. Christine is particularly concerned with sharing this intellectual pilgrimage with her readers in Part I, where she draws on the devotional techniques of Passion meditation to pull her readers in affective engagement with Libera's suffering, as well as in the gloss, which transforms the reading experience into one of penitential devotion. I would like to conclude with a consideration of what this means for Christine's relationship as an author with her readers. When explaining how her readers should use the gloss as a tool for interpretation, Pizan writes, "la fiction de cestui livre se puet alegorisier triblement, c'est assavoir assimiller au monde general, qui est la terre, aussi a homme singulier et puis au royaume de France" (6). The work of allegory is here akin to the verb *allegoresis*, that is, interpreting texts allegorically—although Pizan's working definition of allegoresis is slightly different than our own modern one. While the term 'allegorie' was a well-established word in the vernacular by

the late middle ages, the verb 'alegoriser,' while common in the Latin of the period, was far less common in French, and both the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Francais* and the *Trésor de la langue francaise* do not recognize any use of the verb before Christine de Pizan. Whether or not Christine coined the word in the vernacular, it was clearly a term that she felt would not be obvious to her readers, as she takes the time to define it in the passage cited above: "alegorisier [...] c'est assavoir assimiller." For Christine, to allegorize means "to assimilate."[158] According to the *Dictionnaire du Moyen Francais*, 'assimiller' had three principle meanings: first, "to compare" or "to make something like another thing;" second, in medicine it meant for a body to "convert a substance into its own" and third, in grammar it meant "to connect one word into another by grammatical accord" (*DMF*, my translations). Allegoresis, defined by Pizan as assimilation, appears in these definitions as a process of connecting: absorbing substances in the body, forging grammatical links, and making things like other things. In one particular attestation of the term "assimiler," taken from *Le Chastel perilleux de l'ame*,[159] we find the following citation: "l'ame est muee en Jhesu Crist quant plus et plus elle est assimilee a Jhesu Crist c'est a dire qu'elle devient a sa semblance en grace et en vertu, et ce est fait par la vertu de ce saint sacrement" (*DMF* entry). This example clearly articulates assimilation as more than a interpretive comparison of the soul to Jesus, but rather the process by which the soul is made like Jesus through sacrament. Given the devotional weight with which

[158] Christine's somewhat idiosyncratic use of the verb 'alegoriser' begins in the *Epistre d'Othéa*, where portions of the 'texte' are followed by an 'allegorie', or an interpretive explanation of the text. She also writes meditations on the seven penitential psalms that she titles *Les septs psaumes allégorisés*. While it is common to refer to allegorized Biblical or pagan texts texts as "moralisé" in the vernacular, Christine's use of the term "allegorisé" in reference to a vernacularized gloss on the Pslams is the only such usage of which I am aware.

[159] The *Chastel perilleux de l'ame* was a guide to religious life written by a Carthusian, Frère Robert, in the 14th century (Brisson 398).

Christine invests her vision, this injunction to "assimilate" her poetry resonates profoundly with Gerson's belief that reading is a way of being in the world.

The question is: whose job is it to practice allegoresis? On the one hand, I believe we can understand the prefatory gloss as just this sort of interpretation: the author revisiting her text to try to elucidate its meaning. On the other hand, just as Christine de Pizan revisits her own vision to interpret it, she invites her readers to continue this labor. Her allegorical interpretation is pointedly unfinished, as she repeatedly exhorts her readers to complete the process of allegoresis by reminding them "Et ainsi plus au long se peut exposer" (4). The interpretive process is thus a continual unfolding over time, and while Pizan offers up directions for interpretation in her gloss, the real work of allegoresis is tasked to her readers. This willingness to invite her readers to share in the process of interpretation stands in contrast to Philippe de Mézière's reasoning for including his "Table des allégories" (117) at the beginning of the *Songe du Vieux Pelèrin*. Here Mézières complains about those poets who turn their audience away from the act of reading by creating allegories that are too difficult and obscure:

> Quiconque écrit des livres comprenant de grands et longs récits, des sujets variés utilisant des paraboles ou des allégories qu'on ne peut comprendre sans quelque commentaire ou explication, ainsi que le font couramment les grands poètes, écrivains ou compositeurs, provoque chez les lecteurs le dégout de la lecture, l'envie de tout abandonner et de critiquer le livre. (112)

Mézières then explains that in order to avoid being one of *those* kinds of writers, he has graciously provided a table to explain what his new-fangled allegories mean:

> L'auteur a fait cela afin que le lecteur profane, souvent sans connaissance religieuse, lisant les récits et les mystères au premier abord obscurs, à cause des noms inconnus attribués aux personnes, vertus et autres choses aux noms transformés, ait recours à cette table et explication, ce qui sera facile à faire; car une fois qu'il aura lu cette table facilement, sans dégout, sans difficulté, c'est-à-

> dire le commentaire des noms, en lisant ce livre il comprendra tout clairemen. (112)

Mézières' defensiveness about his innovative allegorical style ("noms inconnus" and "noms transformés") results in the removal of any effort or difficulty for his readers. Mézières effectively places his readers in a passive position, asking them to consult the table of one-to-one correspondence between allegory and names in order to enjoy reading his *Songe*. Where Mézières seems to want to negate the difficulty of his text, Christine asks her readers to revel in it and to enjoy the obscurity of her poetry as the very essence of its beauty. She takes what is already a difficult text and makes it more difficult with the gloss, asking her readers to read deeply and to work hard at soaking up the images in this first section of the *Advision*. By drawing on the devotional reading skills of her readers, Christine invites them to participate in deeply assimilating her imaginative vision, such that reading becomes a true poetics of social engagement.

Conclusion: The Intimacy of Politics

On January 14, 1432, a bailiff from Auxerre, a region controlled by the Burgundians, was taken captive by partisans of the French faction while travelling along a small road on his journey to deliver official letters to Rouen. Thirty years after Christine de Pizan composed her semi-autobiographical *Advision Christine*, this bailiff—one Jean Regnier—sought the solace of writing about his experiences while imprisoned for seventeen months, from 1432 to 1434.[160] *Les Fortunes et adversitez de Jean Regnier*, first printed in 1526, contains over five thousand lines of various poetic genres and prayers that recount the events of Regnier's capture, the experiences he suffers while imprisoned, and the circumstances of his eventual release. Yet the book's verses also pause to meditate on the poet's own emotional distress and the plight of France more generally.[161] A deeply personal account of Regnier's imprisonment, *Les Fortunes et adversitez* nevertheless seeks to understand the events of the poet's life within a larger political frame.

In one particularly evocative lay, Regnier meditates on his desire to speak about war, peace, and the many adversities afflicting the people of France. He writes that he would like to say more but fears to: "Helas, par ma foy, se je osasse, / Je parlasse / Plus avant de ceste matiere / Se autre que Dieu ne doubtasse" lines 1507-10). He goes on to explain that he shouldn't go any further because of *who* he would like to speak about:

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[160] *Les Fortunes et adversitez* was first printed in 1526, after Regnier's death, although some of its poems circulated individually in manuscripts prior to this first edition (vii). The English had ceded Auxerre to the Burgundians in 1424. Regnier was captured on a small side road near Andelys (xv).

[161] *Les Fortunes et adversitez* is divided into two sections. The first, entitled "Le livre de la prison" extends over nearly five thousand lines of verse that combine lays, ballads, *complaintes*, and prayers to recount the events of Regnier's capture. The second section is a looser collection of poems written to and for Regnier's friends and contacts that range from requests to various nobles and ballads written for friends to allegorical dialogues and moral meditations.

"Mais la gent est de tel maniere / Si tres fiere, / Que il convient que je m'en passe" (lines 1513-15). Following up on this decision to decline saying more, Regnier offers an ingenious image that likens poet to a household servant who sifts flour through a sieve:

> Ainsi que fait la chamberiere
> En sa saziere
> Qui farine par gros sas sasse
> Or vueil je donc trestout sasser
> Gros et gresle trestout ensemble,
> Autrement ne m'en puis passer. (lines 1516-21)

Through this evocative image, we learn that, in part, Regnier cannot write because of the sheer scope of what he wants to say. As he struggles to speak the "trestout ensemble," he lands on the image of a woman sifting her enormous sacks of flour, who relies on her sieve to sort out "gros et gresle." The fine mesh of poetry's sieve can collect and sift through volumes of experiences while also holding back what need not be said. This poetic sieve offers the writer a way out of his impasse ("Autrement ne m'en puis passer"), but it is also the very means by which the poet sifts through himself ("m'en puis passer"). Joining in the "trestout ensemble," the poet finds a passage to words.

Throughout this lay, Regnier meditates on the act of poetic speaking. He wonders how he will say the whole of things: "Il convient que trestout j'assemble / Se bien je vueil tout compasser" (lines 1523-24). He worries that even if he can say everything, he might do it badly: "Se je dis mal, n'en ayez cure, / La prison si m'est tresdure / Que pas n'y scay bien mon maintien" (1538-40). Prison might make a good excuse for poetry, but it may not make for very good poetry. Yet Regnier also hesitates about writing because what he sees—and wishes to speak—may not be the stuff of poetry. Asking his readers to forgive his writing "Se veez que ne disse bien" (1540), the poet goes on to enumerate what his readers have already seen: "On a veu que ceulx d'Alemaigne / En France au

conseil venoient" (lines 1541-2) and, a few lines later: "On a veu les gens par plaisance / Venir en France pour deduyre" (lines 1565-6). The repeated line "On a veu" longs for a time gone by, but as Regnier describes what he sees in contemporary France, these nostalgic words also become critical. Poetry has perhaps already sung the past glories of France, but Regnier suggests that verses must also bear witness to the here and the now.

Lamenting that those who brought war upon the country didn't think about the larger consequences, Regnier writes:

> Je m'esmerveille moult forment
> Quant la guerre si commenca
> Comment ung peu plus largement
> A ce faire on ne pensa. (lines 1557-1560)

Regnier's self-proclaimed project of attempting to encompass the "trestout ensemble" in his poetry echoes and responds to the inability to think "plus largement." The closing stanza of the poem opens to the present tense of what the poet sees: "Bien voy que seul pas je ne suis" (line 1573). In the poems that follow this lay, Regnier meditates at length on the suffering of women, children, knights, the clergy, merchants—the poet is indeed not alone in his tribulations. But in writing about his own difficult imprisonment throughout *Les Fortunes et adversitez*, Regnier suggests that the "trestout ensemble" is not only the suffering of all of France, but also the entirety of his own personal experiences. His story is but one of the many that pass through poetry's sieve. For Regnier, the poetic expression of his suffering becomes meaningful through the fact that it resembles that of others—and can be shared by others. It is an expression that begs to become part of the world that readers see, in the hopes that France can think "un peu plus largement." Regnier hesitates at the beginning of the poem about speaking out against the destruction he sees in France. Writing provides him comfort while imprisoned, but

by the final lines of this lay, he is also confident that the poetic expression of his own personal experiences are an important part of public discourse. First printed in 1526, after the end of the Hundred Years War, *Les Fortunes et adversitez* looks back on and remembers how this prolonged conflict deeply marked one man's life.

Regnier was not alone in writing during imprisonment, nor was he alone in speaking about his personal experiences of the war.[162] Together, the works of Regnier, Charles d'Orléans, Alain Chartier, Eustache Deschamps, and others provide a very different perspective on the Hundred Years War than earlier writers, including Machaut, Gerson, and Christine, but others as well—Philippe de Mezières or Jean Froissart. Throughout this study, I have attempted to show how these earlier writers worked to create a literary space in which readers could engage on a more personal level with public life in France. Taken together, the three literary texts in this study reveal how reading expanded the field of political life in late medieval France for a far broader public than ever before. In the processes of making and reading books, the labors of both readers and writers joined to imagine a public space that was as fully personal as it was political. Regnier and other later writers move beyond a long tradition of bearing witness to the suffering of the masses, just as they also depart from a medieval tradition of authorial political engagement, in which writers speak explicitly against the abuses of power. Theirs is a poetry of social engagement—of speaking the political as personal. This study has shown a broader framework for this literary outpouring, a poetics of social

[162] Deborah McGrady has recently shown how each of these writers sought to contribute to their readers' understanding of the experience of war, as well as the important role that these poetic expressions played in the early peace movement in France. See her articles "Que tous se rallïent" and "Guerre ne sert que de torment."

engagement that posited reading as a unique space for creating connections between the political and the personal.

It is my hope that this study can allow us to further appreciate how the devotional prayers and meditations of *Les Fortunes et adversitez* open the book to an intimate and affective engagement on the part of readers, even as they also help the poet find his way to speaking his personal experiences so that they can be shared. The prayers in the *Les Fortunes et adversitez* are highly personalized expressions that beg God, the Virgin Mary, and the saints to intervene in the particulars of Jean Regnier's misfortunes. In articulating these particulars, in speaking his anguish, these prayers make a clearing for the biographical nature of *Les Fortunes et adversitez*. Like Susanna and Manessah in the *Confort d'ami*, Regnier's prayers are both a means to an end, and an end unto themselves that enable a recognition of the personal experience of history. Unlike the *Confort*, however, readers of *Les Fortunes et adversitez* don't discover these articulations through the distant experiences of Biblical figures, instead finding them in the words of a contemporary poet, whose expression of suffering spills out from prayers into the poetry of the book as a whole. Personal expression in *Les Fortunes et adversitez* opens itself fully to affective reading practices. Regnier himself cites from memory the entirety of a poem by Alain Chartier before writing a response to it, in which he glosses each line of Chartier's poem with verses that explain how Chartier's words relate to and shape Regnier's experience in prison. Like Gerson speaking in the voice of Saint Bernard for his "Fulcite me floribus" sermon, Regnier has clothed himself in Chartier's words, bringing affective reading strategies to contemporary poetry.

Like Regnier's book, Christine de Pizan's *Advision Christine* is a deeply autobiographical reflection on what Christine has seen during her "pelerinage" through life. Part of what Christine has seen, however, is a vision of an intimately suffering body politic. Christine's personal history is less an illustration of one story that makes up the "trestout ensemble" and more a perspective through which readers gain intimate access to the suffering body politic. The *Advision* reveals Libera's body as an object of readers' affections and personal implication. The social poetics of the *Advision* enrich our understanding of the broader context that made possible the poetry of Regnier and others. The *Advision* itself looks back to the intimate language of political suffering that surfaces through Charles' affective reading of Machaut's Biblical stories. The *Advision* also absorbs the lessons from the *Traité contre le* Roman de la Rose, which reveals how readers participate in community and public life through the process of reading. In each of these three texts, readers play an invaluable role in imagining public life in terms that are both personal and political. In their efforts to draw the affective experiences of devotional reading into a literature concerned with the upheavals of contemporary France, Machaut, Gerson, and Christine invited readers to finish the imaginative work they had begun in their writing. In "De Laudibus elegie spiritualis," written between 1422 and 1425 during his exile from Paris, Gerson asks a question that seems almost modern: "Et quis in hoc evo scire poemata vult?" (line 32)—who, in this age, wants to know poems? *Intimate Politics* explores how three late medieval writers and their readers responded to precisely this question as they brought the intimate processes of reading to bear on the public discourse surrounding the upheavals of the Hundred Years War.

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