

Romance and the literature of religious instruction, c.1170–c.1330

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Romance and the literature of religious instruction, c.1170–c.1330: abstract

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This thesis investigates the relations between romance and texts of religious instruction in England between c.1170–c.1330, taking as its principal textual corpus the exceptionally rich literary traditions of insular French romance and religious writing that subsist during this period. It argues that romance is a mode which engages closely with religious and ethical questions from a very early stage, and demonstrates the discourses of opposition in which both kinds of text participate throughout the period. The thesis offers substantial readings of a number of neglected insular French religious texts of the thirteenth century, including Robert Grosseteste's *Chateau d'Amour*, John of Howden's *Rossignos*, and Robert of Gretham's *Miroir*, alongside new readings of romances such as *Gui de Warewic* and *Ipomedon*. This juxtaposition of romance narrative and religious instruction sheds new light onto both kinds of text: romance emerges as a mode with deep-rooted didactic qualities; insular French religious literature is shown to be intensely concerned with the need to compete with romance's entertaining appeal in literary culture. This oppositional discourse profoundly affects the form of instructional writing and romance alike. The discussion of the interactions between insular French romance and instructional literature presented here also serves as a new pre-history of Middle English romance. The final chapter of the thesis offers several new readings of texts from the Auchinleck manuscript, including the canonical romance *Sir Orfeo* and the neglected, puzzling *Speculum Gy de Warewyk*. These readings demonstrate that fourteenth-century romance intelligently adapts the material it inherits from Francophone

literature to a new cultural situation. In these acts of reformation, Middle English romance reveals itself as a discursive space capable of accommodating a wide range of ethical and ideological affiliations; the complex negotiations between romance and instructional literature in the preceding centuries are an important cultural condition for this widening of possibilities.

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Abbreviations

<i>AND</i>	<i>Anglo-Norman Dictionary</i>
<i>AW</i>	<i>Altfranzösisches Wörterbuch</i>
Dean	Ruth J. Dean, with the collaboration of Maureen B.M. Boulton, <i>Anglo-Norman Literature: A Guide to Texts and Manuscripts</i> (London, 1999). [cited by entry number]
<i>DMLBS</i>	<i>Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
EETS o.s. / e.s.	Early English Text Society Original Series / Extra Series
<i>JGEP</i>	<i>Journal of Germanic and English Philology</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>MLR</i>	<i>Modern Language Review</i>
n.s.	new series
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>
PG	<i>Patrologia cursus completus, Series graeca</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne. 161 vols (Paris, 1857–66).
PL	<i>Patrologia cursus completus, Series latina</i> , ed. J.-P. Migne. 221 vols (Paris, 1841–79).
<i>PLL</i>	<i>Papers on Language and Literature</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Modern Language Association of America</i>
<i>PQ</i>	<i>Philological Quarterly</i>
<i>RES</i>	<i>Review of English Studies</i>

Note: all translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

Introduction: The long thirteenth century

This thesis aims to offer a new approach to thirteenth-century literature in England generally, and in particular to the contact and mutual influence between romance and literature of religious instruction during this period. It seems superficially absurd to argue for the thirteenth century as an important period for the history of romance in England. The standard narrative runs as follows: insular French romance flowers during the twelfth century, but then (by all measures available to us) the production of these texts tails off in the following century, before the baton is passed to the English romances, largely derivative translations of this earlier material, which begin to be produced in large numbers around 1300.¹ Of course, such arguments ignore the fact that most insular French romances were circulated enthusiastically during the thirteenth century; in fact, by this measure, the thirteenth century was a period much more richly engaged with twelfth-century romance than the twelfth century was itself.² And, as I show in the final section of the thesis, Middle English romances make intelligent, transformative use of the material that they inherit from Francophone romance. Still, the overriding historical preoccupation in medieval studies with origins and urtexts (at the expense of reception and contexts) has caused the field of insular French studies to neglect the contribution of the thirteenth century to the history of the romance.³

This thesis, then, aims to recuperate the thirteenth century as an important stage in

1 For this argument, see Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 136.

2 For a sense of this textual culture, see Dean 151–75.

3 We might compare this situation with that of the fifteenth century in the 1980s. This period suffered a similar neglect until the shift in perception spearheaded by the publication of *The Oxford Book of Late Medieval English Verse and Prose*, ed. Douglas Gray (Oxford, 1985), a development commemorated by *The Long Fifteenth Century: Essays for Douglas Gray*, ed. Helen Cooper and Sally Mapstone (Oxford, 1997). The final nail in the coffin of fifteenth-century literature's canonical isolation was James Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History*, vol. 2: *Reform and Cultural Revolution, 1350–1547* (Oxford, 2002). The recent growth of interest in (and production of translations and discussions of) insular French literature may herald a similar shift.

the development of medieval romance by reading these texts alongside instructional literature. Many of the thirteenth century's most important and interesting texts are works of religious instruction, a term which I use to refer to a wide variety of literary forms, including verse sermons, saints' lives, penitential manuals, and theological allegories. Literary studies is notoriously bad at working with such material: we assume that didacticism is equivalent to simplicity, and that conservatism in one area precludes innovation in another.⁴ This may be changing: in recent years (it is said), literary studies has taken a 'religious turn',⁵ and the study of medieval literature has been a particularly rich locus for this shift, with many profitable interrogations of the boundaries of 'religious literature'.⁶ This thesis aims to interrogate these boundaries further by showing the complex, interpenetrative affiliations of romance and religious discourse, and by seeking not to privilege one kind of text over another. Analyses of intertextual and intermodal influence can run the risk of constructing one mode as monolithic, elucidating the complexities of one kind of text through a denial of the complexities of another. Though, I think, this is to some extent inevitable (especially given medieval writers' own predilection for invoking reductive categories in this way), this thesis aims to avoid constructing either romance or religious literature as simplistic or uninteresting. Inherent in this approach is an assumption that medieval writers of romance and religious instruction alike had a good

4 For a powerful corrective to this set of assumptions, see Sarah Kay, *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry* (Philadelphia, PA, 2007).

5 A shift undoubtedly shaped, as much as identified, by the important essays in *Literary History and the Religious Turn*, ed. Bruce Holsinger: *English Language Notes* 44:1 (2006).

6 Some examples of recent attempts are Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular against the Sacred* (Notre Dame, 2013); Lawrence Besserman, *Biblical Paradigms in Medieval Literature: From Caedmon to Malory* (New York, 2012); Rosalind Field, "'Pur les francs homes amender": Clerical Authors and the Thirteenth-Century Context of Historical Romance', in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 175–88; Judith Weiss, 'The Exploitations of Ideas of Pilgrimage and Sainthood in *Gui de Warewic*, in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, ed. Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević and Judith Weiss (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 43–56; Robert A. Taylor, Wendy Pfeffer, Randall A. Rosenfeld, and Lys Ann Weiss, 'The *Bele Alis* Sermon: Homiletic Song and Dance', *Florilegium* 24 (2007), 173–91; and Geoff Rector, 'Courtly Romance, the Vernacular Psalms, and Generic Contrafaction', *Viator* 45 (2014), 117–148.

idea of what they were doing. Many of the texts studied in this thesis do not appeal to the aesthetic tastes of a twenty-first century reader, but this is not evidence that they were ineffectual participants in their own culture. One of the basic premises of the thesis is that the writers discussed below knew very well the cultural implications of the intermodal affiliations that they invoke. We, must, I suggest, take these texts at face value, without importing assumptions regarding their subtlety or effectiveness, in order to understand better how they might have functioned as cultural actors.

The above discussion helps to explain why romance and religious instructional literature might offer such a fruitful conjunction, as I think they do. Various traditions of scholarly neglect — linguistic, temporal, and generic — meet at the intersection of these modes, at least in the case of their insular instantiations, an intersection which spans and defines the period considered here: the ‘long thirteenth century’, c.1170 to c.1330. This period sees the development of an important intertextual discourse surrounding the question of how literature should engage with ethical concerns. The principal actors in this discourse are romances and texts of religious instruction. One of the central claims of the thesis is that this discourse would, over the course of the period, act powerfully on the form of both of these modes alike: neither mode emerges unaffected. By studying the intersections of romance and instructional literature during this period, we can thus interrogate the formal and generic boundaries between romance and religious instructional literature, while simultaneously demonstrating the ethical tensions inherent in this constantly-negotiated boundary, and recuperating a non-canonical period for insular literary history.

By situating itself in this way, this thesis offers a new approach to insular French romance and a new understanding of the thirteenth century as an important period for English literary history. It also functions as a new pre-history of Middle English romance,

with important implications for how we understand the development of this mode. One of my basic contentions is that the historical neglect of insular French religious literature has (among other conditions) allowed us to characterize and define romance in ways that would not otherwise be considered. Derek Pearsall's much-quoted definition of romance as 'the principal secular literature of entertainment' encodes an assumption that romance is simplistic and disengaged with religious culture, an assumption which cannot be supported when the earlier insular French evidence is considered.⁷ As I show in the thesis, drawing on recent scholarly developments that argue for chivalry as a form of lay religion, insular romance is bound up with religious and ethical concerns from a very early stage.⁸ It can be suggested that the history of medieval romance in this period is fundamentally a history of navigating this discourse: the same could be said (much more provocatively) of lay-directed literature of religious instruction, since these texts — which are, after all, romance's cultural neighbours — seek to provide exemplary models of behaviour and piety for the laity, just as the romances do.

The first section of the thesis, comprising Chapters 1 and 2, seeks to demonstrate that twelfth-century romances and vernacular texts of religious instruction (which, in this period, are usually saints' lives) are engaged in a dialectic in which competing ethical and instructional models are proposed. Chapter 1 presents a corpus of insular French hagiographical prologues, and argues for these texts' ideological and cultural coherence. The writers of these saints' lives, following Anglo-Latin models, castigate romance as an ethically empty mode, incapable of being read for spiritual profit, with close intertextual

7 Derek Pearsall, 'Middle English Romance and its Audiences', in *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Early Modern English for Johan Gerritsen*, ed. Mary-Jo Arn and Hanneke Wirtjes (Groningen, 1985), pp. 37–47 (at p. 37).

8 Important contributions are Laura Ashe, 'The Ideal of Knighthood in English and French Writing, 1100–1230: Crusade, Piety, Chivalry and Patriotism', in *Writing the Early Crusades: Text, Transmission and Memory*, ed. Marcus Bull and Damien Kempf (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 155–68 (to take just one example); and Richard Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia, 2009).

reference to specific authors and characters. Working against a critical tendency to understand these motifs as mere expressions of established topoi, I locate these castigations in dialectical relationship with a specific cultural moment — the twelfth-century efflorescence of romance. The discourse performed in these texts suggests that twelfth-century readers frequently received romance as an ethically instructive mode. By presenting their texts as responses to romance, these writers reveal a particular understanding of the cultural position of romance along with a desire to change it. The picture of romance that emerges is one of a widely popular mode that makes controversial (but effective and coherent) ethical claims; that of twelfth-century hagiography as a mode that makes intelligent, specific use of well-known topoi to castigate a dangerous mode that inhabits the same cultural space.

My discussion of this cultural discourse continues in Chapter 2 with readings of twelfth- and early thirteenth-century insular romances. These readings aim to elucidate these texts' understanding of their own cultural position and ethical potential. The readings confirm to a great extent the presentation of romance in the insular saints' lives discussed in Chapter 1, and by returning to these hagiographical texts in the course of the discussion, and reading them against the texts that they castigate, I explore further the language that they use to criticize romance. Romance emerges as a mode that encodes a deviant, even heretical ethics. While some texts, such as *Gui de Warewic*, clearly evince some anxiety about their questionable ethical status, other texts (for example, Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*) revel in it. These chapters continue a long-standing critical discourse concerning the relationship between romance and hagiography.⁹ Approaches of this kind have fallen out of popularity since Jocelyn Wogan-Browne's important corrective — as she

⁹ For a bibliographical history of this discourse, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "'Bet ... to ... rede on holy seyntes lyves ...': Romance and Hagiography Again", in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 83–97.

points out, our instinctive category distinctions are not always useful tools for thinking about the relation between romance and hagiography.¹⁰ However, the saints' lives discussed in Chapter 1 clearly wish to mark a separation between their sacred biographies and the 'profane biographies' of romance. On the one hand, these modes evince many similarities; on the other, these similarities demarcate important areas of tension and generative anxiety. In a sense, then, the readings found in these chapters problematize the category distinction made in the title of the thesis — romances are, and were received as, texts of religious instruction at this time. At the same time, however, they assert that meaningful distinctions can be drawn between romance and hagiography, and that this distinction lies principally in the ethical affiliations of the texts.

The second section of the thesis, which comprises Chapters 3, 4, and 5, discusses how romance manifests itself in insular French religious writing from around 1230 to the end of the thirteenth century. The keystone of this section, and one of the major contributions of the thesis as a whole, is the extended reading of Robert Grosseteste's *Chateau d'Amour* in Chapter 3. Grosseteste's ambitious insular French poetic allegory has been sorely neglected, and needs to be accounted for in our narratives of thirteenth-century literary culture. I situate Grosseteste's poem firmly in the context of his Latin works in order to demonstrate that his philosophical positions necessitate an altered view towards the exemplarity of everyday life. I argue for the poem's dependence upon (and consciously playful use of) the narrative conventions of romance, and suggest that this dependence is deeply remarkable, given the uneasy cultural position of romance in the century preceding the composition of the text. This text is evidence for a markedly different approach to the problem of romance from that seen in the saints' lives discussed in Chapter 1 since, instead of rejecting romance as ethically void, Grosseteste maps it onto the core narrative of

¹⁰ Ibid.

Christianity, thus recuperating its value by colonizing its signification. I suggest that this text can be taken as emblematic of a larger shift in the relationship between religious writing and romance in insular literary culture at this time.

Chapter 4 continues the argument of the previous chapter by discussing two substantial instructional poems — Robert of Gretham’s *Miroir* and William of Waddington’s *Manuel des Pechiez*, both of which respond to pastoral needs identified by Grosseteste’s diocesan constitutions (and at least one of which may have been composed as a direct result of this pastoral mandate). Both of these poems make extensive use of *exemplum* narratives; in fact, they are two of the earliest insular French texts to structure themselves around the *exemplum*. I argue that the shifting status of romance in the thirteenth century is related to the growth of the vernacular *exemplum* at this time. Many of the *exempla* contained within these poems position themselves firmly against romance ethics; but their use of a literary form in which moderate solutions (rather than self-mortification or martyrdom) are possible suggests that they are exploring new formal possibilities for religious instruction, and that these possibilities increasingly make use of exemplary narratives that resemble romance in many respects.

Chapter 5 explores the relationship between romance ethics and the growth of affective writing in English and insular French through readings of the works of John of Howden and John Pecham. Howden’s *Rossignos*, in particular, gives an extremely useful perspective on how a meditative hermeneutic method might allow for secular, ‘romance’ exemplary models to be retained as objects of contemplation, if not devotion. All of these texts, I argue, are attempting to make their readers think of martial heroes as meditative analogues for the penitent (a spiritual warrior); in doing this, they encourage their readers to think about romance (and the exemplary models it transmits) differently. The images are fundamentally different from superficially similar monastic texts because of their different

context (these are texts written for lay aristocrats), and because they do not attempt to disclaim the virtue of the worldly figures and structures upon which their allegories are based. Instead, they stand as attempts to change the way in which their readers think about worldly exemplarity without denying them the ability to enjoy the texts which had continued to be read from the twelfth century onwards, despite constant cultural pressure against these reading habits.

Chapter 6, the third section of the thesis, contains readings of early fourteenth-century English romances from the Auchinleck manuscript, with a deliberately expansive definition of the word that includes the *Speculum Gy de Warewyk*, *The King of Tars*, and *Sir Orfeo*. I argue in this chapter that these early English romances, despite depending closely on insular French material in most cases, exist in a radically different cultural situation from that of their predecessors discussed in Chapter 2. Because they must inscribe a wider audience than their twelfth-century predecessors, these texts cannot depend upon (or even work against) a stable interpretative code in the same way that nearly all insular French romances could. This instability creates a great deal of cultural space for romance, as the texts discussed in this chapter demonstrate. These texts all engage in a reassessment of what it means for a text to be a romance, and what ideological positions might be inherent in this identification.

My chosen body of texts is, of course, necessarily selective, and many important, relevant texts have fallen by the wayside. If the remit of this thesis were larger, more space would be available for discussions of early Middle English literature in particular: *Ancrene Wisse*, the ‘Katherine Group’ texts, Thomas of Hales’ *Love Rune*, and the early romances *Havelok* and *Horn* have all been reluctantly omitted. To be clear, I do not intend to suggest by this omission that these texts cannot be read profitably against their insular French contemporaries.

Chapter 1: Twelfth-century perspectives on insular romance writing

Writers throughout the span of the Middle Ages have frequently expressed their disapproval of profane literature.¹ From Alcuin’s famous rhetorical question ‘Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?’, to the prologue to the fourteenth-century poem *Speculum Vitae*, which considers the ‘iestes’ of Bevis of Hampton and Guy of Warwick to be ‘noht bot vanyte’, examples can be multiplied extensively.² Because condemnatory judgements of this kind are found throughout the Middle Ages, few attempts have been made to distinguish patterns in the material: the present chapter is an attempt to do precisely this. In the twelfth century, romance becomes the standard target of these invectives, and remains so for the rest of the period under consideration.³ The late twelfth century appears to have been a particularly fruitful period for the condemnation of romance in insular literary culture: French hagiographical prologues from this period castigate romances with

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- 1 The classic account of this discourse is G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1961), pp. 10–15; for another important contribution, see John W. Baldwin, ‘The Image of the Jongleur in Medieval France around 1200’, *Speculum* 72 (1997), 635–63. The question of how to refer to the literary objects of this disapproval is a difficult one: though ‘profane’ is not an ideal solution, it avoids the problematic assumptions imported by the commonly-employed term ‘secular’; for a criticism of this usage, see Sarah Kay, review of *The Medieval Poetics of Contraries*, by Michelle Bolduc, *Comparative Literature Studies* 45 (2008), 391–93 (at p. 392).
- 2 For the text of Alcuin’s question, see *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, vol. 2: *Alcuini sive Albini Epistolae*, ed. Ernst Dümmler, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Epistolae 4 (Berlin, 1895), p. 183; and for discussion, see (among others) Robert Levine, ‘Ingeld and Christ: A Medieval Problem’, *Viator* 2 (1971), 105–28; Donald Bullough, ‘What has Ingeld to do with Lindisfarne?’, *Anglo-Saxon England* 22 (1993), 93–125; and Mary Garrison, ‘Quid Hinieldus cum Christo?’, in *Latin Learning and English Lore: Studies in Anglo-Saxon Literature for Michael Lapidge*, ed. Katherine O’Brien O’Keeffe and Andy Orchard, 2 vols (Toronto, 1993), I:237–59. For the text of the second quotation, see *Speculum Vitae: A Reading Edition*, ed. Ralph Hanna using materials assembled by Venetia Somerset, 2 vols (Oxford, 2008), I, ll. 41–48.
- 3 See Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Literary Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 22–31. As Furrow shows (*ibid.*, pp. 43–71, and ‘*Chanson de geste* as Romance in England’, in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, ed. Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević and Judith Weiss [Cambridge, 2010], pp. 57–72), *chanson de geste* and romance were not habitually distinguished in insular literary culture; in the discussion that follows, I take romance, *lai*, and *chanson de geste* to be broadly synonymous. For this argument, see also William Calin, ‘*Gui de Warewic* and the Nature of Late Anglo-Norman Romance’, *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 17 (1990), 23–32 (at p. 30).

remarkable frequency and consistency.⁴ The texts studied in this chapter thus form a distinct and coherent cluster within the broad literary tradition of Francophone hagiography.⁵ This group of texts, taken as a whole, suggests that twelfth-century hagiographers were aware of, and concerned by, the power of romance (and its neighbouring genres) to draw readers and audiences away from religious literature. We do not need to understand this anxiety as being generated by a genuine moral panic on the part of insular hagiographers, though the converse view — that these condemnations are performative, even playful, attempts at authorial self-promotion — is also unappealing.⁶ It

- 4 See S.C. Aston, 'The Saint in Medieval Literature', *MLR* 65 (1970), xxv–lxii: 'clerical writers appear to have made deliberate use of the Saint's Life as a counter to contemporary worldly-orientated literature ... it is in the twelfth-century Lives that clerical writers have offered their most telling counterblasts to the *fables d'Arthur et de Charlemagne*.' (p. xl). For discussions of these prologues, see Karl Uitti, 'The Clerical Narrator Figure in Old French Hagiography and Romance', *Medioevo romanzo* 2 (1975), 394–408; Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 94–104; and Francis Gingras, 'Le bon usage du roman: cohabitation de récits profanes et de textes sacrés dans trois recueils vernaculaires de la fin du XIII^e siècle', in *The Church and Vernacular Literature in Medieval France*, ed. Dorothea Kullmann (Toronto, 2009), pp. 137–56.
- 5 As noted by William Calin, *The French Tradition and the Literature of Medieval England* (Toronto, 1994), insular saints' lives 'appear to be a particularly English or Anglo-Norman preoccupation' (p. 88), since they survive in significantly larger numbers than do continental saints' lives. For general accounts of Francophone hagiography, see *ibid.*, pp. 88–116; Martine Thiry-Stassin, 'L'hagiographie en Anglo-Normand', in *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature latine et vernaculaire en Occident des origines à 1550*, vol. 1, ed. Guy Philippart (Turnhout, 1994); Aston, 'The Saint'; Françoise Laurent, *Plaire et édifier: Les récits hagiographiques composés en Angleterre aux XII^e et XIII^e siècles* (Paris, 1998); Phyllis Johnson and Brigitte Cazelles, *Le vain siècle guerpir: A Literary Approach to Sainthood through Old French Hagiography of the Twelfth Century* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1979); Brigitte Cazelles, *La Corps de sainteté d'après Jehan Bouche d'Or, Jehan Paulus et quelques vies des XII^e et XIII^e siècles* (Geneva, 1982); Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c.1150–1300: Virginity and Its Authorizations* (Oxford, 2001), and "'Clerc u lai, muïne u dame": Women and Anglo-Norman Hagiography in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries', in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1150–1500*, ed. Carol M. Meale (2nd edition, Cambridge, 1996), pp. 61–85 (with an extremely useful list of texts and bibliography on pp. 76–78); William Calin, 'Saints' Stories: The Literary Quality of Anglo-Norman Martyr Hagiography', in *The Shaping of Text: Style, Imagery, and Structure in French Literature: Essays in Honour of John Porter Houston*, ed. Emanuel J. Mickel, Jr (Lewisburg, PA, 1993), pp. 24–44; Emma Campbell, *Medieval Saints' Lives: The Gift, Kinship, and Community in Old French Hagiography* (Cambridge, 2008); Paul John Jones, *Prologue and Epilogue in Old French Lives of Saints before 1400* (Philadelphia, 1933); and M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford, 1963), *passim*.
- 6 The first view seems naïve in its assumption of an uncomplicated connection between literary object and social reality; the second depends (perhaps too comfortably) upon a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Paul Ricoeur's term: see his *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage [New Haven, 1970], esp. pp. 30–32), which may be more a reflex of our own critical preoccupations than a perceptive reading of the texts. For important critiques of suspicious hermeneutics, see Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay is About You', in *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, NC, 2003), pp. 123–51; and Rita Felski, *Uses of Literature* (Malden, MA, 2008).

may not be necessary to commit to either of these positions. As I show in the following chapter, insular romances of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries work to claim themselves as sites of ethical discourse, and in doing so promote values and behavioural standards that run contrary to those encouraged by ecclesiastical establishments.⁷ If these romances' claims to ethical validity are taken seriously, the cultural space claimed by vernacular hagiography (the twelfth-century ethical narrative mode *par excellence*) begins to be threatened. This would be problematic for a writer of saints' lives in either of the ways mentioned above: it could cause a declining interest in the writer's textual productions, or reduce the audience's exposure to the ethical programme that s/he wishes to promote, or both. Whatever reason we might posit for the apparent pervasiveness of this discourse in twelfth-century insular French hagiography, it is certain that these texts seek to position themselves against romance. As the following readings demonstrate, this desire to present vernacular hagiography as a replacement for romance can tell us a great deal about how romance was received in insular literary cultures.

Although vernacular hagiography forms the principal focus of this chapter, the discussion must begin with a consideration of the important antecedents found in earlier twelfth-century Latin writing. Aelred of Rievaulx's *Speculum caritatis* is an important early witness to this discourse. The text relates an anecdote in which Aelred, instructing Cistercian novices at Rievaulx, explains that tears are not reliable indicators of a charitable disposition, even if they are shed for Christ.⁸ Using an analogy drawn from Augustine's

7 Vernacular literature was often a site of highly politicized discourse in the post-Conquest period. Peter Haidu's work on Old French vernacular literature as a means of ideological control is a useful demonstration of how to understand the flourishing of vernacular literature in a political context. See Haidu, *The Subject Medieval/Modern: Text and Governance in the Middle Ages* (Stanford, 2004), esp. pp. 39–56.

8 *Speculum caritatis* II.51. All references to this text are taken from *Aelredi Rievallensis Opera Omnia*, vol. 1: *Opera Ascetica*, ed. A. Hoste and C.H. Talbot (Turnhout, 1971); for discussion of the specific episode, see Jaakko Tahkokallio, 'Fables of King Arthur: Aelred of Rievaulx and Secular Pastimes', *Mirator* 9 (2008), 19–35 (at pp. 24–25).

Confessions, Aelred notes that people are frequently moved to tears when they encounter dramatic or poetic depictions of persecution, even though the character thus persecuted may be entirely fictive.⁹ In response, one of the novices draws the following comparison with his own former life:

Ad haec uerba, quodam ille pudore perfusus, demisso capite, fixisque in terram luminibus: ‘Verissime, inquit, uerissime. Nam et in fabulis, quae uulgo de nescio quo finguntur Arthuro, memeni me nonnunquam usque ad effusionem lacrimarum fuisse permotum. Vnde non modicum pudet propriae uanitatis, qui si forte ad ea quae de Domino pie leguntur, uel cantantur, uel certe publico sermone dicuntur, aliquam mihi lacrimam ualero extorquere, ita mihi statim de sanctitate applaudo, ac si magnum aliquid ac inusitatum mihi miraculum contigisset. Et reuera uanissimae mentis indicium est, pro his affectibus, si forte pro pietate contingant, uana gloria uentilari, quibus in fabulis et mendaciis solebat compungi.’¹⁰

[At these words the novice blushed and, with his head bowed and his eyes fixed on the ground, he said: ‘Truly so, very truly so. For also when listening to fables that are popularly made up about that Arthur, whoever he is, I remember I was sometimes moved to the point of shedding tears. Therefore I feel greatly ashamed of my vanity, for when I succeed in squeezing out a tear listening to things that are, with piety, read, chanted, or indeed preached about our Lord, I immediately congratulate myself as if some great and extraordinary miracle had happened to me. And it is, in fact, the mark of a very vain mind to become puffed up with vainglory because of these affections that, even though they accidentally come in relation to piety, used to move my mind when listening to fables and lies.’]¹¹

The novice (as voiced by Aelred) goes so far as to imply here that the affective qualities of Arthurian stories have corrupted his emotional response to religious narratives; emotional responses to fiction are thus not reflections of a virtue engendered by religious narrative,

9 *Speculum caritatis* II.51; Tahkokallio, ‘Fables of King Arthur’, p. 25.

10 *Speculum caritatis* II.51.

11 Translation from Tahkokallio, ‘Fables of King Arthur’, p. 26; adapted from *The Mirror of Charity*, trans. Elizabeth Connor (Kalamazoo, MI, 1990), p. 199. Tahkokallio notes (pp. 22–23), the question of the precise identity of the Arthurian material referred to in this anecdote is a matter of debate; for the view that Aelred’s novice refers to orally circulated Arthurian stories, see Roger Sherman Loomis, ‘The Arthurian Legend before 1139’, in his *Wales and the Arthurian Legend* (Cardiff, 1956), pp. 179–220 (at pp. 186–91); and D.H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 173; for the view that the reference is to Geoffrey’s *Historia*, see J.S.P. Tatlock, *The Legendary History of Britain: Geoffrey of Monmouth’s Historia Regum Britanniae and Its Early Vernacular Versions* (Berkeley, CA, 1950), pp. 207–11; and Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England*, vol. 1: *c.1550 to c.1307* (London, 1974), pp. 212–13.

but signs of a vanity that, in a devotional context, purports to signify pious emotion. This claim — that fiction can habituate a false emotional response to religious narratives — is a remarkable one, since it suggests that monks thus habituated respond to religious narratives as if they were fictional; and, furthermore, that their (presumably) profound belief in the reality of these narratives is not sufficient to nullify this effect. This would have been a matter of deep concern for someone like Aelred, who (as we might expect from a Cistercian monk writing in the wake of Bernard of Clairvaux) considers emotional response to be a cornerstone of devotional practice.¹² It might be suggested that this anxiety is derived at least partially from the fact that the meditative techniques associated with such responses stray uncomfortably close to the imaginative processes that concoct fiction. A characteristically Cistercian meditative technique involves the imaginative visualization of scenes from the Bible, as in, for example, Aelred's *De Jesu puero duodenni*, which encourages the meditant to kiss the feet of Jesus like the sinful woman in Luke 7:36–38, and in so doing, effectively to write themselves into the Gospel text.¹³ In his treatise *De institutione inclusarum*, Aelred even admits that new actions can be introduced into the narrative by the meditant, though he reassures his anchoritic audience that Jesus will undo any non-canonical (we might even say fictional) action.¹⁴ The similarities between this

12 On Bernard's own attitude towards emotion, see the following discussions of a famous excursus in Bernard's *Sermons on the Song of Songs*: Brian Patrick McGuire, *The Difficult Saint: Bernard of Clairvaux and His Tradition* (Kalamazoo, 1991), pp. 143–44; and M.B. Pranger, 'Bernard the Writer', in *A Companion to Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. Brian Patrick McGuire (Leiden, 2011), pp. 220–48. McGuire claims (p. 143) that the highly emotional passage shows that Bernard is able to 'mould his inner life into a Christian form without denying his natural impulses'; Pranger disagrees (pp. 238–43), saying that what appears to be an outburst of natural emotion is better read as a performative device with an important structural function in the text.

13 See Thomas H. Bestul, 'Antecedents: The Anselmian and Cistercian Contributions', in *Mysticism and Spirituality in Medieval England*, ed. William F. Pollard and Robert Boenig (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 1–20 (at p. 16). Text in Hoste and Talbot (eds), *Opera ascetica*; see also *Jesus at the Age of Twelve*, trans. Theodore Berkeley, in Aelred of Rievaulx, *Treatises, The Pastoral Prayer*, trans. Theodore Berkeley, Mary Paul Macpherson, and R. Penelope Lawson, introd. by David Knowles (Kalamazoo, MI, 1971), pp. 1–39 (at p. 33).

14 For a discussion of this meditative technique, see Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 2011), p. 121; and for the relevant text, Aelred of Rievaulx, *De institutione inclusarum*, in Hoste and Talbot (eds), *Opera ascetica*, pp. 635–82 (at p. 669); and for a translation, Mary Paul Macpherson, *A Rule of Life for a Recluse*, in Aelred, *Treatises*, pp. 41–102 (at p.

form of meditation and imaginative literature are clear. Arthurian stories are problematic not because they make mendacious truth-claims, but because they teach potential meditants to substitute an emotional response appropriate to fiction for the desired response.¹⁵

Aelred's attitude towards Arthurian stories suggests, then, that the emotional appeal of fictional narrative was considered to be a serious spiritual danger at Rievaulx Abbey, and perhaps more widely in twelfth-century monastic cultures. The idea was soon propagated beyond the monastic context as well. In a passage which probably draws upon Aelred's account, the theologian Peter of Blois makes the following claim in the course of a treatise on confession:

Saepe in tragoediis et aliis carminibus poetarum, in jocularum cantilenis describitur aliquis vir prudens, decorus, fortis, amabilis et per omnia graciosus. Recitantur etiam pressurae vel injuriae eidem crudeliter irrogatae, sicut de Arturo et Gangano et Tristanno, fabulosa quaedam referunt histriones, quorum auditu concutuntur ad compassionem audientium corda, et usque ad lacrymas compunguntur. Qui ergo de fabulae recitatione ad misericordiam commoveris, si de Domino aliquid pium legi audias, quod extorqueat tibi lacrymas, nunquid propter hoc de Dei dilectione potes dictare sententiam? Qui compateris Deo, compateris et Arturo. Ideoque utrasque lacrymas pariter perdis, si non diligis Deum.¹⁶

[Often in tragedies and other compositions of poets, (as) in the songs of minstrels, a man is described who is prudent, comely, brave, lovable, and gracious in every way. The poet tells of the oppressions or injuries cruelly inflicted upon him, as in some of the fictions that performers relate of Arthur and Gawain and Tristan, at hearing which the audience's hearts are excited to compassion, and moved even to tears. You, then, who are moved to feel pity when a romance is performed, if you hear something devout about God read out to you, which compels you to weep, do you think that because of this weeping you have any conception of what it is to love

88).

15 William of Newburgh, by contrast, raises a more pragmatic objection in his castigation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's Arthurian fictions: Geoffrey's narrative falsely identifies itself with the 'honest name of history' ('honesto historiae nomine'), and in doing so (it is implied), raises doubts concerning the ability of historical narratives to make believable truth-claims. See William of Newburgh, *Historia rerum Anglicarum*, in *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. Richard Howlett, 4 vols (London, 1884), I.12.

16 Peter of Blois, *Liber de confessione sacramentali*, PL 207, cols 1088C–89A.

God? You who feel compassion for God, you feel it for Arthur too. Both kinds of tears are wasteful, if you don't love God.]¹⁷

Unlike Aelred, Peter is probably not writing for a monastic audience, and though his account runs along similar lines, it is noticeably different. The idea that fictional narrative corrupts the affective qualities of religious meditation is no longer present (or is not explicitly expressed) in this text. Instead, Peter cautions in somewhat weaker terms that love of God is a necessary element of pious emotion. The text might be read as implying that romance fictions need to be rejected before a genuinely pious affective response can be cultivated, though Peter's famously ambivalent and complex attitude towards his own poetic output may lead us to doubt that this moral can be derived uncomplicatedly from the text.¹⁸ Whether or not we take it at face value, the text certainly expresses (along with the *Speculum caritatis*) the idea that tears shed without love of God are wasted effort. This idea of wasted effort is a repeated preoccupation of the insular French hagiographers mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, and to whom I turn now.

The twelfth century saw the efflorescence of romance, a new kind of self-consciously fictive writing.¹⁹ This relatively youthful mode was clearly regarded with suspicion by some writers of more established kinds of text. The idea that texts whose literal meaning was not directly true could have an ethical value, and thus communicate

17 Translation from Peter Dronke, 'Peter of Blois and Poetry at the Court of Henry II', in *The Medieval Poet and His World* (Rome, 1984, [f.p. in *Mediaeval Studies* 28 (1976), 185–235]), pp. 281–340 (at p. 296).

18 Ibid, pp. 288–97. Dronke, following Reto Bezzola, *Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en occident (500–1200)*, 3 vols (Paris, 1963), III:39–44, argues that one of Peter's letters, confusingly addressed to someone of the same name, is not a real letter, but a fictive negotiation of two literary 'selves'; for a rejection of this view, Richard Southern, 'The Necessity for Two Peters of Blois', in *Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to Margaret Gibson*, ed. Lesley Smith and Benedicta Ward (London, 1992), pp. 103–18. Southern's argument is convincing; however, there is still no need to dismiss Dronke's broader argument as regards Peter's negotiation of his literary identities, as John D. Cotts notes in *The Clerical Dilemma: Peter of Blois and Literate Culture in the Twelfth Century* (Washington, DC, 2009), pp. 123–30.

19 For an important discussion of this development, see Green, *Beginnings of Medieval Romance*.

non-literal truth, was apparently a difficult one for many writers from this period of literary history to accept, even though some strands of twelfth-century intellectual culture were increasingly willing to accept the idea that fictions could conceal ethical truths.²⁰ Many insular French saints' lives express clear opposition to the idea that ethics can subsist in fiction. Chardri, the author of the early thirteenth-century poem *La Vie des Set Dormanz*, devotes a section early in his prologue to a defence of his subject matter:

Ne voil pas en fables d'Ovide, Seinnurs, mestre mun estuide, Ne ja, sachez, ne parlerum Ne de Tristram ne de Galerun; Ne de Renard ne de Hersente	55
Ne voil pas mettre m'entente, Mes voil de Deu e sa vertu, Ki est pussant e tutjurz fu, E de ses seinz, les Set Dormanz, Ke tant furent resplendisanz	60
Devant la face Jesu Crist. Car si cum il est escrit Vus en dirrai la verité De chef en chef cum ad esté. Un empereur esteit pussant	65
En Costentinoble la grant; Decius fu icil numez, Orgeillus e pussant assez, Mes de la lei fu mescreant, Car en Apolin e en Tervagant	70
Aveit tute se entente mise.	<i>(Vie des Set Dormanz, ll. 51–71)</i> ²¹

[Lords, I do not want to place my labour into recounting the fables of Ovid, nor, even, you should know, will we speak of Tristan or of Galeron; nor do I want to expend my effort on stories of Renard or of Hersente: instead, I want to speak of God and his virtue, who is powerful and always has been, and of his saints, the Seven Sleepers, who were so very resplendent before the face of Jesus Christ. I will tell you the truth, just as it is written; in all significant respects just as it was. There was once a powerful emperor in the great city of Constantinople; he was called Decius, and he was very proud and powerful, but in the matter of his faith he was a

20 On twelfth-century explorations of fiction and truth, see *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism, c. 1100–c. 1375: The Commentary Tradition*, ed. A.J. Minnis and A.B. Scott with David Wallace (Oxford, 1988), pp. 113–126.

21 Quotations from the text are taken from *La Vie des Set Dormanz*, ed. Brian Merrilees, ANTS 35 (London, 1977).

heathen, because he put all his effort into the worship of Apollo and Tervagant.]

This passage is rich with unspoken anxieties. Chardri places his chosen matter against representative metonyms of several different genres (Ovid for classical myth, Tristan and Galeron for romance and *chanson de geste* respectively; Renart and Hersent for the *fabliau*). He refrains from characterizing these genres directly, but does so implicitly by stating that his chosen subject is to do with God, and that the story tells the truth ‘cum ad esté’ (‘as it was’, line 64).²² The profane stories are therefore not, by implication, anything to do with God, and also not given to telling the truth just as it was. This is an implicit, but nevertheless fairly clear critique of fictional narratives, even of narratives with strongly associated moralized interpretations (such as Ovid).²³ Interestingly, Chardi makes no attempt to distinguish between Ovid, whose writings were often read as religious allegories, and the other texts mentioned, for which this hermeneutic strategy does not appear to have been available.²⁴ These texts are thus presented as fundamentally less valuable than stories expressing a religious truth.²⁵

The use of the lexicon of effort and work to describe the task of composition further

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- 22 Though these lines (especially line 62) clearly make reference to the Latin source of the *Set Dormanz*, their truth-claim extends into the realm of ethics as well. For an important discussion of how to read these assertions of historical accuracy in saints’ lives, see Thomas Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1988), pp. 38–71.
- 23 Ovid’s works (along with their accompanying interpretative apparatus) would have been known to most medieval readers and writers through the grammar-school curriculum; see Günter Glauche, *Schullektüre im Mittelalter: Entstehung des Lektürekansons bis 1200 nach den Quellen dargestellt* (Munich, 1970); Ralph Hexter, ‘Ovid in the Middle Ages’, in *Brill’s Companion to Ovid*, ed. Barbara Weiden Boyd (Leiden, 2002), pp. 412–42; Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (2nd edn, Aldershot, 1988), p. xxxiv; and Tony Hunt, *Teaching and Learning Latin in Thirteenth-Century England*, 3 vols (Cambridge, 1991).
- 24 See Ralph Hexter, ‘Medieval Articulations of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: From Lactantian Segmentation to Arnulfian Allegory’, *Mediaevalia* 13 (1987), 63–82; and Peter Dronke, ‘Metamorphoses: Allegory in Early Medieval Commentaries on Ovid and Apuleius’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 72 (2009), 21–39.
- 25 See Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, “‘Bet ... to ... rede on holy seyntes lyves ...’”: Romance and Hagiography Again?, in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 83–97, for the thought-provoking argument that this type of statement is not a ‘piece of literary history’ but a ‘launching device, a temporary marker around which to mobilize discourse’ (p. 84).

suggests that Chardri considered the work expended in translating or re-telling narratives from these genres to be wasted, or at least to be better spent in telling a story that expresses divine truth. We might easily see echoes of Peter of Blois in this formulation. Just as the devotional effort ('entente', line 71) of the emperor comes to nothing, because it is directed at the wrong object, Chardri's putative effort ('entente', line 56) expended in the writing of *fabliaux* would also be wasted, because it is not aligned towards an expression of truth.²⁶ Indeed, the word 'mescreant' ('heretic', line 69) carries this very sense of believing in the wrong way.²⁷ The prologue thus seeks to align Decius' heresy with the 'heresy' of composers of profane literature, since although both are fervent devotees of their chosen faith, no amount of fervour will solve the problem of their misdirected devotion. This idea of profane poetry as a form of literary heresy is a highly resonant one: it admits that profane texts might seem to have a formal kinship with devotional ones, but that their fundamental divergence in terms of essential value belies this apparent similarity. Chardri's characterization of profane literature is a sophisticated one that seeks subtly to account for its obvious appeal, while denying its fundamental value.

The presence of Chardri's justification of his matter itself suggests that his inscribed audience might have expected to be diverted by a different kind of story from a *vita*. The *Vie*'s octosyllabic couplets give it a formal kinship with many of the romances and other

26 In Guillaume le Clerc's mid-thirteenth century homiletic poem *Le Besant de Dieu*, ed. Ernst Martin (Halle, 1869), this idea becomes the text's overarching metaphor. The poem directs its audience in the proper spending of God's metaphorical coin ('besant'), and presents itself as being generated by a desire on the poet's behalf not to spend his own coin unwisely. In the course of the prologue, Guillaume performs an authorial retraction that demonstrates what the unwise spending of God-given talents might look like in the context of literary composition: 'Guillame, un clers qui fu Normanz, / Qui versefia en Romanz / Fablels e contes soleit dire / En fole e en vaine matire, / Peccha sovent: deus li pardont! / Mult ama les deslitz del mond / E mult servi ses enemis / Qui le guerreeint tut dis.' (ll. 79–86, 'Guillaume, a clerk from Normandy, who made verses in French, used to recount fables and tales on foolish and pointless subjects. He sinned often: may God pardon him! He loved the delights of the world a great deal, and served his enemies a great deal, who always fought against him'). It is interesting to note in this context that there is no evidence for these 'fablels e contes' in Guillaume's extant works, which consist of an insular French version of the *Book of Tobit* (Dean 468), a moralized bestiary (Dean 702), and a poem about the *Joies de Nostre Dame* (Dean 704).

27 See *OED* s.vv. mis- prefix², and miscreant adj. and n..

Ke ne frium, sicum jeo quit,
 La Passiun de Jhesu Crist:
 Tant sumes feinz k'en ubliance
 Mettum tut Deu e sa pussance.

(*Vie de Seint Josaphaz*, ll. 2931–40)³¹

[We love the folly of this life so much that we would sooner hear Roland and Oliver sung of, and would hear the battles of the Twelve Peers much more readily than, in my opinion, we would do for the Passion of Jesus Christ: we are so very false, we who neglect God and his power.]

The idea that popular genres of profane literature were displacing their religious counterparts is therefore a repeated preoccupation in Chardri's extant works. The mention of Roland in the context of the Passion is particularly interesting, since it creates a possibility that Chardri recognized the similarities between Roland's self-sacrifice and Christ's Passion, and further considered this affiliation to be impious and inappropriate.³² The suggestion implicit in this juxtaposition may be that the story of Roland is attempting to appropriate the topoi and motifs of religious narrative.³³ The use of the word 'feinz' (*AND* s.v. feint adj.; 'false', 'faint', 'faint-hearted') to describe those who prefer Roland's 'passion' to Christ's is highly significant in this context. If Chardri is indeed referring to Roland's death in these lines, then the point must be that Roland's 'passion' is no more than a faint image of Christ's — even a misleading one. In the text's argument, people who prefer such representations are equally faint ('feinz') images of virtue, and those who choose to experience genuine religious narratives have correspondingly genuine virtue. Roland's 'passion' is not a legitimate reflection of a religious motif, but rather a heresy, because it appropriates the structure of sacred narrative and directs it towards an

31 *Chardry's Josaphaz, Set Dormanz und Petit Plet*, ed. John Koch (Heilbronn, 1879).

32 On the 'passion' of Roland, see *The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition*, ed. Gerard J. Brault, 2 vols (London, 1978), I:42–43.

33 See Richard Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia, 2009), pp. 96–97, for a literary example of a knight (from the *Chanson de Guillaume*) who juxtaposes the suffering of Christ and the suffering of the warrior directly.

inappropriate object. The martyrdoms of saints, on the other hand, are appropriate and edifying reflections of Christ's Passion because they occur in similar contexts, usually involving religious persecution and the renunciation of temporal power.

Martyrdom narratives typically concern themselves with the contrast between the saint's physical weakness at the time of martyrdom and the saint's spiritual strength. Feats of physical endurance in these texts are presented as being caused by God's intervention as a consequence of the saint's unfailing holiness, rather than by the prowess of the saint. Because Roland's death does not fit into this narrative archetype, its similarities to Christ's Passion cannot generate the same meanings that are possible for saintly martyrdoms. The reason given for Roland's popularity is also worthy of examination; Chardri's claim that he and his contemporaries love 'the folly of this life' ('la folie ... de ceste vie', ll. 2931–32) so much that they prefer Roland to Christ says a great deal about how Chardri understood the interpretative capacity of his contemporaries.³⁴ Roland, Oliver, and the Twelve Peers all have superlative physical power and martial prowess, and were presumably admired on these grounds by twelfth-century audiences. The famous anecdote about the story being sung to Norman troops before the battle of Hastings is a good indication that Roland would have been thought of in this way.³⁵ Though such virtues were often mentioned and praised by high-medieval hagiographers, as Katherine Allen Smith has shown, texts that celebrate the martial skill of their subjects tend to locate this skill safely in the narrative past; in such

34 There are examples of similar accusations; for instance, a story found in Caesarius of Heisterbach's *Dialogus miraculorum*, in which a preacher pretends to begin a sermon by talking about Arthur, and then reprimands his audience when their interest and alertness increases: see Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 94. In a similar vein, a fourteenth-century sermon castigates its audience, who show no emotional response to Christ's Passion but are moved to tears by the story of the death of Guy of Warwick's lion: see Owst, *Literature and Pulpit*, p. 14n and Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford, 1990), p. 75; both are citing London, British Library MS Harley 7322, fol. 49.

35 See William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum: The History of the English Kings*, ed. R.A.B. Mynors, trans. R.M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1988), §3.1, and D.C. Douglas, 'The Song of Roland and the Norman Conquest of England', *French Studies* 14 (1960), 99–116.

texts, prowess is laudable when collocated with a non-violent present.³⁶ This does not mean that warriors who never relinquished their earthly profession were never considered models of sanctity. As Smith notes, Roland and Charlemagne were both objects of religious devotion in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: the tomb of the former was a pilgrimage site, and the latter was canonized in 1165.³⁷ However, we may safely understand this kind of devotional practice as alien to Chardri's spirituality. For Chardri, Roland's death is simply a matter of martial bravery, which is not a Christian virtue but rather another example of 'la folie ... de ceste vie'. This idea of 'worldly folly' is central to Chardri's objection to profane literature as expressed in this section of the *Josaphaz*: the story of Roland is not necessarily incapable of sustaining a moral interpretation, but in most reception-circumstances, such an interpretation would not be advanced, since the audience's attention is fixed too firmly on the text's literal sense. Chardri's inscribed audience lacks either the competence or willingness to read in this way. Texts which directly show the moral and devotional implications of their narratives are therefore highly preferable to those which only have the potential to be read in this way.

Of course, the stance taken by Chardri in these texts does more than present a view of profane literature. Both prologues invoke a discourse of opposition in which sacred and profane literature are dialectical opposites, and in doing so, suggest that these modes of writing share more than Chardri might wish to admit.³⁸ Indeed, a number of texts in this group of insular saints' lives mix criticism of profane genres with an appropriation of elements characteristic to those genres. The common currency of narrative motifs in

36 Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 156–76, and esp. p. 159. Anglo-Saxon literary culture was more somewhat more tolerant of martial sanctity: see John Edward Damon, *Soldier Saints and Holy Warriors: Warfare and Sanctity in the Literature of Early England* (Ashgate, 2003).

37 Smith, *Making of Monastic Culture*, p. 160.

38 On the dialectical opposition of profane and morally instructive literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, see Sarah Kay, *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford, 2001), pp. 179–215; and Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 94–104.

romance and hagiography has often been noted, though few attempts have been made to read these similarities alongside the condemnations of romance discussed in this chapter.³⁹

One text which combines a tendency to employ romance motifs with a condemnatory prologue is *La Vie saint Osith*, another late twelfth-century text:⁴⁰

Meuz vaut oir ici entour	
Ke de la geste paenur,	90
De Guercedin e de Saisons	
Deu enemis e felons	
E d'autre teus pur verité,	
U l'em vus ment a grant plenté	
Ky aime e ot la vanité,	95
Deu li en set mut de malgré.	
Des seinz Deu la veraie estoire	
Devum aver bien en memoire	
Kar quant nus la folur oum,	
Essample sovent en pernum;	100
Ky sen escute e sen entent	
Il en amende mut sovent.	
De saint' Osith ore vous dirum.	(<i>Vie saint Osith</i> , ll. 89–103) ⁴¹

[It is better to listen to this than to the deeds of pagans, of Gurreddin and the Saxons, enemies of God and evil-doers, and to other such things, where you will be told many lies. Those who love and listen to vanity are not welcome to God. We must hold in our memories the true histories of God's saints because when we listen to folly, we very often take example from it — while he who listens to sensible things

39 On hagiography and romance, see Paul Strohm, 'Passioun, Lyf, Miracle, Legende: Some Generic Terms in Middle English', *Chaucer Review* 10 (1975–76), 62–75 and 154–71; Diana Childress, 'Between Romance and Legend: "Secular Hagiography" in Middle English Literature', *PQ* 57 (1978), 311–22; Wogan-Browne, 'Romance and Hagiography Again'; M. Dominica Legge, 'Anglo-Norman Hagiography and the Romances', *Medievalia et Humanistica* n.s. 6 (1975), 41–49; Margaret Hurley, 'Saints' Legends and Romance Again: Secularization of Structure and Motif', *Genre* 8 (1975), 60–73; and Laurel Braswell, 'Sir Isumbras and the Legend of Saint Eustace', *Mediaeval Studies* 27 (1965), 128–51. Attempts have been made to construct an intermediate category for romances considered similar to hagiography: see Ojars Kratins, 'The Middle English *Amis and Amiloun*: Chivalric Romance or Secular Hagiography?', *PMLA* 81 (1966), 347–54; Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1968), pp. 120–38; and Hanspeter Schelp, *Exemplarische Romanzen im Mittelhochdeutschen* (Göttingen, 1967).

40 Two articles have argued for the presence of these features, though they differ considerably in their views regarding their purpose: Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'Women and Anglo-Norman Hagiography'; and Delbert Russell, 'The Secularization of Hagiography in the Anglo-Norman *Vie seinte Osith*', *Allegorica* 12 (1991), 3–16. That such features are frequently encountered in insular French hagiography is one of the central arguments of Laurent, *Plaire et édifier*.

41 Text from 'La Vie saint Osith, virge et martire: The Life of St Osith', ed. Delbert W. Russell, trans. Jane Zatta, and rev. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *PLL* 41 (2005), 339–444.

and understands them can very often improve himself. Now we will tell you about St Osith.]⁴²

As Delbert Russell has argued, this may be a direct reference to Jean Bodel's near-contemporary poem *La Chanson des Saisnes*, which makes a similar claim for its own superiority to other types of literary text.⁴³ In this poem, Jean Bodel famously characterized romances of the *matière de Bretagne* as 'vain et plaisant' (line 9, 'fictitious and entertaining'), those of the *matière de Rome* as 'sage et de san aprenant' (line 10, 'wise and educational'), and those of the *matière de France* as 'de voir chascun jor apparent' (line 11, 'appear[ing] truer each day').⁴⁴ The *Chanson de Saisnes* is a *matière de France* text (it narrates the story of Charlemagne's campaign against a Saxon king); Bodel is thus making a claim for the superiority of his own text by arguing for the superiority of the genre that it exemplifies.⁴⁵ However, as Douglas Kelly argues, the nature of his text makes it unlikely that Bodel is claiming that it communicates historical truth.⁴⁶ Bodel is in fact making an ethical claim here, as Kelly shows; the *matière de France* is true because the French crown confirms the exemplarity asserted by its literary archetype, Charlemagne: 'a dynastic argument comprehensible in the context of the *translatio imperii* commonplace'.⁴⁷ The *Vie saint Osith*, in contrast, denies the ethical value of this kind of exemplarity. In the argument of the text, the fundamental problem with profane literature is that its audiences tend to read even 'folur' as exemplary. This denial comes close to the heart of the tension observed

42 Translation from *ibid.*

43 Russell, 'Secularization of Hagiography', p. 3.

44 Text from Jean Bodel, *La Chanson des Saisnes*, ed. Annette Brasseur, 6 vols (Geneva, 1989).

45 Bezzola, in *Origines et formation* II:334–35, suggested that Bodel may be rewriting Arthur's victory over the Saxons in this text; Bodel's claim for the superiority of his matter may therefore be implicit even in the broad narrative of the poem.

46 Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison, WI, 1992), p. 211.

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 215–17 (quotation at p. 217).

in the texts discussed in this chapter: profane literature looks as if it can be read ethically, but its exemplarity does not refer to a pious ethical system (as these insular hagiographers would have understood it). This may help to explain why romances, which seem (at least to our eyes) fairly uncontroversial in comparison to bawdy, irreverent texts such as *fabliaux*, seem to have been the targets of a disproportionate number of the condemnations discussed in this chapter. Romance is sufficiently complex, and sufficiently serious, to exist in the same literary space as the vernacular saint's life, and (perhaps partially as a result of this proximity) makes ethical claims that other profane genres do not. Paradoxically, romance's participation in ethical discourse may be precisely what makes insular hagiographers castigate it with such frequency.

One of the richest and most extensive extant twelfth-century condemnations of profane literature is found in Denis Piramus' *Vie de Seint Edmund le Rei*. The opening lines of this poem perform a powerful and extensive retraction of the profane compositions of Denis' youth.⁴⁸ As part of this retraction, the text casts doubt on the truth-content and instructive value of profane literature in great detail. As such, the text is an extremely valuable window into the discourse analysed in this chapter. Denis begins his retraction as follows:

48 A comparable example of authorial retraction is found in the twelfth-century continental French *Passion of St Andrew*, a poem which, though not linguistically insular, is found in Paris, MS Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal MS 3516, a manuscript containing various items of probable insular origin, including a *Life of St Mary of Egypt* (Dean 576), a *Life of St Gregory* (Dean 514), and a prose lapidary (Dean 359); see A. T. Baker, 'The Passion of Saint Andrew', *MLR* 11 (1916), 420–49: 'Un raison dire vos vulh, / Tot simplement et senz orguilh, / Tuit escolteiz qui estes sage, / Ki Deu ameiz de vrai corage. / Ju ai sovent traitiet d'amur, / De joie grant et de dolzor, / De vaniteit et de folie, / De gas, de ris, de legerie. / Ai folliet en ma jovente; / En autre liu or ai m'entent. / Cant juvenes fui teil chose fiz / Et mon pensir et en teil liu mis / Dont moi repent et vul retraire, / Car teil chose est a Deu contraire.' (ll. 1–14: 'I want to tell you a true story, very simply and without pride: may all who are wise listen. I have often written of love, of great joy and sweetness, of vanity and stupidity, of merriment, of jollity, of leisure. I was foolish in my youth; I put my effort in another place now. When I was young I made such things, and put my thought into that place, of which I now repent and wish to retract, since such a thing is contrary to God'). For examples of similar retractions drawn more broadly from medieval European literature, see Anita Obermeier, *The History and Anatomy of Auctorial Self-Criticism in the European Middle Ages* (Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 112–33. *The Passion of Saint Andrew* is, to my knowledge, the earliest condemnation of profane literary composition in continental French.

Mult ai usé cume pechere
 Ma vie en trop fole manere,
 E trop ai usée ma vie
 E en peché e en folie.
 Kant court hanteie of les curteis, 5
 Si fesei les serventeis,
 Chanceunettes, rimes, saluz
 Entre les drues e les druz.
 Mult me penai de tels vers fere
 Ke assemble les puise treire, 10
 E k'ensemble fussent justez
 Pur acomplir lur volentez.
 Ceo me fist fere l'enemi,
 Si me tint ore a malbaili;
 Jamés ne me burdera plus. 15
 Jeo ai noun Denis Piramus;
 Les jurs jolifs de ma joefnesce
 S'en vunt, si trei jeo a veilesce,
 Si est bien dreit ke me repente.
 En autre ovre mettrai m'entente, 20
 Ke mult mielldre est e plus nutable.
 Deus m'aïde, Seint Espirit
 Seit of moi e si i aït! (*La Vie de Seint Edmund*, ll. 1–23)⁴⁹

[I have very often spent my life in a very foolish manner, like a sinner; I have gone about it in sin and in folly a great deal. When I frequented the court along with the courtiers, I composed *sirventes*, songs, rhymes, and messages between lovers and their beloveds. I went to great effort to make these verses so that I might draw them together, and which were assembled in order to accomplish their intended function. The devil made me do this; in this way he held me to ruin until now. I will never joke again. My name is Denis Piramus; the joyful days of my youth have gone, and now I am very old — thus it is entirely right that I repent. I will put my effort into another work, which is much more valuable and more important. Help me, God; may the Holy Spirit be with me and thus help me!]

The very opening of the poem marks it as an explicit reaction to profane literature, both as experienced in the poet's own life and in general. In the first four lines of the text, Denis claims to have committed a grave (but unspecified) sin — a sin which is subsequently revealed to consist in the composition of love poetry. This literary sin is characterized in very strong terms: we are told specifically that the poems of Denis' youth are caused by the

⁴⁹ Quotations from the text are taken from the most recent critical edition: Denis Piramus, *La Vie de Seint Edmund le Rei: Poème anglo-normand du XII^e siècle*, ed. Hilding Kjellman (Gothenburg, 1935). The prologue has also been recently re-edited from the British Library manuscript by Ian Short, in 'Denis Piramus and the Truth of Marie's *Lais*', *Cultura Neolatina* 67 (2007), 319–40.

devil.⁵⁰ For Denis, profane literature is not simply a waste of time (though he does invoke the same wasted-effort topos seen in Chardri and Peter of Blois), nor even a pale reflection of divine truth, as it was for Chardri. Although to compose such poetry is to joke (*AND* s.v. *bourder* v.²; ‘burdera’, line 15), the jokes are not harmless ones. The composition of profane literature is instead presented as a positively sinful category that demands repentance and retraction. He gives a detailed explanation of this belief with reference to two (presumably) well-known texts from his own literary culture:

Cil ki <i>Partonopé</i> trova	25
E ki les vers fist e rima,	
Mult se pena de bien dire,	
Si dist il bien de cele matire;	
Cume de fable e de menceonge	
La matire resemble soungé,	30
Kar iceo ne put unkes estre.	
Si est il tenu pur bon mestre	
E les vers sunt mult amez	
E en ces riches curz loëz.	
E dame Marie autresi,	35
Ki en rime fist e basti	
E compassa les vers de lais,	
Ke ne sunt pas del tut verais;	
E si en est ele mult loée	
E la rime par tut amée,	40
Kar mult l’aiment, si l’unt mult cher	
Cunte, barun e chivaler;	
E si enaiment mult l’escrit	
E lire le funt, si unt delit,	
E si les funt sovent retreire.	45
Les lais solent as dames pleire,	
De joie les oient e de gré,	
Qu’il sunt sulum lur volenté.	
Li rei, li prince e li courtur,	
Cunte, barun e vavsur	50
Aiment cuntes, chanceuns e fables	
E bons diz, qui sunt dilitables,	
Kar il hostent e gettent puer	
Doel, enui e travail de quer,	

⁵⁰ An interesting parallel to this characterization is provided by Walter Map, whose *De Nugis Curialium* uses hell as a metaphor to describe the court. See *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers’ Trifles*, ed. and trans. M.R. James, revised by C.N.L. Brooke and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1983), pp. 2–26.

E si funt ires ubliër 55
 E del quer hostent le penser.
 Kant cil e vus, segnur trestuit,
 Amez tel ovre e tel deduit,
 Si vus volez entendre a mei,
 Jeo vus dirrai par dreaitte fei 60
 Un deduit, qui mielz valt asez
 Ke ces autres ke tant amez,
 E plus delitable a oïr.
 Su purrez les almes garir
 E les cors garantir de hunte. 65
 Mult deit hom bien oïr tel cunte.
 Hom deit mult mielz a sen entendre
 Ke en folie le tens despendre.
 Un dedut par vers vuz dirrai,
 Ke sunt de sen e si verrai 70
 K'unkes rien ne pout plus veir estre,
 Kar bien le virent nostre ancestre,
 E nus en après d'eir en eir
 Avum bien veü que ceo est veir,
 Kar a nos tens est avenu 75
 De ceste oeuvre meinte vertu.
 Ceo que hom veit, ceo deit hom crere,
 Kar ceo n'est pas sunge n'arveire. (La Vie de Seint Edmund, ll. 25–78)

[He who wrote *Partonopeus*, and who made and rhymed the verses, worked very hard to speak well. Indeed, he did relate the matter well, but as in fable and in lies the matter resembles a dream, for it can never be real. And yet he is considered to be a good poet, and his verses are highly appreciated, and are praised in these rich courts. And lady Marie as well, who rhymed and constructed the verses of *lais* (which are not in any way true) — she too is very much praised, and their rhyme is loved above all; for many love them, and counts, barons and knights consider them dear to them, and so they love this writing, and have it read, and they delight in it, and they have it recited often. The *lais* are often pleasing to ladies; they hear them with joy and willingly, because they are in accord with their desires. The king, the prince, and the courtier, the count, the baron and the vavasour all love tales, songs, and fables, and good stories, which are pleasing because they get rid of sorrow, boredom and heaviness from the heart, and because they cause anger to be forgotten, and take away pensive thought from the heart. Since you, dear lords, love such a work and such a delight, if you wish to listen to me, I will tell you truly a delight, which will be worth a great deal more than these others that you love so much, and more delightful to hear — and you can heal your souls, and protect your bodies from shame. A man should really listen to such a story. A man who spends his time in foolish pursuits would do much better to listen to sense. I will tell you a delight in verse, which is good sense, and so true that nothing can possibly be more true, since our ancestors embraced it. And afterwards, from age to age, we have seen well that this is the truth, since it has come down to our time from this work of great virtue. Man should believe what man sees: this is neither a dream nor a matter of doubt.]

Denis continues his assault on profane literature at length and in surprisingly specific terms. Two authors of representative texts from two of the principal fictional narrative genres of this period — romance and *lai* — are singled out for criticism, and this criticism targets the basic veracity, rather than the competence or superficial form of their texts. The *Partonopeus*-poet's labour of composition produced a competent piece of versification ('si dist il bien', line 28), Denis admits, but his subject ('matire', line 28) is not similarly praiseworthy, for reasons similar to those given by Chardri in the *Set Dormanz* and the *Josaphaz*: it does not directly express or affirm divine truth. We might say (invoking Chardri's terminology) that even though the *Partonopeus*-poet tried his best, he could never succeed in composing a worthy poem, because he was a compositional heretic: a poetic *mescreant*. Though the accidental features of the *Partonopeus*-poet's text — the rhyme, the versification, and so on — are all competent, the matter can never be real because, like a dream, it has no direct connection with reality.⁵¹ The formal and affective qualities of such poems are thus praised, even while their fundamental value is criticized. However, in a subtle act of rhetorical appropriation, these qualities are transferred onto the poem that Denis is in the process of presenting and characterizing. A standard defence of literary entertainment was that it provided a relief for a heavy heart, dispelling misery and pensiveness.⁵² Denis here commandeers a widely-accepted notion of literature's value by applying it to his own composition, saying that the delight provided by his poem ('deduit', line 61) will exceed that provided by profane texts such as *Partonopeus* and Marie's *Lais*,

51 Denis must, of course, be referring to one of the non-revelatory types of dream (*insomnium*, *visum*, or *phatasma*), especially since the protagonists of saints' lives so often experience revelatory visions (*oraculum*, *visio*) while sleeping: see Steven Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 7–11. Importantly, medieval dream-theorists often understood non-revelatory dreams as deceptive. Just as non-revelatory dreams give a false impression of figuring an external reality (on which, see *ibid.*, pp. 21–23), so too may *Parthonope*'s accidental features give us the false impression that it contains truth. This understanding of the deceptive appearance of non-revelatory dreams may underpin Denis' presentation of *Parthonope* as 'soungé'.

52 Melissa Furrow, *Expectations*, pp. 1–13, and Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 1982), pp. 39–89.

which courtiers love so much ('tanz amez', line 62). This is a clever piece of argumentation, since it attempts to persuade Denis' inscribed audience with reference to aesthetic values with which they would be familiar.⁵³ Instead of claiming that religious literature provides a different kind of pleasure — even if a more worthy one — than entertaining poetry, the poem makes the stronger and more comprehensible claim that the pleasure afforded by this kind of literature is in fact of the same type, only better. Denis tells us that *lais* are pleasing to ladies because these texts are 'in accordance with their desires' ('sulum lur volenté', line 48). The discussion of the pleasurable qualities of *lais* in the previous lines (ll. 35–47) suggests strongly that this desire consists in a wish to be delighted and entertained. Denis recognizes (at least superficially) that hagiography cannot simply claim to be more truthful than, or ethically superior to profane literature, but must accord with the desires of its inscribed audience by offering 'deduit' (line 69) as well as edification.

The final section of the prologue makes the exemplary thrust of Piramus' poem clear:

Les vers que vus dirrai si sunt	
Des enfances de seint Edmunt	
E de miracles autresi.	80
Unkes hom plus beals n'en oï.	
Rei, duc, prince e empereür,	
Cunte, barun e vavasur	
Deivent bien a ceste oevre entendre,	
Kar bon ensample il purrunt prendre.	85
Rei deit bien oïr d'autre rei	
E l'ensample tenir a sei,	
E duc de duc e quens de cunt,	
Kant la reison a bien amunte.	
Les bones genz deivent amer	90
D'oïr retreire e recunter	

⁵³ Even if, as various people have argued, Denis was a monk at Bury St Edmunds, it is hard to imagine that this poem, which suggests itself as useful instruction for kings, dukes, princes, emperors, counts, barons and vavasours (ll. 82–84), and which engages so closely with courtly literary taste, would have been written for the edification of Denis' brothers. We might plausibly understand it as an attempt to promote and advertise the abbey's patron saint to a wider audience.

Des bones gestes les estoires
E retenir en lur memoires.

(*La Vie de Seint Edmund*, ll. 78–93)

[The verses that I will recount to you are about the childhood of St. Edmund, and of his miracles as well. You will hear of no more beautiful man. King, duke, prince, emperor, count, baron, and vavasour would do well to listen to this work, because of the good example they can take from it. A king does well to take heed of another king, and take his example for himself, and a duke to a duke and a count to a count, since there is a great deal of sense in these examples. Good people should love to hear good deeds and stories told and recounted, and keep them in their memories.]

This section continues with an appropriation of the lexicon of romance. When St. Edmund (who was, of course, a king) is described as a superlatively beautiful man, he resembles a romance hero, who would typically be described in similar terms when introduced into the narrative.⁵⁴ Edmund was a king, and so we might expect his exemplarity to be in the secular realm of judicial wisdom and martial skill.⁵⁵ However, as the subject of the poem is revealed, we find that the king has been remade as a saint, and those attributes that would have been otherwise described in terms of romance now belong to the realm of hagiography.⁵⁶ Just as the beauty of romance heroes indicates their superlative worth as rulers, lovers, and warriors, the beauty of saints in hagiographical texts indicates their spiritual merit.

The position taken by Piramus against profane literature reveals a great deal about how he understood these texts in the context of his contemporary literary culture, and also, by implication, sheds light on the reputation of sacred and didactic literature in this same culture.⁵⁷ I would suggest that, in this remarkably direct piece of literary criticism, Denis is

54 For example, in the Middle English *Horn*, where the eponymous character is described in very similar terms: 'He hadde a sone that het Horn; / Fairer ne mighte non beo born' (*King Horn*, ed. Rosamund Allen [New York, 1984] ll. 9–10).

55 Anglo-Saxon royal saints often display this kind of exemplarity: see Damon, *Soldier Saints*.

56 Cf. Furrow, *Expectations*, p. 11.

57 Standalone critical accounts of Piramus' work are fairly few; but see Short, 'Denis Piramus'; and for briefer discussions, Evelyn Birge Vitz, *Orality and Performance in Medieval Narrative* (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 174–77; Furrow, *Expectations*, pp. 25–27, and pp. 212–13; Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 81. Aside from Short's detailed investigation of a specific aspect of the prologue, these are fairly cursory treatments of what has been described as an important early piece of literary criticism. (Short,

doing much more than just performing what Anita Obermeier has called ‘fixed topoi’.⁵⁸ Though Obermeier is correct in noting the long history of the poetic retraction, it does this performance an injustice to imply that they exist in their texts only by virtue of being a conventional element. In my view, the same can be said for all of the texts discussed in this chapter. Aelred’s use of Augustinian material in the *Speculum caritatis* is clearly a subtle application of a well-known topos to a specific cultural situation (namely, the nascent popularity of Arthurian fiction), and has serious implications for the Rievaulx monks’ understanding of their own piety: there is no reason to suspect that the same is not true for the other texts discussed in this chapter, even if fewer reliable contextual clues survive in these texts.⁵⁹ Though, as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne notes, we should not necessarily assume that the categories invoked by these texts are useful analytical tools for literary history,⁶⁰ these ‘position statements’ do show a desire on the part of the writers to place their texts in dialectical discourse with other texts, whose analogous formal qualities are argued to conceal a deviant, near-heretical ethics. We do not have to commit to a theoretically unsophisticated understanding of genre in order to read these texts as genuine attempts to identify themselves as a particular kind of writing, and as in opposition to another kind of writing. I would suggest, then, that these texts are useful — even vital — points of reference for literary historians, even if they do not in themselves constitute ‘piece[s] of literary history’.⁶¹

When taken together, this cluster of twelfth-century insular French saints’ lives

‘Denis Piramus’, p. 328).

58 Obermeier, *Anatomy of Auctorial Self-Criticism*, p. 115.

59 All of the poetic retractions discussed in this chapter must be understood as being derived ultimately from Augustine’s immensely influential *Confessions* I.xxiii (and elsewhere): see Augustine, *Confessions*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke (Washington, D.C., 1953); and Obermeier, *Anatomy of Auctorial Self-Criticism*, pp. 71–94.

60 Wogan-Browne, ‘Romance and Hagiography Again’, p. 84.

61 *Ibid.*

discussed in this chapter can tell us a great deal about the reception of profane literature in twelfth-century England. From the evidence of these texts — in their number and topical consistency as much as in their individual position statements — it is clear that the cultural discourse surrounding profane writing was highly dialectical at this point in insular literary history. The relative lack of comparable twelfth-century texts written in continental dialects of French may suggest further that this tension was particularly strongly expressed in insular religious writing.⁶² Whether or not this is the case (and the argument of this chapter does not require it to be the case), these kinds of texts may be plausibly understood as reactions to the twelfth-century ascendancy of romance and its related modes and genres (*chanson de geste*, love-lyric, and *lai*). The repentance performed by Denis, Chardri, and the author of the *Vie seinte Osith* in their respective prologues suggests a literary culture in which entertaining poetry was being increasingly condemned as frivolous or spiritually dangerous. The voices condemning profane literary practice (such as, for example, that of Chardri in the prologue to the *Set Dormanz*) represent a reaction against a mode that had become extremely popular in the reading- and listening-cultures of twelfth-century England; so popular, perhaps, that it began to be regarded by writers like Chardri as a form of literary heresy.⁶³

Importantly, the texts discussed in this chapter present themselves as replacements for the popular texts that they condemn. Although some of the prologues quoted above suggest that their narratives will provide a similar — but divinely approved — pleasure to the texts that they replace, this suggestion is not substantially borne out in the texts

62 With the exception of the *Passion of St Andrew* (for which, see note 48 above) continental saints' lives with prologues that condemn profane literature are generally written later than the twelfth century: the main extant examples are *La Vie de Saint Thibaut: An Old French Poem of the Thirteenth Century*, Helen Eastman Manning (New York, 1929); and A.J. Denomy, 'An Old French Life of Saint Barbara', *Mediaeval Studies* 1 (1939), 148–78 (written at the end of the thirteenth century).

63 For an important analogous discussion of romance ethics as heresy, see A. J. Denomy, *The Heresy of Courtly Love* (New York, 1947).

themselves, despite the similarities noted above. The saintly heroes of these texts reject worldly values, as of course they must by virtue of their status as subjects of hagiographical narratives; it might, then, be argued that romance is appealing because it can inscribe an ethical system that does not require *contemptus mundi* on the part of its heroes or, indeed, its readers. Though, as Françoise Laurent has argued, one of the distinctive qualities of insular hagiography lies in its attempt to present exemplary figures whose virtues are applicable to everyday life, it is still the case that what we see in most of these texts is a less-than-convincing sleight-of-hand — an attempt to persuade their readers that their texts will give them just as much pleasure (‘deduit’, *Vie de Seint Edmund*, line 61) as romance or lyric.⁶⁴ Peter of Blois’ remark to the effect that secular heroes more readily stirred the emotions of the laity than Christ’s passion suggests the impossibility of such a project. Why should we weep for saints whose torments are assuaged by the certainty of their martyrdom, or for confessors whose privations are similarly hedged against salvation? The structure of Christ’s Passion, and of the hagiographical narratives that ape it, is essentially comic. It might easily be suggested, then, that the only appropriate tears to weep in response to such texts are tears of joy in gratitude for Christ’s sacrifice for humanity. It is difficult to feel strong sympathy for saints, even in the midst of their horrifying tortures or grim privations, since such moments of apparent narrative crisis are constantly undercut by the inevitability of the saint’s imminent assumption into heaven.⁶⁵ On the other hand, we can imagine very easily that someone would weep out of pity when reading the story of Tristan (for instance), whose pursuit of illicit love leads to a death that can only result in his damnation. Perhaps the fact that so many romance heroes are (from a

64 Laurent, *Plaire et édifier*, pp. 407–576. For Laurent, the best example of this practice is Guillaume de Berneville’s *Vie de Saint Gilles*, which is given an extensive reading on pp. 475–576. Laurent articulates a similar argument in the introduction to Guillaume de Berneville, *La vie de Saint Gilles: texte du XII^e siècle publié d’après le manuscrit de la Bibliothèque laurentienne de Florence*, ed. Françoise Laurent (Paris, 2003).

65 For a good example of such a text, see Simund de Freine, *La vie de Saint Georges*, in *Les oeuvres de Simund de Freine*, ed. John E. Matzke (Paris, 1909), pp. 61–117.

particular ethical perspective) actually anti-heroes goes some way towards accounting for the mode's enduring appeal in the Middle Ages. While there are certainly formal and thematic similarities between these hagiographical narratives and romance, it can be argued that such similarities serve only to point up the move away from the secular world. In fact, the dialectical opposition set up in the hagiographical prologues discussed above relies upon the existence of tangible differences between vernacular hagiography and romance. A truly hybrid work would instead dilute the differences between the two modes and would make it very difficult to target profane poetry with the kind of criticism that writers of didactic poetry so clearly wanted to give.

The insular hagiographical prologues discussed in this chapter work to present romance as an ethically deviant mode. This move does not in itself demonstrate the existence of a cultural discourse in which romance was understood in this way, though, as I have suggested above, the frequency with which twelfth-century insular texts condemn romance ethics is fairly good evidence that such a discourse did indeed exist. As I show in the following chapter, twelfth-century insular romances also offer us evidence that this discourse of opposition was an important feature of insular literary culture at this time. Insular romances of this period demonstrate an acute awareness of the ethical problems inherent in their chosen mode. For many of these texts, as I show, this anxiety becomes a generative force. It could be suggested, then, that insular French hagiography's persistent condemnations of romance open up — paradoxically — a cultural space in which romance can more freely explore its own ethical claims. From a diachronic perspective, we might easily regard condemnations of romance in the high and late Middle Ages as stale, non-interactive topoi. I would suggest that this particular cluster of texts demonstrates the insufficiency of this notion. These highly intelligent, subtle polemics might better be regarded as crucially important cultural conditions for the development of early insular

romance. Taken as pieces of genuine literary criticism, rather than as meaningless generic performances, these texts can be read as interrogating (even as instantiating) a discourse which asks a key question: what does (and what should) romance do? The most distinctive and interesting features of twelfth-century romance, I suggest, are generated by its own attempts to answer this question.

Chapter 2: Romance ethics, c. 1170–1230

It is an obvious truism that Christian ideologies dominated the European Middle Ages in one sense or another. But Christianity has, of course, never been hegemonic. This chapter focuses on the new vernacular genre of romance in the twelfth century, a period characterized by a growing concern among clerics with the ‘personal reform of all Christians’.¹ As has been noted in various places, the idea that sustained ecclesiastical interest in lay spirituality began in 1215 is highly reductive; rather, the Fourth Lateran Council (and its famous canon *Omnis utriusque sexus*) represents the culmination of at least a century of concern for the problems it addresses.² This chapter seeks to link the twelfth-century rise of vernacular fiction with the growing interest in lay spirituality over the same period, arguing that the twelfth century in England sees the widespread creation of texts that promote independent forms of religiosity. In making this argument, I do not wish to invoke an over-simplistic, and ultimately unsupportable, notion of an ideological conflict between two cohesive groups, one aristocratic and the other ecclesiastical. The texts certainly do not suggest this; moreover, we know that their writers were often clerics.³ What the texts do demonstrate is a canny, selective use of Christian ideologies for non-devotional purposes. In many texts throughout the Middle Ages, religious sentiment works

1 Giles Constable, *The Reformation of the Twelfth Century* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 4.

2 See Alexander Murray, ‘Confession before 1215’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, vol. 3 (1993), 51–81 (p. 65: ‘[the Lateran decrees] confirmed an existing momentum’); *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Biller and Alastair Minnis (Woodbridge, 1998), pp. 1–34; Elaine Treharne, ‘The Life and Times of the Old English Homilies for the First Sunday in Lent’, in *The Power of Words: Anglo-Saxon Studies Presented to Donald G. Scragg on His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. H. Magennis and J. Wilcox (Morgantown, 2006), pp. 207–42 (at p. 240). Treharne sees a pastoral mandate in twelfth-century English writing even before the Third Lateran Council: see her *Living Through Conquest: The Politics of Early English, 1020–1200* (Oxford, 2012), p. 139.

3 Rosalind Field, “‘Pur les francs homes amender’”: Clerical Authors and the Thirteenth-Century Context of Historical Romance’, in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 175–88.

to justify a violent way of life (a product of historical necessity).⁴ The poems discussed in this chapter perform an important subset of this cultural work: their romance modalities mean that they privilege interpretative ambiguity and the importance of context and reception in determining meaning.

The twelfth century in England sees the widespread creation of texts that promote independent, lay ideologies — what Rosalind Field calls ‘a self-fashioning of the Anglo-Norman barony’.⁵ As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, this self-fashioning was far from uncontested: twelfth-century insular hagiographical prologues stage a remarkably cohesive attack on the values of profane fiction. By turning now to insular romances contemporary with these polemics, I hope to read romance — too often dismissed as merely entertaining — with this dialectic in mind. I am convinced that romance is not an essentially ‘secular’ mode, *pace* Derek Pearsall’s much-quoted definition, which has caused more problems for romance criticism than has previously been acknowledged.⁶ Besides the obvious difficulty inherent in the fact that we have direct evidence for clerical ownership of romance texts,⁷ and the problem that many romance texts clearly engage with what we might term theological questions,⁸ I cannot accept the notion that romance fundamentally (that is, divorced from all contingencies and contexts) inscribes the secular. Indeed, phrased in this way, the absurdity of the notion is revealed. Romance is a mode

4 On the independent ideology of knightly piety, see Richard Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors: The Religious Ideology of Chivalry* (Philadelphia, 2009) esp. pp. 67–93.

5 Field, ‘Clerical Authors’, p. 181.

6 Derek Pearsall, ‘Middle English Romance and its Audiences’, in *Historical and Editorial Studies in Medieval and Early Modern English for Johan Gerritsen*, ed. Mary-Jo Arn and Hanneke Wirtjes (Groningen, 1985), pp. 37–47: ‘the principal secular literature of entertainment of the Middle Ages’ (p. 37).

7 For example, the four copies of *Gui de Warewic* owned by the Augustinian house at Canterbury and recorded in their fifteenth-century library catalogue: *St. Augustine’s Abbey, Canterbury*, ed. B.C. Barker-Benfield, *Corpus of British Medieval Library Catalogues* 13, 3 vols (London, 2008), pp. 429–32.

8 See, for instance, Siobhan Bly Calkin, ‘Romance Baptisms and Theological Contexts in *The King of Tars* and *Sir Ferumbas*’, in Purdie and Cichon (eds), *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, pp. 105–19.

characterized by its oblique engagement with external ideas. This quality of distance has an important implication for the purposes of the present discussion; namely, that a great deal of room for ambiguity exists. Romance's characteristic obliqueness means that it is better equipped to carry a variety of ideological affiliations than other modes of writing. I consider this obliqueness to be dialectical in itself: when we think of romance alongside its contemporary academic discourses, characterized to such a great extent by their search for meaning through language, romance's obliqueness begins to seem rather more dialectical than might first be supposed. Romance is an imaginative space in which heterodox ideologies can be explored, by virtue of its fictive nature, which ostensibly limits the status of its truth claims. By the same token, these ideologies are not permanent features of the mode.

Romance does not, therefore, uncontroversially and eternally express the ideologies of aristocrats, even if romances usually narrate the deeds of fictional (for the most part) aristocrats, and even if they were sometimes written for this purpose — and of course, it is presumptuous to assume that we know the original purposes for which these texts were written in the absence of direct statements to this effect. Rather, romance is an ideological site which, by virtue of its fictional nature and its tendency towards malleability and elusiveness, can be made to mean in a wide range of different ways. This chapter seeks to demonstrate the subversive and radical nature of this heterogeneity in insular texts from the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. I read the texts analysed in this chapter as the sites of an ideological conflict for hermeneutic control. While the combatants in this battle cannot be identified directly with 'the Church' and 'the aristocracy' directly, it is nevertheless the case that these texts are all concerned with the questions of who has the right to read them, and how. They participate in and accommodate a conflict which, then, is essentially about authority, ethics, and hermeneutics. The insular hagiographers discussed in Chapter 1 react

with hostility to a literary mode over which traditionally dominant modes of interpretation (and therefore dominant ethical systems) had no direct control. Again, it needs to be emphasised that I do not imagine romance texts as fundamentally expressing aristocratic values, even if many of their early examples initially did just this.⁹ It is much more important to consider the form of romance itself — multifarious, oblique, and vernacular. Romance was not, of course, the first vernacular mode to narrate the deeds of secular aristocrats (there are obvious precedents for this in Anglo-Saxon heroic literature and vernacular history) but it was nevertheless the first mode to do so in a way that we would now label as self-consciously fictive.¹⁰ In a culture that requires its textual products to be ethical, in the broadest sense, fiction is a dangerous type of writing. The inherently playful nature of a text that narrates events that it knows not to be literally true, or a text which presents a didactic voice which we cannot consistently trust, poses a remarkable challenge to a dominant intellectual culture that insisted so forcefully on literature's ethical engagement. The first part of this chapter offers readings of several texts that may have formed part of this challenge.

A discussion of the ethics of romance must begin with one of the foundational texts of exemplary knighthood: the *Chanson de Roland*.¹¹ While much of the poem's vast

9 See R.W. Hanning, 'The Audience as Co-Creator of the First Chivalric Romances', *The Yearbook of English Studies* 11 (1981), 1–28. Cf. Ian Short, 'Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England', *Anglo-Norman Studies XIV: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1991*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 229–49: 'patronage was a necessary condition for literary production in the twelfth century' (p. 247). Lee Patterson (following Guy Raynaud la Lage) has seen in twelfth-century romance evidence for a process 'by which medieval writing was gradually laicized'; my purpose in this chapter is to demonstrate that this process is an historically contingent feature of texts that seek to effect it, and not a fundamental feature of the mode. See Patterson, 'Virgil and the Historical Consciousness of the Twelfth Century: The *Roman d'Eneas* and *Erec et Enide*', in his *Negotiating the Past: The Historical Understanding of Medieval Literature* (Madison, WI, 1987), pp. 157–95 (at p. 158); and de Lage, 'Les romans antiques et la représentation de l'antiquité', *Le Moyen âge* 67 (1961), 247–91 (at pp. 250–51).

10 I follow D.H. Green in saying that 'fiction' necessarily entails a complicity between text and audience: see *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance: Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge, 2002), esp. pp. 4–7.

11 I include the *Roland* in the broad category of romance, though it is strictly speaking a *chanson de geste*, since the terms do not seem to have been closely distinguished in insular writing: see William Calin, 'Gui de Warewic and the Nature of Late Anglo-Norman Romance', *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 17 (1990),

scholarship has devoted itself to interpreting the text on its own terms, I wish to take a different approach here, and focus on one temporally and geographically specific response to Roland’s literary fame.¹² As we saw in the previous chapter, the story of Roland was singled out for specific criticism by Chardri in the twelfth-century insular French *Vie de Seint Josaphaz*. The precise terms of his criticism are worth repeating here, not least because Chardri seems to be using this text as a synecdoche for imaginative literature in general:

... la folie
Amum tant de ceste vie
Ke plus tost orrium chanter
De Rolant u d’Oliver
E les batailles des Duze Pers 2935
Orrium mut plus volenters,
Ke ne frium, sicum jeo quit,
La Passiun de Jhesu Crist (Vie de Seint Josaphaz, ll. 2931–38)¹³

[We love the folly of this life so much that we would sooner hear Roland and Oliver sung of, and would hear the battles of the Twelve Peers much more readily than, in my opinion, we would do for the Passion of Jesus Christ.]

Reading these two texts against each other, with the admittedly speculative assumption that something resembling the Oxford *Roland* was Chardri’s referent here, can suggest a great deal about the insular reception of the Roland story at this time.¹⁴ Chardri says that people (including him: ‘amum’) love this present, carnal life (and not the next one) so much that they would prefer to hear about this life than about the life to come. Their love of the world engenders a desire to hear about the deeds of Roland and Oliver. Chardri’s use of ‘folie’, a

23–32 (at p. 30); and Melissa Furrow, ‘*Chanson de geste* as Romance in England’, in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, ed. Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević and Judith Weiss (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 57–72.

12 See the useful summary of Roland scholarship up to c.1995 in Wolfgang van Emden, *La Chanson de Roland* (London, 1995), pp. 19–22.

13 Chardri’s *Josaphaz*, *Set Dormanz und Petit Plet*, ed. John Koch (Heilbronn, 1879).

14 It is worth noting here that Roland was often cited as a model of worldly virtue: see George Jones, *The Ethos of the Song of Roland* (Baltimore, 1963), p. 99.

word with a wide range of pejorative senses, clearly shows his opinion of this tendency.¹⁵ His claim, notable in itself as one of the chronologically earliest extant pieces of *Roland* criticism, deserves careful examination in the context of its narrative target.¹⁶

First of all, it is important to note that the *Roland* bears a number of close resemblances to a saint's life,¹⁷ and that Chardri is himself writing a hagiographical text (though not a martyrdom). It is difficult to imagine Chardri inveighing against saints' lives of any kind; we may therefore safely assume that he would not have considered hagiography liable to being criticised in the same terms as the *Chanson*, despite the fact that hagiographical texts are not literally 'about' Christ. Saints are christomimetic heroes, whose martyrdoms and privations can be described as being typologically related to the Passion. In other words, the deeds of saints are read as heralding the truth of Christ's life through their structural resemblance to it. Chardri's distaste for the story of Roland implicitly denies the spiritual validity of Roland's assumption into heaven; Roland cannot be, for Chardri, christomimetic. The Roland of the Oxford text offers his glove to God while near the point of death in a gesture that recalls closely one of the central rituals of vassalage. Peter Haidu has noted the interpretative difficulties of this scene:

Roland performs his death semiotically: he transforms himself in to a complex sign. The significations of this sign are problematic. What is not problematic is the religious sanction accorded the hero's death by the text. ... That he confesses his sins marks the subject not only as a heroic warrior but a proper Christian: in spite of the extraordinary feats of arms performed and punishments endured, he remembers his religious duty at the moment of death.¹⁸

15 These include 'wickedness', 'sexual perversion', and 'sin' (*AND* s.v. *folie*¹ n.).

16 Though see *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, ed. and trans. R.C. Johnston (Oxford, 1981), ll. 113–14, for a comparison between Henry II and Charlemagne, 'whose might was immense through the deeds of the twelve peers amongst whom were Oliver and Roland' ['ki poeste fud grant / Par les dudze cumpaignuns, Olivier e Rodlant']. The text dates (p. xxiii) to c.1175; roughly contemporary with the *Josaphaz*.

17 See, for instance, van Emden, *Roland*, p. 74.

18 Peter Haidu, *The Subject of Violence: The Song of Roland and the Birth of the State* (Bloomington, IN, 1993), p. 18.

Chardri, of course, would disagree with the second part of this statement; Haidu's presentation of the religious content of the *Roland* would probably have been controversial in twelfth-century England. If Chardri considered Roland's assumption into heaven to be unproblematic, then he would surely have considered Roland to be more than just a 'proper Christian', but a saint, and the condemnation quoted above would have taken a different object. The fact that Chardri does not consider Roland to be a saint suggests strongly that he would not have taken his confession or subsequent assumption as normative.

In the Oxford text, Roland's death-scene is narrated three times in sequential *laissez similaires* (174–76); angels descend in the second *laisse* of the set and, in the third *laisse*, bear Roland's soul to heaven:

Pur ses pecchez Deu en puroffrid lo quant.	2365
...	
Sun destre quant en ad vers Deu tendut, Angles del ciel i descendent a lui	2373
...	
Sun destre quant a Deu en puroffrit, Seint Gabriël de sa main l'ad pris. Desur sun braz teneit le chef enclin, Juntas ses mains est alet a sa fin. Deus tramist sun angel Cherubin E seint Michel del Peril, Ensembl'od els sent Gabriël i vint.	2390
L'anme del cunte portent en pareïs.	2395
	(<i>Roland</i> , ll. 2365, 73–74, 89–96)

[He proffered his gauntlet to God for his sins.

...
He offered his right gauntlet to God,
Angels from heaven descend toward him.

...
He proffered his right gauntlet to God,
Saint Gabriel took it from his hand.
He laid his head down over his arm,
He met his end, his hands joined together.
God sent His angel Cherubin
And Saint Michael of the Peril,
Saint Gabriel came with them.

They bear the Count's soul to Paradise.]¹⁹

The scene concludes: ‘Morz est Rollant, Deus en ad l’anme es cels.’ (‘Roland is dead, his soul is with God in Heaven’, line 2397). As we can see, this gesture is characterised as a penitential one (line 2365), but such an interpretation, though encouraged by the text, is deeply problematic if we read Roland’s repentance as including those morally ambiguous acts which form a central part of his profession as a knight. It is difficult, for example, to compare this moment to the famous ‘lagrimetta’ scene in Dante’s *Purgatorio*, in which a single tear is enough to save a hardened sinner from a morally bankrupt life, since penitential practice at the time of the *Chanson de Roland*’s composition did not, famously, leave much room for late repentance.²⁰ The text cannot imply that Roland is offering up his glove as a symbol of everything that he has done wrong in his life. The glove must rather stand as a symbol of Roland’s redemption through good works — and the identity of these works is obvious. It is tempting to understand the glove as an object that encodes the transition between physical, knightly vassalage and spiritual vassalage in the service of God; in other words, that the object that once stood as a symbol of a sinful practice (one nevertheless capable of allegorical treatment) is allowed to assume its allegorical referent as its *sensus literalis*.²¹ Such an interpretation of the moment might lead us to believe that Roland is performing a retraction of his secular career. But this is not what is happening

19 Text and translation taken from *The Song of Roland: An Analytical Edition*, ed. Gerard J. Brault, 2 vols (University Park, PA and London, 1978).

20 Dante Alighieri, *La Divina Commedia*, ed. Umberto Bosco and Giovanni Reggio (Florence, 1979), *Purgatorio* V, vv. 104–08: ‘e quel d’inferno / gridava: “O tu del ciel, perché mi privi? / Tu te ne porti di costui che ‘l mi toglie; / ma io farò de l’altro altro governo!”’ [‘and the one from hell cried out: “O you from heaven, why have you deprived me? For a little tear, you are taking the eternal part of this man away from me; but I will do differently with the other part!”’]. On late repentance, see Jean-Charles Payen, *Le motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale: des origines à 1230* (Geneva, 1967), pp. 494–95.

21 As Henri de Lubac notes, this commingling of literal and figurative hermeneutic modes would have been highly suspect from the perspective of a clerical exegete: see his *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, 2 vols, vol. 1 trans. Mark Sebanc, vol. 2 trans. E.M. Macierowski (Edinburgh, 1998–2000, f.p. as *Exégèse Médiévale: les quatre sens de l’Écriture*, 2 vols [Paris, 1959–1964]), II:82.

here. Instead, the glove serves to assert forcefully the close kinship between physical and spiritual conflict, and in doing so makes no apology for Roland's knightly vocation. The proffering of the glove does not represent a rejection of the world, but rather an assertion that warriors can attain salvation through their profession.²² An enigmatic passage from the moment immediately before Roland's assumption serves to point up this argument:

Li quens Rollant se jut desuz un pin;	2375
Envers Espagne en ad turnet sun vis.	
De plusurs choses a remembrer li prist:	
De tantes teres cum li bers conquist,	
De dulce France, des humes de sun lign,	
De Carlemagne, sun seignor, kil nurrit.	2380
Ne poet muer n'en plurt e ne suspirt.	
Mais lui meïsmes ne volt mettre en ubli,	
Cleimet sa culpe, si priet Deu mercit:	(<i>Roland</i> , ll. 2375–83)

[Count Roland lay beneath a pine tree,
 He has turned his face toward Spain.
 He began to remember many things:
 The many lands he conquered as a brave knight,
 Fair France, the men from whom he is descended,
 Charlemagne, his lord, who raised him.
 He cannot help weeping and sighing.
 But he does not wish to forget prayers for his own soul,
 He says his confession in a loud voice and prays.]

Roland does not turn away from the world at the moment of his death; still less does he turn his spiritual attention away from worldly concerns in anticipation of his death, as do the heroes of so many hagiographical narratives. Indeed, we are directly told (in *laisse* 174) that Roland positioned himself facing his enemy in order to emphasise his military and feudal virtue.²³ Instead of leaving the world, he looks into the distance and remembers his

²² On *Roland's* ideological work in this area, see Laura Ashe, "A Prayer and a Warcry": The Creation of a Secular Religion in the *Song of Roland*, *Cambridge Quarterly* 28 (1999), 349–67, and W.D. Paden, 'Tenebrism in the *Song of Roland*', *Modern Philology*, 86 (1989), 339–56.

²³ ll. 2360–63: 'Turnat sa teste vers la paiene gent: / Pur ço l'at fait que il voelt veirement / Que Carles diet e trestute sa gent / Li gentilz quens, qu'il fut mort cunquerant.' ('He turned his head towards the pagan army: / He did this because he earnestly desires / That Charles and all his men say / That the noble Count died as a conqueror').

past — his accomplishments, his feudal ties, and his country — and weeps. We cannot reasonably see this as a rejection of his past life, since this life is clearly presented as virtuous elsewhere in the text; rather, we must see in Roland's tears a sense of regret that he must now leave his knightly life behind. This marks Roland as being quite unlike the saints whose martyrdoms the text appropriates for its hero: while saintly martyrs look forward to heaven at the point of death (and even much earlier in some cases), Roland looks back at his past. This perspective is clearly in potential conflict with Roland's immediate future: the text needs to specify (ll. 2382–83) that Roland does not forget his need to confess during this act of remembering. Despite this concession to (relatively) normative religiosity, the passage as a whole shows that Roland's martial profession plays a central role in assuring his salvation: Roland's confession of unspecified sins satisfies a basic confessional requirement, but his glove remains the central image of the scene, along with everything it represents.

This emphasis on worldly accomplishments at the expense of spiritual ones must be a fundamental part of Chardri's disdain for the story of Roland. The terms of Chardri's criticism suggest that readers like him would have understood Roland's assumption into heaven, alongside the poem's other depictions of divine intervention in secular activities, as asserting (and, for a more sympathetic reader than Chardri, demonstrating) the salvific potential of a life lived as a loyal vassal and successful warrior.²⁴ But as we have seen, the text goes further than this; Roland does not practise knighthood in order to gain salvation, but in order to serve his temporal lord, Charlemagne, and salvation is his eternal reward for this temporal service. In a saint's life (indeed, in the specific saint's life that Chardri ends up writing) the background and profession of the saint are only important insofar as they demonstrate the saint's retreat from the world. But for Roland, and the *Chanson de Roland*,

²⁴ See Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, pp. 94–95 and ff.

kinship ties, history, and accomplishments remain of paramount importance, even when he comes to the end of his life.

The religious content of the *Chanson de Roland* has been much remarked upon, although its precise function remains a subject of debate.²⁵ It is clear, however, that the action of the poem takes place entirely in the created world, and that whatever function the moments of divine intervention play, they do not serve to complicate the ideological claims made by the text. The actions taken by God in the poem (holding the sun still to assure Charlemagne's victory over the Saracens in *laisse* 180; saving Thierry from defeat in the judicial combat in *laisse* 285) assert that the text's stated ethical claims are correct.²⁶ It is clear that God enters the narrative in order to make moral judgements; to differentiate good from bad, Saracen from Christian, traitor from loyal vassal. In a famous example, Roland makes an ethical assertion ('Païen unt tort e chrestïens unt dreit'), and God confirms it by assuming him into heaven.²⁷ However, as Sharon Kinoshita has argued, this binarism is flimsier than it might first appear: the text must commit to it in order to create the fiction of a culturally unified Frankish state.²⁸ Binary opposition is also necessary for the text in order to provide its heroes with the most rigorous possible test of prowess. We can only know that the Franks are truly great warriors if they face enemies whose skill and military organization are broadly comparable to their own; the text must therefore construct its antagonists as being 'virtually indistinguishable' from its heroes in nearly all matters apart from religious identity.²⁹ Religious identity, then, helps the *Roland* to navigate its own

25 For an influential contribution to the debate that argues that the religion of the text is 'celle du lien féodal', see Bernard Cerquiglini, 'Roland à Roncevaux, ou la trahison des clercs', *Littérature* 42 (1981), pp. 40–56 (at p. 50).

26 As Sarah Kay notes, the very fact of a text's making ethical judgements encourages us to agree with them: see her 'Ethics and Heroics in the *Song of Roland*', *Neophilologus* 62 (1978), 480–91.

27 *Laisse* 79, ll. 1015–16.

28 Sharon Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries: Rethinking Difference in Old French Literature* (Philadelphia, PA, 2006), p. 39.

29 *Ibid.*, p. 26. In subsequent pages (pp. 31–45), Kinoshita argues that the social roles of Frankish and

problematic form — a form which it must take in order to assert the exemplarity of its hero. In this analysis, the God of the *Roland* is a narrative tool which allows the text to maintain its binaries. Whatever the intention or original purpose of these moments of divine intervention, they have been thoroughly drawn into the *Roland*'s ideological orbit. Roland's story is too powerfully secular to allow for its subsumption into a body of literature that serves principally to demonstrate the power and mercy of God and his actions in the world on behalf of the faithful. Instead, the God of the *Roland* functions primarily as a confirmation of the code of feudal loyalty laid out in the poem.³⁰ Peter Haidu has argued powerfully that Roland's death has the ideological function of performing 'the subjection of the warrior class ... to a monarchy that does not yet exist'.³¹ In this context, it might be suggested that the poem's performance of Roland's salvation is the means by which this subjection of the feudal aristocracy to a monarchical power structure might be purchased.

Roland's move from one mode of reality to another is an important structural feature of the poem, because it impedes its ability to function meaningfully as a religious allegory.³² As Katherine Allen Smith has demonstrated, one of the principal ways in which

Saracen women are another important point of distinction between the groups. On the subject of Christian/Saracen similarity, cf. Norman Daniel's much-quoted comment that these groups are like 'rival football teams', in *Heroes and Saracens: An Interpretation of the Chansons de Geste* (Edinburgh, 1984), p. 82.

30 Importantly, later versions of the poem contain much more diegetic piety; see in particular Roland's *vanitas vanitatum* speech in *The Châteauroux-Venise 7 Version*, ed. J.J. Duggan, in *La Chanson de Roland / The Song of Roland: The French Corpus*, ed. J.J. Duggan (3 volumes, Turnhout, 2005), II, ll. 3334–57; and Laura Ashe, 'The Ideal of Knighthood in English and French Writing, 1100–1230: Crusade, Piety, Chivalry and Patriotism', in *Writing the Early Crusades: Text, Transmission and Memory*, ed. Marcus Bull and Damien Kempf (Woodbridge, 2014), pp. 155–68 (esp. p. 159).

31 Haidu, *Subject of Violence*, p. 190.

32 On the symbolic interpretation of the *Roland*, see Russell Hunt, 'Biblical Typology and the Role of Baligant in the Oxford *Roland*', *Neophilologus* 66 (1982), 161–66. For another text that has been read as rejecting its own potential for allegorical or symbolic interpretation, see Laura Ashe, 'The Meaning of Suffering: Symbolism and Anti-Symbolism in the Death of Tristan', in *Writers of the Reign of Henry II: Twelve Essays*, ed. Ruth Kennedy and Simon Meecham-Jones (Basingstoke, 2006), pp. 221–38. I would suggest that we can see in this text a comparable attempt to assert independence from Christian hermeneutics.

stories about knights were imbricated into the mainstream of monastic spirituality was by allegorizing them: the valiant knight becomes a type of Christ, in a move which makes few claims on the ethical status of real-life knights.³³ However, this process only works if the literal subject of the allegory does not move into the realm of the allegory's non-literal object. For this reason, a saintly hero of a hagiographical text is not an allegorical representation of Christ, but rather a typological reflection. The standard *passio* narrative not only mirrors the scriptural narratives that depict Christ's death, it replicates them incidentally. Saints undergo their martyrdoms through a deliberate and self-aware *imitatio Christi*. Narratives that deal with these kinds of stories must therefore depend upon the literal sense as their primary point of reference. Allegorical representations of the Passion, on the other hand, do not bear such a close literal resemblance to their referents. A knight's suffering in the course of vanquishing an evil enemy on the battlefield could easily be used as the raw material for a Passion allegory, but if the knight dies in the course of his duties and is assumed into heaven in a manner that metaphorically recalls the Ascension, then what is his status? This act demands an identification with the warrior's values in a way that allegory does not.

This discussion is important because Chardri clearly sees the story of Roland as being fundamentally different from hagiographical martyrdoms, and we need to understand exactly why this could be the case. For a reader sympathetic to the notion of martial virtue, the parallels are clear — both heroes suffer for their lords, and are rewarded with salvation for this devoted suffering. But when put in these terms, the divergence becomes obvious. The lord for whom Roland suffers is not the one that effects his eventual salvation. In fact, the lord who saves Roland has not been previously acknowledged as a devotional object in

33 Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge, 2011), esp. pp. 112–55. She also demonstrates that warriors could be direct spiritual exemplars for monks, but this, importantly, involved the highly selective use of virtuous qualities (pp. 156–96).

the text before the point of death. It is useful to recall here one of the shared critical poses struck by the polemicists discussed in the previous chapter: that devotees of profane literature are guilty of the same sin as pagans (miscreancy, or misdirected belief).³⁴ There is no questioning Roland's zealous devotion, but the fact that the object of this devotion is Charlemagne brings the moral value of this virtue into question. Roland's devotion purports to inscribe a virtuous conceptual referent on itself, while in fact referring a decidedly ambivalent object. For Chardri, I expect, the fact that Roland's miscreancy is rewarded with salvation by the narrative would have raised fundamental problems, and would have easily been enough for him to label this text itself as miscreant. The *Chanson de Roland*, then, attempts to eat its cake and have it by mirroring the structure of hagiography but without directing its hero's actions towards the object that makes sense in a hagiographical structure. The result, whatever the intention of the writer of the Oxford *Roland* in this area, is a text that gives its hero a saint's welcome into heaven without the requirement of having undergone a saint's passion.

The assumption of Roland into heaven also raises problems concerning the narrative identity of Charlemagne. The function of this character in the *Roland* has been much debated, especially in terms of his apparent despair (or at least despondency) at the end of the poem. Does the presentation of Charlemagne as a feudal lord bereft of his vassal make a statement about knightly devotion to religious ideals? One of the structural problems of the *Chanson* is that Charlemagne's allegorical role in a Christianized reading of the text is supplanted by God's intervention in the narrative in the passage quoted above. One way of reading the proffered glove is that Roland is marking his own shift from one

34 Cf. Bramimonde's characterization of the Saracen gods as failed feudal lords in the Oxford *Roland*, ll. 2714–17: 'Dist Bramimunde: "Or oi mult grant folie! / Cist nostre deu sent en recreantise. / En Rencesval malvaises vertuz firent, / Noz chevalers i unt lesset ocire."' ['Bramimonde said: "What rubbish I hear! / Those gods of ours have given up the fight. / At Roncesvaux they did us a colossal bad turn, / They allowed our knights to get killed."]. For a discussion of this passage, see Kinoshita, *Medieval Boundaries*, pp. 37–38.

form of vassalage to another, but this reading does not square with the fact that the poem's upholding of feudal values is so complete: the poem does not (or cannot) fully commit to the shift that it obliquely suggests.

We must read the *Chanson de Roland* (or, at least, the instantiation of this story that we imagine Chardri responding to) as an assertion of an edgy, and very new, theological notion: the salvific potential of knightly violence.³⁵ Its incorporation of religious motifs (even, importantly, if they were added by a writer whose intention was to give the text a more pious hero) functions as a justification of the place of violence in medieval society — both violence motivated by religious differences and violence between Christians. In its use of structural features taken from hagiography, the author of the *Roland* proposes Roland's final combat as a form of *imitatio Christi*, and in doing so negates the possibility of removing the text's literal teeth through the use of allegory. At the point of his assumption, Roland becomes unavoidably literal, and as such refuses to be placed into the category of heroes whose deeds promote piety through their incidental resemblance to those of Christ. We might further suggest that the *Roland*, dangerously, 'does' hagiography better than hagiography itself. The necessity of saints' lives' adherence to a particular narrative structure means that many texts can only multiply incidents — particularly the tortures that preface many saints' martyrdoms — rather than inserting substantial events.³⁶ The *Roland*, on the other hand, is bound by different, more liberal generic conventions and prescriptions, and is therefore able to make the case for the superlative virtue of its hero in a much more entertaining way than is possible for most hagiographical texts. This is a subjective judgement, certainly, but it is worth asking whether it was a judgement

35 On this discourse, see Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, pp. 5–13; and Ashe, 'Ideal of Knighthood'.

36 An excellent example of this practice is the insular French *Vie de Saint Georges*, the majority of whose text is taken up by lurid descriptions of the hero's tortures. See Simund de Freine, *Vie de Saint Georges*, in *Les Oeuvres de Simund de Freine*, ed. John E. Matzke (Paris, 1909), pp. 61–117; and *Verse Saints' Lives Written in the French of England*, trans. Delbert Russell (Tempe, 2012), pp. 23–39 and 143–85.

frequently made in medieval reception-circumstances. More importantly, when read against Chardri's criticism, the tensions inherent in the *Roland's* formal resemblances to (and ethical divergences from) hagiography become apparent.

The *Chanson de Roland* was a text that seemed to have enjoyed reasonable currency in Anglo-Norman reading-cultures, but the story does not originate in England. We need to ask whether insular romance contains distinctive responses to this conflict of ideologies. I continue this discussion with the *Romance of Horn*, one of the major achievements of insular romance-writing. I argue that this text offers a thoroughgoing assertion of romance's ideological independence from normative Christian piety, and in doing so can be read as a contribution to the dialectical discourse between romance and religious literature introduced in the previous chapter. The *Romance of Horn* makes liberal use of Christian literary imagery, but, like the *Chanson de Roland*, exploits the symbolic potential of its imagery in order to assert the sacral, self-sufficiently virtuous nature of secular order itself.³⁷ The text's use of religious motifs thus serves to promote its own ideological claims, and makes this imagery subservient to the overriding laicity of the text.

The Romance of Horn, which may have been written in the early 1170s for the court of Henry II, is a self-assured work, comfortable in its implicit ideologies.³⁸ The poem's obvious prestige allows us to suggest reasonably that it was not an eccentric product of its literary culture. It is clearly comfortable in making use of Christian symbolism to increase the authority and value of its central character:

Oilz aveit vers e clers e le vis ot rosin,
Gente façon aveit, bien semblot angelin; 15

³⁷ Cf. Laura Ashe's reading of the poem as stamping divine authorization onto insular history in *Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 146–58.

³⁸ For a persuasive argument for the date and origin of the poem, see Judith Weiss, 'Thomas and the Earl: Literary and Historical Contexts for the *Romance of Horn*' in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. Rosalind Field (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 1–14.

Cum esteile jornals, quan lievet al matin,
 Sur les altres reluist, ki li sunt pres veisin,
 Sur tut ses cumpaignuns resplent Horn li meschin. (*Romance of Horn*, ll. 14–18)³⁹

[His eyes were clear and bright, his face rosy, his bearing noble. He looked like an angel. Like the day-star, rising in the morning, Horn shone brighter than his nearest companions: the boy surpassed all his friends in splendour.]⁴⁰

Horn is introduced to the narrative with the word ‘orphanin’ (‘orphan’, line 4), and we are left to assume from the context that he was recently orphaned by the Saracens, presumably invaders, who come to kill Horn and his companions. To the inscribed audience, who are familiar with the story of Horn’s father’s death, the situation would have been clearer. In this text, however, Horn’s story begins in the first moments of his being orphaned. When we first encounter him, Horn has just entered into his birthright by inheriting his father’s possessions and status. The reference to the day-star makes it clear that this transfer of power is meant to function as a figure of the Incarnation.⁴¹ Horn rises from the shadow of his dead father and begins his life as a powerful worldly agent in a way which makes reference both to feudal convention and religious imagery. However, in contrast to Jesus’ father, Horn’s is dead. Horn does not move through his story in order to reclaim the land for possession under his father’s direct authority. Instead, we enter the narrative at the beginning of a new dynastic stage: the moment of Horn’s accession to his birthright. The only narrative function of Horn’s father in this text is to be dead, and in being so to authorize Horn to begin his journey towards having what is rightfully his. As Susan Crane has noted, the career of Horn’s father provides the archetype for his son’s: at various points in the narrative, Horn makes reference to analogous deeds performed by his father, with the

39 Text from *The Romance of Horn*, ed. Mildred K. Pope, rev. and completed by T.B.W. Reid, 2 vols (Oxford, 1955–1964).

40 Translations of this text from *The Birth of Romance in England: Four Twelfth-Century Romances in the French of England*, trans. Judith Weiss (Tempe, 2009), p. 45.

41 Christ is referred to as the day-star in 2 Peter 1:19: ‘We have also the more firm prophetic word, whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the daystar arise in your hearts.’ (Douay-Rheims).

effect that we understand Horn as following closely in his father's footsteps, performing a repetition of his dynastic master-narrative.⁴² At the end of the text, it becomes clear that Horn's career will, in turn, become the archetype of his own son's.⁴³ The text's depiction of Horn's moment of inheritance thus gives us a clear and efficient understanding of the character's function in the narrative. We can immediately place him on a convenient trajectory from an unjust denial of rightful inheritance to glory and victory. There is no sense of a greater cause, because the cause is, at this point, exactly as large as Horn himself. Almost immediately, then, *The Romance of Horn* draws attention to the greater interest of its narrative process when compared to its final resolution. To employ the term used by Frank Kermode to characterize romance as a whole, *The Romance of Horn* is an 'end-determined fiction'.⁴⁴ We know exactly where Horn is going to end up; importantly, however, this knowledge does not detract from the narrative experience of the poem. The poem's cultural value consists in its reinscription of values already familiar to (and esteemed by) its inscribed audience. In this respect, it resembles a saint's life, but the values which it reinscribes are clearly very different.

The Romance of Horn sites itself in a space between history and romance, and exploits features of both modes to produce an ideological engagement with its contemporary politics.⁴⁵ It performs this engagement by using the shape of romance narrative to perpetuate (and to justify) relatively recent historical developments, presenting them as Platonic accidents to the divinely-mandated form of history as a whole.⁴⁶ In this model, Horn emerges inevitably as a type of Christ, but the comparison implicit in this

⁴² Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith and Culture in Anglo-Norman England* (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 26–27.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

⁴⁴ Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford, 1967), p. 6.

⁴⁵ Ashe, *Fiction and History*, pp. 121–58.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 146–58.

presentation of character does not make a statement about how the poem's audience should understand Christianity. Instead, the *Romance of Horn* makes selective use of basic, static Christian concepts and imagery to improve the presentation of its central character and authorize his actions. The poem is never exegetical: we never learn anything about doctrine, and the fact that Horn is a type of Christ says essentially nothing about Christ.⁴⁷ Other narrative elements that could be understood in other contexts as Christian symbolism perform different functions. The poem indulges in extensive descriptions of aristocratic finery, a 'wealth of spiced wines, white greyhounds, brocades and jewels', as in the following excerpt:⁴⁸

Herlaund, li seneschal, grant entent i ad mise
 Qu'il fussent a cel jor bien servi par mestrise.
 Nuls n'acuntast les mes qu'il orent par asise,
 Estre les entremes ke Herlaund lur devise.
 Deus! taunt servi le jor fiz de meinte marchise! 920
 Mes unc n'i out un sul ki servist en chemise,
 Mes en pelice vaire u herminē u grise
 U en bliaut de paile del meuz de paienise.
 ...
 Horn servi icel jor en un bliaut purprin. 930
 En la sale le jor nen out si gent meschin:
 La colur aveit clere e les vis out rosin:
 Dame ne l'ad vëu, si cum crei e devin,
 K nel vousist tenir suz voertur hermin.
 Il ad le jor porté une cupe d'or fin — 935
 Unkes n'orent mellor Cesar ne Costentin —
 A trifuire iert entallé de bon or meleskin:
 D'icele serveit il rei Hunlaf de sun vin. (*Romance of Horn*, ll. 916–23, 30–38)

[Herland the seneschal had made every effort to have them excellently served that day. Nobody could enumerate the courses they had, as was the custom, as well as the side-dishes which Herland devised for them. Lord, how many marchioness' sons served that day! But there was not one who served in his under-tunic, but in mantles of grey and white fur or ermine, or in silk tunics, the best that heathen lands could provide. ... On this occasion Horn served in a crimson tunic. There was no such handsome boy in the hall that day: his face was rosy-cheeked and radiant. No

47 I will draw a contrast between this practice and later insular romances which do make genuine attempts to engage with theological issues.

48 Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 29.

lady saw him, so I think and believe, who did not want to embrace him under a coverlet of ermine. That day he carried a goblet — neither Caesar nor Constantine ever had a better — carved in relief of fine, pure gold. With it he served Hunlaf his wine.]⁴⁹

In other contexts we might read these descriptions as indicators of quasi-heavenly, and thus divinely-mandated, luxury; however, in this poem they can only represent a fetishism of the exaggerated of aristocratic life. Horn is not the only person to possess such finery, and it is his physical appearance, not his material wealth or fine clothing, that marks him out as exceptional. Indeed, when Herland first finds Horn, recently exiled in a boat, he is not fully clothed, since he and his companions are drying their fine tunics after being shipwrecked (ll. 142–43). Herland's first impression is of Horn's 'gente fa un' ('noble deportment', line 138). So, the poem's extensive descriptions of fine possessions do not function to mark Horn out as exceptional among his peers; instead, they show the prestige and finery of Horn's entire social class. Horn is an exceptional being, certainly, but one surrounded by other exceptional beings: he is superior by degree, not by kind. *The Romance of Horn* is as much about justifying the superiority and wealth of the aristocracy as it is about an exceptional individual. The poem's values work to affirm the justness of the social order of feudal society,⁵⁰ and its extensive descriptions of material goods exist to demonstrate the rewards of high rank in that system. The obvious value given by the poem to such indicators of wealth and status further suggests that we, too, should value these commodities. Indeed, the relative unimportance of narrative tension in the text suggests that these incidental features form a central part of the cultural work done by the poem. The poem thus encourages a kind of class envy in which the social order is affirmed by

49 Weiss, *Birth of Romance*, pp. 22–23.

50 This has been argued convincingly by Susan Crane (*Insular Romance*, p. 24), although I dispute her linked claim that the same can also be said of the English *King Horn*. For other discussions of the poem's interaction with the values and conventions of feudalism, see J.D. Burnley, 'The *Roman de Horn*: its Hero and its Ethos', *French Studies* 32 (1978), 385–97; and Ashe, *Fiction and History*, pp 146–58.

encouraging a desire for the material wealth shown as being possessed by the highest actors in this hierarchy. Horn makes his inexorable journey towards redemptive victory as a superlative representative of his class, not as an individual, and the poem's use of Christian imagery to assert its hero's exceptional nature must be read as being in service of these values.

The Romance of Horn does not pose a significant challenge to the ideological positions that it explores. However, not all insular romances of the twelfth century are similar in this respect, as the following readings will show. The two surviving romances of Hue de Rotelande, a cleric and writer who lived and worked in Wales around the same time as Walter Map, form a useful counterpoint to the texts discussed above.⁵¹ *Ipomedon*, and its sequel *Protheselaus*, are both recognized to be the products of an adept poetic voice.⁵² Both poems are found in multiple copies, and *Ipomedon* in particular is witnessed in fairly late manuscripts; it is therefore unlikely that either poem was culturally insignificant, or enjoyed only limited circulation.⁵³ *Protheselaus* had an aristocratic patron in the person of Gilbert FitzBaderon, lord of Monmouth, and it is likely that the same was true for *Ipomedon*.⁵⁴ *Ipomedon* has been described as 'simultaneously a courtly romance and a parody of a courtly romance', and critics have discerned parodic elements in *Protheselaus* as well, although to a lesser degree.⁵⁵ The existence of such texts begs an important

51 For a discussion of the similarities of literary style between these two writers, see Neil Cartledge, 'Masters in the Art of Lying? The Literary Relationship between Hugh of Rhuddlan and Walter Map', *MLR* 106 (2011), 1–16.

52 William Calin, 'The Exaltation and Undermining of Romance: *Ipomedon*', in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly and Keith Busby, 2 vols (Amsterdam, 1988), II:111–24, ranks Hue 'second only to to Thomas, author of the *Tristan*, as a writer of Anglo-Norman romance'. (p. 111). Critics have been rather less kind to *Protheselaus*, which has often been regarded as disorganized hack-work: see, for instance, M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford, 1963), p. 90; for an opposing view, see Judith Weiss, 'A Reappraisal of Hue de Rotelande's *Protheselaus*', *Medium Aevum* 52 (1983), 104–11.

53 See Dean 162–63.

54 See *Protheselaus*, by Hue de Rotelande, ed. A. J. Holden, 3 vols (London, 1991–1993), III:1.

55 Ibid., III:4.

question: what function might romances that parody the conventions of their mode play in twelfth-century insular literary culture, a culture apparently so charged with inter-modal dialectic?⁵⁶ If romance is indeed making serious and controversial ideological claims in this period, then we might reasonably understand a parodic romance such as *Ipomedon* as a text that seeks to undermine these claims from within,⁵⁷ and in so doing to mark it as performing similar cultural work to that of the hagiographers discussed in Chapter 1. In my view, this is unlikely. *Ipomedon*'s participation (by virtue of its form) in the mode of romance is enough to mark it as an affirmation of romance hermeneutics, even if it sees particular instantiations of romance — in this case, the largely continental French model of courtliness — as deserving of mockery.

Put in the simplest possible terms, *Ipomedon* tells the story of its eponymous hero's quest to earn the love of a proud lady known as 'La Fiere'. Most critics now agree that the poem is written in a parodic style, and that it mocks specific motifs and narrative topoi in romance, as well as incorporating at least one pastiche of a well-known text.⁵⁸ Some early critical accounts of *Ipomedon* read the poem as being essentially 'serious' (that is, non-parodic),⁵⁹ but most later readings have moved towards giving the poem's parodic and burlesque elements the prominence they deserve, while maintaining that its mockery of romance conventions does not intend to subvert the conventions themselves.⁶⁰ Penny Eley

56 Medieval romance, it must be said, subjects itself to an ironic perspective from its inception. Scholarship has noted this particularly of Chrétien de Troyes, on which see Jean Frappier, *Chrétien de Troyes: l'homme et l'oeuvre* (Paris, 1957), pp. 125–26; Peter Haidu, *Aesthetic Distance in Chrétien de Troyes: Irony and Comedy in Cliges and Perceval* (Geneva, 1968), and 'Au début du roman, l'ironie', *Poétique* 36 (1978), 443–66; and David C. Fowler, 'Love in Chrétien's *Lancelot*', *Romanic Review* 63 (1972), 5–14.

57 For this argument, see Calin, 'Exaltation and Undermining'.

58 Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 90; Holden (ed.) *Ipomedon*, pp. 44–52.

59 See Ronald M. Spensley, 'The Structure of Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*', *Romania* 95 (1974), 341–51, and Robert W. Hanning, 'Engin in Twelfth-Century Romance: an Examination of the *Roman d'Eneas* and of Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*', *Yale French Studies* 51 (1974), 92–101.

60 Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 158–74; Calin, 'Exaltation and Undermining'; Rosalind Field, 'Ipomedon to *Ipomadon A*: Two Views of Courtliness', in *The Medieval Translator: Papers from the Gregynog Conference 1987*, ed. Roger Ellis (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 135–41; and Roberta Krueger, 'Misogyny,

has advanced the further argument that the poem works to subvert its own signification through ‘the systematic blocking of every avenue of interpretation by the sustained marshalling of red herrings, internal contradictions, and logical conundrums’.⁶¹ In other words, *Ipomedon* destabilizes its own potential for meaning; by extension, it may offer a nihilistic comment on the ability of romance as a whole to carry meaning. This idea is clearly of great interest in the present discussion. The attention paid by the poem to the matter of its own interpretation may mark it as a participant in the dialectical discourse surrounding romance discussed here and in the previous chapter. As we saw in Chapter 1, one of the standard twelfth-century criticisms of romance texts is that they are evacuated signifiers: they adopt forms that suggest a potential for the signification of religious, exemplary, or ethical meanings, but create only a superficial connection to the spiritual truths whose accidentals of imagery and form they appropriate. A romance made in a form that explicitly subverts the significative potential of its own mode in this way could thus be understood as an implicit criticism of romance as a cultural object. Alternatively, the poem could be understood as taking pleasure in empty signifiers by arranging them in a way which presents careful readers with an interpretative puzzle; however, I wish to go further here, and argue that Hue attempts something much more destabilizing.

Ipomedon is a long and convoluted text, with a plot whose intricacies and extensions are frequently caused by the counterintuitive decisions made by its protagonist. Early in the poem, *Ipomedon* goes to the court of La Fiere, having succumbed to *amor de lonh* after hearing reports of her beauty. La Fiere comes to reciprocate *Ipomedon*’s love, but she cannot marry him, since she has declared that she will marry only the best knight in

Manipulation, and the Female Reader in Hue de Rotelande’s *Ipomedon*, in *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context: Selected Papers from the 5th Triennial Conference of the International Courtly Literature Society, Dalfsen, 1986*, ed. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam, 1990), pp. 395–409.

61 Penny Eley, ‘The Subversion of Meaning in Hue de Rotelande’s *Ipomedon*’, *Reading Medieval Studies* 26 (2000), 97–112 (p. 98).

the world — specifically, the one most distinguished in feats of arms (ll. 129–32) — and Ipomedon does not match this description at this point in the poem. In fact, Ipomedon appears to be a terrible coward (*‘Par semblant trop cuars esteit’*, line 521), since he has no interest in any chivalric pursuit apart from hunting (*‘... river’ e bois tant ama, / De autre pruësce unc ne pensa’*, ll. 529–30). No reason is given for this preference: the narrator says that he does not know why (*‘Jeo ne sei pas pur quei le fist’*, line 531). The implication is clearly that Ipomedon has the capacity to engage in the full range of chivalric pursuits, but that he refuses to do so for some reason. Having discovered that La Fiere will not marry him on account of his apparent lack of prowess, Ipomedon tours Europe, participating in every war that he hears about, and is always the best warrior (ll. 1771–82). But he does not reveal his identity (*‘... nul ne saveit ki il fu’*, line 1783), thus compromising the structural function of this ‘display’ of chivalry. Ipomedon is given a similar opportunity to demonstrate his prowess when La Fiere, who has been urged by her barons to choose a husband, agrees to hold a three-day tournament whose victor will be able to claim her hand in marriage (ll. 2550–54). Ipomedon, after adopting various disguises, emerges victorious from the tournament, but returns home without claiming the hand of La Fiere (ll. 7203–04). He has a further opportunity to proceed to the narrative stasis engendered by marriage when a pagan giant called Leonin attempts to force himself upon La Fiere, but even this does not proceed as expected. Having defeated Leonin in single combat, Ipomedon proceeds with an *‘estrange ovre’* (line 9919): he disguises himself in his vanquished adversary’s armour and pretends that Leonin was the victor. As Robert Hanning notes of this section of the poem, ‘the story seems destined to continue indefinitely’.⁶² It is only brought to a close by the intervention of another knight, Capaneus, who, upon defeating Ipomedon-as-Leonin, notices a ring on the vanquished knight’s finger that identifies them

⁶² Hanning, *‘Engin’*, p. 94.

as half-brothers (ll. 10205–87). Ipomedon and La Fiere are reunited, and the dynastic and sexual unions that the poem has so compulsively deferred are finally allowed to take place (ll. 10500–40). Significantly, the text makes no pretence about the sexual nature of the union when Ipomedon and La Fiere finally marry.⁶³ The form of *Ipomedon* thus strongly suggests that heterosexual union is the enemy of narrative: the text is only allowed to continue because Ipomedon refuses — for reasons that are explicitly marked as unknown by the narrative voice — to bring his own story to a close. Typically, romances are texts which set themselves certain narrative conditions (for instance, the achievement of prowess or the defeat of a usurper), and which eventually allow themselves to meet these conditions and come to a natural close. In this context, *Ipomedon* is remarkable in its insistent continuation in defiance of the early fulfilment of the narrative conditions that would allow for its cessation — conditions that would have been fulfilled even earlier if the poem had had a more compliant protagonist.

Since Ipomedon is apparently so reluctant to proceed to a conclusion explicitly marked by the text as being defined by normative, generative heterosexual fulfilment,⁶⁴ we might reasonably ask whether this errancy is to be taken as being in some sense sexually deviant, whether by extension *Ipomedon* itself, that narrative machine which works so hard to avoid its own conclusion, can be similarly characterized as deviant, and whether such a comment on the form of *Ipomedon* might be taken as extending to some of the narrative excesses of other romances — after all, *Ipomedon* is far from the only medieval romance to indulge in an immoderate multiplication of events. The implicit association between *Ipomedon*'s narrative structure and the idea of sexual deviance is strengthened by the

63 'Chescun de cez ad ben gardé / A autre sa virginité, / Or se entreament tant par amur / Ke il se entrefoutent tute jur.' (ll. 10513–16: 'Each one of them had kept their virginity well for the other — now they love each other so much that they fuck each other constantly.')

64 For the generative aspect of the couple's pleasure, see line 10540: 'L'un de eus l'autre ne cureça, / Mais tuz jurz en grant delit erent / E mut beaus enfans engendrèrent' ('They did not anger each other, but were continually in great delight, and had many beautiful children').

epilogue's close intertextual reference to the epilogue of Alan de Lille's *De planctu naturae*, a text which engages in extended condemnations of sodomy.⁶⁵ Much critical attention has been paid to *Ipomedon*'s remarkable epilogue, a text which Penny Eley has called 'a many-layered advertisement for its author's superiority'.⁶⁶ It achieves the remarkable feat of being a recognizable parody of (at least) two other well-known texts: as well as making reference to the *De planctu*, the epilogue is also a parodic rewriting of the famous 'address to lovers' in the *Tristan* of Thomas,⁶⁷ and may also reference the version by Bérroul.⁶⁸

Ipomedon a tuz amanz	
Mande saluz en cest romanz	10560
Par cest Hue de Rotelande;	
De part le deu d'amur cumande	
Des or mes lealment amer,	
Sens tricherie e senz fauser;	
E se nuls de amer se retrait	10565
Devant ço ke il ait sun bon fait,	
Enfin cil ert escumengé,	
E puis si ait plener cungé	
De enveisir la u il purra,	
Asouz ert cil ki plus avra. ⁶⁹	10570
A Credehulle a ma meisun	
Chartre ai de l'absolucium;	
Se il ad dame u pucele	
U riche vedve u dameisele	
Ne voille creire ke jo l'ai	10575
Venge la, jo li mustera;	
Ainz ke d'iloc s'en seit turné	
La chartre li ert enbrevé,	

⁶⁵ *De planctu naturae* XVIII.xvii–xviii, in *Literary Works of Alan of Lille*, ed. and trans. Winthrop Wetherbee (Cambridge, MA, 2013).

⁶⁶ 'Sex and Writing: Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon* and Alan of Lille's *De Planctu naturae*', in *Courtly Literature and Clerical Culture: Selected Papers from the Tenth Triennial Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society, Universität Tübingen, Deutschland, 28 Juli – 3 August 2001*, ed. Christop Huber, Henrike Lähnemann, and Sandra Linden (Tübingen, 2002), pp. 93–103. (at p. 103).

⁶⁷ Holden (ed.) *Ipomedon*, p. 56 n.1 and Crane, *Insular Romance*, pp. 171–73.

⁶⁸ Eley, 'Subversion of Meaning', p. 105.

⁶⁹ The meaning of this couplet is unclear: see Holden (ed.) *Ipomedon* ll. 10568–70n.

E ço n'ert pas trop grant damages
 Se li seaus li pent as nages. (Ipomedon, ll. 10559–80)

[Ipomedon sends greetings to all lovers in this romance through Hue de Rotelande; he commands them on behalf of the God of Love to love faithfully from now on. And if anyone abandons love before he has had his way, he will be excommunicated in the end. And then may he have full permission to amuse himself where he can; the one who has the most will be absolved. At my house in Credenhill I have a charter of absolution. If there is a lady or a maiden, a rich widow or a damsel who is not willing to believe that I have it, may she come here: I will show it to her. Before she has returned from that place, the charter will be signed for her, and it will not be too great a detriment if the seal hangs down to her arse-cheeks.]

The connections made in this passage between writing, sexual intercourse, religion, and ethics are rich and complex, a fact belied by the salacious central metaphor. As Eley notes, Hue ‘identifies himself intertextually with [Alan’s] figure of Genius’, which ‘had long been associated with birth, marriage, and reproduction’.⁷⁰ By inviting this comparison, Hue presents his literary occupation as generative. This presentation can be compared to one of the overarching metaphors in the *De planctu naturae*, which associates grammar and writing with sexual intercourse by describing sodomy in terms of grammatical error. To understand this reference, we must understand that language (particularly metaphorical language) and sodomy were closely interrelated categories in the Middle Ages. For Thomas Aquinas, as for many theologians before him ‘sodomy is disruptive because it brings about a pleasure that cannot be subsumed to any system of meaning’.⁷¹ Pleasure becomes a signifier without a signified; in other words, it ceases to ‘mean’ anything except itself, and can therefore never generate anything greater than itself. Hue’s charter is similarly self-signifying: it is a document that gives sexual pleasure to its wielder while simultaneously authorizing the pursuit of the same pleasure. The self-authorizing

70 Ibid., p. 99. This may mirror an analogous move in the *De planctu*, which associates Alan closely with the figure of Genius: on this see William E. Burgwinkle, *Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law in Medieval Literature: France and England, 1050–1230* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 196.

71 Michael A. Johnson, ‘*Translatio Ganymedis*: Reading the Sex Out of Ovid in Alan of Lille’s *The Plaint of Nature*’, *Florilegium* 22 (2005), 171–90 (p. 179, paraphrasing the *Summa* of Aquinas).

circularity of the charter suggests that the pleasure it encourages is not normative, even though the poem concludes with a crude assertion of Hue's own heterosexual desire.

In *De planctu*, Genius excommunicates those who take pleasure in sodomy; Hue's threat of excommunication to those who abandon love ('de amer se retrait', line 10565) is clearly a reference to this. However, Hue diverges from Alan by excommunicating not sodomites, but insufficiently enthusiastic lovers. This is a critical divergence. In Hue's text, excommunicates are absolved by the unrestrained pursuit of sexual pleasure, and the instrument of their absolution (the charter) is also the instrument of Hue's own pleasure. The means by which excommunicates are absolved are thus identical with the thing that absolves them. As Eley has argued, the close links between sexual pleasure and writing in this passage serve to characterize reading and writing romance as, in some sense, a 'displacement activity' for sex.⁷² The lovers mentioned in this passage, then, are invited not to engage in the unrestrained pursuit of sex, but rather its displacement activity: the consumption of texts like *Ipomedon*. The charter — Hue's possession, and, it is strongly implied, his sexual organ — is a document that both authorizes and gives pleasure, and is therefore clearly a metaphor for the poem itself, and by extension, romance.⁷³ Lovers (that is to say, readers or listeners) take pleasure from romance and are enjoined to seek more of it. The poem's fictive nature is the mechanism by which this pleasure is authorized: fictional texts create space for a pleasure that is not so strongly tethered to ethical concerns as pleasure experienced in reality, and which can therefore be safely enjoyed. As we saw in

72 Eley, 'Sex and Writing', p. 96. This relationship is nicely encapsulated by what I suggest is a pun in line 10578: as Crane notes (*Insular Romance*, p. 172) 'enbrevé' could mean either *embriever* (to inscribe, sign) or *embriver* (press upon); it may therefore be plausibly suggested that Hue intends to imply one word by means of the other.

73 On the bawdy implication of the dangling seals, see Nicholas Jacobs, 'Une allusion impudique chez Hue de Rotelande: *Se li seaus li pent as nages*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 96 (1995), 223–24; and Suzanne Kocher, 'Desire, Parody and Sexual Mores in the Ending of Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*: An Invitation Through the Looking Glass', in *Sexuality in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Times: New Approaches to a Fundamental Cultural-Historical and Literary-Anthropological Theme*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin, 2008), pp. 429–47.

Chapter 1, this disconnection is frequently contested: in such a light, *Ipomedon* might be read as an assertion of the ethical disengagement of fiction. In any case, the epilogue can be read as Hue's disguised plea for his audience to continue seeking the pleasure that he provides, presumably in the form of further commissions or acts of patronage. This much is unsurprising; what is remarkable, however, is that this plea seems to invite an understanding of the pleasure engendered by romance as sexually deviant.

It is clear that the self-perpetuating pleasure encouraged by Hue is quite different from the generative, normative pleasure encouraged in the *De planctu naturae*.⁷⁴ In fact, it is much closer to the sodomitical pleasure whose prevalence is lamented in Alan's text. This text characterizes sexual deviance as a kind of grammatical error: for Alan, and for other twelfth-century writers, bad grammar is like sodomy because misplaced grammatical markers do not perform their intended function, such as indicating a case, a tense, or grammatical gender.⁷⁵ The *De planctu* opens with a condemnation of men who betray their grammatical and sexual roles by acting as both predicate and subject; in fact, a similar reversal of normative roles can arguably be seen in *Ipomedon*. In a passing comment towards the end of the poem, Hue remarks (absurdly) that his poem is the source of the *Roman de Thebes*, or even the whole Theban cycle:

De ceste estorie, ke ai ci faite,
Est cele de Tebes estraite; (*Ipomedon*, ll. 10540–41)

[The story of Thebes is excerpted from this story, which I have written here.]

In fact, the opposite may be true: some of Hue's narrative material appears to have been

74 Encouraged, though not necessarily achieved: see Burgwinkle, *Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law*, p. 12; and Jonathan Morton, 'Queer Metaphors and Queerer Reproduction in the *De planctu naturae* and the *Roman de la Rose*', in *Dante and Desire in the Middle Ages*, ed. Manuele Gagnolati, Tristan Kay, Elena Lombardi, and Francesca Southerden (Oxford, 2012), pp. 208–26.

75 Eley, 'Sex and Writing', pp. 96–97, and see also Jan Ziolkowski, *Alan of Lille's Grammar of Sex: The Meaning of Grammar to a Twelfth-Century Intellectual* (Cambridge, MA, 1985).

drawn from romances of antiquity, including the *Roman de Thebes*.⁷⁶ The likely direction of textual dependence is therefore exactly the opposite of what Hue claims. Given this, I would suggest that Hue's remark is a deliberate reversal of the normative roles of *Ipomedon* and its sources: Hue makes his poem assume the role of subject when it should properly be a predicate, and in doing so performs an audacious reversal of the flow of literary dependence. A similar role-reversal can be argued to be inherent in Hue's self-insertion into the epilogue since, remarkably, Hue presents himself as the emissary of *Ipomedon*, rather than *vice versa* (line 10561). This reversal of creative authority places *Ipomedon/Ipomedon* as subject and his author as predicate; while this orientation fits with Hue's claim that he is translating *Ipomedon* from a Latin source (line 35), we know that Hue is not nearly as subservient to his matter as this would suggest. The implications of this positioning may extend to a comment on the patronage system upon which Hue depended for at least some of his livelihood.⁷⁷ *Ipomedon*, as instantiated in the poem's epilogue, represents an ideology that commands the pursuit of pleasure. Though Hue can enjoin his audience to seek more of this pleasure, he has no power to determine the form it takes. When we remember that Hue is really talking about literary composition here, then the force of his performed subservience to *Ipomedon* (along with everything he represents) is made clear. Romance, for Hue, is unavoidably imbricated in the patronage relationship, since its form and content must be affected by the predilections of its patrons and audience. By the central metaphor of the epilogue, we remember, romances are made so that more romances can be made. But Hue does not have the power to change the discourse which he is transmitting: he can only work with the material that he is given. And this discourse is

76 Crane, *Insular Romance*, p. 158; drawing on Fay Fisher, *Narrative Art in Medieval Romances* (Cleveland, 1938), pp. 69, 72, 76.

77 Rosalind Field, 'Romance in England, 1066–1400', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 152–76, summarizes earlier work by saying that 'there is evidence enough to suggest that the original patronage and audience of these romances belonged to the closely connected households of the Anglo-Norman aristocracy' (p. 161).

one not of discursive change, but of static self-perpetuation. Romance, then, is presented by Hue as a fundamentally queer mode; each text a stage in an infinite procession of objects designed to facilitate the creation of other objects like them. Romance derived from patronage situations is sodomitical, because it reflects nothing but its own form. It is a pure pleasure game.⁷⁸ Hue thus denies the ability of romance to carry ethical meaning (rejecting the example of texts such as the *Roland*) but also affirms the autocentric pleasure of romance.

I want to recall at this point the language used by Chardri, in his prologue to the *Vie des Set Dormanz*, to criticize profane literature. Chardri rejects romance by saying that he would prefer to put his effort into telling a worthy story, and then places the ‘wasted effort’ he rejects next to his description of the pagan emperor Decius, who ‘put all his effort into the worship of Apollo and Tervagant’, and who is described in near-identical terms to the wasted effort of writing fiction.⁷⁹ Paganism and heresy were closely related categories throughout the Middle Ages, and Decius, a pagan and therefore also a heretic (at least when brought into collocation with Chardri’s Christian present), is juxtaposed with the person who puts their effort into studying Ovid or reading about Tristan. Sodomy and heresy are also closely associated categories of deviance, as *Ipomedon* shows us: when one of La Fiere’s barons suggests that she marry the son of the Duke of Spain, another baron named Drias roundly condemns the suggestion, saying that the proposed candidate is an ‘erite’ (‘heretic’, i.e. ‘sodomite’, line 2354) who ‘se delite en ses garçons’ (‘who takes pleasure in his boyfriends’, line 2368), and who would therefore cause his wife to lament (line 2374), presumably because of his lack of sexual interest in her. As Suzanne Hafner notes of the famous accusation of sodomy in the *Roman d’Eneas* (which might be

78 Cf. Sarah Kay’s characterization of the text as ludic in *Courtly Contradictions: The Emergence of the Literary Object in the Twelfth Century* (Stanford, CA, 2001), p. 108.

79 *La Vie des Set Dormanz*, ed. Brian Merrilees, ANTS 35 (London, 1977), ll. 70–71. See Chapter 1 above for a more extensive discussion of this passage.

justified by the text — may thus be haunted by the spectre of this accusation, even if we must stop short of claiming the presence of deliberate irony here.⁸⁴

As I suggested in the previous chapter, profane literature is often described in terms that suggest it as a literary heresy; it may also, on the evidence discussed above, have been understood as sodomitical by the same analogies. The reasons that a writer like Chardri would wish to stress such a comparison are gradually becoming clearer, and excitingly, we can begin to see the emergence in our narrative of the broad motif-complex that unites profane literature, heresy, sodomy, and paganism under its most convenient metonym — romance.⁸⁵

The structural similarity of these sins shows why Hue's comparison between his own literary activity, deviant sexual intercourse, and the notion of the endless circular reproduction of signs (that, more normatively, should signify other things apart from themselves) comes so easily to his pen, despite the apparently recondite nature of its marriage of concepts. The resulting image of endlessly reproduced signs is not an unfamiliar one today. In fact, the source of this familiarity — the cultural theory of Jean Baudrillard — provides us with a powerful theoretical tool with which to describe the status of *Ipomedon*'s signification in particular, and the signification of the romances discussed elsewhere in this chapter:

84 For suggestive parallels to this argument, see Eugene Vance, 'Signs of the City: Medieval Poetry as Detour', *New Literary History* 4 (1973), 557–74; and Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (New York, 1985), pp. 107–08, for the idea of the narrative middle as 'detour' and a 'struggle toward the end under the compulsion of imposed delay' (the latter quoted in Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* [Cambridge, 1994], p. 31). For an intriguing analogous discussion of later texts, see Patricia Parker, *Inescapable Romance: Studies in the Poetics of a Mode* (Princeton, 1979).

85 On the connection between heresy/paganism and sodomy in the Middle Ages, see Michael Goodich, 'Sodomy in Medieval Secular Law', *Journal of Homosexuality* 1 (1976), 295–302; Burgwinkle, *Sodomy, Masculinity, and Law*, pp. 31, 201; John Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century* (Chicago, 1980), pp. 278–86; Michael Goodich, *The Unmentionable Vice: Homosexuality in the Later Medieval Period* (Santa Barbara, CA, 1979), p. 7; and R.I. Moore, *Formation of a Persecuting Society: Authority and Deviance in Western Europe, 950–1250*, 2nd edition (Oxford, 2007), p. 88.

All western faith and good faith became engaged in this wager on representation: that a sign could refer to the depth of meaning, that a sign could be exchanged for meaning, and that something could guarantee this exchange — God of course. But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to the signs that constitute faith? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer anything but a gigantic simulacrum — not unreal, but a simulacrum, that is to say never exchanged for the real, but exchanged for itself, in an uninterrupted circuit without reference or circumference.⁸⁶

Baudrillard fixes his attention on postmodern culture's negotiation of its own signification-practice, but his ideas can be readily applied to the Middle Ages as well. According to medieval sign theory proper, which before the thirteenth century almost always derived from Augustine, signs are things which signify; if they signify ambiguously, it is not the fault of the sign but of the interpreter.⁸⁷ Signifiers other than those of Baudrillard's first order ('the reflection of a profound reality')⁸⁸ are therefore excluded from medieval semiotics, since signification does not fail or succeed based on the ontological status of the sign, but rather based on the interpretative skill and Christian virtue of the interpreter. But the story does not end here. I would suggest that the clerical attacks on profane literature discussed in the previous chapter understand and attack their targets as second-order signifiers (that which 'masks and denatures a profound reality').⁸⁹ A text such as the *Chanson de Roland*, which makes use of narrative motifs usually reserved for saints' lives, and which, by doing so, attempts to characterise its hero as saintly, would surely be guilty of this kind of distortion in the eyes of Chardri and Denis Piramus. As much as anything

86 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, 1994; f.p. in French as *Simulacres et simulation* [Paris, 1985]), pp. 5–6.

87 Stephan Meier-Oeser, 'Medieval Semiotics', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2011 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta: <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2011/entries/semiotics-medieval/>>. A fundamental text for medieval sign-theory is Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, ed. R.P.H. Green (Oxford, 1996), pp. 13–15.

88 Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, p. 6

89 Ibid.

else, the ideological project of the *Roland* involves the distortion of the discursive reality surrounding the problem of Christian warriors. As Richard Kaeuper notes (among others), the notion of salvation through violence was a highly controversial one.⁹⁰ But the *Roland* does not, of course, offer an argument in support of its hero's virtue. It does not even admit the existence of dialectic. It simply presents a universe in which knights attain salvation for their deeds, and lets this universe stand as its own reality, perhaps in the hope that reality will shift to mirror the text. Its 'argument' is imagistic, covert, and involves the deliberate non-representation of controversy and debate. In this analysis, the *Roland* and *The Romance of Horn* are both examples of Baudrillard's third-order signifier (that which 'masks the *absence* of a profound reality'),⁹¹ since the cultural work performed by both texts lies in their creation of fictional worlds in which the ethical system that they wish to promote exists uncontroversially, and in the implicit claim that these fictions map onto reality.

Where, then, do we place *Ipomedon* in this rough genealogy? The poem's status as a self-aware performance of the textual heresy/sodomy described by Alan de Lille marks it as different from the *Roland* or *The Romance of Horn*. Because *Ipomedon* embraces its ultimately fictional nature (by contrast with most other romance texts, which insist on their own ethical applicability) we can regard Hue's romance as being a fourth-order signifier: a system of signifiers that works only to perpetuate its own signification. *Ipomedon* is a profoundly disruptive, radical text whose object of mockery goes far beyond the motifs and narrative conventions of courtly literature. The text goes further by calling seriously into question romance texts' persistent claims for their moral applicability. But as we have seen, this remarkably deconstructive move does not align itself with the criticisms of writers like

⁹⁰ Kaeuper, *Holy Warriors*, pp. 5–13.

⁹¹ Baudrillard, *Simulacra*, p. 6.

Chardri and Denis Piramus. Instead, the epilogue encourages us to embrace romance's viral potential for self-replication by asserting the self-referential (even sodomitical and heretical) pleasure that we may take from it.

It is worth asking where Hue's second poem, *Protheselaus*, fits into this narrative. Appropriately, it continues the story of Hue's first poem by narrating the exploits of Ipomedon's son, the eponymous character. In the jargon of this discussion, *Protheselaus* is the sodomitical reiteration of *Ipomedon* promised in the epilogue to this text. The text may show some awareness of this status; as Judith Weiss notes, *Protheselaus* is constantly judged by other characters in the poem by reference to his famous father, whose virtues *Protheselaus* shares, and whose identity he cannot therefore escape, at least at the beginning of the poem.⁹² Interestingly for the present reading, the radical mockery of *Ipomedon* seems largely absent from this text: the parodic and scurrilous elements of *Ipomedon* are clearly not present to the same degree in *Protheselaus*, though Weiss, its kindest critic, has detected some element of comedy in the poem.⁹³ In what may be a highly suggestive divergence, this text (unlike *Ipomedon*) inscribes its immediate patron, Gilbert FitzBaderon (ll. 12700–01). It is possible, given that Hue does not name his patron in *Ipomedon*, that this romance was not a product of a particular patronage context. It may well be the case, then, that the form of *Protheselaus* was determined in part by the requirements of Hue's patron, and that its more straightforward form responds to this patronage-situation. Through this form, it encodes the response to Hue's implicit castigation of romance's patronage-system found in *Ipomedon*: writers of romance depend on the support of patrons for their livelihoods, and therefore have to write works to appeal to those patrons.⁹⁴ By a pleasing coincidence, then, *Protheselaus* may embody the essence

⁹² Weiss, 'Reappraisal of *Protheselaus*', p. 105.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁹⁴ *Ipomedon* is not the only twelfth-century romance to reflect on the patronage system in this way: the *locus classicus* of this discourse is Chrétien's ambiguous praise of Marie in his *Lancelot*, which has been

of what *Ipomedon* mocks; that is, narratives whose form is determined by the taste or ideology of a non-authorial party. *Ipomedon* is a powerful statement of authorial independence. *Protheselaus* may reveal the highly idealistic nature of this statement. *Ipomedon* can be taken as a thought-experiment in romance unconstrained by decorum or extra-authorial ideology; at the very least, it implies one of the most radical and deconstructive hermeneutic systems of any twelfth-century text.⁹⁵ By this token, it stands at the peak of insular romance's ideological independence in the twelfth century. The other texts discussed in this chapter all perform and inscribe independent hermeneutic systems to one extent or another, but Hue is exceptional in his conscious and openly-expressed awareness of romance's potential in this regard.

The final reading of this chapter presents, I suggest, a considerable contrast to the texts discussed above in its profound ambivalence regarding the question of romance's ethical potential. *Gui de Warewic*, a text from what Judith Weiss regards as the 'second wave' of Anglo-Norman romance,⁹⁶ has been the subject of extended critical debate on questions of its meaning and function. Discussions have focussed particularly closely on a strange episode from the centre of the text, which comes immediately after Gui has returned from his adventures to claim the beautiful Felice (who is now convinced of his prowess) as his wife. This passage is unexpected in the context of what has come before, and admits a wide range of interpretations:

read as an oblique indication of Chrétien's dissatisfaction with the matter that he has been requested to treat since Gaston Paris, 'Études sur les romans de la Table Ronde II: *Le Conte de la Charette*', *Romania* 12 (1883), 459–534. See also Jean Rychner, 'Le Prologue du *Chevalier de la Charette*', *Vox Romanica* 26 (1967), 1–23; and Jean Frappier, 'Le Prologue du *Chevalier de la Charette* et son interprétation', *Romania* 93 (1972), 337–77. On the relationship between *Ipomedon* and the romances of Chrétien, see Lucy M. Gay, 'Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon* and Chrétien de Troyes', *PMLA* 32 (1917), 468–91, and Calin, 'Exaltation and Undermining'.

95 Lee Edelman's powerful definition of queerness as that which rejects the future, and thus the political (which can only operate when we care about the future) is highly relevant to Hue's sodomitical play here. See Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC, 2004).

96 *Boeve de Haumtone and Gui de Warewic: Two Anglo-Norman Romances*, trans. Judith Weiss (Tempe, 2009), p. 1.

Ore ad Gui tut sun pleisir, 7555
 Quant de s'amie ad sun desir;
 Ensemble furent cinquante jurz,
 Plus ne durerent lur amurs.
 Il avint qu'en la premere nuit
 Qu'il firent lur commun delit, 7560
 Ke Gui après sa femme jut,
 E ele un enfant de li conceut. (Gui, ll. 7555–62)⁹⁷

[Now that Gui had everything he wished, since he could fulfil his desire for his beloved. They were together for fifty days; their love-making lasted no longer than that. It happened that on the first night of their mutual enjoyment, Gui slept with his wife and she conceived a child with him.]⁹⁸

The narrative reminds us here that Gui's exploits up to this point have all been in the pursuit of Felice's love, and that her reciprocation (as well as the continuation of his own line) causes that part of the narrative to finish. The desires that have animated Gui's travels through Europe and his displays of prowess appear to have been satisfied. But as many critics have commented, the text does not end at the expected point. Instead, the text moves away from the characteristic zoomed-out generalities of romance epilogues, and takes an unexpected turn.

Ço fu en mai, el tens d'esté,
 Que Gui ert en Warewic la cité.
 De berser est un jur repeiré, 7565
 Veneisun ad pris a grant plenté;
 Mult joius e lé se feseit;
 A une vespree, que bele esteit,
 Gui en une tur munta,
 En half as estres se pua; 7570
 Le pais envirun ad esgardé
 E le ciel, qui tant ert esteillé,
 E le tens, qui ert serré e cler.
 Gui comence dunc a penser
 Cum Deus li out fait grant honur, 7575

⁹⁷ Text taken from *Gui de Warewic: Roman du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Alfred Ewert (Paris, 1932).

⁹⁸ All translations of this text from Weiss, *Boeve and Gui*.

Unc a chevaler ne fist greignur:
 Qe unc ne fu en liu n'en estur
 Qu'il ne fu tenu al meillur,
 E cum il ert home de grant afaire
 E preisé en estrange terre, 7580
 E qe tanz homes aveit oscis,
 Turs e citez par force pris,
 E cum aveit sun cors pené
 Loinz en estrange regné
 Pur une femme qu'il tant amat, 7585
 Pur qui tant mals duré ad;
 Mais unc pur sun criatur,
 Qui fait li ad si grant honor,
 Ne s'entremist de lui servir;
 Mais ore s'en voldra repentir. 7590
 A suspirer dunc comença,
 En sun corage se purpensa
 Que tote sa vie changera
 E en Deu servise se mettra. (*Gui*, ll. 7563–94)

[It was in May, in summertime, that Gui was in the city of Warwick. One day he had come back from hunting, having taken a great quantity of game and was very joyful and glad. One a beautiful evening, Gui climbed a tower and leant out of the high gallery. He looked at the country round about and at the sky, which was so full of stars, and at the clear, calm weather. Then Gui began to think how God had done him great honour; He had never done greater to any knight, for he was never in any place or fight that he was not considered the best. And he thought of how he was a man of influence, and renowned in foreign lands, and how he had killed so many men, captured towers and cities by force, and had exerted himself far off in strange realms, for the sake of a woman whom he loved so much and for whom he had borne great suffering — but never for his Creator, who had done him such great honour, nor had he bothered to serve Him. But now he wanted to repent of this. He began to sigh, and resolved in his heart that he would completely change his life and put himself at God's service.]

The passage gives us a view of Gui's life of apparently perfect fulfilment, and an unusual moment follows. In a beautiful scene with few parallels elsewhere in the text, Gui is given the time and space to think about his life and accomplishments. The poem is driven at a fast pace by the actions of its hero, and these actions leave little room for contemplative thought, but this scene is an exception. As Paul Price has noted, Gui's recollection of violent, aggressive acts of war are not consistent with the rest of the poem.⁹⁹ Although Gui

⁹⁹ Paul Price, 'Confessions of a Godless Hero: Guy of Warwick and Comprehensive Entertainment', in *Medieval Romance: Translation and Innovation*, ed. Judith Weiss, Jennifer Fellows, and Morgan Dickson (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 93–110.

has certainly killed many people, the closest the text comes to claiming that he has captured towers and cities is when Gui's advice and military support assures future successes for Seguin, Duke of Lorraine:

Li dux desore conquerrat
 Les chastels que perdu ad
 Par Gui e par sun conseil
 Qui desore li ert mult fedeil. (*Gui*, ll. 1909–12)

[Thereupon, through Gui, who was from now on most loyal to him, and by his advice, the duke would conquer the castles which he had lost.]

However, this prediction is by no means directly fulfilled in the text. Gui's advice does cause Seguin to make peace with Reiner, the German emperor, despite Seguin's initial animosity towards him,¹⁰⁰ and this peace must lead to the restoration of Seguin's fief, since he feels able to offer half of it to Gui (ll. 2867–70). The peace also causes Reiner to give his niece to Seguin in marriage, and we may assume that the dynastic link forged by this marriage means that Seguin's fief will be further extended. But none of this amounts to the military conquest described by Gui in his retraction.

We may, therefore, uncontroversially accept the claim that Gui did not act on God's behalf in the first half of the text. God's presence in this part of the poem is limited to conventional pious formulae and ascriptions of success to God's providence, and these are features of nearly all medieval romances.¹⁰¹ However, the linked claim that his deeds were all performed in order to gain Felice's love is deeply suspect. Hernis, the emperor of Constantinople, offers Gui his daughter in marriage in return for Gui's help in the

100 See *Gui*, ll. 1890–1900, for Seguin's animosity and Gui's instinct towards peacemaking, and ll. 2494–856 for the peacemaking itself, done on Gui's advice.

101 For a few of the many examples of these formulae, uttered by Gui and others, see ll. 3355, 3903–10, 5610–12, etc. For a useful discussion of the stylistic choices behind the deployment of pious formulae in romance, see Roger Dalrymple, *Language and Piety in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge, 2000).

emperor's war against the Sultan of Konya (ll. 3149–54). The poem does not give us a response, even though we might expect a refusal on grounds of prior attachment. Later, when the offer is repeated, Gui accedes readily ('bonement', line 4200), and thanks the emperor (ll. 4195–99). Only shortly after, when the rings and officiant are close at hand, does he think of Felice:

E Gui dunc a primes s'est purpensé
 De sa amie, qu'il tant ama,
 En poi de hure ublié l'a. (Gui, ll. 4228–30)

[And then for the first time Gui thought of his sweetheart, whom he loved so much. In only a short while he had forgotten her.]

This striking passage is emblematic of the poem's narrative amnesia with regard to Felice, who is afforded remarkably few mentions between Gui's departure from England and his return (ll. 1548, 4231, 4307), despite the fact that Gui's questing is ostensibly done on her behalf. By stating directly that Gui has forgotten Felice, the poem does not allow us to accept unquestioningly its hero's motivations for leaving England in the first place. In fact, though the structure of the poem pivots around Felice, and despite the fact that Gui is (initially) buried next to her, she is a less centrally important character in the poem than we might think. It has been suggested that homosocial bonds form the most important interpersonal relationships in the poem,¹⁰² and with this in mind, much could be made of the fact that Gui is disinterred after his burial next to Felice so that his remains might be conveyed by his faithful companion, Terri, and transported to an abbey in Lorraine.¹⁰³

102 Laura Hibbard, *Medieval Romance in England* (rev. edn, New York, 1963), p. 134; Calin, 'Late Anglo-Norman Romance', p. 25.

103 As Judith Weiss points out in 'Gui de Warewic at Home and Abroad: A Hero for Europe', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 1–11, Gui gives clear instructions that his body should not be moved after death (p. 9, and see *Gui*, ll. 11501–04, 11535–42). Despite the fact that many attempts to move him are miraculously thwarted, Terri experiences no difficulty in disinterring his friend and conveying him to Lorraine.

Is there a convincing single cause, or set of causes, for Gui's obstinately restless travels around Europe in the first half of the poem? If we cannot accept Felice's promised love as a plausible motivating force, then what remains? The friendship of Gui's brothers in arms, certainly; but perhaps even more than this, the continued deferral of return, fulfilment, peace, and death. This reading goes beyond character-based criticism. As many of the poem's readers have noticed, *Gui* is a poem that functions by the extensive multiplication of incident.¹⁰⁴ We might argue, uniting an impression of a character addicted to feats of arms and an audience addicted to hearing about them, that Gui continues his journey because he must. To do otherwise would be to bring the textually useful part of the hero's life to its end, and would thus bring about the end of the poem. But *Gui* goes further than this in choosing to show its hero repenting of deeds that cannot be found amongst the mass of incidents contained in the poem's first five thousand lines. In a continuation of his privately-voiced retraction which, importantly, further exaggerates the earlier inconsistencies, Gui explains to Felice why he must leave her:

Atant es vus sa moiller!	7595
Quant vit sun seignur si penser:	
‘Sire, fait ele, dunt pensez?	
Pur Deu vus pri, nel me celez.	
Unc mes si pensif ne vus vi;	
Estes vus dun de rien marri?	7600
— Amie, fait il, jol vus dirrai,	
Tut mun corage vus mustera;	
Puis que primes vus amai,	
Tanz malz pur vus sufferz ai,	
Ne qui que home fust unc né	7605
Qui tantes dolurs ait enduré	
Pur une femme cum jo ai pur tei.	
Pur vus ai fait maint grant desrei,	
Homes ocis, destruites citez,	
Arses abbeies de plusurs regnez,	7610
E quanqu'en cest mund fait ai	
Des l'ure qeu a vus m'acointai,	

¹⁰⁴ Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 167.

E de mal e de ben,
 Nel vus voildrai celer rien,
 E quanque ai mun cors pené, 7615
 E quanque ai fait e doné,
 Pur vus l'ai fait, ben le sacez,
 E asez plus que ci n'oez.
 Si tant eurus eusse esté
 Que solement la meité 7620
 Fait eusse pur Deu qui nus cria,
 Que si grant honor presté m'a,
 La gloire del ciel pur veire avreie,
 Ensemble od Deu saint serreie;
 Mais pur lui unc rien ne fis, 7625
 Pur ço sui las e chaitif.
 Tant francs homes ai oscis,
 En mei sunt li pecché remis;
 El servise Deu desore irrai,
 Mes pecchez espenir voldrai: 7630
 Le liu u avrai une nuit jeu,
 Ja altre feiz n'i serraï veu;
 De tuz les bens que mes ferai
 La meité de tut vus granterai.' (Gui, ll. 7595–634)

[Then his wife appeared. When she saw her husband so pensive, she said: 'My lord, what are you thinking? In God's name, I beg you not to hide it from me. I've never seen you so downcast; are you distressed about something?' 'My love,' he said, 'I'll tell you about it; I'll tell you everything that's in my heart. From the first moment I loved you, I've borne so much suffering for you; I believe there's no man ever born who endured so much sorrow for a woman as I have for you. For you I've caused great havoc, killed men, destroyed cities, and burnt abbeys in many kingdoms. And whatever I've done in this world, whether bad or good, from the moment I first knew you, I've not wanted to hide anything from you. All that I've exerted my body for, and all that I've done and given, I've done for you, you can be certain, and much more than you've heard here. If I were lucky enough to have done only half for the sake of God who created us, who has lent me such great honour, I would truly have heavenly glory and be a saint, together with God. But I never did anything for him, and so I am wretched and despicable. I've killed so many honourable men that the sins remain with me. From now I shall go in God's service; I want to expiate my sins. The place where I lie one night I shall never be seen in a second time. I shall give the credit to you for half of all the good actions I henceforth do.']

This passage encodes a remarkable doublethink. On the one hand, a multitude of warlike acts, ostensibly performed for Felice and involving suffering, would have assured Gui's saintly elevation had he performed these same acts ('la meité' can only refer back to the previously mentioned exertions) for God. On the other, the acts themselves — the killing

of honourable men, the burning of abbeys, and so on — are despicable and sinful.

Moreover, as few previous readers of the poem have noted, Gui does not devote himself entirely to God in the second half of the poem, but instead says clearly that he will devote fully half of his good actions to Felice.¹⁰⁵ But the veracity of this assurance is called into question by the fact that the poem does not once mention Felice before Gui's second return to England.¹⁰⁶

Gui's retraction has been frequently commented upon for a good reason: it creates a remarkable interpretative mess. I would suggest that the passage, and by extension the poem as a whole, works to do exactly this. We would do well to consider the remarkable awareness of romance's ethical claims — and its questionable ability to make those claims — found in Hue's *Ipomedon*. It would not be unreasonable to claim a similar awareness on the part of the *Gui*-poet. An important line from the passage quoted above can function as a way into this reading. When Gui tells Felice that he has performed many acts that he has not told her about ('E asez plus que ci n'oez', line 7618) this statement can be read as addressing the poem's inscribed audience alongside Felice. Gui's persistent return to his own 'text' in this passage makes us return to it along with him, and most readers or listeners would surely be aware that Gui is not the kind of romance hero who burns abbeys. The statement functions to remind us that romance is, fundamentally, fictive; that it is not history, or even an accurate record of the deeds of knights, but rather what we might call a curated set of inventions chosen to present the text's characters in a particular way. *Gui* is a text which persistently presents its hero as perfectly good and perfectly heroic — the best knight in the world.¹⁰⁷ But this passage of retraction and self-disgust suggests the presence

105 The Auchinleck *Guy* hedges this promise substantially: 'Of alle þe dedes y may do wel / God graunt þe, lef, þat haluendel / And Marie, his moder swete' (*Guy of Warwick: The First or 14th-Century Version*, ed. Julius Zupitza, EETS e.s. 42, 49, 59 [London, 1883–1891], st. 26/10–12). The Caius version is much closer to *Gui* (*ibid.*, line 7430).

106 Not mentioned between line 7465 and line 11387.

107 Gui is referred to as such from very early in the poem, when he wins his first tournament (ll. 933–34).

of a text lying beyond the fringes of this story of exemplary knighthood. Lurking in the poet's imagination is a Gui, unrealised in the book of *Gui*, whose actions are more ambiguous, and even positively sinful. We might further observe that 'real' knightly practice at this time would very rarely, if ever, have furnished the exemplary model of behaviour provided by Gui. Throughout the Middle Ages, knighthood was a brutal, ugly profession, whose ethical value was highly contested.¹⁰⁸ Through Gui's retraction, the poem reminds us that its hero's actions cannot be taken as ethical models by drawing the veracity of the entire narrative (within its fictional frame) into question.

Gui is a text that is clearly preoccupied with the ethical value of knighthood and its textual representations. It can be understood as performing a tacit exploration of romance ethics at the same time as providing an entertaining narrative. In doing so, it must be understood as responding to the wide-ranging discourse on the ethical value of romance traced in this chapter. And as we have seen, it responds to this discourse with some anxiety. The dipartite structure of the poem reflects this anxiety by providing two models for knighthood: one in which warlike acts are performed by a perfectly good man in the service of a woman; and one in which similar acts are performed by the same man in the service of God. And as we have seen, the first model is called into question in various ways. This is not to say, however, that the second half of the poem attempts to provide a solution to the problem of romance ethics. As noted above, the second half of the poem does not place its hero fully in God's service, but still allows Gui's devotion to Felice to colour the rest of the narrative, however faintly. Moreover, as Judith Weiss has noted, we cannot fully trust Gui's postures of humility and penitent anonymity.¹⁰⁹ One of the implicit points made by the poem turns on the basic similarity between its two halves, which are

108 See, for instance, Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 63–81.

109 Weiss, *Boeve and Gui*, pp. 17–18.

united in their ethical insufficiency as much as in their multiplication of near-identical incident. Although we are told that the fundamental message of the whole text (here ‘escrit’) is that ‘la sume de sa valor’ (‘the essence of his worth’) was that he ‘tut guerpi pur sun criatur’ (‘forsook everything for his Creator’, ll. 12921–22), it is hard to derive that message from the poem.¹¹⁰ It may be the case that Gui’s sameness before and after his retraction draws on a tendency of some hagiographical texts to efface any transformative effect of religious conversion.¹¹¹ But while these hagiographical texts push the sanctity of the convert back to before the point of conversion, we might say that *Gui* works somewhat differently, since, by contrast, it moves the ethically problematic career of the convert forward into the period after his partial rejection of that career. Were this structural feature to stand alone, we might read it as an affirmation of the potential for knights to attain salvation by continuing undeterred in their violent profession. But as we have seen, *Gui* offers its readers subtle clues that texts about knights are not, and should not be read as, primers of knightly behaviour or explorations of the ethics of ‘real-life’ knighthood. Instead, *Gui* explores — unconclusively, with numerous turbulent, confused moments — a question that all the texts discussed in this chapter (as well as the previous one) have taken a position on: what does romance do? In this, it can only be responding to a discursive pressure for it to do *something*; a pressure that I suspect it felt particularly keenly by virtue of its position in literary history, at the beginning of a century that saw some of the most sustained explorations of vernacular fiction’s ethical potential at any point in the Middle Ages.

We might summarize the anxieties of *Gui* by saying that it demonstrates the insufficiency of drawing straightforward, literal exemplary models from romance. We

110 For this argument, see Laura Ashe, ‘*Mutatio Dexteræ Excelsis*: Narratives of Transformation after the Conquest’, *JGEP* 110 (2011), 141–72.

111 Ashe, ‘*Mutatio*’, pp. 166–71.

might even say that its obvious contradictions reveal the insufficiency of a literal hermeneutic model for treating the text. Indeed, the text peppers itself with moments that seem to invite allegorical interpretation, but that fail to sustain themselves in a way that would allow us to construct a coherent metaphorical reading.¹¹² In doing this, it reveals the commensurate insufficiency of non-literal interpretations. When Gui says that he has burnt abbeys, we search through our memory of the text to recall events that would match this description, and when the memory of such events does not present itself, we think whether the statement could make non-literal sense.¹¹³ But, of course, it does not. Gui's burnt abbeys are an irreducible, aporetic statement, and I would argue that this is precisely their function. Like Hue's *Ipomedon*, *Gui* is, at a fundamental level, a text about signification. I would suggest that this is in no small part due to the fact that twelfth-century insular hagiographers — whose castigations of romance form such a remarkable cluster of dialectic — exerted a powerful cultural force on romance by calling into question the basic value of this so-called 'literature of secular entertainment'. Despite a healthy discourse surrounding the notion that entertaining literature could be justified on the basis of the solace and relief that it imparted, we can see that such a justification was deeply insufficient in the matter of insular romance.¹¹⁴ Writers like Denis Piramus may indeed accept that romance provides solace, but that does not stop him from characterizing it using a motif-complex that tars heresy, sodomy, entertaining fiction, and paganism with the same brush. Encoded in such characterisations is the insistence that literature cannot avoid engaging with religious ethics, even if it makes no direct claim for such an engagement. In

112 Weiss, *Boeve and Gui*, pp. 17–18.

113 I suggest that this kind of reading-practice was more fundamental to medieval literary culture, broadly considered, than is generally admitted. The principles of signification codified in medieval Biblical hermeneutics would have been utterly familiar, in their most basic form, to almost any reader or hearer of romance in this period, even if lay audiences were not directly or consciously invoking exegetical principles when they read or heard a text.

114 Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca and London, 1982), pp. 128–63.

the face of that cultural pressure, *Gui* evinces a deep anxiety regarding its own status as a fundamentally (though perhaps reluctantly) ethical text, and attempts to generate value from the performance of this anxiety.

This discussion begs a question: why did the author of *Gui* not write a saint's life? The answer is that the other basic cultural pressure on a writer of romance was the taste and demands of his intended audience. We can account for the nature of a great deal of *Gui*'s content by stating that it represents what the poem's patron or audience would have liked, and what they must have demanded.¹¹⁵ This negotiation between an audience's demand to have more of what they like, on the one hand, and the widespread denials of the existence of entertainment pure and simple, on the other, forms the cultural conditions that produce a text such as *Gui*. The apparent 'continuation' of *Gui* past its hero's death in order to narrate briefly the exploits of his son Reinbrun may, in fact, be a reflection of this need to produce literature to satisfy the demands of a particular market. Indeed, we might suggest that the incongruous presence of supernatural elements in the Reinbrun section of the poem could indicate the poet's incorporation of his audience's changing taste.¹¹⁶ This section of the poem is a salutary reminder that romances are not produced in a creative vacuum. Like Chrétien, the *Gui*-poet may not have chosen his own *matiere*, and his *san* may have been similarly regulated by the patron-poet (or, more loosely, audience-poet) relationship.¹¹⁷

* * *

The overall picture here is one of pluralism. The texts considered in this chapter use a wide

¹¹⁵ Cf. Hanning, 'Audience as Co-Creator'.

¹¹⁶ Weiss, *Boeve and Gui*, p. 19.

¹¹⁷ Cf. note 94 above.

variety of strategies to negotiate their positions with regard to cultural pressures towards the expression of normative ethics. It would be unreasonable for us to suspect otherwise, given that aesthetic individualism, broadly speaking, is both the objective of romance's emancipation from clerical hermeneutics and the means by which it is emancipated. It is worth emphasizing that we cannot come to a general view of the broad cultural situation of the twelfth century from these texts: alone, they can witness little more than their own practice. However, it is clear that insular literary culture was marked in the twelfth century by a pervasive cluster of clerical discourse that questioned and criticised romance's constructions of secular exemplarity and literary individuality. It is uncontroversial to say that a building conflict between the aristocratic and ecclesiastical hierarchies reached a critical point in the second half of the twelfth century with the murder of Thomas Becket in Canterbury Cathedral, and that this broader conflict is one of the central political discourses of twelfth-century England.¹¹⁸ At a time when aristocrats and clerics were engaged in a conflict of competing claims to authority, is it unreasonable to suggest that the literary objects made for members of this aristocracy would have reflected in some way their will to power? I would suggest not; and certainly, whatever these texts' relationship to their contemporary political and ecclesiastical situations, it is uncontroversial to say that they themselves construct a discourse that sets them apart from normative notions of ethical value.

These textual perspectives, all taken from the first century of insular French romance, serve to demonstrate the mode's exertions of ideological independence in the face of dialectical opposition. Indeed, some of them provide disturbingly prescient critiques of the medieval Christian symbolic order, and in doing so pose a powerful

118 For broad accounts of the political conflict between church and state in this period, see Z.N. Brooke, *The English Church and the Papacy: from the Conquest to the Reign of John* (Cambridge, 1931); Walter Ullman, *The Growth of Papal Government in the Middle Ages: A Study in the Ideological Relation of Clerical to Lay Power* (London, 1962); and Brian Tierney, *The Crisis of Church and State 1050–1300* (Toronto, 1988).

challenge to normative models of signification. But, as we will see in the following chapters, the situation does not persist far into the thirteenth century. In the wake of the Lateran reforms, and in a century that saw the first flowering of widespread insular documentary culture, religious writing begins to engage more subtly with the ethics and ideologies of romance. And, as religious writing becomes more confident in its use of romance, castigation turns to colonization, replacement to rapprochement.

Chapter 3: Robert Grosseteste's *Chasteau d'amour* and romance

In an anecdote recorded in the *Lanercost Chronicle*, a text begun about thirty years after Robert Grosseteste's death in 1253, the Earl of Gloucester asks the famous bishop how he acquired his excellent manners:¹

‘Si licet’, inquit, ‘domine episcopo, unum sine offensa quaererem, vellem libenter edoceri unde tanta curialitas posset oriri. Nam te simplici progenie accepimus ortum, et tamen ita facete facta tua exequentem ut saepe de te in seculo sermonum conferamus.’

[‘Lord Bishop’, he said, ‘if it is permissible without offending you to ask you a question, I would like to know how such fine courtliness can be acquired. For I know you are of humble origin and nevertheless, my friends and I often comment on your courtesy.’]

Grosseteste's reply:

‘Verissime,’ ait, ‘domine comes, humili de patre et matre sum natus in orbe, sed tamen inter praecipuos virtuosae vitae viros ac rectores orbis alitus sum a juventute.’ ... ‘A principio,’ ait, ‘quo sacram Scripturam cepi revolvere et legere, virorum fide dignorum, qui ab inchoato mundo nunc usque, homines prudentes, modesti, liberales, et casti, caeterisque virtutibus pollentes, in suis gestis et moribus velut in suis verbis et vultibus, me informare possent, reperi; et eorum actibus me conformare studui.’²

[‘It is quite true, my Lordship’, replied the bishop, ‘that my father and mother were of lowly estate, but from my earliest years I lived among the most distinguished and virtuous men and the rulers of this world.’ ... ‘From the time’, said the bishop, ‘that I began to read and study the Scriptures, I learned about worthy, wise men who, from the beginning of the world until now, by their deeds and behaviour (but as if by their words and faces) showed me prudence, modesty, liberality, chastity and other virtues, by which they were able to instruct me. And I tried to conform my actions to theirs.’]³

1 See A. G. Little, ‘The Authorship of the Lanercost Chronicle’, *The English Historical Review* 31 (1916), 269–79 (pp. 273–74) and *Chronicon de Lanercost MCCI–MCCCXLVI*, ed. J. Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1839), pp. xii–xiii.

2 Text from *ibid.*, pp. 44–45.

3 Translation from Servus Gieben, ‘Robert Grosseteste and Medieval Courtesy-Books’, *Vivarium* 5 (1967), 47–74 (p. 47), with some alterations. For a similar sentiment, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*:

Importantly, this anecdotal instantiation of Grosseteste does not suggest that the earl's esteem for courtesy is a worldly affectation, better replaced by pious devotion.⁴ Instead, he makes the point that even courtly manners are underpinned by Christian ethics, and thus encourages the earl to understand courtesy as a spiritual accomplishment, rather than only an aristocratic one. The earl is surprised by Grosseteste's courtesy because he understands courtesy as a commodity exchanged between aristocrats in order to demonstrate and reinforce their position in a secular hierarchy (in other words, as cultural capital).⁵ Grosseteste's remark appropriates this commodity by claiming that its value lies not in its social prestige, but in its intellectual, spiritual underpinnings.

This remark is highly characteristic of the historical Grosseteste's thought.⁶ For the anecdotal Grosseteste, a proper understanding of courtesy's spiritual foundations appears to be preferable to a rejection of what might be argued, in the *contemptus mundi* tradition, to be a repugnant worldliness, only capable of impeding spiritual knowledge.⁷ At first glance, it is certainly difficult to see the spiritual pertinence of the bishop's courtesy: the

A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture (2nd edition, Cambridge, 2008), p. 211.

- 4 In the discussion that follows, I maintain the distinction observed in this sentence between the anecdotal and historical Grosseteste, since it is impossible to prove the authenticity of the anecdote. It is nevertheless at least plausible, given Grosseteste's probable authorship of two Latin poems on courtesy (see *ibid.*, p. 48).
- 5 Pierre Bourdieu's term: see his essay 'The Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. by J. Richardson, trans. by Richard Nice (New York, 1986), pp. 241–58. *Curialitas* is an example what Bourdieu calls embodied cultural capital: 'external wealth converted into an integral part of the person' (p. 244f).
- 6 The standard hand-list of Grosseteste's works remains S. Harrison Thomson, *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln 1235–1253* (Cambridge, 1940). It should be consulted alongside James McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 455–504, which takes into account advances in scholarship and manuscript discoveries up to 1980.
- 7 Cambridge, Trinity College MS B.15.38, ff. 77r–79v (dated s.xiii med) contains a *De contemptu mundi* attributed to Grosseteste ('tractatus sancti Roberti Lincolnensis episcopi de contemptu mundi'). This ascription was accepted by S. Harrison Thomson (*The Writings*, pp. 129–30) but has since been shown to be false: see Edward B. King, 'The *De contemptu mundi* Attributed to Grosseteste', *Speculum* 58 (1983), 724–26. As King shows, the text is uncharacteristically Grossetestean, in its style as much as in its content, and is in fact an abbreviated version of Hugh of St Victor's *De vanitate mundi* (p. 725).

earl's compliment is prompted by Grosseteste's refusal of a choice pike at dinner, after his honoured guest was given a smaller fish.⁸ Nevertheless, it is likely that the historical Grosseteste would have agreed with his anecdotal counterpart on this point, as his commentary on the pseudo-Dionysian *Celestial Hierarchy* suggests:

everything that participates in the good is, according to its degree of sharing, a vestige and a distant imitation of the Absolute Good. All lower creatures can be made the object of a discourse symbolizing the spiritual world of God and angel.⁹

We might easily take the anecdotal Grosseteste's remark as an attempt to demonstrate this idea.¹⁰ Everyday courtesy is presented as an imitation of (and participation in) the virtue of luminaries, a virtue which is itself imitative of divine goodness. The symbolic nature of mundane courtesy thus justifies its practice. *Curialitas* may be a lesser virtue, but because it exists in a hierarchy of virtues emanating from God's goodness, it can be taken as both an imitation and a symbolic reminder of this goodness, and derives value from being

8 Gieben, 'Courtesy-Books', p. 47.

9 Paraphrase from McEvoy, *Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 96. McEvoy's text is from the inaccessible thesis edition of J. S. McQuade, 'Robert Grosseteste's Commentary on the *Celestial Hierarchy* of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University Belfast, 1961). Declan Lawell's edition of this commentary is forthcoming with Brepols in 2015.

10 Though Grosseteste is clearly here commenting on the text in front of him, he nevertheless gives the Dionysian material his own inflection; as McEvoy notes, Grosseteste's use of the characteristically Augustinian term *vestigium* suggests the presence of Neoplatonic exemplarism (McEvoy, *Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 96).

understood in this way.¹¹

In fact, one of Grosseteste's most characteristic ideas takes a very similar shape. His theory of intellectual knowledge depends upon a distinction between two faculties of the soul: the *aspectus mentis* (reason) and the *affectus mentis* (desire). For Grosseteste, 'the soul's capacity to understand (*aspectus*) is inseparable from its loves (*affectus*) and cannot transcend them'. Truth can only be known to the extent that 'the soul's love can transcend ephemeral objects'.¹² These objects cannot be rejected outright, because sense-knowledge (the apprehension of these ephemeral objects by the senses) is the only immediate source of knowledge available to humans, whose fallen nature removes the possibility of a 'direct intuition of the spiritual and transcendent'.¹³ The reasonable soul (*aspectus mentis*) uses sense-data to produce abstract knowledge but, as we have seen, cannot transcend the affective soul's desires. When desire is directed towards worldly things, the soul's capacity for knowledge is limited; when it moves beyond these things, its horizons are expanded. Ephemeral objects are thus vital conduits of spiritual contemplation, but only when reason directs the mind's desire beyond the objects themselves toward the spiritual realities that they symbolize and imitate. By this way of thinking, *curialitas* becomes a valuable

11 At first glance, the exemplary texts to which this anecdotal Grosseteste seems to be referring can only be those of the Bible, but the words 'nunc usque' prompt a closer look. It is clear that Grosseteste's first acquaintance with the Bible caused him to learn from the example of worthy men, and that we must identify these worthies as textual entities by the fact that they were not physically present to instruct Grosseteste. However, it is less certain that Grosseteste found all of his ethical instructors in the pages of the Bible, since we are specifically told that their exemplary behaviour took place throughout the span of history. The syntax of the passage is ambiguous, but it is certainly possible that Grosseteste is saying here that the Bible taught him the art of ethical reading, at which point he was able to understand the lessons of various exemplary figures, some of whom are found in the Bible, and some of whom are found in more recent texts. Saints' lives are an obvious source of such virtuous models, but since the question specifically mentions Grosseteste's *curialitas*, and not his piety or religious virtue, we might just as easily suggest courtly romance or historical writing as possible models, since these modes contains more direct examples of the kind of behaviour praised by the earl. This can be no more than a suggestion, but at the very least the passage attests to Grosseteste's reputation as a man who modelled his secular manners on exemplary models taken from literature.

12 McEvoy, *Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste.*, p. 331.

13 Ibid., p. 355.

contemplative exercise when it begins to serve as a reminder of the divine goodness, and when the affective soul ceases to desire courteous behaviour for its own sake. The anecdotal Grosseteste's guide for this process is the Bible, and the same is true of his historical counterpart, who held that 'without the guidance of the *liber scripturae* we could not read aright the *vestigia Dei* which are written into the nature of things.'¹⁴

Both of these ideas fall under the broad Neoplatonic/Augustinian doctrine of exemplarism, 'one to which [Grosseteste] returns at every opportunity and in all his works'.¹⁵ The doctrine runs as follows:

Each created reality has a truth which consists in its conformity to its external exemplar in the divine mind or creative word of God. It follows logically that the mind can only claim possession of complete truth concerning any individual thing when it can see, not merely the object itself, but the exemplar which is its standard.¹⁶

Importantly, exemplarism is not just an epistemological concept for Grosseteste, but is fundamental to many other aspects of his thought. The most important textual expression of this exemplarism is the treatise *De luce*. Grosseteste's theory of the metaphysics of light has been argued to be one of his greatest contributions to the history of ideas in general,

14 Ibid. p. 358.

15 Ibid., p. 321. It should be noted that some scholars have argued that Grosseteste's commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* shows him moving away from an illuminationist theory of knowledge. The principal argument to this effect is Steven P. Marrone, *William of Auvergne and Robert Grosseteste: New Ideas of Truth in the Early Thirteenth Century* (Princeton, 1983), pp. 157–214; and *Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2001), I:29–108, where the argument is reprised. For a recent suggestion that Grosseteste is in fact attempting to reconcile illuminationist and Aristotelian epistemologies, see Christina van Dyke, 'An Aristotelian Theory of Divine Illumination: Robert Grosseteste's *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (2009), 685–704; and 'The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth: Robert Grosseteste on Universals (and the *Posterior Analytics*)', *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 48 (2010), 153–70. Van Dyke's account of the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics* helps to account for the strongly Augustinian character of Grosseteste's commentaries on the pseudo-Dionysian corpus, produced very late in his life: see McEvoy, *Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, pp. 96–98.

16 This is McEvoy's précis (*Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 321) of a passage from Grosseteste's treatise *De veritate*, for which see *Die Philosophischen Werke des Robert Grosseteste, Bischofs von Lincoln*, ed. Ludwig Baur (Münster, 1912), pp. 130–43.

and the treatise in which the theory is set out is one of his most celebrated works: as S. Harrison Thomson remarks, ‘it is of considerable importance in view of the marked leaning of Oxford speculation after the time of Grosseteste toward a “Lichtmetaphysik”.’¹⁷ It also demonstrates the same tendency towards exemplarism found in the works discussed above. In *De luce*, Grosseteste argues that light (*lux*) is the first form of corporeity, and that all matter emanates from it.¹⁸ As it moves farther away from its originary point, it loses luminescence, and gains density. Physical matter (condensed light) is thus the lowest element of a hierarchy governed by the divine *lux*.¹⁹ Moreover, this cosmological model has ethical implications, because it is incompatible with an understanding of the body as the prison of the soul, a view closely allied with the *contemptus mundi* tradition.²⁰ Such a conception of the soul-body relationship depends on a belief that spiritual and corporeal substances are made of different things (this is known as dualism). Grosseteste’s philosophy of light rejects dualistic cosmological models in which ‘the higher universe was thought to be of an essentially different stuff from the earth’, and replaces it with a system that distinguished spiritual and earthly matter only by ‘degree of density, perfection, and beauty’.²¹

This condensed account of some of Grosseteste’s theological and philosophical

17 Thomson, *The Writings*, p. 108.

18 On this subject, see the important account in Cecilia Panti, ‘The Evolution of the Idea of Corporeity in Grosseteste’s Writings’, in *Robert Grosseteste: His Thought and Its Impact*, ed. Jack P. Cunningham (Toronto, 2012), pp. 111–39.

19 For an edition and translation of *De luce*, see Cecilia Panti, ‘Robert Grosseteste’s *De luce*: A Critical Edition’, in *Robert Grosseteste and His Intellectual Milieu: New Editions and Studies*, ed. John Flood, James R. Ginther, and Joseph W. Goering (Toronto, 2013), pp. 193–238; and Neil Lewis, ‘Robert Grosseteste’s *On Light*: An English Translation’, in *ibid.*, pp. 239–47.

20 McEvoy, *Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 268.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 185. This connection between Grosseteste’s cosmology and his epistemology is not uncontroversial; Steven Marrone denies that we can equate Grosseteste’s cosmological *lux* with the light-metaphor he uses to describe the process of cognition (*New Ideas of Truth*, pp. 197–200); Christina van Dyke has argued convincingly against this view (‘An Aristotelian Theory of Divine Illumination’, pp. 693–69).

positions suggests several things: first, that his writings show a powerful unity, and that this unity is more than just metaphorical or imagistic.²² It also shows that texts such as the anecdote with which I began this chapter (which is at least characteristic of the historical Grosseteste, even if its authenticity is uncertain) can be plausibly read with reference to these ideas.²³ In fact, Grosseteste's willingness to apply his philosophical and theological ideas to everyday situations is demonstrated in a number of clearly authentic texts. During his episcopate, Grosseteste directed his archdeacons to prohibit 'drunken parties', explaining 'how they deformed the image of God in man by taking away the use of reason, by inhibiting physical activity, inducing morbid passions, shortening life, and leading to apostasy and other evils.'²⁴ Importantly, Grosseteste does not simply enumerate the negative consequences of drunkenness. The mention of the *imago Dei* here suggests the same exemplarism we find in Grosseteste's philosophical and theological works.²⁵ As Southern notes:

his attack on popular behaviour was chiefly remarkable for his knowledge of popular goings-on, and his readiness to bring up very big generalities and statements of principle in denouncing minor disorders.²⁶

We also see traces of exemplarism in Grosseteste's *Notus in Iudea Deus*, a text that seems to represent the confessional formula used personally by Grosseteste and his household.²⁷

²² The absence of clearly articulated links between these areas of Grosseteste's thought is, in my view, insufficient reason to reject the possibility of their being connected (as Marrone does).

²³ On the authenticity of the anecdote, see note 4 above.

²⁴ R.W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of An English Mind in Medieval Europe* (2nd edn, Oxford, 1992), p. 261. For the original texts see F.M. Powicke and C.R. Cheney, *Councils and Synods, with Other Documents Relating to the English Church*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1964), I:201–05, 479–80.

²⁵ See, for instance, *De veritate*, in Baur (ed.), *Die Werke*, p. 136, for a description of man as 'similitudo et imago dei'.

²⁶ Southern, *Robert Grosseteste*, p. 261.

²⁷ Joseph Goering and F. A. C. Mantello, 'Notus in Iudea Deus: Robert Grosseteste's Confessional Formula in Lambeth Palace MS 499', *Viator* 18 (1987), 253–73, and particularly p. 257 for the argument that the text was a personal production, designed to be used in Grosseteste's household by him and his *familia*.

Aliud ore dicebam et alius corde uolebam, et ita sub ouina pelle uulpinam
conscienciam abscondebam.

[I would speak one thing while intending another, hiding a fox's conscience in
sheep's clothing.]²⁸

The apparently virtuous words spoken by the false penitent are not genuine expressions of the virtue that they claim to denote, because the idea that they refer to is not virtuous, but sinful. We might easily see echoes of the *Lanercost* anecdote in this formulation. It betrays an exemplaristic understanding of dissimulation: sin is a perversion of God's image in man. This is a persistent rhetorical topos (though I am suggesting it is much more than rhetorical) in Grosseteste's writings. As he notes in the *Hexaemeron*, quoting Boethius approvingly, 'Our behaviour and the reason of our whole life are formed after the exemplar of heaven.'²⁹ To disregard this exemplar is sinful, and results in the spiritual deformation of the person. Two further examples will suffice to demonstrate the absolute ubiquity of this mode of thought. In a letter written 'perhaps between 1232 and 1234' Grosseteste rebukes 'an unnamed master of theology' for his rumoured sexual immorality:³⁰

A corpore ... Christi te sejunxit lubrica et putrida labes luxuriae, et antiqui hostis corpori adunavit. ... tu es cleri spectabilis macula; theologorum ignominiosa verecundia; inimicis theologiae gaudium et laetitia; totius plebis derisio, canticum, et fabula.³¹

28 Text and translation from *ibid.*, p. 267 and p. 255 respectively.

29 *Hexaemeron*, ed. Richard C. Dales and Servus Gieben (Oxford, 1982), V.xix.1: 'Mores nostrit et tocius vite racio, ad celestis ordinis exemplar formantur'; English text from *Robert Grosseteste: On the Six Days of Creation*, trans. C.F.J. Martin (Oxford, 1996), p. 179. Grosseteste is quoting the *De consolatione philosophiae* I, prosa 4, for which see Boethius, *De consolatione philosophiae; Opuscula theologica*, ed. Claudio Moreschini (rev. ed., Munich, 2005).

30 *The Letters of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln 1235–1253*, trans. F.A.C. Mantello and Joseph Goering (Toronto, 2010), p. 80.

31 *Roberti Grosseteste quondam episcopi Lincolniensis epistolae*, ed. H. Luard (London, 1861), p. 48.

[The dangerous and putrid infection of lewdness has cut you off from the body of Christ and made you one with the body of the old enemy. . . . You are a visible blemish on the clergy, a disgraceful insult to theologians, a joy and a delight to the enemies of theology, a laughing stock, a song, and a tale to all the people.]³²

In the same way that drunkenness deforms a person's expression of God's image, the cleric's lechery deforms his reputation to such an extent that he is only suitable to be the subject of a bawdy song or a vulgar tale; Christ is no longer his exemplar. The same image occurs in Grosseteste's famous invective against papal corruption, addressed to the papal curia at Lyons in 1250:

The most prodigious fact in the world is the perversion of Christ's representative on earth acting contrary to Christ in his principal operations. The papal see . . . the sun of the whole world . . . which should, like the sun, give light, life, nutrition, growth, preservation and beauty to the earth, has lost its proper functions, its *rationes causales*, the reason for its existence. It has been perverted and it has become a source of perdition and destruction. He who bears the *persona* of Christ has divested himself of this *persona* and taken that of his earthly relatives and of his own flesh and blood.³³

Again, the pope's sin consists in his lack of conformity to Christ, his exemplar. In all of these texts, Grosseteste demonstrates an unwillingness to separate abstract concepts or principles from their practical applications or physical manifestations — a tendency which is entirely consistent with his exemplaristic Neoplatonism. Indeed, as the preceding pages clearly show, Grosseteste's thought shows a remarkable imagistic consistency. Furthermore, this mode of thought has profound implications for Grosseteste's understanding of the moral status of creation. Grosseteste's rejection of the *contemptus mundi* tradition extends, as I hope to show, to a reassessment of the ethical value of the created world.

32 Mantello and Goering (trans.) *The Letters*, p. 80.

33 Southern's translation (*Robert Grosseteste*, p. 280), quoting Servus Gieben, 'Robert Grosseteste at the Papal Curia, Lyons: Edition of the Documents', *Collectanea Franciscana* 41 (1971), 340–93 (at pp. 359–63).

* * *

The purpose of this chapter is to read Grosseteste's neglected vernacular masterpiece in the intellectual context set out above, and in doing so, to demonstrate the intellectual choices that determine some of its formal and stylistic features.³⁴ *Le Chateau d'Amour* is an insular French poem of roughly 900 octosyllabic couplets; beyond this, it is difficult to characterize. Its generic affiliations, inscribed audience, and purpose are all matters of uncertainty. As I argue below, many of these difficult areas are elucidated by a reading of the poem that situates itself in Grosseteste's intellectual landscape.

The *Chateau* has often been characterized as a text of basic religious instruction; in McEvoy's phrase, a 'popularization of theology'; in Southern's, 'the fullest expression of [Grosseteste's] pastoral theology for a popular audience'.³⁵ These characterizations make an implicit statement about the audience of the *Chateau*, despite the fact that we do not know precisely what that audience was. The poem makes a basic statement of its own intended audience, but this description rules out only the Latin-literate:

34 The bias against detailed considerations of Grosseteste's vernacular works is an institutional one that reflects the disciplines of the principal shapers of the tradition: philosophers and theologians (Daniel Callus, James Ginther, James McEvoy), and medieval Latinists (Joseph Goering, Richard C. Dales, F.A.C. Mantello). The centrally important contribution of the historian R.W. Southern also neglects the vernacular works — only five pages of his monograph (*Robert Grosseteste*, pp. 225–30) are given over to discussion of the *Chateau*, for example. Of course, the distinction I draw between Grosseteste's Latin and Anglo-Norman writings is in some senses an arbitrary one; for instance, the Latin treatise *Templum Dei* has more in common with his Anglo-Norman pastoral works than with a work such as the *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics*, and that his two extant Latin works on courtesy have more in common with the Anglo-Norman *Rules for Household and Estate Management* than with any other of his surviving works.

35 McEvoy, *Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 25; Southern, *Robert Grosseteste*, p. 225. 'Pastoral theology' is a problematic term, because it can mean theology written for clerical instruction on the subject of ministry, or theology written for the instruction of the laity. The *Chateau* is not obviously either of those things, and should not, in the present state of knowledge, be referred to as such. Southern is not alone in using the term; other examples include Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "'Our Steward, Saint Jerome": Theology and the Anglo-Norman Household', in *Household, Women, and Christianities in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne and Anneke Mulder-Bakker (Turnhout, 2005), pp. 133–65 (at p. 148); and James McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford, 2000), p. 153.

En romanz comence ma reson
 por ceus ke ne sevent mie
 ne lettrure ne clergie. (Chasteau, ll. 26–28)³⁶

[I begin my work in *romanz* for the sake of those who do not have Latin learning.]

However, it is likely that not all of the text's eventual users matched even this description: medieval library catalogues show that several religious houses owned copies of the *Chasteau*.³⁷ It is highly likely that the poem was read and used by *litterati* at some point during its textual afterlife. This speculation is supported by some of the surviving copies: two manuscripts of the *Chasteau* contain extensive marginal annotation in Latin,³⁸ and twelve have a substantial Latin prologue.³⁹ Some of the text's users therefore had at least basic Latinity; the fact that a set of established marginal additions seems to have circulated with the poem suggests that some of these accretions may, at times, have been taken as integral parts of the text.⁴⁰ The frequent presence of paratextual elements such as rubrics and marginalia suggests that the text may have been used as a resource for teaching.⁴¹ It is plausible to suggest that these manuscripts imply a reception-context in which clerics used the *Chasteau* as teaching resource. However, the content of the poem creates significant

36 Text from Evelyn Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*: A Text in Context' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 2002), pp. 90–191.

37 Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', pp. 17–23.

38 This fascinating example of Latin explanatory glosses on a French text has important implications for traditional views on the functions and registers of the three languages of late-medieval England. The MSS are Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France MS fr. 902, whose annotator writes 'extensive' marginal notes, 'showing meticulous analysis of the content of the poem and the allusions in it'; and Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 132, whose notes 'echo those in [BNF fr. 902]' (Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amour*', p. 15). The text of these annotations is recorded in the scholarly apparatus to Mackie's edition.

39 Ibid, p. 10, for a list of the manuscripts; pp. 192–93 for an edition of the text.

40 It is nevertheless important not to conflate this basic knowledge of Latin (which was relatively common) with clerical literacy: see M.T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, (3rd edition, Malden, MA, 2013), pp. 332–33.

41 Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', p. 14.

difficulties for understanding the nature of this instruction and proposing a plausible audience for it.

The *Chasteau* is a deliberately sophisticated text. As the following example shows, Grosseteste did not hesitate to introduce complex theological concepts into his poem without explanation:

Mult est nature enbelie
 quant Nature naturante
 a nature est joygnante
 kant nature est naturée. (Chasteau, ll. 870–73)

[Nature was greatly enhanced when God ('naturing Nature') joined with nature so that nature was perfected. ('natured')]⁴²

These 'surprisingly technical' terms refer to the distinction between *natura naturans* ('Nature as First Cause') and *natura naturata* ('Nature as that which was caused').⁴³

Significantly, the terms are not explained in the surrounding text, even though they would clearly be nonsensical to anyone not previously acquainted with the terminology.⁴⁴

Southern claims that Grosseteste makes no deliberate attempt to explain 'theological concepts on the fringe of eccentricity' here, but rather that these ideas 'flowed irresistibly into his poetry of popular instruction', thus demonstrating 'how difficult he found it to

42 Translation from Evelyn Mackie, 'Robert Grosseteste's Anglo-Norman Treatise on the Loss and Restoration of Creation, Commonly known as *Le Chateau d'Amour*: An English Prose Translation', in *Robert Grosseteste and the Beginnings of a British Theological Tradition*, ed. Maura O'Carroll (Rome, 2003), pp. 151–79.

43 Southern, *Robert Grosseteste*, p. 228. As Southern notes, the term 'natura naturans' appears to be derived from Aristotle's *Physics* (upon which, incidentally, Grosseteste wrote a commentary: see Thomson, *The Writings*, p. 82), and the term 'natura naturata' may be derived from Averroes. Grosseteste appears to have been one of the earliest Latin philosophers to employ the distinction (ibid., p. 228n). See further H. Siebeck, 'Über die Entstehung der Termin *natura naturans* und *natura naturata*', *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 3 (1890), 370–78; and H. A. Lucks, '*Natura naturans* — *Natura naturata*', *New Scholasticism* 9 (1935), 1–24. As Lucks notes (p. 2), Bonaventure found it necessary to explain the *naturans/naturata* distinction in his commentary on the *Sentences*; we can safely discount the possibility that the terminology had enough currency to be readily comprehensible.

44 Southern, *Robert Grosseteste*, p. 227.

separate the various parts of his mind'.⁴⁵ The *contra* to this assumption that Grosseteste found such a separation desirable can be found in the very opening lines of the poem:

Ky bien pense, bien poet dire.
 Sanz bien penser ne poet suffire
 de nul bien fait comencer.
 Deu nus doint de lui penser,
 de ki par ky en ky sunt
 trestuz les biens ke sunt el mund. (*Chasteau*, ll. 1–6)

[Whoever thinks well, can speak well. Without thinking well, one cannot be adequate for the task of beginning anything well. God gives us the ability to think of him, of whom and by whom and in whom are all of the good things in the world.]

For Grosseteste, goodness requires intellection, and any intellectual endeavour must have knowledge of God as its objective. These lines make it difficult for us to imagine the poem's more difficult moments as unexplained jargon. We must imagine the *Chasteau* in a reception-context in which these lines were either understood, or could have been elucidated — especially since the *natura naturans* / *natura naturata* distinction is an important feature of the poem. The distinction reminds its reader that nature contains vestiges of God's creative power; as Southern notes, 'it must have stirred echoes of Denys's Hierarchies and of the divine nature flowing through the Creation and drawing all things back to their source.'⁴⁶ This hierarchical understanding of the world, which insists that created realities can be read as *vestigia* of their transcendent counterparts, is one of the *Chasteau*'s fundamental concepts. It is difficult to justify the argument that Grosseteste haphazardly introduced this important terminology without bothering to explain it, or without accommodating the competencies of his intended audience in some way.

Even if Grosseteste had, as Southern suggests, an uncontrollable tendency to

45 Ibid., pp. 227–28.

46 Ibid., p. 228.

pepper his poem with theological complexities, the fact that they remain unexplained suggests a great deal about the inscribed audience of the poem. Either the poem was intended for an audience who would have understood the reference (and this is a very different audience from that traditionally assumed for the poem), or it was intended to be used as part of a pedagogical programme designed to increase its audience's theological competency beyond the basic understanding that would have been expected of a truly 'popular' audience.⁴⁷ This level of proficiency would not necessarily have been expected even of an audience of clerics: Grosseteste's diocesan constitutions required only basic knowledge from his parish priests.⁴⁸ One plausible suggestion concerning the text's intended audience, which explains its theological complexity, vernacularity, and widespread institutional circulation, is that the text was written for the Oxford Franciscans, to whom Grosseteste lectured between 1230 and 1235.⁴⁹ These friars would have required advanced theological instruction, but not all of them would have been Latin-literate.⁵⁰ If the text were indeed written for the Oxford friars, this would help explain the text's clear

47 This is not to say that the lines were unproblematically understood in all of the text's reception-contexts: in fact, nearly all of the extant manuscripts transmit the nonsensical reading 'ignorante' for 'ioygnante' in line 872, and one manuscript (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS fr. 902) omits the passage entirely.

48 See Mantello and Goering (trans.) *The Letters*, p. 183: 'I exhort in the Lord and firmly charge that every shepherd of souls and each and every parish priest know the Decalogue, that is, the ten commandments of the law of Moses. These he should frequently preach and explain to the people subject to him. He should also know what the seven deadly sins are and likewise preach to the people the duty of avoiding them. He should know, moreover, at least in simple terms, the seven sacraments of the Church; and those who are priests should especially know what constitutes a true confession and the sacrament of penance, and they should repeatedly teach the laity in the vernacular tongue the form for baptizing. Every priest should also have at least a rudimentary understanding of the faith as contained in both the major and minor creeds, and in the tract called 'Whoever wishes to be saved' (*Quicumque vult*), which is recited daily in church at prime.' For the Latin text, see Luard (ed.), *Epistolae*, p. 155.

49 Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', pp. 47–57. The only other substantial suggestion regarding the text's audience is that it was written for the sons of Simon de Montfort during Grosseteste's episcopate. M. D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman in the Cloisters: The Influence of the Orders on Anglo-Norman Literature* (Edinburgh, 1950), p. 101; and *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background* (Oxford, 1963), p. 223. Southern (*Robert Grosseteste*, p. 225) suggested that the text was written for performance as a pious entertainment.

50 Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', pp. 51–52.

instructive remit and theological complexity, as well as Grosseteste's choice of language.⁵¹ It would certainly make sense for Grosseteste to have written this text for an order with which he was so closely connected.⁵²

Whatever audience we posit for the *Chasteau*, we can say confidently that it is not an intellectually flimsy text, and that it encodes an expectation that its complexities will be understood, even by readers who had not necessarily been educated in the schools. We must reconcile this apparent complexity with the text's form and style. Many of the *Chasteau*'s ideas are expressed using literary imagery drawn from romance and legal discourse. It is difficult to reconcile these features of the text if we see them (along with Evelyn Mackie) as being merely 'culturally understandable imagery'.⁵³ In fact, these stylistic elements are fundamental to the cultural and theological work performed by the poem, and must not be dismissed as mere sugar for its educational pill. The imagery of the *Chasteau* is much more than just 'culturally understandable'; it is fundamental to the poem's hierarchical vision.

Evelyn Mackie's convincing demonstration of the *Chasteau*'s indebtedness to biblical imagery means that it is no longer uncontroversial to label it a 'courtly' poem, since she couples this evidence with an assertion that previous assessments of the poem's courtliness were based on an insufficient understanding of the sources of its imagery. A

51 The text was probably written after 1230, in any case: James McEvoy (*Robert Grosseteste*, p. 151) argues that the *Chasteau* was written after *De cessatione legalium*, which can be dated firmly to after 1230 on internal evidence (Grosseteste, *De cessatione legalium*, ed. Richard C. Dales and Edward B. King [London, 1986], p. xiv). It could, of course, have been written for the Franciscans after the beginning of Grosseteste's episcopate.

52 Grosseteste's close association with the friars (on which, see McEvoy, *Robert Grosseteste*, pp. 51–61) is clear. One major example of is his extensive correspondence with the friar Adam Marsh: 'Sixty of [Marsh's] letters, the largest group in the collection, are addressed to Grosseteste. These testify to a unique association between the two men which was of much significance for the growth and organization of the Franciscan Order in England' (*The Letters of Adam Marsh*, ed. and trans. C.H. Lawrence, 2 vols [Oxford, 2006–2010], I:xviii.). Though only two of Grosseteste's letters to Marsh survive, the content of Marsh's letters shows clearly that Grosseteste was an active correspondent: as Luard notes (*Epistolae*, pp. xc–xci), internal evidence demonstrates the existence of at least fourteen other letters to Marsh.

53 Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', p. 53.

central argument of Mackie's thesis and publications is that the *Chasteau* does not attempt a *rapprochement* between courtly and religious literature.⁵⁴ It is certainly the case, as Mackie demonstrates, that the poem's description of the Castle of Love (which represents the Virgin Mary, the vessel of the Incarnation) is in many respects similar to 'the description of the new Jerusalem in the Apocalypse'.⁵⁵ The correspondences are close, and it is therefore likely that Grosseteste had this passage in mind when he wrote the allegory. However, the argument that follows from this source-identification does not stand up to close examination. However much the castle depicted in the second allegory might depend on scriptural sources, it is still recognisably a medieval castle. It is immune to siege-engines (line 591), protected by a moat (ll. 585, 602), located in dangerous border countries (line 581), and it is inhabited by a king's son. It is a heavenly castle in equal measure, and this essential liminality is why it is described as being located in the marches. An attempt to identify the castle as being either a corporeal or a spiritual castle, as all previous discussions have done, misses the point. As an extremely important couplet, located at the numerical centre of the poem, has it:

natures deus, ceo est la summe:
e veray Deu e veray home. (*Chasteau*, ll. 849–50)

[two natures, that is the whole matter: both true God and true man.]

The double nature of the castle is thus centrally important to the conceptual vocabulary of the poem, since it is the vessel of the Incarnation, or in other words, the means by which spiritual Jesus takes on a carnal nature, while retaining his spiritual wholeness, in order to

54 Ibid., p. 77. For a typical view of the type rejected by Mackie, see Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature*, p. 223, where the poem is described as being fundamentally courtly, or that of Kari Sajavaara, *The Middle English Translations of Robert Grosseteste's Chateau d'Amour* (Helsinki, 1967), where it is called 'a vernacular "romance" on the Redemption' (p. 43).

55 Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', p. 77.

effect the mechanism of salvation. This section is far from the only place in which the *Chasteau* deploys non-religious imagery; Jane Zatta and Jim Rhodes have both demonstrated the poem's extensive use of legal terminology and romance topoi.⁵⁶ However, neither of their readings offers a full answer to the question of why the poem should employ this terminology, and how its affiliations with different literary modes affect its meaning and cultural function.

The *Chasteau* is generally understood to contain two principal allegorical sections: the allegory of the king and his four daughters (ll. 205–458), and the allegory of the Castle of Love (ll. 575–838).⁵⁷ In fact, this is an insufficiently nuanced approach: the terms of the allegory are introduced early on and persist throughout the poem. The text begins with the story of Adam and the loss of Paradise, and this narrative is in many ways a straightforward précis of the biblical story. No further allegory beyond that already present in the biblical source is introduced. However, as the narrative progresses, Adam's loss begins to be described in terms with specific legal significance in the field of feudal land-ownership:

Sen lui dona e saver,
 beauté, poer, e franc voler,
 de tuit le mund la seynurie
 et tuiz jurs sanz morir sa vie,
 e paraÿs en heritage
 e vivre deske icele estage

(*Chasteau*, ll. 87–92)

[He gave him understanding and knowledge, beauty, power, and free will, lordship over the whole world, and eternal life without death, and paradise as an inheritance, with the right to live in that residence.]

As Jane Zatta has shown, the *Chasteau* takes trouble to characterize Adam's possession of

⁵⁶ Jane Zatta, 'The "Romance" of the *Castle of Love*', *Chaucer Yearbook* 5 (1998), 163–185; Jim Rhodes, *Poetry Does Theology: Chaucer, Grosseteste, and the Pearl-Poet* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2001), pp. 43–71. Both of these essays were apparently unknown to Mackie.

⁵⁷ Mackie, 'Robert Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', pp. 68–70.

paradise as free tenement, ‘one of the most privileged tenurial relationships’, and one that gives its holder ‘possessory rights in the king’s court’.⁵⁸ A discussion of the two types of law (natural and positive) to which Adam was subject describes positive law as follows:

L’autre positive est nomé
 cele ke defend al home:
 Ne mangez pas de la pome
 del arbre ke vus ci veez,
 sacez si tu le mangez
 tu murrez en fin de mort
 sanz solaz e sanz confort.
 E si le comand ne passez
 la seynurie tuit avrez
 ke en paraïs est e en terre,
 tuit sanz enuiz e contrere.

(*Chateau*, ll. 118–28.)

[The other is called positive law, which commanded man thus: “Do not eat the apple from the tree that you see here; know that if you eat it you will die, without ease or comfort. And if you do not break this commandment, you will have lordship over everything in Paradise and on Earth, without any trouble or discord.”]

The first five lines of the commandment (ll. 120–24) are clearly a direct paraphrase of Genesis 2:17.⁵⁹ The last four lines, on the other hand, do not have a biblical source, and their presence seems relatively extraneous to the basic meaning of the commandment.⁶⁰ In fact, they reiterate two very similar passages (ll. 87–92, quoted above, and ll. 107–10):

Dunc ni ad si grant leësce,
 grant seynurie e grant hautesce
 por aver tel heritage,
 lui e trestuit sun lignage.

(*Chateau*, ll. 107–10)

58 Zatta, ‘The “Romance” of the *Castle of Love*’, p. 171; see also Frederick Pollock and Frederic William Maitland, *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I* (2nd edition, Cambridge, 1898), II:426.

59 ‘But of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death.’ (Douay-Rheims)

60 On the typically Grossetestean distinction between natural and positive law, see Dales and King (eds), *De cessatione legalium* I.v.1–6.

[There could not be any such great joy, such great lordship and honour as that of possessing such an inheritance, for Adam and all his descendants.]

The repetition of these terms suggests that this parallelism is an important part of the poem's function. The text appears to foreground an understanding of Adam's lordship with reference to the terms of feudal landholding. Adam and his descendants are granted Paradise as a perpetually heritable fief, but their rights over it are conditional on their observance of the laws of the land. The story of the Fall that follows the above passages likewise makes heavy use of the lexicon of feudal land-ownership. Adam's sin causes God to judge him, and to punish him and his descendants by disinheriting them perpetually.⁶¹ As Zatta notes, this descent into servitude removes Adam's right to plead his case in the king's court, thus producing a situation that has a direct parallel in medieval English law: a serf seeking to bring a case to court must have a free kinsman plead on his behalf.⁶² Importantly, none of these quotations is drawn from the strictly allegorical sections of the poem; the poem does not insulate itself against understanding the 'real' Adam in feudal terms.

Adam's disinheritance produces a paradox, and this paradox finds an elegant and easily comprehensible expression through the lexicon chosen by Grosseteste. Adam must find someone with the following contradictory characteristics:

ke seit de franche natiun
 ke por lui moustre sa resun
 por clamer sun eritage;
 e k'il seyt de sun lignage,
 issi k'il seyt vereis home

61 This theme is also developed in Grosseteste's sermon *Ex rerum initiarum*, which was probably written after the *Chasteau* in c. 1240: see Servus Gieben, 'Robert Grosseteste on Preaching: With the Edition of the Sermon *Ex rerum initiarum* on the Redemption', *Collectanea Franciscana* 37 (1967), 100–41 (esp. pp. 123–25).

62 Zatta, 'The "Romance" of the *Castle of Love*', p. 173; and Pollock and Maitland, *The History of English Law*, II:426.

ne k'il manjast de la pome.
 Sanz pechie lui estuet venir
 e tuittes les treys leys retenir,
 celes deus de paray's
 e cele del munt Synaïs
 ke a Moysen doné fu,
 e tenue unkes ne fu
 de nul ke peché feïst.

(*Chasteau*, ll. 185–97)

[... who is of free family, who can plead his case for him in order that he might claim his heritage; and who comes from his [i.e., Adam's] own lineage, so that he is truly a man — but who did not eat of the apple. He must come without sin and keep all three of the laws, the two laws of Paradise and that of Mount Sinai which was given to Moses and which was never kept by anyone who ever sinned in any way.]

We are thus presented with a situation in which an entire family has been reduced to servile status, and whose continued existence only perpetuates their servility, since Adam is the first of his kind, so all of his descendants are by definition disinherited themselves.⁶³ The poem expresses this idea with a paraphrase of Genesis 3:19: '[Adam] de joye mis est a dolor / en travail e en suor' (ll. 143–44, 'Adam was brought from joy to sorrow with work and sweat'). This biblical reference also gestures towards a convention of feudal society that a tenant who was reduced to working his own land was considered servile.⁶⁴ Adam has no hope of restoration; a member of his family must be found who has not suffered the same descent into servility, but this is manifestly impossible, since all of his descendants have suffered the same fate, and he is the first of his kind. Having set up this hopeless situation, the text adopts a coy, riddling tone in its suggestion that a solution exists:

E ki est dunke ke si cler veïst
 ke de teus homes peust penser
 e teus merville nuncier?

⁶³ Elsewhere, Grosseteste uses the metaphor of a man who has fallen into a deep pit to explain the impossibility of man's self-restoration: see Dales and King (eds), *De cessatione legalium*, I.viii.6.

⁶⁴ Pollock and Maitland, *History of English Law*, II:427: 'a prolonged performance of villein services must put a family's free status in jeopardy.'; Marc Bloch, *Feudal Society*, vol. 2: *Social Classes and Political Organization*, trans. L. A. Manyon (2nd edn, London, 1962), p. 50; and Genesis 3:17–19.

Ici reposera mun dit.
 Si vus dirray un respit
 ke bien tuche a ma matire,
 por ceo le voil issi escrivre. (Chasteau, ll. 198–204)

[And who can see so clearly that he could think of such a man and proclaim such a miracle? I will pause my tale here, and I will tell you a story that has great relevance to my subject: this is why I want to write it here.]

The clear-sighted person mentioned in the first three lines of this quotation could well be the prophet Isaiah, since his book is frequently quoted throughout the *Chasteau*.⁶⁵

However, the first reference to his book is only found later in the poem (line 511). Given that the lines quoted above come just before a direct address to the audience (line 199), it is worth examining whether they could in fact refer to the audience themselves.

As we have seen, the first section of the poem gives a chronological account of the Fall as narrated in the book of Genesis, and specifically — we might even say deliberately — avoids any mention of predestined salvation. Instead, it presents the reader or listener with the same problem presented in the opening verses of the book of Isaiah: the unavoidably sinful nature of mankind as an insurmountable obstacle to salvation.⁶⁶ By deferring its presentation of the solution, the text invites its readers to use their interpretative faculties to work towards the answer: in other words, to make a prediction regarding the future of the narrative. The prophetic resonance of the passage thus seeks to align biblical prophecy with the interpretative work performed by the reader. In the same way that the book of Isaiah prophesies the appearance of a saviour, the reader is encouraged to anticipate the resolution of the narrative. The text therefore sets up an

65 Isaiah 9:6: ‘For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace’ (Douay-Rheims). See Mackie, ‘Robert Grosseteste’s *Chasteu d’Amur*’, p. 69, where it is argued that the entire poem can be read as a commentary on this verse.

66 Isaiah 1:4: ‘Woe to the sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a wicked seed, ungracious children! They have forsaken the Lord; they have blasphemed the Holy One of Israel; they are gone away backwards’ (Douay-Rheims).

expectation that it will proceed by narrating the Incarnation — the literal answer to a question posed in figurative language. Instead, the text moves deeper into allegorical discourse with a passage that has no obvious relevance to the lines that immediately precede it:

Un reys esteit de grant poer,
de bon voler, de grant saver.
Iceu roy un fiz avoit
ke trestuit sun sen savoit. (Chateau, ll. 205–08)

[There was once a very powerful king, whose will was noble and whose wisdom was great. This king had a son who shared all of his wisdom.]

These lines would undoubtedly have suggested a generic affiliation with romance, as a comparison of this passage with the beginning of *Gui de Warewic*, probably the most widely circulated insular French romance, will show.⁶⁷ After a short conventional prologue, the narrative section of *Gui* begins as follows:

En Engleterre uns coens esteit,
En Warewic la cité maneit;
Riches ert e de grant poeir,
Cointes e sages, bon chevalier. (Gui de Warewic, ll. 27–30)⁶⁸

[In England, there was once a count. He lived in the city of Warwick. He was rich and very powerful, intelligent and wise; a good knight.]

The similarities of phrasing are striking, and it is hard to imagine that the *Chateau*'s early audiences would not have apprehended the passage's stylistic debt to romance at this point, especially since many other characteristic romance *topoi* can be found in this section of the narrative. One of the king's servants commits a crime, and is punished by being delivered

⁶⁷ Sixteen manuscripts of the poem (including fragments) survive – a figure that dwarfs that of any other Anglo-Norman romance. See Dean 154 (and for comparison 151–75).

⁶⁸ Text from *Gui de Warewic: Roman du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Alfred Ewert (Paris, 1932).

up to the king's enemies. The four daughters of the king, Mercy, Truth, Justice, and Peace, debate whether this punishment should stand. Justice and Truth win the argument, and the servant, who is no longer named Adam, despite being clearly identical with him, is placed into the servitude of the king's enemy, who attacks him constantly and mercilessly.

Because of this, Peace and Mercy cannot therefore stay in the realm, and so go into exile:

Ne Pes ni poet demorer,
 del païs l'esteut turner
 kar pes ne remeint mie
 en guerre ne en atye.
 Ne Misericorde n'est nomée,
 tuz unt le païs exilé.
 Ni ad rien ke seit remis
 ke a destrucciun ne seit mis.
 Tuz sunt malmis e neez,
 ni ad ke .viii. almes salvez,
 ceo est Noé e ces .iii. fiz.
 Iceus ke en l'arche sunt gariz
 e lur femes ke od eus sunt,
 plusni ad remis del mund. (Chateau, ll. 355–68)

[Peace could not stay; she had to leave the country because peace cannot in any sense remain in times of war or malice. Neither was Mercy's name spoken: both were exiled from the country. There was nothing that was restored, nothing that was not destroyed. Everything was destroyed and drowned. There were only eight souls saved, namely, Noah and his three sons. They were protected in the ark and their wives were with them. Nothing else in the world was saved.]

This departure may invoke the exile-and-return motif so common in medieval English romances.⁶⁹ In the *Chateau*, as in many romances and historical narratives, exile and lawlessness go together, as do peace and the return of the exile.⁷⁰ The fact that the text can

69 For a useful overview of this motif in English texts, see Rosalind Field, 'The King Over the Water: Exile-and-Return Revisited' in *Cultural Encounters in the Romance of Medieval England*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 41–53.

70 See Laura Ashe, "'Exile-and-return' and English Law: the Anglo-Saxon Inheritance of Insular Romance', *Literature Compass* 3 (2006), 300–17; and Diane Speed, 'The Construction of the Nation in Medieval English Romance', in *Readings in Medieval English Romance*, ed. Carol M. Meale (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 135–59: '[In exile-and-return narratives] the hero undergoes displacement from his home ... and his society experiences corresponding loss and diminution' (p. 146).

only be resolved by the intervention of the king's son (ll. 429–31) might be taken as another nod to romance, which characteristically associates endowed kingship (at least in continental texts) with narrative stasis and/or resolution.⁷¹ We may find further evidence of the Chasteau's affiliation with romance in its use of legal discourse since, as Susan Crane notes, English romance is characteristically preoccupied with the legal proficiency (as well as the prowess) of its heroes.⁷² In fact, the king's son presents his promised resolution in specifically legal terms.⁷³

The act of invoking these non-religious motifs and narrative structures in the middle of a text of religious instruction is clearly a charged one (as the texts studied in the preceding chapters demonstrate), but it is especially so when seen in the context of what immediately precedes it. Having suggested that a 'merveille' (line 200) capable of redeeming Adam's family could exist, the poem proceeds with the story of a king, his son and his four daughters. Just when we expect the text to retreat from its figurative language and reveal the solution to the problem that it has posed, it becomes a fully-fledged allegory. The implication is that a character in this allegorical romance is capable of reclaiming Adam's inheritance. We might expect the *moralitas* that concludes this section to explain how the characters map onto their biblical counterparts, but the poem refuses to do this directly:

71 The *locus classicus* for this idea is Chretien de Troyes' *Lancelot*, whose eponymous protagonist must rescue Arthur's queen after she is abducted: Arthur is static and powerless, and depends on the agency of his vassals to exercise his power. Similar examples can be multiplied extensively with reference to the Matter of Britain and Matter of France romances. On Chretien's Arthur as an enfeebled king, see Laura Ashe, 'The Anomalous King of Conquered England', in *Every Inch a King: Comparative Studies on Kings and Kingship in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, ed. Lynette G. Mitchell and C.P. Melville (Leiden, 2013), pp. 173–92 (esp. pp. 176–77).

72 Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith and Culture in Anglo-Norman England* (Berkeley, CA, 1986), pp. 86–87.

73 *Chasteau*, ll. 453–54: 'Sustendray le jugement / kanke a Justice apent' [I will uphold the judgement that pertains to Justice].

E cil ke cest ensample entent
 poet ver apertement
 ke iceste signifiace
 est en Deu une puissance.
 De Deu le Pere est toute riens,
 par Deu le Fiz sunt fait tuz biens,
 en Deu le Seynt Espiriz
 est tute riens acompliz;
 un Deu sanz division,
 une substance e plus non.
 Ta beneicon a trestuz dunt
 ke cest escrit entendrunt. (Chasteau, ll. 459–70)

[And whoever understands this *exemplum* can see clearly that its meaning is ‘one virtue in God’. All things are from God the Father, all good things are done by God the Son, and all things are accomplished by God the Holy Spirit; one God, undivided, a single substance and no more. May his blessing be upon all who understand this narrative.]⁷⁴

This is a surprising statement. Instead of identifying the figurative referents of the characters in the narrative, the text chooses to stress its function as a demonstration of the idea that virtues only express goodness when united in God.⁷⁵ The interpretative act demanded of the reader is one of unification, rather than allegoresis. It is not enough simply to identify the divine referents of the characters in the surface narrative, since such an identification only admits analogy or structural similarity. I would suggest that this is precisely why the text refuses to identify its figurative referents here. For Grosseteste, the Incarnation is God’s act of unification with his creation, a unification which allows creation to participate in the nature of divinity in a ways that was not possible before Christ.⁷⁶ The world in which the *Chasteau* can use figurative language to express spiritual mysteries is one in which God has been united with his creation, and in which his *vestigia*

74 The translation of ‘virtue’ for ‘puissance’ is after Evelyn Mackie, who glosses it as such on the evidence of a Latin-Anglo-Norman glossary; it is not attested with this meaning in *AND*. See ‘Robert Grosseteste’s *Chasteu d’Amur*’, p. 191.

75 We find the same emphasis in the opening lines of the poem: ‘Deu ... / de ki par ky en ki sunt / trestuz les biens ke sunt el mund.’ (‘God ... of whom, by whom and in whom are all the good things in the world.’, ll. 4–6).

76 On this, see Dales and King (eds), *De cessatione legalium* III.i.28.

can be read. In interpreting this section of the text, then, we must recognize that its figurative language is more than just ‘culturally understandable imagery’ or convenient metaphor. Instead, it is a powerful demonstration of God’s unity with the created world. The text’s affiliations with romance make perfect sense in this context, given Northrop Frye’s famous identification of the mode as a kind of ‘secular scripture’.⁷⁷ As we have seen in previous chapters, romances frequently appropriate religious discourse in order to present their own models of piety and ethics. We might reasonably imagine the *Chasteau* as a rejoinder to this appropriation by demonstrating how these literary and cultural discourses are in fact expressions of (and participations in) religious truths. I would suggest that the *Chasteau*’s use of figurative language derived from the literary and social discourses of romance and feudal law serves to demonstrate the dependence of these created realities on their spiritual exemplars.

This conception of the *Chasteau* extends to a consideration of its structure. Evelyn Mackie reads the entire poem as an extended commentary on Isaiah 9:6, but this verse is not mentioned until l. 513.⁷⁸ It is certainly a structural element of the second part of the poem, but it would be excessive to regard it as the most important one. As I will show, it can instead be demonstrated that the *Chasteau* shares a very similar overall structure with the Athanasian Creed, and that the whole text can therefore be viewed as a metaphorical explanation of the doctrines found in this text.

Grosseteste’s diocesan statutes say that every priest should have the following competencies:

at least a rudimentary understanding of the faith as contained in both the major and minor creeds, and in the tract [‘tractatus’] called ‘Whoever wishes to be saved’

⁷⁷ Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA, 1976).

⁷⁸ ‘Robert Grosseteste’s *Chasteu d’Amur*’, p. 69.

(*Quicumque vult*), which is recited daily in church at prime.⁷⁹

This *tractatus* is the Athanasian Creed, a lengthy statement of faith which I quote in abridged form:

Whoever desires to be saved must above all things hold the Catholic faith. ... Now this is the Catholic faith, that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, without either confusing the persons or dividing the substance. For the Father's person is one, the Son's another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is one, their glory is equal, their majesty co-eternal. ... And in this trinity there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are coeternal with each other and coequal. ... So he who desires to be saved should think thus of the Trinity.

It is necessary, however, to eternal salvation that he should also faithfully believe in the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the right faith is that we should believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is equally both God and man. He is God from the Father's substance, begotten before time; and he is man from his mother's substance, born in time. Perfect God, perfect man composed of a rational soul and human flesh, equal to the father in respect of his divinity, less than the father in respect of his humanity. ... Who suffered for our salvation, descended to hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sat down at the Father's right hand, whence he will come to judge living and dead: at whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies, and will render an account of their deeds; and those who have behaved well will go to eternal life, those who have behaved badly to eternal fire. This is the Catholic faith. Unless a man believes it faithfully and steadfastly, he will not be able to be saved.⁸⁰

The omitted passages are essentially expansions on their preceding statements. The creed divides naturally into two sections, the first of which treats the unity of the Trinity, and the second of which treats the Incarnation. As we have seen, the 'significance' of the *Chateau's* first allegory is to do with the unity of God; the second allegory (which describes Mary as a beautiful castle in which Jesus takes shelter) is about the Incarnation.⁸¹ Importantly, just

⁷⁹ Mantello and Goering, *The Letters*, p. 183. For the Latin text, see Luard (ed.), *Epistolae*, p. 155.

⁸⁰ Latin text in *Enchiridion symbolorum: definitionem et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum*, ed. Heinrich Denzinger and Adolf Schönmetzer, 36th edn (Barcelona, 1976), pp. 40–42. Translation from J.N.D. Kelly, *The Athanasian Creed* (London, 1964), pp. 17–20.

⁸¹ The poem engages in a lengthy description of the castle in ll. 524–824.

as in the Athanasian Creed, the *Chasteau*'s narration of the Incarnation is a starting point for a condensed narrative of salvation history. Close paraphrases of the Athanasian Creed are relatively frequent in the *Chasteau*, as Mackie's *fons fontium* shows.⁸² I would further suggest that the opening line of the poem ('Ky bien pense, bien poet dire') can be taken as a parallel to the syntactically-similar opening of the creed (especially in a literary culture where poems were so commonly referred to by their first lines).⁸³ Indeed, when the *Chasteau* is given a title it is often called *tractatus* (for instance, in the index of Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 132),⁸⁴ and although this is an extremely flexible term that could apply to many kinds of text, it is undeniably something else that the two texts have in common.

If the structure of the *Chasteau* is analogous to that of the Athanasian Creed, then we would expect its second section begin with a discussion of the dual nature of Christ, and this is indeed the case. Two arresting passages in this section treat the theological conundrum of how Jesus could be simultaneously perfect God and perfect man. The first runs as follows:

Mes cum merueille serreit
 si un home iceo avoit,
 ke de home eust tute la nature,
 sanz defaute e a mesure,

82 The analogous passages recorded in Mackie's *fons fontium* are ll. 7–20, 197, 210, 463–66, 554–56, 850, and 1491–93. Though Mackie refers to an Old French verse translation of the text (for which, see *Libri psalmodum versio antiqua Gallica*, ed. Francisque Michel [Oxford, 1860], p. 361), this text is a close enough rendering for the similarities to be applicable to the Latin text as well.

83 Though it should be noted that poems with similarly-structured opening lines are very common: see Arthur Långfors, *Les incipit des poèmes français antérieurs au XVI^e siècle* (Paris, 1917). The *Chasteau* is identified by its incipit in the medieval library catalogues of Durham Cathedral Priory ('Tractatus de gallico qui sic incipit Qui bene pense'), and in John Leland's catalogue of the collections of the London Carmelite house ('castellum amoris Roberti Grostest, gallice: Ki bien pense'); see Mackie, 'Robert Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', p. 39.

84 See P. R. Robinson, 'The "Booklet": A Self-Contained Unit in Composite Manuscripts', *Codicologica* 3 (1980), 46–69; and, for other examples from medieval library catalogues, Mackie, 'Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', p. 39.

si ke verei home feust
 ke nule defaute n'en eust,
 e puis fuist verray cheval.
 Impossible est de estre tal!
 Mais ke teux le poeit trover
 merveillus le peust clamer. (Chateau, ll. 541–50)

[But what a marvel it would be if there were such a man: one whose nature was entirely human, lacking nothing and in the correct measure; who was truly a man without deficiency, and who was also truly a horse. It is impossible for such a thing to exist! But anyone who might find such a thing could call it a marvel.]

This passage may be derived from Boethius' second commentary on Porphyry's *Isagoge*, possibly via John of Salisbury's *Metalogicon*.⁸⁵ However, Grosseteste is doing more than simply rehearsing a well-known philosophical example here. During the course of his influential discussion of universals, Boethius makes the following point about mental fictions:

If one puts and joins together by the understanding what natures does not allow to be joined, no one fails to realize that that is false. For example, if someone joins a horse and a man in imagination, and portrays a centaur.⁸⁶

The mind can produce ideas by aggregation (as in this example) or division. Boethius argues that the latter process can produce true things; for instance, the abstract idea of a line, which is true despite the fact that it cannot have corporeal existence on its own.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ These analogues were first noted by a previous editor of the *Chateau*: see *Le Chateau d'Amour de Robert Grosseteste*, ed. J. Murray (Paris, 1918), pp. 174–75.

⁸⁶ *Five Texts on the Medieval Problem of Universals*, ed. and trans. Paul V. Spade (Indianapolis, 1994), p. 23. For the Latin text, see Boethius, *In Isagogen Porphyrii commenta*, ed. Samuel Brandt (Vienna, 1906), I.11. The analogue from the *Metalogicon* may also be taken from Boethius' commentary; see John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon*, ed. J.B. Hall (Turnhout, 1991), II.xx.27–29: 'Qui enim hircoceruum cogitat aut centaurum, ignotam naturae, hominis ad bestiam, aut bestiae ad bestiam, compositionem opinatur.' ['For a man who contemplates a goat-stag or a centaur thinks of a combination of man with beast or beast with beast which is unknown to nature.'] Translation from *John of Salisbury: Metalogicon*, trans. J.B. Hall (Turnhout, 2013), p. 128. There are also possible analogues in Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae*, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford, 1911), XII.i.43, 'in Centauris equorum et hominum natura mixta est.' See also the discussion of fire in *Etymologiae* XIX.v.i.

⁸⁷ Spade, *Five Texts*, p. 24.

Aggregation, on the other hand, produces false ideas, such as the centaur. Boethius is thus denying (quite reasonably) that the human mind cannot create things by this process of aggregation. Of course, Grosseteste must agree with him, but only in the case of the *human* mind. In an exemplaristic understanding of the universe, the human mind is a pale reflection of its divine counterpart. While humans can imagine things, they cannot change the ontological status of a thing by imagining it. By contrast, God (in an analogous process) does precisely this. The Incarnation is presented as an act of the divine imagination, which can create even logically absurd things (for instance, something that is entirely man and entirely horse). These lines from the *Chasteau* thus appear to play on an example from a well-known philosophical discussion by using it as a metaphor. This is a remarkable move: as scholastic philosophy brushes up against one of the central mysteries of Christianity, and in doing so reaches its discursive periphery, it finds new impetus as a metaphorical vestige of that mystery.

We find a corresponding passage in Grosseteste's treatise *De cessatione legalium*, which, while recognizably similar to the lines from the *Chasteau* quoted above, contain some crucial differences:

Indeed, the Incarnation of the Son of God is a matter very far from the realm of the believable. For of all real possibilities, nothing is less probable than that a person be both God and man. This, considered in itself, seems less able to exist than that a person be both man and lion. For these two species, man and lion, share in many things. But divinity and humanity cannot share in something because divinity is supremely simple. It is not possible that the Creator of all share in something with a creature, because if they were to share in something, what they shared in would be created. Thence the uncreated would be the creative essence in God, and the created, the essence in a creature. Therefore, humanity and divinity, which share in nothing, are more different than humanity and lionness [*leonitas*], which share in many things. It seems less probable, therefore, that divinity and humanity, which are more different, would come together in one person, than that humanity and lionness, which are less different, would come together in one person.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ *On the Cessation of the Laws*, trans. Stephen M. Hildebrand (Washington, D.C., 2012), I.viii.18 (p. 75). For the Latin text, see Dales and King (eds), *De cessatione legalium*, p. 47.

Though the argument differs slightly in its orientation, it is clear that Grosseteste is making use of a very similar analogy here, even if we find *leonitas* where we might, on the evidence of the *Chasteau*, expect *equinitas*.⁸⁹ However, the comparison has not been recycled entirely; for whatever reason, Grosseteste appears to have tailored the content of his analogies to the text in which they are presented. Later in the *Chasteau*, Grosseteste employs another striking comparison to illustrate the idea of Christ's two natures:

Ky eust ice une espée
 bien trenchante e ascerée
 e en feu l'em la meist
 tant que ardante la feïste,
 tant come ele ardante feüst.
 Nul ne serreit ke peüst
 le feu partyr del ascer
 nel ascer del feu severer.
 E ky del espée feroit
 dous natures i trovereit
 le ascer trenche par nature,
 e le fer art e ceo est dreiture,
 e tuit de une espée ist.
 Issi est de Jhesu Crist.
 Natures dous ad pleynement,
 de Deu e de home veirement. (*Chasteau*, ll. 1233–48)

[Suppose that someone had a sword, very sharp and made of steel, and placed it in the fire until it became very hot, as hot as it could be — there is nobody who can part the fire from the steel nor sever the steel from the fire. And whoever works the sword will find two natures in it: the steel by nature cuts, and the fire burns, truly, and the whole thing is one sword. So too with Jesus Christ. He was fully possessed of two natures: true God and true man.]

This passage, too, is similar to a section in Grosseteste's *De cessatione legalium*:

⁸⁹ *Equinitas* is a famous example from Avicenna, used in an argument to the effect that natures are neither universals or particulars in themselves: see *Metaphysica*, in Avicenna, *Opera* (Venice, 1508), fol. 86v. It is (remotely) possible that Grosseteste preferred *leonitas* to avoid associating his argument with this doctrine. Alternatively (and equally remotely), *leonitas* may have been preferred in order to avoid future copyists mistaking the unusual word *equinitas* for the easily-confused reading *equitas*.

But the flesh assumed by the Word, although it cannot be adored according to its own nature, as John Damascene says, it is nevertheless adored in the incarnate Word of God not because of itself, but because of Word of God united to it in *hypostasis*. And we do not adore the flesh alone but the flesh of God, that is, God incarnate. Wood alone, for example, is not inaccessible to the touch, but united with fire, it becomes charcoal. It is inaccessible to the touch not because of itself but because it has been united with fire. It is not of the nature of wood to be inaccessible, but that of charcoal as it is wood on fire. Created flesh, therefore, that has been assumed by the Word of God, on account of the Word of God united to it in *hypostasis*, has that which can be worshipped; and the glory of being able to be worshipped incomparably exceeds every created glory.⁹⁰

Both of these metaphors come (along with their arguments) from John of Damascus' *De fide orthodoxa*.⁹¹ The passage from the *De cessatione* is a close rendering of its source, and replicates the point in the same context; like Grosseteste, the Damascene uses the example of burning wood to explain why Christ's body is not to be adored in itself.⁹² The same, however, cannot be said of the passage from the *Chasteau*: the analogous metaphor in *De fide orthodoxa* is used in service of the argument regarding Christ's human and divine operations, whereas in the *Chasteau* it is used as a simple demonstration of Christ's double nature.⁹³ In *De fide orthodoxa*, this basic concept is demonstrated several chapters earlier

90 Hildebrand (trans.), *On the Cessation of the Laws* III.i.8 (p. 157); Latin text in Dales and King (eds), *De cessatione legalium*, pp. 121–22.

91 See *John of Damascus: Writings*, trans. Frederic H. Chase, Jr. (Washington, D. C., 1958), pp. 165–406. We know that Grosseteste had a close acquaintance with John's writings, since he translated a number of his works (including *De fide orthodoxa*): see Thomson, *The Writings*, pp. 45–51; Meridel Holland, 'An Edition of Three Unpublished Translations by Robert Grosseteste of Three Short Works by John of Damascus', (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1980); and 'Robert Grosseteste's Translations of John of Damascus', *Bodleian Library Record* 11 (1983), 138–54. Grosseteste also revised Burgundio of Pisa's translation of *De fide orthodoxa* with reference to a Greek text; on this, see E. Hocedez, 'Les trois premières traductions du *De Orthodoxa Fide*', *Le Musée Belge* 17 (1913), 109–23; McEvoy, *Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste*, p. 76; and Irena Backus, 'John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*: Translations by Burgundio (1153/4), Grosseteste (1235–40) and Lefèvre d'Étaples (1507)', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 49 (1986), 211–17.

92 Chase (trans.), *Writings*, p. 285: 'Yet we do not worship the creature, because we do not adore it as a mere body, but as being one with the divinity, because His two natures belong to the one Person and the one subsistence of the Word of God. I am afraid to touch the burning coal because of the fire which is combined with the wood.'

93 *Ibid.*, p. 308: 'just as the natures of both the fire and the steel are preserved intact in the red-hot knife, so also are there two operations and their effects. For, while the steel has its cutting power, the fire has its power of burning; and the cut is the effect of the operation of the steel, while the burn is that of the operation of the fire'. Chase's 'knife' is an acceptable rendering of the Greek μάχαιρα (short sword, knife; see PG 94, cols 1053–54) and the Latin *gladius* (a short sword); we know that Grosseteste's *espée*

with the image of the coal, which unites the natures of wood and fire.⁹⁴ Grosseteste has therefore apparently chosen to deploy the image of the sword in preference to the image of the coal.

It is clear from the preceding discussion that Grosseteste's choice of metaphors in the *Chasteau* is far from haphazard. When read against its source, the Boethian horse-metaphor demonstrates the limits of philosophical investigation, and suggests that images have the power to bring us to an understanding of otherwise-inaccessible mysteries.⁹⁵ Though a similar function cannot be discerned in the sword-metaphor, we can say that it seems to have been chosen carefully, and probably in preference to a more obvious alternative. I want to suggest at this point that we can also understand these metaphors in the context of Grosseteste's use of romance imagery in the *Chasteau*, since they both refer to familiar (indeed, centrally important) objects in the iconography of knighthood. After all, in the metaphorical argument of the *Chasteau*, Christ is a knight — which, for Grosseteste, we must remember, is the same as saying that knights participate in the nature of Christ — and the allegory chosen by Grosseteste to narrate the Incarnation clearly shows the influence of romance. It can therefore be argued that the sword-metaphor and the horse-metaphor may have been selected because of their imagistic suitability.

Would the *Chasteau*'s horse-man have been understood as a knight? I will suggest that this could well have been the case. As Richard Kaeuper has shown, medieval writing

is a rendering of *gladius*, because this is the word he uses in his (as yet unedited) translation of the *De fide orthodoxa*: see Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale MS lat. 2155, fol. 138r.

94 Chase (trans.), *Writings*, p. 278: 'as an example of things that are united, there are two natures in a coal — that of fire, I mean, and that of wood; or these may be divided, because the nature of fire is one thing and that of wood another. And these are not united or divided by their number but in some other manner. And so, just as it is impossible to say that the three Persons are one Person, even though they are united, without bringing about any confusion or suppression of the difference, so it is impossible to say that the two hypostatically united natures of Christ are one nature without our bringing about suppression, confusion, or annihilation of their difference.'

95 For a similar exploration of the potential for reading philosophical narratives as literary texts, see the exciting contribution of Virginie Greene, *Logical Fictions in Medieval Literature and Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2014).

(imaginative or historical alike) habitually insists on the indispensability of the knight's horse; moreover, this insistence persists despite the fact that knights conducted much of the business of warfare on foot.⁹⁶ The ever-present horse is therefore an ideological presence in these texts, not an earnest attempt to reflect practice; it is an indicator of social status that elevates the knight 'literally above commoners'.⁹⁷ The horse is also a technological enhancement of the knight's body which, as Susan Crane has shown, invites an understanding of the knight as cyborg.⁹⁸ The economic status of the chivalric order allows its members to purchase additional bodies that make them faster and more powerful. This fact makes a powerful link between socioeconomic status and (literally) superhuman physical power: a horseman is more than just a man.

As I demonstrated above, the *Chasteau's* horse-metaphor reorientates Boethius' argument that assemblages produced by mental aggregation do not exist in order to show, by contrast, that the divine mind has the power to produce such assemblages, even if they seem logically absurd. Though Boethius, John of Salisbury and Isidore conceptualize the assemblage of man and horse as a monstrous centaur, a closer analogy with the *Chasteau's* image of Christ as divine assemblage is produced by identifying its horse-man as a knight.⁹⁹ If horse ownership is indeed fundamental to a knight's performance of identity, then we can say that a knight *is* his horse, since his ability to be identified as knight depends on his possession of a horse. In a similar way, Christ's identity is defined by his two natures: the possibility of his being identified as the second person of the Trinity

96 Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 172–75.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 175; see also Susan Crane, *Animal Encounters: Contacts and Concepts in Medieval Britain* (Philadelphia, 2012), p. 141.

98 *Ibid.*, pp. 138–39 and pp. 145–47. Also see Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Medieval Identity Machines* (Minneapolis, 2003), pp. 35–77 (esp. p. 76). Crane and Cohen both draw on the theoretical model of Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, 1991).

99 On the idea of Christ as *mixtura* of natures, see Robert Mills, 'Jesus as Monster' in *The Monstrous Middle Ages*, ed. Bettina Bildhauer and Robert Mills (Cardiff, 2003), pp. 28–54.

depends on his assumption of human nature. As we have seen, a knight's horse ennoble him; it is also the case that the horse of the metaphor, which represents the divine nature of Christ, ennoble the fleshly nature which it takes on.

The *Chasteau* is not the only text which portrays a mounted warrior as the union of two substances, one spiritual and the other physical. One such text, the widely circulated pseudo-Anselmian *Similitudo militis*, exhibits a number of telling differences from the *Chasteau*, and as such makes for a useful comparison.¹⁰⁰ The text is part of a work known as *De similitudinibus*, which circulated exclusively under Anselm's name in the Middle Ages.¹⁰¹ We know that Grosseteste read *De similitudinibus*; it is therefore likely that he had read the *Similitudo militis*.¹⁰² The basic demonstration of the text is as follows:

Sicut miles temporalis armis munitus est temporalibus, sic miles spiritualis debet armis munitus esse spiritualibus.¹⁰³

[Just as the temporal knight is protected with temporal arms, so too must the spiritual knight be protected by spiritual arms.]

The text proceeds by identifying a piece of military equipment and assigning it a spiritual analogue. Importantly, the knight's horse in this text is analogous to the body of the spiritual warrior, and the warrior (which represents the *homo interior*) does not ride his

100 Text from *Memorials of St. Anselm*, ed. R.W. Southern and F.S. Schmitt (Oxford, 1969), pp. 97–102. For critical accounts of the text, see David Crouch, *The Image of the Aristocracy in Britain, 1000–1300* (London and New York, 1992), p. 101; Katherine Allen Smith, *War and the Making of Medieval Monastic Culture* (Woodbridge, 2011), pp. 120–21; and Michael Evans, 'An Illustrated Fragment of Peraldus's *Summa* of Vice: Harleian MS 3244', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 45 (1982), 14–68 (at p. 20). Similar texts exist: for some examples, see *ibid.*, Kaueper, *Holy Warriors*, pp. 1–5; and the *Tretyse of Gostly Batayle* in *Yorkshire Writers*, ed. Carl Horstmann, 2 vols (London, 1895–1896), II:421–36.

101 The text may have been written by a reporter, or by Anselm himself, though neither view is perfectly compelling (Southern and Schmitt [eds], *Memorials*, p. 7).

102 See P. W. Rosemann, 'Robert Grosseteste's *Tabula*', in *Robert Grosseteste: New Perspectives on His Thought and Scholarship*, ed. James McEvoy (Turnhout, 1995), pp. 321–56 (at p. 346); and on Grosseteste and Anselm more generally, Margaret Healy-Varley, 'Anselm's Fictions and the Literary Afterlife of the *Proslogion*' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 2011), pp. 111–67.

103 Southern and Schmitt (eds), *Memorials*, p. 97.

horse, but goes into battle on foot.¹⁰⁴ Allegories of this kind were common throughout the Middle Ages, and nearly all of them understand the horse in these carnal terms.¹⁰⁵ The horse as body is prone to rebellion, and must be restrained by its rider, who may use figurative equipment like the bridle of the *Similitudo militis*, which represents abstinence.¹⁰⁶ These chivalric allegories all have their ultimate source in St Paul's 'symbolic vocabulary of spiritual combat', as Katherine Allen Smith has shown.¹⁰⁷ However, the image found in the *Chasteau* stands apart from nearly all of the other extant examples of this allegory because it inverts horse and man.¹⁰⁸ Instead of being a figure for the rebellious, sinful body, the horse becomes a figure for Christ's divine nature, and the man a figure for sinful humanity in general. For Grosseteste, Christ has to be a horse, because the image would not have been worked in reverse: the literary history of the *miles Christi* allegory (and perhaps as importantly, the literary resonances of horses in general)¹⁰⁹ depends too heavily on conceptualizing the horse as sinful flesh. Grosseteste thus engages in an ennoblement of the horse as figurative image. This runs against a wider tendency of medieval religious writing to engage in what Susan Crane has called a 'devaluation' of the metaphorical horse.¹¹⁰ Crane argues for a 'chivalric counter-tradition' of positive horse-

104 Smith, *Making of Monastic Culture*, p. 121.

105 See for, instance, Crane, *Animal Encounters*, p. 141, for a quotation from Gregory's *Moralia in Job* (XXXI.27; text in PL 76, col. 588) to this effect.

106 Southern and Schmitt (eds), *Memorials*, p. 99: 'Frenus autem, quo huiusmodi equus regitur, abstinentia dicitur.'

107 Smith, *Making of Monastic Culture*, p. 18; see also Rosemary Woolf, 'The Theme of Christ the Lover-Knight in Medieval English Literature', *RES* n.s. 13 (1962), 1–16 (p. 11). An important verse for this tradition is Ephesians 6:11: 'Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil' (Douay-Rheims).

108 The only other reversal of this image that I have found is in Henri d'Andeli's *Lai d'Aristote*, which concludes with the well-known image of Phyllis (desire) riding Aristotle (reason); see V.A. Kolve, *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative: The First Five Canterbury Tales* (Stanford, CA, 1984), p. 247.

109 See *ibid.*, pp. 217–56; and Crane, *Animal Encounters*, pp. 137–68.

110 Crane, *Animal Encounters*, p. 141.

metaphors; while this claim is compelling, the *Chasteau* is evidence that religious writing was also capable of working against the normative metaphorical associations of horses.¹¹¹ However, where chivalric texts seek to recuperate the horse in order to argue for the virtue of the knights that they depict, Grosseteste recuperates the horse in order to allow the knight to function unproblematically as a figure of Christ.¹¹²

The *Chasteau*'s metaphor of the red-hot sword also resonates with the ideas discussed above.¹¹³ The sword is, of course, the one of the characteristic weapons of the warrior aristocracy, and the most important symbol of secular power and governance in the Middle Ages. The *gladius materialis* (as it was known) stood for secular power, and the *gladius spiritualis* for ecclesiastical power.¹¹⁴ Since the *espée* of the *Chasteau* is similar to these *gladii* in the sense that it has both material and spiritual identities, it is worth exploring the possibility that the images are related.¹¹⁵ Grosseteste employs the *gladius materialis/spiritualis* distinction in a letter to William Raleigh which argues against the practice of disinheriting children born out of wedlock:

The princes of this world ought also to know that both swords, that is, the material and the spiritual, belong to Peter. The spiritual sword is used by the princes of the Church, who by themselves take the part and place of Peter; but the material sword is used by the princes of the Church by the hand and ministry of secular princes, who are obliged to draw and sheathe the sword they carry at the prompting and

111 Ibid.

112 The fact that Grosseteste could have chosen (on the evidence of the *De cessatione*) to employ the image of the lion, the king of the bestiaris, to figure Christ's divine nature is further evidence for this point.

113 The image may be a reversal of the well known story of the monk who meets the ghost of his dead brother, a knight whose arms are red-hot, causing him agony in death: see *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall (Oxford, 1969–1980), IV:246–49.

114 The image derives ultimately from Luke 22:38: 'But they said: "Lord, behold: here are two swords."' (Douay-Rheims); on the *gladii*, see Gerhard B. Ladner, 'The Concepts of "Ecclesia" and "Christianitas" and Their Relation to the Idea of Papal "Plenitudo Potestatis" from Gregory VII to Boniface VIII', in his *Images and Ideas in the Middle Ages: Selected Studies in History and Art*, 2 vols (Rome, 1983), II:496–97.

115 It is also worth recalling that the *Chasteau*'s *espée* demonstrably translates the *gladius* of the *De fide orthodoxa*: see note 91 above.

command of the princes of the Church.¹¹⁶

For Grosseteste, as for many people throughout the Middle Ages, both swords are expressions of the same divine power, though the material sword must be a fainter reflection than the spiritual, because it is one step further from God. Though I do not wish to claim that the *Chasteau* deliberately encourages its reader to understand the two-natured sword with reference to these *gladii*, it is at least clear that the metaphor resonates strongly with ideas of secular governance and aristocratic power. And since aristocratic power maps directly onto divine power in the allegorical scheme of the poem, the resonance is an appropriate one. The sword serves to remind us that we are in a poem that uses the knight as a figure for Christ, and that the metaphorical Christ's aristocratic power represents the literal Christ's divine power. In doing this, it reinforces Grosseteste's firm conviction that created things, including secular institutional structures, exist in hierarchical relation with their spiritual exemplars. We might go so far as to say that the entire *Chasteau* works to demonstrate this Neoplatonic model of created reality.

* * *

As the preceding discussion demonstrates, Christ's knightly identity in the *Chasteau* is of central importance to the poem's ideology.¹¹⁷ At the time of the poem's composition, English knighthood was undergoing a fundamental change. Where it had previously been a largely *de facto* designation, in the first half of the thirteenth century it became a rank that indicated particularly high social and economic status, a change which came with a drastic

¹¹⁶ Mantello and Goering, *The Letters*, p. 120. For the Latin text, see *Epistolae*, ed. Luard, pp. 91–92.

¹¹⁷ The image of the *miles Christi* and, more broadly, of the spiritual warrior is one with a long and extensive pedigree, but one which saw particularly heavy use in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: see Smith, *Making of Monastic Culture*, pp. 71–111 and *passim*.

decrease in the number of families with knightly status.¹¹⁸ It could be reasonably suggested that the symbolic cachet of knighthood was particularly high at the time of the *Chasteau*'s composition, and that this might have affected Grosseteste's choice to make use of the iconography of knighthood in the poem. Certainly, knighthood was becoming an object of popular literary fascination around this time, as courtly romance diffused from socially elite circles to a wider social mix,¹¹⁹ while knighthood itself became an increasingly elite rank.¹²⁰ It is also intriguing to note that a number of knights joined the Franciscan school in Oxford in the early days of the order, when Grosseteste was their lector. If the friars were indeed the text's original audience, then the previous profession of some of its members could have suggested the parallel to Grosseteste when writing the *Chasteau*.¹²¹

Given Grosseteste's clear preoccupation with intellectual consistency throughout all of his intellectual and pastoral activity, it is impossible to imagine the chivalric elements of the *Chasteau* as mere window-dressing for the poem, as I have shown above. Instead, it would be perfectly consistent with Grosseteste's character and the stylistic tendencies of his writing to imagine the *Chasteau* as encouraging its readers to think of knights (whether as literary depictions or in their lives) as types of Christ, the ideal form of that profession. This hermeneutic encouragement would have the effect of neutralizing the independent ideological tendencies of romance discussed in the previous chapter, and by doing so to colonize their signification. The *Chasteau*'s use of romance imagery deviates from

118 See Kathryn Faulkner, 'The Transformation of Knighthood in Early Thirteenth-Century England', *EHR* 111 (1996), pp. 1–23 and esp. p. 14.

119 One example is the Anglo-Norman *Romance of Horn*, which was probably written for performance at Henry II's Christmas court in 1171–72 (for which, see Judith Weiss, 'Thomas and the Earl: Literary and Historical Contexts for the *Romance of Horn*' in *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance*, ed. Rosalind Field [Cambridge, 1999], pp. 1–14), but by the mid-thirteenth century was circulating in manuscripts such as Oxford, Bodleian Library, MSS Douce 132+137, a miscellaneous collection owned by a middle-class lawyer or estate manager. On this MS, see Robinson, 'The "Booklet"'.¹²¹

120 See David Crouch, *The English Aristocracy 1070–1272: A Social Transformation* (New Haven, 2011).

121 See Mackie, 'Robert Grosseteste's *Chasteu d'Amur*', p. 51, and Thomas of Eccleston, *Tractatus de adventu fratrem minorum in Angliam*, ed. A. G. Little (Manchester, 1951), pp. 3–6.

dominant traditions of chivalric allegory by refusing to engage in implicit deprecation of the created world; in doing this, it also demonstrates its rejection of the *contemptus mundi* theme that characterizes all of the twelfth-century polemics against romance. Its figurative technique thus works to constrain romance's potential for independent ethical expression without denying that the professions of the lay order were fundamentally sinful. Though Grosseteste's conception of piety does not depend on a rejection of the material world, it does require the layperson to direct their *aspectus mentis* beyond created realities, and in doing so to attempt to recognize the spiritual exemplars that underpin them. The *Chasteau's* function, I would suggest, is to encourage precisely this kind of vision.

Chapter 4: Romance and the insular French *exemplum* after 1250

As I have argued in preceding chapters, the thirteenth century opens up new formal and ideological possibilities for the literature of religious instruction, and romance is one of the driving forces of this shift. Robert Grosseteste's *Chasteau d'Amour* interacts with profane literature in a more complex and appropriative way than twelfth-century hagiography; twelfth-century romance's insistence on inhabiting an ethical discursive space may have been an important cause of this engagement. As I show in the following chapters, the *Chasteau* is not a dead end for thirteenth-century literary history: the tendency for interaction and appropriation found in this poem can be seen in other thirteenth-century religious texts. Indeed, the *Chasteau* itself may have been an influential model for an important (though neglected) group of insular French instructional poems written during the second half of the thirteenth century. I argue below that this group of texts can be read as embodying a similar instructional project to that seen in Grosseteste's poem. Though, as will become apparent, some aspects of their relationship with Grosseteste's pastoral activity are relatively well established, this discussion makes the further claim that these texts' responses to lay exemplarity take a similar form to that seen in the *Chasteau*; in other words, that elements of Grosseteste's style and hermeneutic method may have been transmitted along with the bare mandate for pastoral care that he promoted.

It has been claimed that Grosseteste's influence on thirteenth-century theology was slight. For Richard Southern, his veneration as a theologian begins with John Wyclif and his followers in the late fourteenth century;¹ James McEvoy makes the further assertion that Grosseteste's Latin pastoral writings were neglected for the first century following his

¹ See R. W. Southern, *Robert Grosseteste: The Growth of an English Mind in Medieval Europe* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1992), pp. 296–322: 'He was never forgotten, and his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* was a commonly quoted book in the faculty of Arts; but he does not appear to have been recognized as a conspicuous or coherent influence in the major developments of the period before 1350.' (p. 297).

death.² Though recent scholarship has shifted to take greater account of Grosseteste's influence on thirteenth-century writing, further work is still required.³ In particular, there are few discussions of Grosseteste's influence on vernacular literary culture: a new map of Grosseteste's influence on literary discourses outside the medieval university, and in vernacular literatures, needs to be drawn.⁴

There is some evidence that Grosseteste was recognized as a writer of insular French devotional and confessional writing during the Middle Ages. Two manuscripts of Robert Mannyng of Brunne's *Handlyng Synne* claim that it was translated from

þe boke þat men clepyn yn frenshe Manuel Pecche þe whych boke made yn frenshe Roberd Gros-test, Bysshop o Lyncolne.⁵

While this source-identification is correct — Mannyng's poem is indeed a translation of the insular French *Manuel des Pechiez* — the attribution of the *Manuel*'s authorship to Grosseteste cannot be seriously entertained, since thirteen copies of the *Manuel* state that the text was written by a certain William Waddington, who was almost certainly the

2 McEvoy, *The Philosophy of Robert Grosseteste* (Oxford, 1982), p. 139: 'it was left to Wyclif, and later still, to Gascoigne to revive his biblical and pastoral works, which they did, but in writings that were little read.'

3 As noted in James Ginther, *Master of the Sacred Page: A Study of the Theology of Robert Grosseteste, ca. 1229/30–1235* (Aldershot, 2004), p. 192. Ginther's book itself performs some of this work by showing that Grosseteste's theology exerted an influence on Richard Rufus, Richard Fishacre, and St. Bonaventure. On Grosseteste and Bonaventure, see also Servus Gieben, 'Robert Grosseteste and Adam Marsh on Light in a Summary Attributed to St. Bonaventure, in *Aspectus et Affectus: Essays and Editions in Grosseteste and Medieval Intellectual Life in Honour of Richard C. Dales*, ed. Gunar Freibergs (New York, 1993), pp. 17–33. For recent accounts of Grosseteste's thirteenth-century influence, see several of the contributions in *Robert Grosseteste: His Thought and Impact*, ed. Jack P. Cunningham (Toronto, 2012).

4 Though see the following important exceptions: Matthias Hessenauer, 'The Impact of Grosseteste's Pastoral Care on Vernacular Religious Literature: *La Lumière as Lais* by Pierre de Peckham', in *Robert Grosseteste: New Perspectives on his Thought and Scholarship*, ed. James McEvoy (Turnhout, 1994), pp. 377–92; 'For a Larger Audience: Grosseteste's *Perambulavit Iudas* in Anglo-Norman', in Cunningham (ed.), *Grosseteste's Thought and Impact*, pp. 259–313; and *La Lumière as lais: Pierre de Peckhams Vermittlung scholastischer Theologie* (Wiesbaden, 1989).

5 Thomson, *The Writings*, p. 253f.

original author of the poem, as Matthew Sullivan has shown.⁶ Attributions of this kind are nevertheless interesting because they suggest that Grosseteste's name had a particular set of cultural associations for the people who made them. As it happens, these particular attributions do not offer good evidence for Grosseteste's thirteenth-century reputation; both manuscripts are dated to the turn of the fifteenth century and, as Ryan Perry has argued, one may have been copied directly from the other.⁷ In fact, they are fairly typical examples of an early fifteenth-century explosion of authorship ascriptions to Grosseteste. As an examination of Thomson's list of *spuria* demonstrates, no incorrect ascriptions of Latin works survive before the mid-fourteenth century, and there are relatively few before the beginning of the fifteenth century, at which point *ad auctoritatem* ascriptions become common.⁸ This change is undoubtedly due to the increased popularity enjoyed by Grosseteste's works after their 'rediscovery' by John Wyclif and others, and does not speak to an earlier cultural recognition of Grosseteste as an author of vernacular pastoralia, but as

6 Matthew Sullivan, 'The Origin and Subsequent Audiences of the *Manuel des Péchés*', unpublished D.Phil thesis (Oxford, 1990), p. 77; 'The Author of *The Manuel des Péchés*', *Notes and Queries* 236 (1991), 155–57, and 'A Brief Textual History of the *Manuel des Péchés*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 93 (1992), 337–45. Some earlier accounts suggested that the original version of the poem was anonymous: see, for instance, Emily Hope Allen, 'The *Manuel des Pechiez* and the Scholastic Prologue', *Romanic Review* 8 (1917), 434–62 (pp. 445–48).

7 See Perry's descriptions of London, British Library MS Harley 1701 for *Geographies of Orthodoxy: Mapping English Pseudo-Bonaventuran Lives of Christ, 1350–1550*, <www.qub.ac.uk/geographies-of-orthodoxy/resources/?section=manuscript&id=40>; and "'Thynk on God, as we doon, men that swynke": The Cultural Locations of the *Meditations on the Supper of Our Lord* and the Middle English Pseudo-Bonaventuran Tradition', *Speculum* 86 (2011), 419–54 (at p. 440). Perry notes in his description of Harley 1701 that his doctoral thesis, 'The Cultural Locations of *Handlyng Synne*' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen's University of Belfast, 2005), contains a much longer analysis of the relationship between these manuscripts, but I have been unable to consult it. Perry's construction of this textual relationship competes with several other accounts: Idele Sullens, in her edition of *Handlyng Synne* (Binghampton, 1983), also argued (pp. xlii–xliii and surrounding discussion) that Harley was copied from Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Bodley 415, but her construction of the textual history of the poem has been shown to be deeply problematic: see Sullivan, 'Origin and Subsequent Audiences', pp. 213 n. 1 and 216 n. 41. For an alternative model textual descendency, see Raymond G. Biggar, review of *Handlyng Synne*, ed. Idele Sullens, *Speculum* 62 (1987), 969–73, for an alternative stemma in which Bodley and Harley are copies of the same exemplar.

8 See Thomson, *The Writings of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln, 1235–53* (Cambridge, 1940), pp. 240–70. The earliest demonstrably false ascriptions in this list are from the second half of the fourteenth century. Since Thomson, at least one false thirteenth-century ascription has come to light, for which see Edward B. King, 'The *De contemptu mundi* Attributed to Grosseteste', *Speculum* 58 (1983), 724–26.

a fifteenth-century ‘magnet for attributions’.⁹ The presence of authorship attributions in three manuscripts of the *Prick of Conscience* may allow us to antedate slightly this sense of Grosseteste as vernacular *auctor*; the earliest of these (Leeds, University Library MS Brotherton 500) was written as early as the late fourteenth century.¹⁰ Though all three of the manuscripts contain texts of the same recension of the *Prick*, their lack of close textual co-dependence might suggest that they were not the earliest examples of this kind of attribution. Intriguingly, there is a further connection between the *Prick* and Grosseteste’s cultural authority: the author of the *Prick* makes extensive use of an insular French text, *Les Peines de Purgatoire*, whose Latin translation is unanimously attributed to Grosseteste in its manuscripts, even though all extant manuscripts of the insular French version are anonymous.¹¹ The earliest manuscript of the Latin translation is dated to the late fourteenth century, and there is further evidence that the translation was probably not made until some time after Grosseteste’s death.¹² Since the attribution to Grosseteste appears to be coeval with the translation, and since none of the extant Latin manuscripts is a copy of another extant text (at least according to Relihan’s stemma),¹³ the translation, and with it the attribution to Grosseteste, could substantially predate the earliest extant manuscript.¹⁴

9 Thomson, *The Writings*, p. 240. On Wyclif’s use of books belonging to Grosseteste, see Anne Hudson, ‘Wyclif and the Grosseteste Legacy at Oxford Greyfriars’, in Cunningham (ed.), *Grosseteste’s Thought and Impact*, pp. 201–16; on Wyclif’s interest in Grosseteste generally, see Beryl Smalley, ‘The Biblical Scholar’, in *Robert Grosseteste, Scholar and Bishop*, ed. Daniel A. Callus (Oxford, 1955), pp. 70–97.

10 See Robert E. Lewis and Angus McIntosh, *A Descriptive Guide to the Manuscripts of the Prick of Conscience* (Oxford, 1982), p. 3 and sigla MV24 (Brotherton 500), MV63 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Digby 14), and MV72 (Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Laud Misc. 486). The poem’s composition is usually dated to the mid-fourteenth century (p. 17).

11 See Robert J. Relihan, Jr., ‘An Edition of the Anglo-Norman and Latin Versions of *Les Peines de Purgatorie*’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Iowa, 1978), pp. 25–37.

12 The manuscript is London, Lambeth Palace Library MS 500. Relihan (ibid., p. 106–07) follows the date given in M.R. James, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Manuscripts in the Library of Lambeth Palace* (London, 1929), pp. 701–03.

13 Relihan, ‘*Peines*’, p. 165.

14 Relihan suggests (pp. 36–37) that this tendency to attribute pastoral works to Grosseteste may have begun as early as 1300, but this claim does not appear to have a strong evidentiary basis, but is rather based on an over-literal reading of Beryl Smalley’s suggestion (‘The Biblical Scholar’, p. 70) that Grosseteste’s status increased over the course of the fourteenth century (she does not necessarily mean

However, this claim must remain speculative.

In the present state of the evidence, then, we cannot make a compelling claim for a widespread cultural recognition of Grosseteste as an authoritative writer of insular French pastoral literature much before the Wycliffite ‘rediscovery’. However, this does not mean that his influence cannot be seen in thirteenth-century religious instructional literature. We can even say that the fifteenth-century scribes who attributed the *Manuel des Pechiez* to Grosseteste were correct, though in a way that they probably never recognized. As D.W. Robertson discovered, the *Manuel* bears remarkable structural similarities to one of Grosseteste’s diocesan statutes on the subject of lay education.¹⁵ This decree states that the laity should be taught various central concepts of the faith *in idiomate communi*, and its enumeration of these concepts corresponds to the structure of early versions of the *Manuel*.¹⁶ The poem, in its original form, is thus evidently an attempt to provide an instructional resource for the concepts enumerated in Grosseteste’s diocesan statutes; its composition may therefore have been prompted directly by the statutes.¹⁷ Grosseteste’s statutes were highly influential on later sets of diocesan constitutions issued by other bishops, and enjoyed wide circulation. It is therefore reasonable to suggest that their influence could have filtered into insular French (or indeed English) writing as well,

the beginning of the fourteenth century).

- 15 D.W. Robertson Jr., ‘The *Manuel des Péchés* and an English Episcopal Decree’, *MLN* 60 (1945), 439–47. The theory has held up well to Matthew Sullivan’s investigation of the *Manuel*’s textual history, whose original structure appears to have been as Robertson described (p. 440 n. 3): see ‘The Audiences of the *Manuel*’, pp. 18–21.
- 16 Robertson, ‘The *Manuel*’, pp. 439–42. For the text, see *Roberti Grosseteste episcopi quondam Lincolnensis epistolæ*, ed. H. R. Luard (London, 1861), p. 155; and *The Letters of Robert Grosseteste, Bishop of Lincoln 1235–1253*, trans. F.A.C. Mantello and Joseph Goering (Toronto, 2010), p. 183.
- 17 Though, as Andrew Taylor notes in ‘Manual to Miscellany: Stages in the Commercial Copying of Vernacular Literature in England’, *The Yearbook of English Studies* 33 (2003), 1–17 (at p. 7), the remarkably quick dissemination of the *Manuel* may have been due to the encouragement of Walter Gray, Archbishop of York, since Waddington was a member of Gray’s *familia*. For a similar argument, see Sullivan, ‘Origin and Subsequent Audiences’, pp. 117–18. These suggestions would require us to assign the *Manuel* a very slightly earlier date than what is generally accepted (c. 1260), since Gray’s episcopate ended with his death in 1255. For the suggested date of the *Manuel*, see E. J. Arnould, *Le Manuel des Péchés: Étude de littérature religieuse anglo-normande* (Paris, 1940), p. 356.

especially considering the decrees' focus on confession in the vernacular.¹⁸ Similar correspondences between Grosseteste's statutes and Pierre de Peckham's *Lumere as Lais* have also been identified.¹⁹ The *Manuel* (extant in twenty-eight copies) and the *Lumere* (twenty-one copies) seem to have been two of the most widely-circulated insular French poems of any genre: texts bearing structural similarities to the decrees were clearly an important part of insular literary culture at this time. It seems likely, then, that ecclesiastical prescriptions were in some way involved in the promulgation of vernacular texts of religious instruction during this period. It might therefore be plausibly suggested that Grosseteste's statutes were easily understood as a topical checklist governing the content and organization of instructional literature, since the *Lumere* and the *Manuel*, two culturally significant poems, appear to have used it as such. We might even speculate that the statutes were written with this in mind.

A comparison cannot easily be drawn between the topical organization of Grosseteste's statutes and Robert of Gretham's *Miroir*, the text which forms the other principal focus of this discussion, since the *Miroir* is a sermon-cycle, arranged around the liturgical year, and cannot therefore commit to the kind of topical organization seen in the *Manuel*. Notwithstanding, there are several important similarities between the *Manuel* and

18 Christopher Cheney, in the first edition of his *English Synodalia of the Thirteenth Century* (London, 1941), argued (p. 121) that Grosseteste's statutes were derived from the 1240 statutes of Walter Cantilupe, who was Bishop of Worcester between 1237 and 1266, and D. W. Robertson follows this analysis ('The *Manuel*', p. 440). However, Cheney had changed his mind by 1968, and it is now accepted that Cantilupe's statutes are derived from Grosseteste's, rather than the reverse. See Cheney, *English Synodalia of the Thirteenth Century* (1st edition reprinted with new introduction, London, 1968), pp. vi–vii. On the influence of Grosseteste's statutes generally, see *ibid.*, p. 110–11, and Andrew B. Reeves, 'Teaching the Creed and Articles of Faith in England: Lateran IV to *Ignorantia Sacerdotum*' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 2009), pp. 55–56; Guy Trudel, 'An Edition with Commentary of the *Speculum huius vitae*, a Fifteenth-Century Pastoral Manual in English' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1999), I:47–49. On the influence of these statutes, see Marion E. Gibbs and Jane Lang, *Bishops and Reform, 1215–1272* (London, 1934); Vincent Gillespie, 'The Literary Form of the Middle English Pastoral Manual with Particular Reference to the *Speculum Christiani* and Some Related Texts' (unpublished D.Phil. thesis, University of Oxford, 1981), esp. p. 19; and Helen Birkett, 'The Patorial Application of the Lateran IV Reforms in the Northern Province, 1215–1348', *Northern History* 43 (2006), 199–219.

19 Hessenauer, 'The Impact of Grosseteste's Pastoral Care', pp. 381–86.

the *Miroir* aside from their similar dates, shared substantial length, wide circulation (at times in the same manuscripts), octosyllabic verse form, and language.²⁰ Both poems share a prologue in which the author refuses to reveal his name, only to do so in the epilogue;²¹ their authors are associated with similar geographical areas;²² and, perhaps most importantly, both poems make extensive use of narrative *exempla* in order to reinforce their arguments. For vernacular poems at this time, this was an unusual choice: in fact, the *Manuel* and *Miroir* are two of the earliest extant insular French poems to make substantial use of *exempla*.²³ I will argue below that this use of non-hagiographical vernacular narrative in a text intended for religious instruction can be associated with the discourse of exemplarity discussed in the previous chapters. It has been amply demonstrated that the thirteenth century sees an explosion in the production of vernacular religious literature across Europe as a result of the decrees of the Fourth Lateran Council.²⁴ One of its unacknowledged effects in England was, as I suggest below, the provision of instructional

20 The *Manuel* is dated to around 1260 in Arnould, *Le Manuel*, p. 356. The *Miroir* is assigned a significantly earlier date in Dean 589, but a convincing argument for a date of composition between 1250 and 1260 is made in K. V. Sinclair, 'The Anglo-Norman Patrons of Robert the Chaplain and Robert of Greatham', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 27 (1992), 193–208. Both poems exist in a large number of copies: see Dean 589 (the *Miroir*; ten copies listed), and 635 (the *Manuel*; twenty-eight copies listed). Both texts are preserved together in three manuscripts: Cambridge, University Library MS Gg.1.1 (admittedly, an unsurprising coexistence, given the compendious nature of this volume); Nottingham, University Library MS Middleton LM/4; and San Marino, Huntington Library MS HM 903.

21 Allen, 'Scholastic Prologue', p. 452.

22 Sinclair argues ('Anglo-Norman Patrons', pp. 204–05) that Robert of Greatham was an Augustinian canon either at Lilleshall in Shropshire, which held the advowson of the church in Ashby-de-la-Zouch in Leicestershire (Lincoln diocese), where Robert's likely patrons held lands; or in Northamptonshire (Lincoln diocese). Waddington worked in York diocese, as we have seen (note 17 above).

23 Two examples of earlier insular French texts, the twelfth-century translation of the *Vitas patrum* and Angier's early thirteenth-century translation of Gregory's *Dialogues*, both closely associated with the regular clergy, are discussed below.

24 For the text of the Lateran decrees, see H. J. Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees of the General Councils: Text, Translation and Commentary* (St Louis, MI, 1937), pp. 236–96; for important accounts of their scope, meaning, and diffusion, see Raymond Foreville, *Latran I, II, III, et Latran IV* (Paris, 1965); Alexander Murray, 'Confession as an Historical Source in the Thirteenth Century', in *The Writing of History in the Middle Ages: Essays Presented to R.W. Southern*, ed. R.H.C. Davis and J.M. Wallace-Hadrill (Oxford, 1981), pp. 275–322; and *Handling Sin: Confession in the Middle Ages*, ed. Peter Biller and Alastair Minnis (York, 1998).

literature that engages with the discourse surrounding romance and exemplarity discussed in the previous chapters. I will argue that Waddington's *Manuel* and Gretham's *Miroir*, both of which make extensive use of vernacular *exempla*, give these narratives a function which is discernibly different from that of their Latin (and Latinate) predecessors and contemporaries; this difference, in my view, consists in their provision of models of exemplarity that engage closely with those found in profane literary genres.

The Latin *exemplum* is a literary form with a long history.²⁵ As Larry Scanlon has shown, its earliest instantiation is monastic.²⁶ The major text of this tradition, the *Dialogues* of Gregory the Great, are an 'attempt to provide the new Benedictine monasticism with its own hagiography.'²⁷ As Carole Straw has argued, the *Dialogues* assert a form of holiness distinct from saintliness: the latter 'possesses its freedom to know divine laws directly'; the former commands 'an obedience to God ... within a hierarchical structure'. In the Gregorian model, the holy man 'must not separate himself from God [or] from his fellow man.'²⁸ Though texts containing monastic *exempla* were usually written in Latin, there are at least two vernacular examples: the insular French translation of the *Vitas*

25 On *exempla*, see Joseph Albert Mosher, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England* (New York, 1911), pp. 54–74; Jean-Thiebault Welter, *L'Exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du moyen âge* (Paris, 1927), pp. 34–62; G.R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England*, (2nd edition, Oxford, 1961); Frederic C. Tubach, *Index exemplorum: A Handbook of Medieval Religious Tales* (Helsinki, 1969); *Les exempla médiévaux: Introduction à la recherche suivie des tables critiques de l'Index exemplorum de F.C. Tubach*, ed. Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu and Jacques Berlioz (Carcassonne, 1992), and *Les exempla médiévaux: Nouvelles perspectives* (Paris, 1998); *Le tonnerre des exemples: Exempla et médiation culturelle dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. Marie Anne Polo de Beaulieu, Pascal Collomb, and Jacques Berlioz (Rennes, 2010); A.G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 76, 238, 255–57; Claude Bremond, Jacques Le Goff, and Jean-Claude Schmitt, *L'Exemplum*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental 40 (2nd edition, Turnhout, 1996), with a useful bibliography to c. 1982; Jacques le Goff, 'Le temps de l'exemplum (XIII^e siècle)', in *Le temps chrétien de la fin de l'antiquité au Moyen Age (III^e–XIII^e siècles)*, ed. Jean-Marie Leroux (Paris, 1984), pp. 553–56 (trans. Arthur Goldhammer in *The Medieval Imagination* [Chicago, 1988], pp. 78–80); and Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge, 1994).

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 63–65.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 63.

28 Carole Straw, *Gregory the Great: Perfection in Imperfection* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), p. 74 (quoted in Scanlon, p. 63 n. 11).

patrum made for the edification of Templars in the twelfth century,²⁹ and the translation of Gregory's *Dialogues* by Angier, an Augustinian canon from St. Frideswide's, Oxford.³⁰ Angier's poem has generally been assumed to have been written for the canons regular at St. Frideswide's, but as Jocelyn Wogan-Browne has recently argued, it may in fact inscribe a lay audience.³¹ The insular French *Dialogues* may therefore represent an important antecedent to the discourse discussed below.

The sermon-*exemplum*, the other major instantiation of the tradition, develops during the late twelfth or early thirteenth century, and is directed at lay audiences.³² Though sermon *exempla* owe much to the Gregorian tradition, they differ from the monastic *exemplum* in their refusal to give their lay audience the agency to participate in the institutional authority embodied by these texts.³³ There is also a tradition of scholastic or proto-scholastic *exempla*: particularly important were the sermons and *Fables* of Odo of Cheriton, Alexander Neckam's *De Naturis Rerum*, and Gerald of Wales' *Gemma Ecclesiastica*. The various works of *magister* Odo, an English preacher born in c.1180, make heavy use of the *exemplum*. The intended audience of his sermons is less clear than that of his *Fables* and some shorter works, all of which seem to have circulated in a

29 See Henri d'Arce's *Vitas patrum, A Thirteenth-Century Anglo-Norman Rimed Translation of the Verba seniorum*, ed. Basilides Andrew O'Connor (Washington, DC, 1949). For some crucial correctives (the poem is in fact anonymous and was written before 1170), see Keith V. Sinclair, 'The Translations of the *Vitas patrum*, *Thais*, *Antichrist*, and *Vision de saint Paul* Made for Anglo-Norman Templars: Some Neglected Literary Considerations', *Speculum* 72 (1997), 741–62. As Sinclair says (p. 762), the choice of insular French reflects the need to provide a text comprehensible to the illiterate Templar brethren.

30 For Angier, see *The Dialogues of Gregory the Great Translated into Anglo-Norman French by Angier*, ed. Timothy Cloran (Strassburg, 1901); Dean 512; and M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 208–09.

31 Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'Time to Read: Pastoral Care, Vernacular Access and the Case of Angier of St Frideswide', in *The Literature of Pastoral Care and Devotion in Medieval England: Essays in Honour of Bella Millett*, ed. Cate Gunn and Catherine Innes-Parker (York, 2009), pp. 62–77.

32 Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, p. 65.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 65: 'The sermon exemplum will amplify the deference to institutional authority already present in the monastic tradition, and it will make increasingly abstract the participation it allows in the sacral power of such authority'. See also the subsequent discussion on pp. 65–70.

scholastic context.³⁴ The same is true of Neckham's *De Naturis Rerum*, a scientific work written towards the end of the twelfth century,³⁵ and of Gerald's *Gemma*, addressed to 'the clergy of his Archdeaconry'.³⁶ These important texts speak to a strand of the *exemplum* tradition which has only a tenuous connection with lay reading- and listening-cultures.

The closest vernacular analogues to the Latin *exemplum* in the early thirteenth century are insular French bestiaries (such as Guillaume le Clerc's *Bestiaire Divin*) and Marie de France's *Fables* (though, as we have seen, Angier's poem may be a significant exception). Despite their shared dependence on exemplarity, texts like Guillaume's and Marie's differ sharply from the Latin *exemplum* in terms of ideology. Marie's *Fables* offer moralities of a more practical than religious nature, and Guillaume's *Bestiaire* eschews institutional forms of authority by offering a direct route to knowledge, showing its audience how to read the natural world.³⁷ Of course, the sermon *exemplum* would have been transmitted to lay audiences in vernacular languages. Though sermons were often written in Latin at this time,³⁸ they would presumably have been delivered to lay audiences

34 For Odo, see Rigg, *History of Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 163. The question of audience is a vexed one for sermon-texts throughout the Middle Ages: see Carolyn Muessig, 'Sermon, Preacher and Society in the Middle Ages', *Journal of Medieval History* 28 (2002), 73–91 (pp. 78–79).

35 See *Alexandri Neckham: De naturis rerum et De laudibus divinae sapientiae*, ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1863), and Rigg, *History of Anglo-Latin*, pp. 117–22.

36 *The Autobiography of Gerald of Wales*, ed. and trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Woodbridge, 2005; f.p. as *The Autobiography of Giraldus Cambriensis* [London, 1937]), p. 26. Also see Rigg, *History of Anglo-Latin*, pp. 93–96.

37 For Guillaume, see *Le Bestiaire: Das Thierbuch des normannischen Dichters Guillaume le Clerc, zum ersten Male vollständig nach den Handschriften von London, Paris und Berlin*, ed. Robert Reinsch (Leipzig, 1892); for Marie, see *Marie de France: Fables*, ed. and trans. Harriet Spiegel (Toronto, 1987). The prologue to Marie's text strongly hints that its exemplarity is decidedly non-religious in nature: see ll. 1–40.

38 There are some exceptions to this tendency: for early French sermons, see C.A. Robson, *Maurice of Sully and the Medieval Vernacular Homily* (Oxford, 1952); and Michel Zink, *La Prédication en langue romane avant 1300* (Paris, 1976). For important discussions of the corpus of Old English sermons that continued to circulate long after the Conquest, see Mark Faulkner, 'Archaism, Belatedness and Modernisation: 'Old' English in the Twelfth Century', *RES* n.s. 63 (2011), 179–203; and Elaine Treharne, 'Reading from the Margins: The Uses of Old English Homiletic Manuscripts in the Post-Conquest Period', in *Beatus Vir: Studies in the Early English and Norse Manuscripts in Memory of Philip Pulsiano*, ed. A.N. Doane and Kirsten Wolf (Tempe, 2006), pp. 329–58.

in French or English.³⁹ However, vernacular sermons do not necessarily assert a different cultural authority from Latin ones. They (and their *exempla*) are still texts which conform to Scanlon's definition of the *exemplum* as a 'narrative enactment of cultural authority'.⁴⁰ To be sure, the relationship of a lay audience to this assertion of authority is substantially different from the relationship of a cleric to a Latin sermon, since clerics were part of the institutional authority expressed by sermons. But the ideology of the text, whether in Latin or a vernacular language, remains substantially the same at this point in history.⁴¹ The liturgical or paraliturgical discursive spaces in which sermons were delivered are not 'vernacular' in this sense: meaning is dictated, not fluid, and interpretative agency on the part of the audience does not exist (or is constructed as deviant almost by definition).

We might contrast this situation with the considerable interpretative agency afforded to the readers and listeners of romance. Romances are often oblique and ambiguous, and lack the concrete discursive and ideological framework of texts like sermons. In the absence of these guiding principles of interpretation, readers and listeners are free to interpret a text in a number of different ways: a romance hero's actions might be variously understood as heroic or repellent in different reception-contexts. Some of the characters and situations depicted in romance narratives seem to suggest this possibility outright through their moral ambiguity: one of the best examples of this is *Gui de Warewic*, whose hero repents from all of his previous actions, since they were done in the service of a woman, not of God.⁴² Gui's subsequent actions are remarkably similar to those which

39 Latin sermons appear often to have been delivered to the laity in the vernacular: see Muessig, 'Sermon, Preacher and Society', pp. 77–79; though this was not always the case. For a sophisticated discussion that complicates the question, see Giles Constable, 'The Language of Preaching in the Twelfth Century', *Viator* 25 (1994), 131–52.

40 Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, p. 34.

41 This argument does not intend to efface the complex, liminal status of preaching *vis-à-vis* vernacularity. A sophisticated recent discussion on this topic is Claire M. Waters, 'Talking the Talk: Access to the Vernacular in Medieval Preaching', in *The Vulgar Tongue: Medieval and Postmedieval Vernacularities*, ed. Fiona Somerset and Nicholas Watson (University Park, PA, 2003), pp. 31–42.

42 See Paul Price, 'Confessions of a Godless Killer: *Guy of Warwick* and Comprehensive Entertainment', in

E co n'est pas chose creiable
 Que tut seit uair k'est dit en fable. 20
 Nun est co uair quant k'est escrit
 D'estoire ke l'em en chancun dist;
 Kar cil ki chancuns controuerent
 Sulum lur quiders les furmererent;
 E l'om dist en respit pur uair 25
 Ke quidance n'est pas sauair.
 Veez si co pot estre uair
 Que vns enfes oust poair
 Cum dist la chancun de Mainet,
 V del orfanin Sansunnet, 30
 V de la gest dan Tristram,
 V del bon messenger Balam.
 Veez les autres ensement:
 N'i ad celui ki trop n'i ment;
 Ne sunt pas forstrait d'escripture, 35
 Mais chascun fait sa controuure.
 Ore seit ke tut seit ueritez,
 Si est co purquant uanitez
 Tels escriz oir e entendre
 V l'alme ne poet nul bien prendre 40
 Kar quanque a l'alme ne fait bien
 Deuant Deu ne ualt nule rien,
 E cil trop laidement se sert
 Ki Deu pur nule rien perd.
 E Deu uolt de sun seruant 45
 Qu'il seit a li tut entendant;
 Tut uolt ke seit a li turne
 Quanqu'il ad a chescun dune.
 Il nus ad done cors e uie
 Veer, parle, e oie, 50
 Entente, membres e curage,
 Tut pur nus garder de damage. (*Miroir*, ll. 1–52)⁴³

[To his most dear lady, Aline, greetings, by the divine virtue. Madame, I have heard it said that you greatly love to hear and read *chansons de geste* and history,⁴⁴ and frequently commit them to memory. But I very much want you to know that this pastime is worse than an empty trifle, because it is nothing but fabrication and foolishness, a result of futile attention, and if someone could find a good moral story in these stories, then everything else would be worthless. It is truly the trick of

43 The *Miroir* has not been edited in its entirety, and most of the existing partial editions are either dated or marred by inaccuracies; see in particular *Miroir ou les Évangiles des Domnées: Edizione di otto domenichei*, ed. Saverio Panunzio (Bari, 1967), given a trenchant review by Linda Marshall and William Rothwell in *Medium Aevum* 39 (1970), 313–21. Around a third of the poem has been recently edited from a single manuscript, printed with the poem's Middle English translation *en face*. References to the prologue are taken from this edition: *The Middle English Mirror: Sermons from Advent to Sexagesima*, ed. Thomas G. Duncan and Margaret Connolly (Heidelberg, 2003).

44 Sinclair, 'Anglo-Norman Patrons', p. 202, suggests that 'chancon ... d'estoire' (line 5) could in fact mean 'weaving song' instead of 'history'.

each thing that wishes to deceive. By lying more confidently, it says anything that pleases, and says nothing true in order to have its lies heard. Indeed, it is not a plausible concept that everything said in fables is true. Nor is it true when it is written in the histories which people declaim in song, since those who devise songs do so in accordance with their imaginations; and it is truly said in a moral tale that imagination is not wisdom. See if this could possibly be true when you hear what mere *children* have been able to do, according to the song of Mainet, or that of the orphan Sanssunet, or in the *geste* of Tristram, or that of the good messenger of Balam. See the others likewise: there is not one that does not lie excessively. They are not drawn from Scripture, but each one of them rather creates its own fiction. Now it must therefore be completely true that it is vanity to hear and understand such writings, for that which does the soul no good is worth nothing before God, and he who loses God for nothing serves himself most wickedly. And God desires that his servant should be attentive to him; he wants all to be turned to him — all that he has given to each person. He gives us body and life, in order that we might see, speak, and hear; understanding, form, and spirit, all to protect us from harm.]

Taken at face value, Gretham's invective against profane literature is very similar to the those found in the twelfth-century texts discussed in Chapter 1. In particular, the description of Aline's literary taste as 'futile attention' ('vaine cure', line 10) invokes an idea found in many of these texts: that such attention is a kind of devotion, structurally similar to religious devotion, but fundamentally flawed on account of its profane object. We may also note Gretham's admission of the aesthetic and imaginative appeal of romance texts. He characterizes romance as an attractive mode, but one whose pleasure is derived from a sycophantic, self-preserving desire to say that which pleases its audience, without regard for truth (ll. 15–18). This comment is significant to the discussion of romance patronage in Chapter 2 above: Gretham criticizes romance on the grounds that it does not express absolute truth, but a constructed, relative 'truth' that reflects the relationship between romance-writer and patron. He proposes his own text as an alternative:

E pur ço que vus aim en Dé
 Tolir vus voil de vanité,
 Que vus li puissez rendre en bien
 Quanqu'il demande a crestien;
 Pur ço vus ai fait cest escrit
 U vus purrez lire a delit;

presented as a reader of the *Miroir*, not just a passive auditor. In these respects, the *Miroir* is a distinctly unusual ‘sermon-cycle’. It appears to have been constantly available to its patron, who would (if we take these lines at face value) have been free to read (and re-read) sermons for any of the set Sunday lections at any time of the year. The *Miroir* thus bears a formal resemblance to a sermon-cycle, but it is hard to reconcile this appearance with the reception-context inscribed by the prologue: in other words, we can scarcely imagine the text actually being used as a sermon-cycle (at least exclusively) in Aline’s household. A couplet from the prologue might suggest why the text should take this form:

E vus altre feiz m’avez dit
Que jo feïsse cest escrit. (*Miroir*, ll. 99–100)

[You previously said to me that I should make this written work.]

Since there is no obvious precedent for Aline’s request that Robert compose a complete set of sermons on the set Sunday Gospel lections, we might plausibly suggest that Aline had heard Robert preach sermons on the Sunday Gospels before, and had requested that they be written up for her personal use. Whatever reason we might postulate for the form of the *Miroir*, the text’s inscribed reception-context suggests that it sees itself as a direct replacement for the romances and *chansons de geste* that Aline appears to have enjoyed. The *Miroir* thus encourages Aline to read it ‘like a romance’, by inviting a conception of itself as a part of Aline’s quotidian entertainment. This does not, of course, necessarily imply that the *Miroir* was intended to be read ‘like a romance’ in any other sense.

Nevertheless, I will suggest that this further claim can in fact be made.

The *Miroir* shows an engagement with the subject matter of profane literature belied by its clearly-expressed scorn for this kind of writing. As Marion Aitken puts it, Gretham ‘n’a pas perdu de vue les rivaux auxquels il devait disputer ses lecteurs, à savoir

the sky.⁵⁰ Despite the friar's apparent acquiescence to the request, the devil instructs the pagan priest not to give up his daughter to the friar, since he has not truly been abandoned by God. The friar, dumbstruck by this outcome (line 4375), soon meets a hermit who encourages him to spend three weeks in penance. After the first week, the friar sees a dove circling overhead; after the second week, he sees the dove flying closer, and after the third week the dove flies back into his mouth. After this, the hermit pronounces the friar's penance complete, and the *exemplum* concludes with a brief morality concerning the value of repentance. We can read this text straightforwardly, along with its morality, as an instructive text on the limitless nature of God's mercy and the value of penance as part of repentance. The gospel text upon which the sermon (and therefore also the *exemplum*) comments fits well with this interpretation: God is merciful as long as the sinner requests mercy with true contrition. However, there is much more to this text than just its explicitly-stated moralization: as I shall show, a rich seam of meaning derives from the resonances that the story would have had for the romance connoisseuse Aline.

First of all, we might speculatively link the friar's choice in this story with the sexual economy of romance. The friar is effectively invited to choose between salvation and damnation, and makes what is obviously the wrong choice because he has temporarily lost sight of any ethical code other than desire. This pursuit of desire at the cost of everything else might easily be read as a comment on the structural tendencies of romance, whose protagonists frequently eschew normative Christian ethical codes in pursuit of illicit love. In a slightly less tendentious comparison, we might observe that the motif of the dove leaving the friar's mouth recalls a striking imagine in *Otinél*, a *chanson de geste* from the Charlemagne cycle which Aline could conceivably have known, since it circulated in

⁵⁰ The dove was a well-established figure for the Holy Spirit: see Isidore, *The Etymologies*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach and Oliver Berghof, with the collaboration of Muriel Hall (Cambridge, 2006), VII.iii.22.

insular reading-cultures.⁵¹ Otinel is a chivalrous young Saracen knight who challenges Roland to single combat, and whose miraculous conversion to Christianity during this combat is symbolized by a dove landing on his head. An intertextual recognition of *Otinel* in relation to this *exemplum* opens the text up to a wide range of xenophobic and culturally partisan readings: it may be taken as suggesting, for instance, that Saracens do not genuinely convert.⁵² But of course, this link cannot be firmly demonstrated.

However, this is not true of all of the literary affiliations discernible in this *exemplum*; in fact, a fairly firm link can be drawn between this *exemplum* and a specific romance which Aline would have known, at least in name. As we have seen, the prologue makes reference to specific romance stories, and the references seem to depend on a shared knowledge of the content of the stories. Gretham appears to have had at least a basic knowledge of the texts mentioned: he knows, for example, that Sansunnet was an orphan (although we are not entirely sure who Sansunnet was today) and that Balan was a messenger.⁵³ He also appears to know that Mainet was a child (see ll. 28–29); he may therefore have recognized the structural similarities between the story of Mainet and the *exemplum* of the friar and the dove. A fragmentary version of the *Chanson de Mainet* has survived, and we know enough of the basic narrative to draw a comparison between it and Gretham's *exemplum*. *Mainet* describes the exploits of a young Charlemagne who, having been forced to flee from his home, changes his name to Mainet and enters the service of Galatre, a pagan king. He falls in love with Galatre's daughter, and persuades Galatre to have her baptised as a Christian and to give her to him in marriage after having

51 See Dean 78.

52 On the suspicion that religious converts have not genuinely converted, or will later renege, see Marianne Ailes, 'Tolerated Otherness: The 'Unconverted' Saracen in the *Chansons de geste*', in *Languages of Love and Hate: Conflict, Communication, and Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean*, ed. Sarah Lambert and Helen J. Nicholson (Turnhout, 2012), pp. 3–19.

53 As Furrow suggests ('Chanson de Geste as Romance in England', p. 68), Sansunnet may be Sanson, one of the sons of Ganelon in the *Chanson d'Aye d'Avignon*. Balan is a character from the *Chanson d'Aspremont*.

demonstrated his unparalleled prowess. As this précis makes clear, the similarities between this story and the *exemplum* discussed above are extensive. The structure of *Mainet* bears a close resemblance to that of the first part of the *exemplum*: their shared narrative components include a journey to a country where Christianity is not the majority religion, a pagan's daughter as the Christian protagonist's object of love, and the need to convince her father of the protagonist's suitability. It is highly likely that Aline, if she were familiar with the story of *Mainet* (and this would make a great deal of sense in the context of Gretham's specific criticism), would have noticed the resonances between these two stories upon encountering the *exemplum*. It is also possible that Gretham's familiarity with this story influenced his choice of this particular narrative for inclusion in his poem as an *exemplum*.

The *Miroir*'s fifth *exemplum* can be read in similar terms. Like the *exemplum* of the friar and the dove, it generates further meaning beyond its basic morality when read in the light of its patron's literary tastes:⁵⁴

Dunt il avint a un sergant	
Ke reis Conred out mult vaillant,	
Pruz ert e sages, fort e fer,	
En Engleterre n'out sun per;	
Mais une vice male aveit,	5090
Ke nuls hom creire nel poeit:	
U le rei poeit avancer,	
Ne a sun os rien purchacer,	
Ne dutat fals encusemenz,	5095
Ne fals plaiz, ne fals jugemenz,	
Nes orphanins desheriter,	
Ne saint Eglise travailler;	
Ne tint cunte de nul desrai	
Mais k'il pouïst plaisir le rei;	
Ne vers Deu ne vers home amur	5100
Mais k'il ploüst a sun seignur.	(<i>Miroir</i> , ll. 5086–101) ⁵⁵

[This happened to a sergeant, whom King Conrad considered very worthy. He was

54 For the version of the story found in the *Manuel des Pechiez*, see ll. 4127–79 of Furnivall's edition (cited at note 65 above).

55 *Ibid.*, p. 144.

bold and wise, strong and powerful, he had no equal in England, but he had a terrible defect, which nobody could believe: wherever he might improve the king's lot, or by his work acquire anything for him, he did not fear making false accusations, nor false pleas, nor false judgements, nor dispossessing orphans, nor inconveniencing the Holy Church; he had no regard for any wickedness except when it might please the king; nor did he bear any love for God or man except when it might please his master.]

This narrative is more explicit than the previous one in its negative presentation of the worldly life. The sergeant's sin is that he considers everything, even his religion, subordinate to the will of his earthly lord. It therefore springs from a very similar choice to that made by the friar. And although the ethical codes chosen by these characters in preference to Christianity are different, both have close analogues in the literary conventions of romance. The friar's single-minded, self-damning lust can be seen as a satire on the idea of courtly love, and the sergeant's criminal devotion to his lord may be a reference to feudalism's loyalties and responsibilities. The sergeant is, in one sense, the perfect vassal — he is unquestioningly, obsessively loyal to his lord, and places his lord's welfare and advancement above everything else, including Christian morality. The fact that this perfect vassalage is simultaneously a highly sinful life from a Christian perspective serves to point out the intrinsic moral flaws in the system.⁵⁶ This reading is strengthened by the changes made by Gretham to his source. The version of the story found in the *Miroir* presents the character of the sergeant quite differently from its source, Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In this text, the sergeant's evils in the service of his lord are not specified; instead, we are told that his worldly industry, which pleases the king, is not matched by an attention to spiritual matters.⁵⁷ Bede thus makes no direct statement about the moral value

56 The text's line 'En Engleterre n'out sun per' (line 5089) is such a typical romance gesture that it is hard to imagine that its resemblance to romance would not have been apparent to a reader like Aline.

57 For Bede's version of the story, see *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave and R.A.B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), V.xiii. The version of the story found in the *Manuel des Pechiez* (see ll. 4127–31) is similar to Bede's version in this respect; however, Robert Mannyng's version of the story in *Handlyng Synne* (referenced here in Furnivall's parallel edition) more closely resembles Gretham's version in the explicit link that it makes between the sergeant's sin and his feudal service: 'Where þat he myghte make a wanlace, / And any þyng to þe kyng purchase, / He ne lette

of the sergeant's worldly occupation; by contrast, Gretham states in no uncertain terms that the sergeant's actions in service of his lord are in themselves evil. The version of the story found in the *Miroir* therefore makes a much stronger connection between feudal service and the sergeant's sinful disposition: this might easily be read as a comment on the structural tendencies of the system as well as the character of the sergeant.

The rest of the *exemplum* can be read as arguing for the similar moral flaws of the what we might call the literature of feudalism — romance, *chanson de geste*, and verse history. The sergeant becomes ill, and the king encourages him to repent from his sins, but the he refuses, on the grounds that repentance would be seen as being motivated by fear of death, not by genuine contrition. The king returns the next day and continues with his entreaties, but this time the sergeant claims that his damnation is certain. He relates the following vision:

Vindrent çæenz dous juvencels, Mais mult par erent dulz e bels; Ço me fust vis, quant jo les vi, Ke de mun mal point ne senti.	
Lunges esturent ça devant	5150
E esguarderent mun semblant, E puis s'asistrent un petit Desur l'espunde de mun lit; Puis traistrent avant un livret Ke mult ert bel e blanc e net;	5155
Le livret devant mei ovrirent E ço k'i out lire me firent; Quant k'i out lui e entendi Jo, ki unc ainz lettre ne vi.	
Ço furent trestut mi bienfait	5160
Quant ke mis quors pensé aveit; Trestut i lui en cel escrit Quant ke oi de bien fait u dist; Neïs tut mis meindre pensez Ki bon fust, n'i fut ublëez;	5165

for no fals othe / Ne for wrappe of lefe ne lothe' (ll. 4378–81). It is far from inconceivable that Mannyng knew the *Miroir*; perhaps this knowledge could account for the resemblance, though in the absence of good critical editions of any of the three texts, this is impossible to know.

Mais li livres ert tant petiz
 Ke ne pout tenir granz escriz.
 Quant l'oi parlui, dunc le plïerent,
 E od lur livre s'en alerent.
 Ne demurat fors un petit 5170
 Dous altres vindrent a mun lit,
 Neirs e horibles e pulenz,
 Od oiz ardanz e vis ruvenz;
 Del veër oi tel desconfort
 Ke mielz volsisse estre mort; 5175
 Tutes parz me turnai d'anguisse,
 Saver si muscer me puisse;
 Mais quel part ke jo me turnai
 E il furent pardevant mei.
 Wuant jo ne vi altre relais 5180
 Si me convint gisir en pais,
 E cil s'asistrent a itant
 E tristrent un grant livre avant;
 Grant ert li livres e horibles,
 Plus i out lettre k'en dous Bibles. 5185
 Iloc lui jo tuz mes mesfaiz,
 Mes mals pensez, mes fols aguaiz,
 Trestut i lui en cel escrit
 Quant ke de mal oi fait u dit;
 Neis tut mis meindre pensez 5190
 Ki de mal fust, n'ert ublïez. (Miroir, ll. 5146–91)

[Two young men came here, who were very beautiful and pleasant in many respects, and it seemed to me, when I saw them, that I did not feel my malady at all. They stood before me in this way for a long time and examined my appearance, and they they sat for a short while on the head of my bed. Then they drew out a small book which was very beautiful, white and clean. They opened the book in front of me and had me read what was in it; then I read and understood it — I who have never comprehended writing. In it were all of my good deeds that I had thought with my heart; there in that text I read all that I had done or said for good; even all my most insignificant thoughts — those that were good — were not forgotten; but the book was very little and could not hold a large amount of writing. When I had understood all of it, they closed it, and took their book and went away. I had not waited more than a little while when two others came to my bed, black and horrible and fetid. They had burning eyes and red faces. I had such discomfort at the sight of them that I wanted very much to be dead; all my parts shrank away from distress, to discover whether I could hide myself, but wherever I turned they were in front of me. When I could not find any remission that would allow me to lie in peace, they too took out and produced in the same way a great book; the book was large and horrible, and it had in it more words than in two Bibles. There I read all of my misdeeds, my bad thoughts, and my foolish tricks; I read in that text everything bad that I had done or said; even all my most insignificant thoughts — those that were bad — were not forgotten.]

The sergeant dies of his illness the next morning, and the *exemplum* concludes with a warning against despair and an encouragement to repent. Even leaving aside the differences between this version and its source (which cannot be demonstrated to be Gretham's own changes), the story attains a new significance when brought into the cultural context of the *Miroir*.⁵⁸ The character of the sergeant can easily be seen as an exaggerated adherent to the feudal convention of devotion to one's lord, and this kind of reductive exaggeration can only come from the pages of romance narrative, whose stories tend to eschew any moral code other than those of courtliness and feudalism, at least in the eyes of their detractors.

In this context, the book of good deeds presented to the sergeant takes on a new significance.⁵⁹ The book is literally a *geste*; a record of worthy and noteworthy deeds, just like the books of knightly *gestes* beloved of Aline. The masterstroke of this *exemplum* is to reveal the fiction of such 'records': that, despite their apparent depiction of surpassing excellence and virtue, they are partial representations (in both senses) of the characters that they depict and lionize. The rest of the story is told elsewhere, in the unwritten book that forms the counterpart to romance texts' narration of worthy deeds. It is easy to imagine Dame Aline, or any similarly enthusiastic participant in romance reading-cultures, making this connection upon encountering the story of the sergeant and his books of deeds; and it is far from implausible to suggest that this implicit comment on the nature of profane literature would have cast a shadow over Aline's subsequent experiences of romance and *chanson de geste*. For every text narrating the admirable deeds of a hero, whether an historical figure or a fictional character, a much longer text must exist containing a

58 This is especially true when we consider that Gretham's text contains only seventeen *exempla*, but that he consulted a large number of collections of such material when assembling the text (see Aitken, *Étude*, pp. 27–53, for a description of Gretham's extensive sources). Gretham must have considered this *exemplum* to be a particularly suitable one for his purposes.

59 Scanlon notes (*Narrative, Authority, and Power*, p. 77–79) that many Latin *exempla* work to assert the sacral power of the language of ecclesiastical ritual: this text could easily be affiliated with this tendency.

narrative of all of their reprehensible actions.⁶⁰ Gretham's presentation of this narrative in a vernacular text serves to colonize romance, and to mediate the responses of its readers. Furthermore, the homilies of the *Miroir* provide an exegetical method that would allow readers to develop the critical faculties required to make readings of the kind given above. Read in this way, Gretham's text stands as a concerted attempt to extend the reach of biblical hermeneutics — and so, by extension, the authoritative voice of the Church — into the realm of lay experience. However, in contrast to the sermon *exempla* characterized by Scanlon as texts which refuse to allow lay participation in the authoritative discourse that they enact,⁶¹ Gretham's *exempla* benefit from — even require — their readers to engage actively in the work of interpretation.⁶² Importantly, I am not arguing that this interpretative agency is a liberating or radical shift. Instead, I would suggest these texts recognize that lay readers already have interpretative agency in the case of texts like romances, and allow some participation in the construction of meaning in the *exempla* in order to exert some control over a potentially deviant process. In other words, hermeneutics is precisely the realm of lay experience into which these texts seek to extend an authoritative voice.

Gretham's vernacular *exempla* thus represent a remarkable innovation. We have seen how the *Miroir's* use of *exempla* to read profane literary genres can be read as an attempt to colonize these genres with ecclesiastical hermeneutic methods, and how the

60 We might recall at this point the aporetic burnt abbeys of *Gui de Warewic*. Are they concealed (along with the sins they metonymize) in the unwritten 'black book' of Gui's deeds?

61 Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, p. 67.

62 The *Miroir* explicitly states that it is designed to give its readers hermeneutic proficiency: Scripture is like a dense, fruit-laden tree which yields nothing until shaken, at which point its sweet fruits fall and can be consumed. See ll. 197–214 and, for a discussion of the metaphor's relationship to the act of translation, see Margaret Connolly, 'Shaking the Language Tree: Translating the Word into the Vernacular in the Anglo-Norman *Miroir* and the Middle English *Mirror*', in *The Medieval Translator* 8, ed. Rosalynn Voaden, René Tixier, Teresa Sanchez Roura and Jenny Rebecca Rytting (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 17–27. This metaphor appears in many medieval texts: for one comparable example relevant to this discussion, see William of Wyecombe's description of the literary pursuits of Robert of Bethune: Robert abandons 'figmenta Poetarum', replacing this literary interest with hagiography: 'fructum deinceps quaesiturus, non folia' ['thenceforth desiring the fruit, not the husks']: *Anglia sacra*, ed. Henry Wharton, 2 vols (London, 1691), II:300.

space that it creates for the practice of lay hermeneutics in itself shows a desire for *rapprochement*, while the everyday content of these narratives also works to make them more appealing to lay audiences. Unlike romance and hagiography, vernacular *exempla* present situations in which moderate solutions are encouraged. Repentance is made available to the sergeant, and it is clear that a secular life lived with adherence to religious values would have been sufficient for him to attain salvation.⁶³ Similarly, the friar from Gretham's fourth *exemplum* is allowed resolution without physical torment or martyrdom. He is not a saint — neither is the sergeant a romance hero. However, both characters make choices and exist in situations that would have been relevant and applicable to the lives of late-thirteenth century lay readers. *Exemplum*-narratives, unlike hagiography, allow for religious teachings to be dramatized in an accessible and practically applicable way: in the case of the virtuous examples, *imitatio* is a possible response, not just *admiratio*.⁶⁴

William of Waddington's *Manuel des Pechiez* makes a similar contribution to this discourse. Like the *Miroir*, it contains a significant number of *exempla*, and can be described, along with Grosseteste's *Chasteau* and Gretham's poem, as an early attempt to incorporate the *exemplum* into vernacular literary forms. Waddington's poem, as we have seen, is a long treatise on various basic features of the liturgy and devotion, and explains various concepts identified as basic components of religious understanding in Grosseteste's ecclesiastical statutes. The educational narrative is illustrated with various *exempla*, which seem to serve both as a means of elucidating the poem's meaning and as light relief.⁶⁵ Like

63 Cf. Canon I of the Fourth Lateran Council, which emphasizes that the sacrament of baptism leads to salvation for virgins, chaste people, and married people alike: see Schroeder, *Disciplinary Decrees*, pp. 238–39.

64 Cf. Leonard Boyle, 'The Fourth Lateran Council and Manuals of Popular Theology', in *The Popular Literature of Medieval England*, ed. Thomas J. Heffernan (Knoxville, 1985), pp. 30–43. Boyle argues (p. 36) that texts such as the *Manuel* suggest a shift in religious attitudes away from a puritanical rejection of sin towards an encouragement of virtue.

65 Like the *Miroir*, the *Manuel* has not received a full critical edition. An edition of the complete text from two manuscripts is found in *Roberd of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, with the French treatise on which it is founded, Le Manuel des Pechiez by William of Waddington*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall (London, 1862). References to the text of the *Manuel* are taken from this edition in preference to Furnivall's later partial

the *Miroir*, the *Manuel* is a poem that engages closely with lay culture, and its *exempla* are similarly a vital part of this ideological project. It inscribes a similar audience to the *Miroir*; namely, readers without Latinity in need of edifying literary occupation.⁶⁶ The use of *exempla* in the *Manuel* may suggest that its audience also had a taste for romance, though there is no specific indication to this effect in the text. Nevertheless, like Gretham's poem, many of the *Manuel's* *exempla* offer a clear engagement with the conventions of chivalric literature. Some *exempla* make a very simple point, as we see in the story of a vain knight who is killed by his enemy. His belongings are divided among his beneficiaries, and his fine coat, upon being claimed by a prideful clerk, catches fire as soon as it touches the man's back, consuming him in flame.⁶⁷ We could understand this text (for which a source has not been found) as a warning to readers against a covetous desire for the aristocratic finery depicted in courtly texts, or as a warning against vanity in general. But more importantly, this is a text about exemplarity. The clerk covets the knight's fine coat because it indicates high status, and he falsely equates this status with value. The proud clerk aspires to look like a knight, and the vanity of this aspiration is demonstrated by the striking disintegration of the coat when it touches the clerk's shoulders. The well-dressed

edition in order to avoid using two line-numbering systems. All quotations have been checked for significant divergences from this later edition: *Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, A.D. 1303, with those parts of the Anglo-French treatise on which it was founded, William of Wadington's Manuel des Pechiez*, ed. Frederick J. Furnivall. 2 vols. EETS o.s. 119, 123 (London, 1901–1903).

66 Matthew Sullivan argues ('Origin and Subsequent Audiences', pp. 21–29) that the *Manuel* directs itself towards a clerical audience, not (as has been previously assumed), an audience of unlettered laypeople; a view which he shares with A. I. Doyle, 'A Survey of the Origins and Circulation of Theological Writings in English in the 14th, 15th, and Early 16th Centuries with Special Consideration of the Part of the Clergy Therein' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cambridge, 1953), I: 59 (quoted in Sullivan, p. 81). This view has been challenged in Ulrike Schemmann, *Confessional Literature and Lay Education: The Manuel de pechez as a Book of Good Conduct and Guide to Personal Religion* (Düsseldorf, 2000), pp. 264–78. Even if a clerical audience is conceded for the *Manuel* (though manuscripts such as Princeton University Library, Taylor Medieval MS 1 demonstrate conclusively that this was not its only audience), this does not fundamentally problematize the argument that it interacts with lay culture, but requires us to understand this interaction as less direct, and perhaps less fundamentally bound up with lay reading. On the Princeton manuscript, see Adelaide Bennett, 'A Book Designed for a Noblewoman: An Illustrated *Manuel des Péchés* of the Thirteenth Century', in *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence*, ed. Linga Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, 1990), pp. 163–81.

67 *Manuel*, ll. 3426–62. See also Arnould, *Le Manuel*, p. 139.

knight is thus an exemplary model for the clerk, and the clerk cannot recognize the falsity of this model because his ethical sense is clouded by the sin of pride. Markers of social status, the *exemplum* asserts, do not represent inner virtue. Though this particular text does not engage directly with romance, it certainly suggests a particular attitude regarding the lay ideologies associated with romance.

Other *exempla* show a more direct engagement with narrative situations typical of romance: one such text relates the story of two knights, ‘mortal enemies’ (‘enimis mortels’, line 3750), one of whom kills the other. The murdered knight’s son, who is ‘bold and brave’ (‘pruz et uaillant’, line 3756), swears to avenge his father’s death. On Good Friday, the knight decides to confront the son of his enemy, but instead of the battle that we might expect to ensue in a romance narrative, the knight falls to the ground by the son’s feet (‘En croiz li chay l’autre al pee’, line 3781), and begs for forgiveness:

... pur l’amur de iesu crist	3783
Qe de la pucele nasquist,	
E a tiel iur u crucifie	3785
Pur sauuer humeine ligne,	
Sa mort a ceus ad pardone	
Que cruelment l’unt pene	(<i>Le Manuel</i> , ll. 3783–88)

[for the love of Jesus Christ, who was born from the Virgin, and who was crucified on the third day to save humanity’s lineage; his death has pardoned those who have cruelly sinned.]

The son pardons his father’s murderer, and they go to mass together. Then, a miracle occurs:

Auant vist le veil chiualer	
Qe ad la croiz ahure	3805
Apres se est returne.	
Le ieouene apres est ale—	
Qe le curuz out pardune—	
Deuotement la croiz ahurer;	

between clerical and lay values.

A further example from the *Manuel* provides evidence for the text's self-situation in relation to lay culture. The *exemplum* begins as follows:

Outre mier, en un pays	2225
Qe habite esteit iadis	
Pres fu de une wastine	
Enclos en une sauagine;	
La gent pur ceo se sunt alez,	
E del pays remuez.	2230
Un dragun i maneit,	
Qe envirun grant mal feseit;	
Homes e bestes deuora,	
Quant dehor mesun les troua.	(<i>Manuel</i> , ll. 2225–34)

[Overseas, in a country that was once inhabited, there was a place close to a wasteland, surrounded by desert. For this reason, the people had gone away and departed the country. A dragon lived there, who did great evil in the surrounding country. He devoured men and animals when he found them out in the open.]

The local people meet in order to plan an attack on the dragon (line 2239), but nobody knows where to find it (line 2246). They ask a holy hermit, who lives in a remote hermitage close to the wasteland, whether he knows where to find the dragon (ll. 2247–54). The hermit exhorts them to confess their sins as a condition of his assistance, and they do as he asks (ll. 2255–62). He tells them to return after three days, which he spends in prayer (ll. 2263–71). As a result of his prayers, an angel appears and leads the people to the dragon's den: a 'grant sarcu de pierre taille' ('a large coffin made of cut stone', line 2285). In it, the people find the dragon lying in the remains of a woman's body, which has been split in two, and ask the angel to account for the bewildering scene (ll. 2289–302). The angel explains that the woman was an adulterer, and was split in two as a sign of her damnation because she shared her body with two people (line 2303–20). The angel then

Religious Ideology of Chivalry (Philadelphia, 2009), p. 16. Kaeuper claims (I think convincingly) that the text's cultural work consists in its questioning of the 'fundamental chivalric urge for vengeance (so often effected through homicide).'

commands the dragon to depart, and it does so, leaving the people in peace (ll. 2321–28).⁶⁹

I would suggest that this *exemplum* plays with our expectations concerning a story that initially appears to present an entirely practical (and not spiritual) problem. The narrative begins in an exotic location, ‘outré mier’, and with a fantastic beast (in fact described as such in the other manuscript collated by Furnivall).⁷⁰ In other words, the story begins with exactly the sort of situation we might find in a romance. Fights with dragons are common in insular romance: well-known examples are in *Gui de Warewic* (which actually narrates two dragon-fights) and *Beues of Haumtone*.⁷¹ The people who have been plagued by the dragon intend to kill it, but this is not the final outcome of the story, as we have seen. We could easily imagine (and have often read) a rather different narrative in which the people find themselves unable to defeat the dragon, and have to rely on the exemplary prowess of a knight in order to achieve resolution. However, the problem is more mundane than this in this *exemplum*: the people simply do not know where to find the dragon, and must gain this knowledge by consulting a hermit, who in turn consults God. Larry Scanlon has argued that the high-medieval development of the *exemplum* is an important part of a shift that sees the expansion of the ecclesiastical hierarchy into a much wider range of social situations than was previously the case: the ‘increasing incursion of the Church into most aspects of lay experience’.⁷² The dragon *exemplum* is an excellent

69 It has not been possible to trace an authoritative early source for this *exemplum*, and unlike many *exempla* in the *Manuel*, no source is specified at the beginning. The story occurs in a number of Latin *exemplum*-collections and sermons, but these all date from a similar period to the *Manuel*. As Arnould notes (*Le Manuel*, p. 128), the story may derive from a legend of St Germain of Auxerre.

70 Line 2231 is rendered as ‘Un merueillus dragun veneit’ in London, British Library MS Harley 4657. Furnivall’s base manuscript is London, British Library MS Harley 273.

71 On the dragon-fights in *Gui de Warewic*, see *Gui de Warewic: roman du XIII^e siècle*, ed. Alfred Ewert (Paris, 1932), ll. 4122–62 and 7227–411; and Ivana Djordjević, ‘Saracens and Other Saxons: Using, Confusing, and Misusing Names in *Gui de Warewic* and *Guy of Warwick*’, in *Exploitations*, ed. Ashe, Djordjević, and Weiss, pp. 28–42. On the dragon-fight in *Beues*, see Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkeley, CA, 1986), p. 105n.

72 Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, p. 69.

demonstration of this argument. It creates a narrative problem which would most naturally have been solved by lay actors, and reshapes the narrative's progress towards resolution in order to justify the central importance afforded to clerical and spiritual actors in the text.⁷³ The apparent irrelevance of the story to the discussion of adultery into which it is inserted is in fact an important part of its ideological work, since it provokes its reader to reconsider the logic of the romance urtext that it reshapes: its misshapen fiction is in fact an assertion that this is how things really are.

The *Manuel* and the *Miroir* are united in their sophisticated use of the *exemplum* in vernacular literary forms; as we have seen, when placed into the broader history of the *exemplum*, these texts are revealed as highly innovative. The intriguing affiliations with Grosseteste's *Chastelau*, another text which redeploys exemplary poetics in order to effect an engagement with the ethical models offered in romance, suggest that these texts may have been part of a literary movement marked by an appropriation of the hermeneutic methods of romance. Both of these poems offer achievable exemplary models, and realistic negative ones, to their readers, and in doing so suggest their participation in a broad shift away from the *contemptus mundi* model of twelfth-century religious instructional literature. By not enjoining their readers to become saints, these poems provide a realistic, everyday alternative to the exemplary models provided by romance; by using vernacular stories to support and illustrate their instructional content, they affirm the capacity of narrative to communicate ethics, and provide an alternative model for that communication. As Jacques le Goff points out, *exempla* are texts which seek the immediate conversion of their audience: by emphasizing achievable, moderate ethical transformations, these texts offer their readers a set of exemplary models which place themselves against the idealized

⁷³ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 70: 'even ... exempla not explicitly religious in content, which deal with local lore or contemporary political events ... affirm the capacity of clerical discourse to appropriate and redefine the lay'. I would suggest this *exemplum* enacts precisely such a redefinition of the lay sphere.

exemplars of romance and hagiography alike.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ *The Medieval Imagination*, p. 80.

Chapter 5: Nightingales at the end of the thirteenth century

As we have seen, the thirteenth century sees an important shift in religious poetry's relationship with romance away from the twelfth century's austere rejection of carnality to a more appropriative stance. Grosseteste's *Chasteau*, along with the substantial insular French confessional and homiletic works whose composition may have been stimulated by his pastoral mandate, demonstrates a willingness to engage closely with the imaginative machinery of profane literature, and to incorporate this into its instructional scheme. The present chapter continues this work by reading a group of late thirteenth-century poems about nightingales. As will quickly become apparent, the nightingale is an exceptionally receptive figure for instructional texts which make use of profane literature; its wide range of associations accord it a symbolic ambiguity from a very early stage. The texts discussed in this chapter exploit this ambiguity in order to create poems that interrogate the borders of sacred and profane literary discourse.

First of all, the symbolic resonances of nightingales need to be treated in detail.

Isidore of Seville offers the following short discussion:

The nightingale (*luscinia*) is a bird that took its name because it is accustomed to indicate by its song the onset of the rising sun, as if its name were *lucinia* (cf. *lux*, gen. *lucis*, 'light, sun').¹

He identifies the two basic characteristics of the bird that will be important for each of its symbolic instantiations in medieval literature: it is a songbird, and it sings at night, just before the dawn. These characteristics generate what becomes a richly significant — and

1 *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof, with the collaboration of Muriel Hall (Cambridge, 2006), XII.vii.37 (p. 266). J.L. Baird, 'Rossignos', in *Rossignol: An Edition and Translation*, ed. and trans. J.L. Baird and John R. Kane (Kent, OH, 1978), pp. 1–53, suggests (p. 24) that Isidore is following a hymn of St. Ambrose here; see PL 14, col. 223 for the suggested analogue.

richly ambiguous — figure in medieval poetry. Several intertwined literary traditions make use of the nightingale, and for precisely this reason, it is impossible to construct a firm typology of usages. Indeed, as I show later in the chapter, some of the most interesting invocations of the nightingale in medieval literature unite several traditions in their treatment. This is almost inevitable; attempts to understand the various possible symbolic resonances of a figure as complex and commonplace as the nightingale should not assume that only one tradition was available to any particular author. Nevertheless, it is entirely uncontroversial to say that the nightingale (whose nocturnal song is easily taken as a symbol of sexual passion) is often linked to romantic and erotic love from an early stage.² In the early thirteenth century, we can find it singing in the background of poems such as the *Donnei des amanz*:

Al tenz d'esté, après Pascur,
 Quant vi parer e folle e flur,
 Oi chanter le russinol
 E le mauvis e l'oriol. (*Donnei*, ll. 1–4)³

[In the summertime, after Easter, when I saw both leaf and flower appear, I heard the nightingale, the thrush and the oriole singing.]

The speaker gets out of bed early in the morning, and the sound of birdsong causes him to remember not the joys of love (which appears to be the conventional association: compare the opening of Guillaume de Lorris' *Roman de la Rose*) but the power of God (line 20).

The sharply ironic turn of events in this line suggests that this opening deliberately invokes

2 See *The Owl and the Nightingale: Text and Translation*, ed. Neil Cartlidge (corr. ed., Exeter, 2003), p. 102: 'so ubiquitous in medieval literature that it hardly needs illustration'. For broad accounts of the nightingale in medieval literature, see Baird, 'Rossignos'; Wendy Pfeffer, *The Change of Philomel: The Nightingale in Medieval Literature* (New York, 1985), Chapters 5–6 and *passim*; and Jeni Williams, *Interpreting Nightingales: Gender, Class, and Histories* (Sheffield, 1997), Chapters 1–3. There is also some relevant material in Sarah Kay, *Parrots and Nightingales: Troubadour Quotation and the Development of European Poetry* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013).

3 *Le Donei des amanz*, ed. Anthony J. Holden, Anglo-Norman Text Society Plain Texts Series 17 (Oxford, 2013).

one genre, only to confound our generic expectations in short order by revealing its true generic affiliations. Indeed, if we understand the opening in this way, then we can regard it as having a greater potential for conventional familiarity than openings of texts that genuinely inhabit the mode, since the ironic force of the passage depends on the pastiche with which the text begins.⁴ In an act with suggestive resonances with events that take place later in the text, Tristan mimics the voice of the nightingale:

Suz l'arbre Tristran seeit
 E aventures i atendeit.
 Humaine language deguisa,
 Cum cil que l'aprist de peça:
 Il cuntrefit le russinol,
 Le papingai, le oriol
 E les oiseals de la gaudine. (*Donnei*, ll. 460–67)

[Tristan sat under the tree and waited for something to happen. He veiled human language like one who had learned to do so long ago: he counterfeited the nightingale's voice, the parrot, the oriole, and the birds of the forest.]

Yseut recognizes Tristan's voice, even though he has disguised it, and his counterfeit birdsong draws her towards him (ll. 520-02), just as the 'real' birdsong of the opening directs the reader falsely towards a set of generic expectations, before redirecting his or her attention towards a quite different set. The poem requires its reader to understand the song of the nightingale as a symbol or signpost of erotic love — an understanding which can then be redirected by the moralizing poet.

The nightingale's song accompanies not only love, but also violence. The spring was not just a time for *fin' amors*; it was also the appropriate season for that other fundamental courtly pursuit, war.⁵ There are several possible reasons for this link: first, as Baird notes, the call of the nightingale was rendered as 'Oci, oci' in Old French (including

4 See Keith Busby, 'The *Donnei des amanz* and Courtly Tradition', *Medioevo Romanzo* 14 (1989), 181–95.

5 See Baird, 'Rossignos', pp 18–22.

insular French) texts, which is homographic for the second-person singular imperative of *occir*, ‘to kill’.⁶ The nightingale thus encourages those who hear it with its bloodthirsty, if mellifluous song. It might also be suggested that these violent nightingales work to imply similarities between courtly love and the homosocial bonds of chivalry. The striking scene in *Gui de Warewic*, in which the eponymous hero is reunited with his closest friend Terri, is a good example. The scene is set (‘Ço fu en mai par un jur, / Quant reverdist chascune flur’; [‘This was on a day in May, when every flower blooms’, ll. 4545–46]), and Gui goes walking in a forest alone, in order to hear the birds (not specifically nightingales) sing, and to delight in their singing (‘Pur oir les oisels chanter / En ço se pot il deliter’ [ll. 4553–54]). In another text, we might expect this passage to set the scene for a romantic encounter, but instead, Gui finds a gravely wounded Terri, provides him with aid, and as a result, forges the romance’s most enduring and important friendship, sealed with a kiss (ll. 5035–66). The highly generic setting of the *locus amoenus*, full of birdsong, must be a deliberate choice, probably intended to highlight the importance of this structurally critical scene. In the context of this discussion, we might also take it as evidence of the possibility that birdsong could be associated with homosocial, as well as romantic, love.

The singing nightingale can also figure the voice of a poet (specifically, the voice of the lyric poet-lover). The association is made fairly regularly in Occitan and Old French lyric poetry,⁷ and it has also been found in Classical literature.⁸ The odd story told by Alexander Neckham in his *De naturis rerum* may make reference to the idea of the nightingale as love-poet:

6 See *AW* s.v. *occir* v., and *AND* s.v. *occire* v.

7 Pfeffer, *Change of Philomel*, pp. 73–136 (esp. p. 83, on Marcabru; p. 89, on Bernard de Ventadour; p. 107f, on Peire Cardenal; and p. 116, on Châtelain de Coucy).

8 Baird, ‘Rossignos’, pp. 12–13 (on Hesiod, Euripides, Stesichorus, and Callimachus).

Sed o dedecus! quid meruit nobilis volucrum praecentrix, instar Hippolyti Thesidae, equis, diripi? Miles enim quidam nimis zelotes philomenam quatuor equis distrahi praecepit, eo quod secum dum ipsius assertionem animum uxoris suae nimis demulcens, eam ad illiciti amoris compulsisset illecebras.⁹

[But what a scandal! Why did that noble singer among birds, the very image of a chaste Hippolytus, deserve to be torn apart by horses? For a certain knight, who was filled with excessive jealousy, ordered the nightingale to be drawn and quartered by four horses, because, as he asserted, she so softened the spirit of his wife that she compelled her to illicit love.]¹⁰

The story of a jealous husband killing a nightingale in order to get revenge for his wife's adultery is itself the backbone of one of the most famous nightingale-poems of the Middle Ages — Marie de France's *Laiüstic*.¹¹ In this text, a lady claims that she stands on her balcony at night in order to listen to the song of the nightingale. In fact, it is an excuse to converse with her knightly lover, who lives next door to her, without her husband's knowledge (though, of course, the nightingale is not only a literal pretext for the liaison but a figurative commentary on its amorous nature). The husband becomes suspicious, silences the nightingale by having it killed, and throws the body of the bird at his wife; the lady, now voiceless (because bereft of her excuse to communicate with the knight), gives the dead bird to her lover, who encases it in a gold reliquary.

Although Marie's poem is a highly ingenious piece of writing, it is clearly indebted in many ways to the last major non-religious nightingale in medieval literature discussed here: the well-known Ovidian story of Philomena.¹² In Ovid's version of a story that may be derived from Sophocles' lost play *Tereus*, Philomena is raped by her sister's husband

9 Text from *Alexandri Neckham De Naturis rerum libri duo*, ed. Thomas Wright (London, 1863), pp. 102–03.

10 Translation from Baird, 'Rossignol', p. 17. As Baird notes (p. 18), another reference to the nightingale as lascivious singer can be found in *The Owl and the Nightingale*, ll. 1049–1101.

11 Text in *Lais de Marie de France*, ed. Karl Warnke, trans. Laurence Harf-Lancner (Paris, 1990), 210–19.

12 For accounts of the Philomena story in medieval literature, see Lena Behmenburg, *Philomela: Metamorphosen eines Mythos in der deutschen und französischen Literatur des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 2009); Baird, 'Rossignol', pp. 3–7; and Pfeffer, pp. 8–13. Ovid's version of the story is from the sixth book of the *Metamorphoses*.

Tereus, who cuts out her tongue when she threatens to denounce him for the rape.

Philomena tells her sister Procne about Tereus' crime by weaving a tapestry; the two sisters then gain their revenge by killing Tereus' son Itys, cooking him, and serving him up to his father at a feast. The revenge is discovered, and Tereus pursues the sisters, but they are transformed into birds.¹³ The story was most likely to have been familiar to Francophone readers in a twelfth-century *Philomena*, possibly by Chrétien de Troyes, which has been preserved as an interpolation in the widely-circulated *Ovide moralisé* (a later text which presents Ovidian material with a buffer of quasi-scholastic glosses, thereby ostensibly authorizing it as the acceptable face of antique pagan literary production).¹⁴ After the text of the *Philomena*, the poet of the *Ovide moralisé* appends a clunky allegorical gloss: each character is given a figurative referent (Tereus is the Body, Philomena is Worldly Delight, and Procne is the Soul), and a morality is drawn from their interactions.¹⁵

As texts such as the *Donnei des amanz* and the *Ovide moralisé* demonstrate, the figure of the nightingale can be assigned a religious meaning that proceeds from a rehandling of secular material (whether this takes the form of pastiche/parody, in the case of the *Donnei*, or apparently serious commentary on pagan material, in the case of the *Ovide moralisé*). We might also add to this list Alexander Neckham's understanding of Philomena as a type of the contemplative man, because her song is silent until the point of her transformation, at which point it is heard clearly.¹⁶ Moreover, the nightingale itself as religious symbol also has a long history. Isidore's entry on the nightingale, noted above,

13 Pfeffer, *Change of Philomel*, pp. 10–13.

14 *Ovide Moralisé: Poème du commencement du quatorzième siècle*, ed. Cornelius de Boer et al., 5 vols (Amsterdam, 1915–38), vol. 1, V, ll. 2217–3684. For an overview of the debate surrounding the question of Chrétien's authorship of the *Philomena*, see Roberta L. Krueger, 'Philomena: Brutal Transitions and Courtly Transformations in Chrétien's Old French Translation', in *A Companion to Chrétien de Troyes*, ed. Norris J. Lacy and Joan Tasker Grimbert (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 87–102 (esp. pp. 87–89).

15 Baird, 'Rossignol', pp. 7–10.

16 See *ibid.*, p. 27.

may also echo Ambrose's implicit understanding of the bird's dawn-song as heralding the coming of Christ.¹⁷ However, the image does not appear to be employed particularly frequently, despite the obvious folk-etymological association between *lux* and *luscinia*.¹⁸ Indeed, as Pfeffer notes, the nightingale is used in the mid-thirteenth century continental *Vie de Saint Thibaut* as a symbol of worldly preoccupation:¹⁹

Devons de les Sereynes do tot lo cham laissier
 Et cels do rossinol qui meinz fait foloier
 Et en totes meneres nos devons enforcier
 Que nos puissien au reigne Jhesu Christ apruchier. (*Thibaut*, ll. 656–59)²⁰

[We must fully leave the field of the Sirens, and that of the nightingale (who drives many people insane), and in all ways we must gain strength in order that we might come to the kingdom of Jesus Christ.]

This is clearly of interest to the present discussion as a statement that resembles those made by the twelfth-century hagiographical texts discussed in Chapter 1, in its rejection of the representative metonyms of secular literature and culture (here, the nightingale and the siren). From the evidence above, it is hard to conclude that the image of the nightingale as a religious figure had much currency in literature of any kind — the extant examples of religious nightingales are generally pastiches of, and/or commentaries on, secular models. And, as we have seen, the *Vie de Saint Thibaut* is quite happy to use the nightingale metonymically to represent attractive but dangerous literary/cultural interests. It could hardly have done this if the nightingale were a figure primarily associated with Christ. By contrast, as I show below, we can state fairly confidently that the surviving evidence for late-thirteenth century insular nightingale poems suggests that the nightingale was a figure

¹⁷ Baird, 'Rossignol', p. 24.

¹⁸ See Pfeffer, *Change of Philomel*, pp. 35–37.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁰ Text from *Vie de Saint Thibaut*, ed. R.T. Hill (New Haven, 1936).

exploited specifically for its multiple associations, religious and secular — and that it emerges as a devotional, meditative figure that generates meaning from its incorporation of both traditions. I will suggest that this exploitation is part of the broad assimilation of the imaginative machinery of profane literature into the ambit of religious poetry, a move with which this thesis as a whole is concerned.

At least two Anglo-Latin poets of the late thirteenth century, both of whom are firmly associated with the royal court, wrote nightingale poems in Latin (and, in one case, insular French). Both John Pecham and John of Howden wrote ‘affective’ nightingale poems; Pecham’s *Philomena praevia*, Howden’s *Philomena*, and Howden’s *Rossignos* all invite, in highly emotional terms, contemplation of various key moments in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and the assumption of Mary. We might be tempted to assume that these are in some way unintellectual texts on account of their emphasis on imagination, rather than intellection. However, this view does not do justice to the texts, or the religious culture out of which they sprang. In a recent book, Michelle Karnes has argued powerfully for a reconsideration of the role of imagination in intellection and cognition: she demonstrates that for theologians such as Bonaventure, imagination, imaginative contemplation, and meditation were all vital components of knowledge. For Bonaventure, Christ

acts within the cognitive process specifically as a cognitive image, one that sustains the mind’s own images and ensures that they accurately represent their objects so that understanding can occur. Seeing how Christ participates in the act of understanding, and participates most dramatically at the site of imagination’s images, we can see how the intellect can use those images to contemplate Christ.²¹

The idea that knowledge requires the illuminative sustenance of Christ is not held by Bonaventure alone. As Christopher Cullen notes, the thirteenth century saw two principal

²¹ Michelle Karnes, *Imagination, Meditation and Cognition in the Middle Ages* (Chicago, 2011), p. 92.

views on this matter — an Aristotelean one, which maintained that ‘cognition is a strictly natural process without need of divine or heavenly assistance’ and a (loosely speaking) Augustinian one, which holds that the ‘human mind is not sufficient in itself to carry out its basic operation of knowing truth, but is in need of divine assistance, usually described in terms of light imagery’.²² In the thirteenth century, prominent exponents of the latter theory included (of course) Robert Grosseteste, as well as William of Auvergne, Alexander of Hales, and John Pecham; the theory continued to be popular until the very end of the thirteenth century, when John Duns Scotus wrote against Henry of Ghent’s theory of illumination.²³ It seems likely that all of the poems discussed in this chapter were written during the apogee of Augustinian illumination, and would as such have been exponents of a current, fashionable philosophical position: John of Howden died in 1278, and John Pecham in 1292.²⁴ While their affinities with light-metaphysics and Augustinian illumination are not immediately apparent in all cases, their meditative, affective, imagistic style links them closely with the Bonaventuran tradition.

The first text I discuss here is the rarely-considered verse meditation *Rossignos*, by John of Howden, a royal clerk.²⁵ This substantial work of around 5000 lines claims in its prologue to have been written for Eleanor (of Provence), dowager queen, consort of the late Henry III, and mother of Edward I; given the documentary associations between Howden and the royal court, this claim seems likely, though we have no evidence that

22 Christopher M. Cullen, *Bonaventure* (Oxford, 2006), p. 77. The most important deviation from this narrative is Stephen P. Marrone, *Light of Thy Countenance: Science and Knowledge of God in the Thirteenth Century* (Leiden, 2001): see my discussion of illumination and cognition in Chapter 3 above.

23 Cullen, *Bonaventure*, p. 77.

24 See A.G. Rigg, ‘Howden, John of (fl. 1268/9–1275)’, and Benjamin Thompson, ‘Pecham, John (c. 1230–1292)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004).

25 The identification of Howden the poet with the scattered references to a John of Howden in historical records has occasionally been questioned, but can be trusted: see *Rossignos*, ed. Glynn Hesketh, ANTS 63 (London, 2006), pp. 2–10, and Louise Stone, ‘Jean de Howden, poète anglo-normand du XIII^e siècle’, *Romania* 69 (1946–47), 496–519.

Eleanor ever owned a copy of the text, since the only manuscript in which it survives was written in the fourteenth century.²⁶ The text has received little critical comment, and has, in fact, often been mistakenly characterized as a translation of Howden's Latin poem *Philomena*, a text to which it bears some resemblance, but which is clearly a different treatment of similar material, with different emphases and, crucially, written for a different audience.²⁷ *Rossignos* begins with the following *accessus* in prose:²⁸

Ci comence la pensee Johan de Houedene, clerck la roine d'Engleterre mere le roi Edward, de la neissance e de la mort e du relievement e de l'ascension Jhesu Crist e de l'assumpcion nostre Dame. E a non ceste pensee 'Rossignos', pur ce ke, sicome li rossignos fait de diverses notes une melodie, auci fait cest livres de diverses matires une acordaunce. Et pur ce encores a il non 'Rossignos' que il estoit fez e trové en un beau verger flori ou rossignol adés chauntoient. Et pur ce fu il faiz que li quor celi qui le lira soit esprys en l'amour nostre Seignour. Benoit soit qui le lira!

[Here begins the meditation of John of Howden, clerk of the queen of England, the mother of King Edward, on the subject of the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, and the assumption of our Lady. And this meditation has the name 'Rossignos' because just as the nightingale makes a melody out of diverse

26 *Rossignos*, ed. Hesketh, pp. 1–2.

27 *Ibid.*, pp. 8–10. Howden's *Philomena* should not be confused with the near-contemporary *Philomena Praevia* by John Pecham. This confusion leads Elizabeth Eva Leach mistakenly to describe the *Rossignos* as a translation of John Pecham's *Philomela* [sic]; see Leach, *Sung Birds: Music, Nature, and Poetry in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 2007), p. 100. For Howden's *Philomena*, see *John Hovedens Nachtigallenlied*, ed. Clemens Blume, *Hymnologische Beiträge* 4 (Leipzig, 1930); for Pecham's *Philomena praevia*, see *Hymnographi Latini: Lateinische Hymnedichter des Mittelalters (Zweite Folge)*, ed. Clemens Blume and G.M. Dreves (Leipzig, 1907), 602–16. Howden's poem was translated into Middle English, probably in the second half of the fourteenth century: see F.J.E. Raby, 'A Middle English Paraphrase of John of Hoveden's *Philomena* and the Text of his *Viola*', *MLR* 30 (1935), 339–43; and for the text, *Meditations on the Life and Passion of Christ*, ed. Charlotte D'Evelyn, EETS o.s. 158 (London, 1921). A recent exception to the critical neglect is the much-needed account of Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, 'The Tongues of the Nightingale: "Hertely Reding" at English Courts', in *New Directions in Medieval Manuscript Studies and Reading Practices: Essays in Honour of Derek Pearsall*, ed. Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, John J. Thompson, and Sarah Baechle (Notre Dame, 2014), pp. 78–98; see also the brief discussions in Elisabeth Salter, *English and International: Studies in the Literature, Art and Patronage of Medieval England*, ed. Derek Pearsall and Nicolette Zeeman (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 90–91; Denis Renevey, '1215–1349: Texts', in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval English Mysticism*, ed. Samuel Fanous and Vincent Gillespie (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 91–112 (discussion of *Rossignos* at pp. 103–05); John Carmi Parsons, 'Of Queens, Courts, and Books: Reflections on the Literary Patronage of Thirteenth-Century Plantagenet Queens', in *The Cultural Patronage of Medieval Women*, ed. June Hall McCash (Athens, GA and London, 1996), pp. 175–201 (at pp. 176, 187–88); and M. Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford, 1963), pp. 232–35.

28 Text from Hesketh (ed.), *Rossignos*. It is most likely an integral part of the text, *pace* Baird, who describes it as anonymous prologue.

notes, this book, too, makes an accordance out of many subjects. And for the following reason, too, it is called ‘Rossignos’: because it was made and composed in a beautiful flowering garden where nightingales were constantly singing. And it was made for the following reason: so that the heart of the one who reads it will be stirred up in the love of our Lord. Blessed be the one who reads it!]

This preface furnishes us with some useful tools for reading the poem. First of all, it presents itself explicitly as a synthesis of many subjects (‘diverses matires’), which, by implication, did not accord until Howden synthesized them. Just as the nightingale takes discordant sounds and turns them into concordant music, the raw materials of *Rossignos* are made to accord through a creative synthesis. This suggests strongly that Howden is not using the word ‘matires’ to refer to the stated subject of his poem (events from the lives of Jesus and Mary), as these events are hardly diverse or discordant. Rather, as we shall see, the poem uses material drawn from a broad field of reference to encourage contemplation of the central events of the Christian narrative. The discursive space in which *Rossignos* has been drawn together is, as we have seen, the ‘beau verger flori’. As Margaret Howell notes, Eleanor of Provence is known to have loved gardens, and Henry III set out a number of new ones for her during his lifetime.²⁹ This fact provides a basic explanation for the text’s remark; however, it is not in itself satisfactory. To understand Howden’s choice to situate his poem in this space, we must look at the courtly and erotic implications of the setting.

Eleanor would have been familiar with the royal garden at Everswell, near Woodstock, first laid out ‘by Henry II as the setting for his amours with Fair Rosamund’ and which, Howell claims, ‘deliberately evoked the romance of Tristan and Isolde’.³⁰ And, as Arlyn Diamond has shown, gardens are a vital setting for romance narratives; ‘a space

²⁹ Margaret Howell, *Eleanor of Provence: Queenship in Thirteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 74–75.

³⁰ Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, p. 74. Also see Howard Colvin, ‘Royal Gardens in Medieval England’, in *Medieval Gardens*, ed. Elisabeth B. MacDougall (Washington, DC), pp. 7–22 (pp. 19–20), and Teresa McLean, *Medieval English Gardens* (New York, 1980), p. 101.

which represents the rituals and pleasure of courtly life', and furthermore 'an eroticized space which reforms or repudiates the demands of rank or female obedience'.³¹ The 'pensee' which, as the prologue would have it, constitutes the text of the *Rossignos*, takes place in this space. The courtly nightingale becomes a religious contemplative, and the courtly garden becomes a place of religious meditation. Eleanor's ideologies are thus gently interrogated in a space which should belong to her; Howden's poem, in a sense, intrudes into this stronghold of courtly ideology and aristocratic female power. As we will see, the poem that follows the preface continues in this appropriation of the secular, courtly imaginary for religious purposes.

Howden's two nightingale poems contain reference to a diverse selection of authors and figures from literature, history, and the Bible (categories that would not, of course, have been treated separately in the Middle Ages). They are by no means idly selected, and a comparison of the *Rossignos* and *Philomena* furnishes direct evidence of this fact, as I show below. Both poems share a meditative, emotionally charged style which dwells extensively on episodes from the lives of Jesus and Mary. Broadly speaking, the texts are part of a tradition of meditative religious writing that goes back to Anselm and beyond.³²

But, as A. G. Rigg notes,

by the middle of the thirteenth century a new kind of religious literature began to predominate over other types. This does not preach the faith (which is assumed) or even morality, but aims at a purely emotional response. It is sometimes labelled 'sentimental' or 'pathetic', and concentrates on the moments in Christian history of maximum pathos.³³

We may see this kind of text as a subset of monastic meditative writing (which, as the texts

31 Arlyn Diamond, 'Meeting Grounds: Gardens in Middle English Romance', in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, ed. Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević and Judith Weiss (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 125–138.

32 See my discussion of Anselmian meditation in Chapter 1 above.

33 A.G. Rigg, *A History of Anglo-Latin Literature, 1066–1422* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 207.

discussed in this chapter demonstrate, was available to non monastic-readers at this time). Both poems fit fairly comfortably into the paradigm of ‘sentimental’ meditation; in particular, they share a tendency to use gruesome, graphic metaphors to describe emotionally charged episodes. The two poems also share a similar structure.³⁴ Despite these common features, the two poems use very different material to treat their similar subjects. As such, they tailor their material to different audiences.

One of the ways in which *Rossignos* is tailored to the royal patron for which it was written is by the introduction of elements from profane literary genres. Importantly, Howden uses the word ‘engin’ to describe the process of making and interpreting his own poem:

Mes de la grandor de la matire
me vaint, si que ne sei qe dire.
Amor, par ta tregrant puissance,
Mon engin e ma langue avauce. (*Rossignos*, ll. 1059–62)

But the glory of the subject defeats me, with the result that I do not know what to say. Love, by your great power, bolster my rhetoric and ingenuity.

This is a key term in medieval French literature, and a highly ambiguous one, with its implications of trickery and deception as well as skill and subtlety. It is frequently associated with the trickery of romance heroes, and the (implicitly analogous) narrative skill of their authors.³⁵ Another possible borrowing from the lexical field of romance comes in the poem’s long comparison of pious bravery with chivalric glory, which I discuss at length below. An epithet used in this section to describe King Bohemond (‘a chere hardie’, line 3987) appears to be a conventional phrase in romance and history: it is also found in

³⁴ See Rigg, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 208–09.

³⁵ There are few substantial studies of the concept of *engin*, but see Robert W. Hanning, ‘Engin in Twelfth-Century Romance: An Examination of the *Roman d’Enéas* and Hue de Rotelande’s *Ipomedon*’, *Yale French Studies* 51 (1974), 82–101; and Douglas Kelly, *The Art of Medieval French Romance* (Madison, WI, 1992), p. 123.

Thomas of Kent's *Roman de Toute Chevalerie* and Jordan Fantosme's *Chronicle*.³⁶ The grouping of Gawain, Lancelot, Perceval and Yvain in ll. 3989–92 suggests that Howden was aware that these characters often participated in the same narratives as one another. Examples could be multiplied further.

We can contrast this field of reference with that of Howden's *Philomena*, which uses the following comparison to indicate the inexpressibility of its subject:

Tuum, virgo, vincit praeconium
Ciceronem et Titum Livium;
Mare laudis mergit Virgilium,
Augustini premit ingenium. (*Philomena*, st. 49)³⁷

[For Tully's style and Livy's pen
The Virgin can't depict.
Her floods of praise drown Virgil too,
And pass Augustine's wit.] (trans. Rigg)³⁸

References of this kind are common in *Philomena*; as Hesketh notes, the poem contains a number of erudite references: 'to the Pleiades, Atlas, Olympus, the Hydra, Olybrius, Pergamon', and so on.³⁹ Even if *Rossignos* does assume 'an audience that can appreciate some often quite abstruse allusions to biblical history, courtly literature, medicinal treatments, musical instruments, saints' lives, heraldry, European geography and classical mythology', it does not contain the erudite classical references seen in *Philomena*.⁴⁰ The poem thus appears to avoid references that might only be obvious to a reader familiar with the standard grammar school *auctores*. This is hardly surprising, given that the poem is

³⁶ *AND* s.v. chere n.¹, quotations 1 and 3.

³⁷ Text from Blume (ed.), *John Hovedens Nachtigallenlied*.

³⁸ *Anglo-Latin Literature*, p. 211.

³⁹ Hesketh (ed.), *Rossignos* p. 10.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

addressed to Eleanor of Provence, to whom this kind of education would likely not have been available. More interesting is Howden's positive choice to write a devotional poem full of references to figures from courtly literature and history, none of which is to be found in the *Philomena*. After a long meditation on the name of Jesus, the poem proceeds to a meditation on the names of various examples of bravery and prowess, in the following remarkable passage, worth quoting at length. The basic comparison is as follows: even the bravest hero is not as brave as the heart that has been painted with the blood of Christ:

Judas li Makabé, sanz faille	
Ne fu pas si pruz en bataille	3970
Com li quors, quant l'Agneau sanz maille	
De son sanc le paint et l'entaille,	
N'Ector li fiz le roi de Troiem	
Ne Troïlus qui bien guerroie,	
Ne Cesar qui le mond mestroie,	3975
Ne Charles qui crîa 'Monjoie!'	
Ne cil a cort nés qui agence	
Et fet grant honur a Provence,	
Ne Rolland qui as fellons tence	
Dont Roncevaus est testmognance,	3980
Ne cil sanz poür qui essaie	
Maint peril e pas ne s'esmaie,	
Ne Cortêheuse qui tornaie	
En Antioche e fort l'effraie,	
Ne Godefrai de sainte vie	3985
Ki fu reis nobles en Surie,	
Ne Böesmond a chere hardie,	
Ne Tancré plain de vaillancie,	
Ne Wawayn qui fu sanz bobance	
Ne Lancelot qui sout de lance,	3990
N'Ywayn qui soun lion agence,	
Ne Percevaus qui bien s'avance,	
Ne li Bastard plain de value	
Ke de duk jesqu'en roi se mue,	
Ne Robert Guichard qui se rue	3995
En Calabre e l'ad conquerue,	
Ne li rois joefne qui sa vie	
Despendoit en chivalerie,	
Ne Richard qui fist s'envaie	
Dont Acre fu bien estormie,	4000
Ne Lowys li rois qui arive	
A Cartage aveske ost plentive,	

Ne li rois Henris qui desrive
 En donant com fontayne vive,
 Ne li quens Reymond de Provence, 4005
 Cil qui roïnis quatre avance,
 Ne Remond le quiens de vaillance
 Qui gardoit Tholos a sa launce
 Ne Alexaundre qui venqui Dare,
 Ne Arthur de qui Bretaigne esclaire, 4010
 N'Edward qui a trebeau viaure
 Qui seul pot Sarrasyn defaire, (Rossignos, ll. 3969–4012)

[Judas Maccabeus, certainly, was not so bold in battle as the heart, when the sinless Lamb painted and ornamented it with his blood — nor Hector the son of the king of Troy, nor Troilus who fought so well, nor Caesar who ruled the world, nor Charlemagne who cried ‘Montjoie!’, nor the short-nosed Guillaume who adorned and did great honour to Provence, nor Roland who fought against criminals (to which Roncesvaux testifies), nor the fearless one who experienced many dangers and was not frightened, nor Curthose who did battle in Antioch and greatly frightened its host, nor Godfrey of the holy life, who was a noble king in Syria, nor brave-faced Bohemond, nor Tancred, full of bravery, nor Gawain, who was without pomp nor Lancelot, expert at the lance, nor Yvain, who tamed his lion, nor Perceval, who did very well for himself, nor the Bastard, full of merit, who turned himself from a duke into a king, nor Robert Guiscard, who charged into Calabria and conquered it, nor the Young King who spent his life in chivalric pursuits, nor Richard who made an attack by which means Acre was fully routed, nor Louis the king who arrived at Carthage with a great host, nor King Henry who overflowed in generous giving like a living fountain, nor the count Raymond of Provence, who brought forth four queens, nor Raymond the courageous count, who protected Toulouse with his lance, nor Alexander who defeated Darius, nor Arthur, by whom Britain is glorified, nor Edward of the beautiful face, who alone can defeat the Saracens.]

The text continues in this vein for some time after this. It is a remarkable digression from the principal subject being discussed in this section of the poem — the name of Jesus, an increasingly popular devotional topos at this time — and, in its length alone, raises the question of why Howden would choose to make such an extended comparison between courtly and divine virtue, and why the form of this comparison should involve the near-interminable naming of figures from fiction and history (especially in a section ostensibly devoted to an exploration of the name of Jesus).⁴¹ Why did Howden consider it so

⁴¹ On this subject, see Denis Renevey, ‘Names above Names: The Devotion to the Name of Jesus from Richard Rolle to Walter Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection I*’, in *The Medieval Mystical Tradition: England, Ireland, and Wales (Exeter Symposium VI)*, ed. Marion Glasscoe (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 103–21; and Eric Jager, *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago, 2000), *passim*.

important to make these comparisons? For John Carmi Parsons, the reasons are to do with differences between Henry III's piety and Edward I's relative lack of the same quality:

The range of historical, and especially chivalric, figures who appear in *Rossignos*, its devotional nature notwithstanding, anticipates that shift away from the religious works produced at Henry III's court to the new historical and chivalric sensibilities manifest under Edward I. When he wrote *Rossignos*, Hoveden was either already in the dowager's service, hoping for a position with her, or was perhaps seeking to enlist her influence so he might obtain one with the new king. The possibilities would exist, then, that the royal widow indicated to Hoveden the desirability of a work forecasting what many must have known would be the tone of her son's reign, so very different from that of Henry III's reign; or that Hoveden saw her as the royal wife and mother who embodied a certain continuity between the reigns—to whom he might fittingly dedicate a work that spanned the differences between them.⁴²

There are several problems with this analysis. The first, of course, is that *Rossignos* is not anticipating any shift away from religious literature. Its fundamentally devotional nature cannot be swept aside in this way; these figures are mentioned primarily in order to demonstrate the impossibility of comparing their achievements to those of Christ. Another problem is that this view depends on a monophonic understanding of aristocratic piety. Henry III was a pious king, certainly, but as Margaret Howell and others have argued convincingly, his piety was very much part of his temporal identity as a king:

Henry III was by temperament a deeply pious man, and his devotion ... was expressed in 'conventional' ways. ... These were also the manifestations of a religious faith which were expected of him; conspicuous piety was an attribute of royalty. This immediately suggests a mixture of motives. Henry's devotion to the Confessor was compounded with his sense of the exalted character of his own office as king; his presentation of the relic of the Holy Blood to Westminster and his rebuilding of the abbey church were given added urgency from Louis IX's possession of the Crown of Thorns and building of the Saint-Chapelle; emulation was a great spur.⁴³

42 Parsons, 'Queens, Courts, and Books', pp. 187–88.

43 Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, p. 85.

In other words, we should not take a naïve view of royal piety in this period — it is unhelpful, for instance, to suggest that Edward I's apparently greater interest in Arthurian matters means that he was 'less pious' than Henry, or that there was a genuine, self-aware shift of emphasis between the two kings. I would suggest that a more fruitful approach would be to consider the philosophical and cultural circumstances in which John of Howden was working. As noted above, Howden can be regarded as working in the Bonaventuran tradition. He was also working in a culture in which (as David Matthews has shown) literature of political complaint was becoming increasingly common.⁴⁴ I do not wish to suggest that the *Rossignos* was a text of political complaint — however, it may nevertheless be the case that this body of literature worked to change the relationships of literary patronage, allowing for a greater degree of independence on the writer's part. Although *Rossignos* clearly responds to Eleanor's interests (most notably, gardens, her ancestors, and literary worthies), it does so, I contend, with the aim of changing Eleanor's perception of these things (we might even say her cognitive processes surrounding these things) in order to redirect her piety towards a recognition of the supremacy of God over worldly affairs. Christ's blood, painted on the heart of the contemplative, is fairly unambiguous evidence that Howden intends the poem to encourage its readers to recognize Christ as the means by which they know anything at all, and the ultimate Platonic idea of all of the virtues that they contemplate in this way. The heart, when aided in its contemplation by Christ, justifies anything that is contemplated with the correct intention. *Rossignos* actually encourages meditation on Yvain and Arthur as examples of bravery, as part of a wider understanding of all virtues as emanating from Christ. The bravery of the heart painted with Christ's blood is only amplified by a contemplation of the bravery of ancestral and literary heroes, since it exceeds the bravery of all of these worthies, and

44 David Matthews, *Writing to the King: Nation, Kingship, and Literature 1250–1350* (Cambridge, 2010).

therefore can only generate additional value by emphasizing the exceptional virtue of the figures it surpasses. *Rossignos* squares the circle of self-congratulatory royal piety by asserting that the great virtues of Eleanor's ancestors and heroes can be contemplated, but only comparatively, with the understanding that those things which come directly from God will always outshine them.⁴⁵ By the same stroke, it theoretically allows for the contemplative, meditative reading of romance and other courtly, secular texts, because the meditative hermeneutic method in which characters are one-to-one allegorical representatives of divine exemplars is no longer the only option — instead, particular examples of virtue can be taken as Platonic accidents of Christ's own virtue. Read in this way, a romance can still be entertaining on its own terms, but must always point towards the divine in the final analysis. We might even go further and say that, in line with his apparently Bonaventuran understanding of cognition, Howden regarded his poem as a kind of cognitive training. In showing how we should think about historical and literary worthies, the poem surely intends to alter how we think about these same characters when we encounter them in their own texts.

Of course, Howden's poem is not entirely innovative in its fusion of the sacred and martial in a vernacular work. I want to suggest that Howden was familiar with Grosseteste's *Chastelau*, even though this poem is not a direct analogue for the meditative, affective literary style sketched above. The *Chastelau* is more glossarial and (in the narrow sense of the word) theological than meditative, even if it owes much to Anselmian theology and pseudo-Anselmian similitudes, and even if its content can be described as affective. Parallels with Grosseteste's tendency to refer to the Fall and Redemption in terms that refer back to specific points of feudal law can be found in the *Rossignos*:

45 In another powerful image, quoted in Wogan-Browne, 'Tongues of the Nightingale', p. 83, meditation is figured as a sword capable of killing a foul beast (ll. 3921–24).

Again, the precise image does not match, but their similar shape suggests that Howden may have had some familiarity with Grosseteste's work. Indeed, if he were searching for vernacular models for the *Rossignos*, the *Chasteau* would have been an obvious and likely choice — it was widely circulated and as we have seen, bears some similarity to the *Rossignos*. Indeed, we have a manuscript of the *Chasteau* that was demonstrably commissioned for a noblewoman between 1280 and 1298 — a very similar period to the date of composition for the *Rossignos*.⁵⁰ It would not be unreasonable to regard these works as part of the same cultural programme — the religious colonization of the chivalric worthy — and to regard Howden's poem as an affective, meditative development of ideas found also in Grosseteste's poem. Importantly, both of these texts reveal the porosity of 'high' and 'low', Latin and vernacular, clerical and lay cultures in the thirteenth century. Eleanor can read in the *Rossignos* a text which is similar in form and style to the Latin poems of Howden and Pecham, both of which are poetic exponents of a current philosophical discourse about the nature of knowledge and cognition, and a text which, by means of this synthetic imagination, subsumes chivalric exemplarity into religious virtue.⁵¹

Howden's incorporation of chivalric exemplarity into the instructional form of *Rossignos* may have been responding directly to a literary interest that we know Eleanor had. Eleanor bought and borrowed various books containing romance during her lifetime,

50 Adelaide Bennett, 'A Book Designed for a Noblewoman: An Illustrated *Manuel des Péchés* of the Thirteenth Century', in *Medieval Book Production: Assessing the Evidence*, ed. Linda Brownrigg (Los Altos Hills, CA, 1990), pp. 163–81.

51 We might easily regard the ideological work done by texts of this kind as a counterbalance for an aristocratic tendency towards the appropriation of religious discourse. Aside from the manifestations of this tendency in romance, discussed at length in Chapter 2, an excellent example is the appropriative use of the liturgy, particularly in relation to a text known as the *Laudes regiae*, which presents Christ as a victorious king, and a defender and upholder of the temporal ruler's power. As Michael Clanchy notes in *England and Its Rulers, 1066–1307* (4th edition, Malden, MA, 2014), p. 237f, Henry III had a particular taste for these appropriative liturgical ceremonies. See also E.H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes regiae: A Study in Acclamations and Medieval Ruler-Worship* (Berkeley, CA, 1946); and Herbert E. J. Cowdrey, 'The Anglo-Norman *Laudes regiae*', *Viator* 12 (1981), 37–78.

and had scenes from the *Geste d'Antioch* painted in her apartments.⁵² As Jocelyn Wogan-Browne notes, the heroes of *Rossignos* would have 'evoked the paintings on Eleanor's palace walls, the images in her books, and the armorial bearings and faces known to her from both books and life.'⁵³ Though I share the reservations of John Carmi Parsons, who remarks that it is difficult to know what to do with this evidence of literary interest,⁵⁴ it is hard to imagine that a royal interest in romance ever failed to be closely linked to an assertion of a connection between the exalted, idealized heroes depicted in romance and the royals themselves, who would have been deeply invested in cultivating such an understanding. It may be the case that the apparently unsystematic mixture of heroes from romance and history (at varying degrees of distance from Eleanor's present) in the *Rossignos* speaks to this desire for self-exaltation (though, of course, it also undercuts it to some limited extent). The power of rhetorical listing — a rhetoric with which *Rossignos* is deeply conversant — should not be forgotten. The long list of names quoted above is royal genealogy without chronology, a textual collocation of chivalric worthies with little regard for ontological status (Howden would surely have known that some of the characters whose virtues he describes never existed) or temporality. It suggests Eleanor's dynasty as the crowning jewel in a long line of virtuous aristocrats, a jewel which is only surpassed by the glory that *Rossignos* is structurally and ideologically committed to asserting. The list is ideologically analagous to textual objects such as the magnificent genealogical roll made for Edward I shortly after his mother's death.⁵⁵ This lavishly-illustrated text gives a

52 See Parsons, 'Of Queens, Courts, and Books', p. 176; and Howell, *Eleanor of Provence*, pp. 82–92.

53 Wogan-Browne, 'Tongues of the Nightingale', p. 85f.

54 Parsons, 'Of Queens, Courts, and Books', p. 176.

55 The roll is London, British Library MS Royal 14 B VI; described in the British Library's *Online Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts* <<http://bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/introduction.asp>>; and in George F. Warner and Julius P. Gilson, *Catalogue of Western Manuscripts in the Old Royal and King's Collections*, 4 vols (London, 1921), II:176. I am grateful to Jocelyn Wogan-Browne for directing me towards this roll.

pictorial and textual demonstration of Edward's lineage, presenting him as the authoritative, inevitable culmination of that lineage. For the Plantagenet kings, in a sense, genealogy was romance, and Howden's poem may reflect that sensibility. What is remarkable is that it manages to function as an exaltation of aristocratic virtue while still reminding Eleanor that this virtue is subordinate to the virtue of a heart painted with Christ's blood. She may have taken comfort from the thought that, with sufficient devotion, she could regard herself as falling into both categories.

* * *

In the final section of this chapter, I want to suggest that a short prose text by John Pecham, the first Franciscan Archbishop of Canterbury, can also be affiliated with the tendencies evinced by Howden's *Rossignos*. The *Jerarchie*, Pecham's 'only vernacular theological work', was written for another Eleanor (Eleanor of Castile, the queen of Edward I)⁵⁶ and can be most simply described as a comparison between the royal court and the court of heaven, 'a sermon in letter form'.⁵⁷ It is derived from the pseudo-Dionysian *De celestia hierarchia*, which, as John Carmi Parsons notes, Grosseteste translated and commented upon in the first decade of his episcopacy;⁵⁸ though Pecham need not have been directly familiar with the *De celestia hierarchia*, since its content was available in summary form in the Lombard's ubiquitous *Sentences*.⁵⁹ The *Jerarchie* is generally assumed to respond directly to a request from the queen to know more about the order of

56 For Eleanor, see John Carmi Parsons, 'Eleanor of Castile: Legend and Reality through Seven Centuries', in *Eleanor of Castile, 1290–1990: Essays to Commemorate the 700th Anniversary of Her Death, 28 November 1290*, ed. David Parsons (Stamford, England, 1991).

57 Parsons, 'Of Queens, Courts, and Books', p. 180.

58 Ibid.

59 M. Dominica Legge, 'John Pecham's *Jerarchie*', *Medium Aevum* 11 (1942), 77–84.

angels, and to perform a narrowly instructive function by comparing the orders of angels to another hierarchy with which Eleanor of Castile would have been familiar — that of the court.⁶⁰ I want to go a little further in this analysis, and suggest that, in line with the reading of *Rossignos* above, we might also understand the *Jerarchie* as a kind of cognitive training.

The *Jerarchie* is usefully approached through Pecham's *Philomena praevia*, a text which demonstrates that Pecham's interest in connecting different levels of reality goes beyond the merely practical. The text is an appropriation of the image of the nightingale for devotional purposes, along much the same lines as Howden's *Rossignos*, although the nightingale appears as a character throughout Pecham's poem (this is not the case in the *Rossignos*). In the *Philomena praevia*, the speaker sends a nightingale to his beloved so that its sweet songs might lift him from his sadness ('Veni ... Ut amicum valeas / cantu delinire. / Tollens eius taedia / voce dulcis lyrae, / Quem. heu. modo nequeo / verbis convenire.' [st. 2]). The nightingale is chosen to take this message for the following reason:

... quia legi
De te quaedam propria,
quae divinae legi
Coaptata mystice
placent summo regi

(*Philomena praevia*, st. 4)⁶¹

[... because I have read about certain properties of yours, which, adapted mystically into the divine law, please the supreme king.]

In other words, the nightingale is a suitable vehicle for the kind of religious message that Pecham wishes to express. The characteristics of the nightingale that make it so suitable are subsequently explained: the bird flies up into a tree and sings (st. 6); his song grows more sonorous around the hour of prime and does not cease (st. 7); around tierce he sings

⁶⁰ Salter, *English and International*, p. 98: 'this is devotional instruction for a great secular princess'; Parsons, 'Of Queens, Courts, and Books', p. 180: 'that earthly example to which a woman of Eleanor's rank might be expected to respond most readily'.

⁶¹ Text from Blume and Dreves (eds), *Hymnographi Latini*, pp. 602–16.

even more ardently; his heart swells and his throat nearly bursts, so strong is his voice (st. 8); at midday he cries so vigorously that its innards rupture with an “Oci, oci”; his song then gradually fades (st. 9); he finally dies at nones, nearly emptied of blood, all of his veins ruptured (st. 10). The mystical properties of this bird are as follows (st. 11); it is the virtuous and loving soul, who composes a song while thinking of its pleasant homeland (st. 12).

The exposition of the nightingale-similitude continues with a comparison between the canonical hours and the stages of Christ’s life: the devout soul who understands this imitates Christ by ascending the Cross (st. 17) and follows the example of the nightingale by singing praises (st. 18). This soul sings “Oci” rejoicing in its pain (st. 24), and at the hour of prime, contemplates the time when God took on flesh (st. 25), even imagining nursing the baby Jesus (st. 30) and washing his little clothes (st. 33). At tierce, the soul sings of Christ’s suffering (st. 35), and sings “Oci” again, hoping to die to the world (st. 37). At midday the soul sings “Oci” again, weeping and praising Christ, who endured so much (st. 47), and is pierced by the arrow of love and sings of Christ’s passion (st. 48). The soul eventually expires, but it is a happy death (st. 80), and should not be lamented, but rejoiced at. The poem ends by addressing itself to a dear brother (‘frater care’, st. 87), who should pray to Christ in order to learn the song of the martyr.

Pecham’s *Philomena praevia*, then, is concerned with connecting several levels of reality together using the image of the nightingale (and one which appears to be a reworking of the nightingale whose pleasant-sounding songs incite men to love and war). The nightingale is a mystical representation of Christ, and the devout soul should be like the nightingale figuratively, in their spiritual demeanour. This state is itself an imitation of the literal events of Christ’s life. The contemplation (and experience) of pain ties the entire poem together; the devout soul is not only encouraged to contemplate Christ’s suffering,

but also to experience it through that contemplation. Although the *Jerarchie* is not directly comparable to the *Philomena* in terms of style, the former can be compellingly read in terms of the latter.

After a short rubric identifying its author and recipient, the *Jerarchie* begins with the following statement:

Cil est benuré qui en terre meine vie celestre ... Qui donc veut tele vie mener, il covient k'il sache aucune chose del estat de paradis, e qu'il adresce sun quer a la guise des citeins du ciel.⁶²

[Blessed is the one who leads a celestial life on earth. ... Whoever wants to lead such a life should know something of the nature of paradise, and should direct his heart towards the nature of the citizens of heaven.]

The notion that the royal court is invoked only as a conveniently understandable metaphor for Queen Eleanor must be discounted at this point. There is a clear devotional purpose to the comparison: the spiritual life is intimately connected to our life on earth, and in order to lead it, we must contemplate spiritual beings ('asdrece sun quer' has strong connotations of meditative contemplation here). The contemplation is intellectual, because we hope to know something about the citizens of heaven, but also, by implication, meditative, because the knowledge and its ethical application are inseparable, and because it proceeds from an imaginative, imagistic consideration. After a fairly pedestrian explanation of how the orders of angels and courtiers are structurally similar, the text offers a moral precept for each order:

E pur ceo ke est dreite seinteté vivre solum la vie des angles taunt cum l'en puet, cele alme eyt beneyte ke les perfections des neofs ordres se efforce de mettre en sun quer; de seraphin, par enbrasee devocion e ardant amur de Deus; de cherubin, par illuminé contemplacion e par tut tens pensers de Deu; de thrones, par adreusement de conscience ki deit fere les jugemenz de la vie; de seignories, par delivrance del

62 Text from Legge, 'John Pecham's *Jerarchie*', pp. 82–84 (at p. 82).

quer de totes males affections e de touz mauz desireres ke l'en eyt de son queor la seignorie; de vertuz, a fere vigrousement quant ke reyson esgarde; de potestas, par ceo ke l'en ne lesse mie a fere le bien pur ennui ne pur gref ke lui enemi purchase par sey a par male genz. Après li quers ke tut le cors e le alme gouverne par charité, c'est par seinte amur de son prome, est en l'ordre de principaus, kar volenté par reson mené est prince du quer. E qui en toz ses fez bee al espirement de Deus e le requert est en l'ordre de archangles; e qui garde les euz e les autres sens ke nul mal message n'i entre, cil est del ordre des aungles. Et quant vostre alme, Madame, serra issi paree, dunke serra ele ierarchizee et serra vostre queor levee a Deu pur estre seraphinant et cherubinaunt et thronizaunt, e serra en sey bien garni par seignorie, vertu e poer e bien ordeynée en eovres par adreusement de charité, par espirement de Deus, e par disciplines de sens foreyns.⁶³

[And because it is true holiness to live according to the life of angels to the extent that one is able, may the soul be blessed who strives to put the perfections of the nine orders in their heart; that of the Seraphim, through the embrace of devotion and the ardent love of God; of the Cherubim, through enlightened contemplation and by constant thoughts of God; of the Thrones, through the amendment of the conscience which must make judgements in life; of the Dominions, through the release of the heart from all evil affections and desires which have lordship over one's heart; of the Virtues, through doing vigorously what reason decides; of the Powers, through not abandoning the doing of good out of weariness or grief which the enemy brings about through his own agency and through that of evil people. After the heart, which governs the entire body and soul through charity (that is to say, through holy love of its neighbour) is in the order of the Principalities, then the will governed by reason is the prince of the heart. And the one who in all his deeds strives towards the inspiration [or possibly *esperiment*; 'knowledge'] of God and seeks it out is in the order of Archangels; and the one who guards his eyes and his other senses so that no evil message enters them, he is in the order of Angels. And when your soul, my lady, is prepared in this way, then it will be hierarchized and your heart will be lifted to God to be seraphinized and cherubinized and throninated, and will be in itself adorned with lordship, virtue and power, and well arrayed in deed by the amendment of charity, by the inspiration of God, and by the control of external stimuli.]

The text exhorts its reader to exercise control over their sensory perception in two places ('garde les euz e les autres sens' and 'disciplines de sens foreyns'): these passages are crucially important for understanding the function and meaning of the whole text. As we remember, the text states at the beginning that its objective is to aid its reader in the pursuit of a celestial life on earth; however, this clearly does not mean the kind of privation practised by nuns, anchoresses, or virgins, for the simple reason that the text is addressed

63 Ibid., pp. 83–84.

to Queen Eleanor, however much this idea might suggest substantial physical privation. Instead, it would seem that the pursuit of this life involves the pursuit of knowledge of celestial things, and in particular, the knowledge of how they are analogous to earthly things. Pecham does not encourage Eleanor to reject the world — surely an unreasonable proposition, considering the role she played in ruling part of it — but rather encourages her to understand how this world figures the next one. The emphasis on sensory inputs in the last section show us that these inputs are not to be rejected, but controlled ‘par disciplines’. Michelle Karnes notes that, for Bonaventure, ‘Christ is the exemplar of any object ... all objects express Christ and lead the individual toward him’.⁶⁴ The proviso to this statement is that the individual has to participate in this act of meditative cognition in order to be led towards Christ through the contemplation of an object. The contemplation of the heavenly court may lead the contemplative towards Christ in short order, but, after exposure to Pecham’s comparison, the everyday experience of the court might reasonably be expected to cause Eleanor to remember the analogous heavenly court; in this way, everyday life can be the source of contemplation. For Karnes, ‘it is clear that Bonaventure believes that everyone should seek contemplation and that everyday experiences can, when properly considered, provide a means to that end’.⁶⁵ I am arguing, then, that Pecham’s short comparison attempts to provide a means by which this proper consideration might be cultivated. As we have seen above, this is far from an isolated tendency. Pecham’s *Philomena*, addressed to an unidentified brother Franciscan, suggests that such texts were not targeted solely at the laity; Howden’s abstruse, prolix, *Philomena* provides even better evidence of this. The *Rossignos*, perhaps more than any of these texts, demonstrates a desire to colonize its patron’s response to literature and life equally; in the pursuit of this

⁶⁴ Karnes, *Imagination*, p. 102.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

desire Howden has produced one of the most remarkable sacred-profane conflations of the thirteenth century.

Chapter 6: Believing in romance, c.1290–c.1330.

Did medieval people believe in their romances?¹ The default position of romance criticism at present — that which characterizes romances principally as entertainments — does not often pay attention to this important question. For insular romances to function as what Rosalind Field calls a ‘self-fashioning of the Anglo-Norman barony’, they must have demonstrated some truth for their first audiences; most fundamentally, the truth of the ethical system of aristocratic lay piety that they inscribe.² Those who listened to these texts must have believed, or disbelieved, or a little of both, in the world presented to them, which, though fictional (which is not the same as untrue) makes ideological truth claims. Indeed, such truth claims can be suggestively thought of as the beginning of romance. Romance’s complex relationship with history and historicity is a major part of this discourse; an appropriation of the structures and events of history allows these truth-claims to be made more forcefully — even more forcefully than in history itself, bounded as this mode is by the need to depict the deaths of its protagonists and the never-ending march of historical time.³ As James Simpson notes of *Sir Orfeo*, its circular form means that ‘the entropic catastrophes of history are held at bay’.⁴ Still, even ahistorical or selectively (or cosmetically) historical narrative modes acquire their own history — we might say their own entropic baggage — as they are reworked by successive generations of writers and

1 This question is a reformulation of the one memorably posed by Steven Justice in ‘Did the Middle Ages Believe in Their Miracles?’, *Representations* 103 (2008), 1–29.

2 Field, “‘Pur les francs homes amender’”: Clerical Authors and the Thirteenth Century Context of Historical Romance’, in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 175–88 (at p. 181).

3 Rosalind Field, ‘Romance as History, History as Romance’, in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol Meale (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 163–73: ‘[T]o listen to the old stories ... is to assert the significance of human experience and to challenge the mutability and mortality that are the substance of history’ (p. 173).

4 ‘Cognition is Recognition: Literary Knowledge and Textual “Face”’, *New Literary History* 44 (2013), 25–44 (at p. 28).

audiences. Romance cannot avoid entropy, even if its constituent texts perform that very avoidance. So, the circular form of *Sir Orfeo* may implicitly deny the diegetic action of history on its characters, but the action of literary history on the text itself, and by extension, the characters within it, cannot be avoided or repudiated (though, as I suggest below, *Sir Orfeo* comes as close to a repudiation as any Middle English romance). Though romance presents itself as being a timeless mode, immune to historical entropy, this timelessness depends on a highly contingent relationship with an historically located audience. To take Simpson's formulation, romance needs an audience capable of recognizing its 'textual face'; a process that requires familiarity with the characteristic features of the mode: 'An artifact implies its history, and is illegible without habituated understanding of that history'.⁵ The central argument of this chapter is that the writers and audiences of the first generation of Middle English romance did not have a 'habituated understanding' of the genre whose constituent parts they inherited. The insular French romance tradition is demonstrably aware of the ideological and cultural conditions that shaped and perpetuated it; this awareness allows for conservative productions such as the *Romance of Horn*, sharp parodies such as *Ipomedon*, and anxious, conflicted texts such as *Gui de Warewic*. Even the writer of *Gui* was implicitly aware of what his text was supposed to do, even if he had his doubts about its ability to do it. However, the anxieties of the first Middle English romances are qualitatively different. Faced with a continuing demand for the material that increasingly required texts written in English, romance writers had the unenviable task of rendering that material for an audience broader than, and culturally remote from, the original aristocratic reception-contexts of insular French romance.⁶

5 Ibid., p. 30.

6 Cf. Ian Short, 'Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England', *Anglo-Norman Studies XIV: Proceedings of the Battle Conference, 1991*, ed. Marjorie Chibnall (Woodbridge, 1992), pp. 229–49: 'Anglo-Norman was, by its nature, class-exclusive; literature in English, by comparison, was class inclusive in that it was accessible to a wider social stratum comprising both monolingual and

This is all to say that the history of Middle English romance weighs heavily upon it from its very inception. To move past the superficial absurdity of this statement, we must take full account of the fact that the history to which I am referring is contained principally in the corpus of insular French romance.⁷ In making this argument, I am reading Middle English romance (particularly the romances of the Auchinleck Manuscript) in a way that differs sharply from the approach of Thorlac Turville-Petre, who argues that the Auchinleck romances present themselves as ‘sources of historical knowledge’.⁸ Instead, I suggest, by the fourteenth century historical narrative had been thoroughly tarred by the brush of romance. Poems such as *Rosignos*, with its long enumeration of ancestral and literary heroes, demonstrate that romances and historical narratives could have performed similar emotional and ideological functions for aristocratic readers at this time. In other words, the interpenetration of history and romance in the Auchinleck Manuscript does not show us that the compilers of this manuscript believed that the stories of Guy and Beves were literally true; instead, it may be said to demonstrate their awareness of the fictive nature of historical narrative, and their willingness to reshape these texts in pursuit of an aesthetic or ideological programme. The most important ‘historical’ context for this vitally important anthology of early fourteenth-century literature is the literary history of insular romance. Many of the texts contained in this manuscript can be read, on one level or another, as responses to the fraught tradition of insular romance-writing, and moreover, as attempts to reshape that tradition in line with romance’s changing audiences and hermeneutic models.

bilingual Anglophones’ (p. 249).

7 For a numerical demonstration that the corpus of Middle English romance was dictated by French antecedents, see Rosalind Field, ‘Patterns of Availability and Demand in Middle English Translations *de romanz*’, in *The Exploitations of Medieval Romance*, ed. Laura Ashe, Ivana Djordjević, and Judith Weiss (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 73–89.

8 Thorlac Turville-Petre, *England the Nation: Language, Literature, and National Identity 1290–1340* (Oxford, 1996), p. 112. Robert Allen Rouse has also made this claim of the Auchinleck romances: see *The Idea of Anglo-Saxon England in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 60.

Many, if not most, Middle English romances have (usually insular) French analogues,⁹ and the mode itself is, of course, deeply indebted to the stylistic techniques of its predecessor. Whether or not the relationship between a Middle English romance and its insular French ancestor is one of direct dependence, it is highly unlikely that any author of the first generation of English romances wrote in total ignorance of insular French treatments of the same story. The existence of this rich literary corpus restricts Middle English writers in their compositional choices. It is self-evident that romances began to be written in English because there was a demand for them to exist in English, whether we see that demand as being motivated by a change in the possible audiences for romance or by a change in the linguistic competencies or preferences of the same audience. I would suggest that both are likely to have contributed to the change, but that the notion of a widespread loss of competency in insular French should not be seriously entertained. Instead, the first English romances witness a change in fashion that preferred (for whatever reason) the consumption of texts written in English, and which caused a need for an existing Francophone literary tradition to be remade in English. We do not necessarily have to think of language as the primary reason for this large-scale remaking of a literary mode; it may have been more ancillary to the cultural project of Middle English romance than we assume.

The fact that Middle English romance does not initially supersede insular French romance, but exists in competition with it for at least seventy-five years (from c.1275, an early date boundary for the composition of texts like *Havelok*, to c.1350, the date of some of the latest manuscripts of insular French romance) is a highly important feature of Middle English romance, and therefore of any literary history that we try to construct from

⁹ The online *Database of Middle English Romance* is useful conspectus of basic information: see <http://www.middleenglishromance.org.uk>.

it.¹⁰ We must read Middle English romances as existing in dialogue with their insular French ancestors, since these ancestors, far from being the dead/absent fathers that they are so often presented as, continued to be produced, transmitted, and donated during the fourteenth century.¹¹ It is also worth noting that, even if we accept that few, if any, new insular French romance compositions were attempted in the fourteenth century, it is certainly possible (in my view, likely) that evidence of *remaniement* may be found in the later manuscripts of these texts. The present state of scholarship would make this evidence difficult to obtain, and it is certainly outside the ambit of this study. Still, we can safely conclude that the insular French romance tradition was far from static — still less moribund — in the first half of the fourteenth century.¹² Circulation and copying implies cultural value to almost the same degree as the production of new texts. However, this is emphatically not to say that the circulation of insular French romance in the thirteenth century implied the cultural continuity of this body of writing. On the contrary, this chapter argues that twelfth-century romance quickly loses its capacity for recognition when it begins to circulate in wider reception-contexts such as Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Douce 132 (whose owner was probably a lawyer or estate-manager).¹³ Such readers had, in

10 The composition of the Middle English *King Horn* is difficult to date precisely; dates of c.1225 or even earlier have been claimed, though it is more likely that the text was written towards the end of the thirteenth century. The chronology of selected European romances in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance*, ed. Roberta L. Krueger (Cambridge, 2000), pp. xiii–xix, is a useful collection of conventional dates.

11 See Rosalind Field, ‘Romance in England, 1066–1400’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 152–76: ‘With the exception of Thomas’s *Tristan* ... all Anglo-Norman romances exist in late thirteenth- or fourteenth-century copies.’ (p. 163, with useful discussion on the following pages); for an example of the view that insular French romance is culturally insignificant in the fourteenth century, see Melissa Furrow, *Expectations of Romance: The Reception of a Genre in Medieval England* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 139. The question of whether a particular English romance depends upon an extant French source is highly contested in some cases (most notably that of *Havelok*); on this debate, see Nancy Mason Bradbury, ‘The Traditional Origins of *Havelok the Dane*’, *Studies in Philology* 90 (1993), 115–42 (p. 117); and *Havelok*, ed. G.V. Smithers (Oxford, 1987), pp. xvi–lvi.

12 See Dean 151–75 (romance) and 76–82.2 (*chanson de geste*); by my count, there are fifteen extant fourteenth-century romance manuscripts, twenty-nine thirteenth-century codices, and a handful from the twelfth century.

13 P.R. Robinson, ‘The “Booklet”: a self-contained unit in composite manuscripts’, *Codicologica* 3 (1980), 46–67 (esp. p. 57).

my view, ceased to recognize the ideological truth claims of twelfth-century romance by the time these texts reached the hands of their English *remanieurs*; a loss partially due to the action of history, but also due to the increasing colonization of romance motifs and poetics by religious instructional texts such as Grosseteste's *Chasteau* (found alongside the *Romance of Horn* in MS Douce 132). Romance is its own victim: its highly appealing, portable motifs were easily transmitted and reworked in such a way that their original ideological context was effaced.

Of course, written circulation was not the only medium by which romance participated in culture; the portability of its constituent *topoi* and its long association with oral performance means that some type of oral and/or memorial transmission for these texts is at least possible, though arguments along these lines have often overstated their case.¹⁴ Indeed, such a mode of transmission makes it even more likely that the constituent motifs and stories of romance would be divorced from their original ideological contexts. However, the writers of Middle English romance often had a written source close to hand; the persistent tendency among writers of Middle English romance to invoke oral performance through devices such as narrative apostrophe is itself performative, and not evidence of transcription or fossilized orality, as has sometimes been claimed.¹⁵ It is easy, given this situation, to posit that Middle English romance writers were relatively uncritical transmitters of the material that they inherited; as Rosalind Field would have it, the

14 See, for example, Bradbury, 'Traditional Origins', pp. 139–42, where it is asserted that the richly descriptive style adopted by the writer of the Middle English *Havelok* is evidence for the 'story's emotional core' (p. 140), a core which is regarded as folkloric in origin, a 'legacy from its traditional ancestry' (p. 142).

15 See, for instance, Rosalind Field, 'From *Gui* to *Guy*: The Fashioning of a Popular Romance', in *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, ed. Alison Wiggins and Rosalind Field (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 44–60: '*Gui* is one of a group of Anglo-Norman romances translated into English to suit the audience's linguistic tastes and abilities, but it changes less than any of them' (p. 55). Middle English romances may differ from their insular French antecedents, but they usually made use of them. On performative orality, see Ananya J. Kabir, 'Forging an Oral Style? *Havelok* and the Fiction of Orality', *Studies in Philology* 98 (2001), 18–48.

Auchinleck manuscript, ‘a summary of the directions in which Middle English romance was developing’, is ‘about the transmission of culture, collecting and making available material that had been accumulating in England for nearly two centuries’.¹⁶ But culture is never static, and as we have seen in previous chapters, the thirteenth century sees a widespread reassessment of the capacity of literature to communicate ethics; a reassessment in which romance texts are closely imbricated. Middle English romance needs to justify its place in literary culture from the very beginning in a way that the first flourishing of insular romance (whose cultural position was initially so secure) did not. It is a consciously second-generation mode whose transmission of the constituent memes of romance is often inflected by an uncertainty about why these cultural units should be transmitted.¹⁷ We might, then, ask ourselves why they came to be transmitted at all, avoiding in doing so the old-fashioned assumption that there is some universal feature of romance that makes it appealing to all imaginable reception contexts. A self-evident answer to the question — one that goes some way towards explaining the ‘conservative’ (Field’s word) nature of the mode — is that its audiences demanded the transmission of these texts.¹⁸ But we need to go further and to ask why this demand persisted, apparently immune to all the substantial societal, cultural and intellectual changes that took place in the thirteenth century. It is certainly true that romance can be plausibly seen as the cultural property of its audiences and patrons, liable to being shaped directly by their wishes; the same cannot be said to the same extent about other modes. However, as I have suggested above, the wishes of fourteenth-century patrons and audiences are not necessarily the same as those of twelfth-century patrons and audiences; in fact, we know that thirteenth- and

16 Field, ‘Romance in England’, p. 170.

17 ‘Meme’ used after Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 3–7 and *passim*.

18 ‘Romance in England’, p. 175.

fourteenth-century manuscripts of romance, whether they were written in insular French or Middle English, circulated far beyond the aristocratic coteries that the insular French texts inscribe. These texts were being read by monks, lawyers, merchants, and aristocrats; to take one additional example, Ralph Hanna has recently shown that mercantile and courtly readers of romance overlapped considerably in their literary interests.¹⁹ It was very easy for twelfth-century aristocratic audiences to ‘believe’ in romance since, in doing so, they were believing in ciphers of themselves. Similarly, romance clearly represented a knowable, ideologically dangerous quantity for the twelfth-century hagiographical polemicists discussed in previous chapters (who may themselves have been part of the first audiences for some of these texts). But as romance diffuses into different reception-contexts (and different languages) we are left with a much muddier cultural discourse. We must ask what truths romance could have asserted for this broader audience — in other words, how these readers and listeners believed in romance. The earliest examples of Middle English romance embody a fascinating set of readings of the literary tradition that they inherited; indeed, since the production of new insular French romances seems to have tailed off around 1230 (with the exception of *Fouke Fitz Waryn*),²⁰ they offer us a vital index of how much romance has changed over the course of the thirteenth century. The readings that follow attempt to understand how writers of romance at the turn of the fourteenth century made sense of the material that they inherited; perhaps perversely, the first of these readings deals with a narrative that almost certainly had no insular French romance as its principal source.

Forms of romance: *The King of Tars*

¹⁹ Ralph Hanna, *London Literature, 1300–1380* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 116–29.

²⁰ The question of why this should happen is a fascinating one — did romance fall out of fashion; did the market for such texts become saturated?

The closest narrative analogues to the tail-line poem known as *The King of Tars* are in Latin chronicles; its insular analogues include the Anglo-Latin *Flores Historiarum* and Rishanger's *Chronica*.²¹ Any attempt that we might make to claim it as a response to the insular romance tradition would therefore seem to be problematic from the outset. Indeed, as Dieter Mehl and others have noted, the text is not placed next to other romances in the Auchinleck manuscript; its companions are instead homiletic texts and religious narratives.²² Mehl places it in his category of 'homiletic romances', and Hanspeter Schelp in the category of 'exemplary romances'; we might even go slightly further and understand the text as an exemplary narrative inflected by the narrative conventions of romance.²³ The large number of nameless characters, its lack of direct dependence on an extant romance text, its location towards the beginning of the Auchinleck manuscript, where the most religious items are placed (not to mention its presence in the Vernon and Simeon manuscripts, both famously devotional compilations), and its use of tail-line stanzas (a form more closely associated with religious writing than romance at this point) all militate against our characterizing this text as romance.²⁴ But this text's dependence on romance goes beyond mere convention. There is some direct evidence for its use of an existing romance in the form of substantial borrowings from the Middle English *Otuel and Roland*. These borrowings include the names of the pagan kings who march against the Sultan of

21 See *The King of Tars*, ed. Judith Perryman (Heidelberg, 1980), pp. 42–49, and Robert Geist, 'On the Genesis of *The King of Tars*', *JGEP* 42 (1943), 260–68.

22 Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London, 1968, f.p. 1967 as *Die mittelenglischen Romanzen des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts*), pp. 122–24.

23 See *ibid.*, pp. 122–24; and Hanspeter Schelp, *Exemplarische Romanzen in Mittelenglischen* (Göttingen, 1967), pp. 131–33. Schelp groups *The King of Tars* alongside other romances about virtuous women (see pp. 114–35).

24 On the construction of Auchinleck, see Turville-Petre, *England the Nation*, pp. 108–41 and esp. 112–13, and Hanna, *London Literature*, p. 104. On the religious associations of tail-rhyme, see Rhiannon Purdie, *Anglicising Romance: Tail-Rhyme and Genre in Medieval English Literature* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 32–65.

Damascus after he converts to Christianity (ll. 1087–89), as well as the repetition of various lines.²⁵ Furthermore, the plot of the first part of the *The King of Tars* (up to the point at which the king's daughter is allowed to give herself in marriage to the Sultan) closely resembles that of *Florence de Rome*, a thirteenth-century *chanson de geste*, now extant only in continental manuscripts.²⁶ The extant English version of this romance dates from the late fourteenth century; the writer of *The King of Tars* therefore either knew a lost early English version of the romance or a French version. Given the close correspondence of incident between *The King of Tars* and the extant *chanson de geste*, the latter possibility seems more likely. We therefore have a writer who is clearly familiar with romance texts in at least English, and probably in French as well, and who seems to have mined some of these texts in order to produce this significant reworking of a story whose closest analogues are found in chronicles. The poem, I shall argue, attempts to re-form history and romance alike into a text that attempts a reformation of its inscribed readership.

The implications of its modern title notwithstanding, *The King of Tars* is not really about the King of Tars, but about (at least to our eyes) the relationship between his nameless daughter and the Sultan of Damascus. The modern title has the authority of the earliest manuscript (Auchinleck) behind it: the text hand has written 'þe king of tars' at the top of the first column of the text on fol. 7r.²⁷ A confusion on the scribe's part regarding the identity of the king is unlikely: the compiler of the Auchinleck manuscript clearly knew his texts well, as numerous studies of the manuscript and its texts have demonstrated; it is a

25 See *Firumbras and Otuel and Roland*, ed. Mary I. O'Sullivan, EETS o.s. 198 (London, 1935), pp. lxxvii–lxix; further examples in Geist, 'Genesis', pp. 266–68. Rhiannon Purdie notes that *The King of Tars* only depends upon Part 1 of *Otuel and Roland*, and not Part 2, a separate text: see *Anglicising Romance*, p. 116.

26 Geist, 'Genesis', pp. 265–66.

27 Vernon's rubric is a better reflection of the text's content: 'Her biginneþ of þe kyng of tars / and of þe soudan of dammas / hou þe soudan of dammas / was icristned þoru godus gras.?'; see *The King of Tars*, ed. Perryman, p. 73 [textual note *supra* l. 1].

well-planned, well-executed volume.²⁸ The oddity of this title is a vital way into this text; as I suggest below, the poem is very much ‘about’ its eponymous character, though not in the way that we expect.

We must return again briefly to the hagiographical polemics discussed in many places above. These texts persistently refer to the stories that they excoriate by the name of their eponymous character (Roland, Charlemagne, etc.); it is reasonable to say that this reflects a general tendency for romances and *chansons de geste* to be named after their heroes. I use the word ‘hero’ advisedly: texts with female main characters are certainly possible (for example the *chanson de geste* about Florence of Rome mentioned above), as are texts about a pair of courtly lovers (for instance, *Floris and Blancheflour*), but such texts are in the minority.²⁹ The many female protagonists of saints’ lives provide a useful comparison. Medieval romances are cults of (usually) male personality. *The King of Tars*, I suggest, is named along this model precisely because of its divergence from it. The text begins as follows:

Herkneþ to me boþe eld and 3ing,
For Maries loue þat swte þing,
 Al hou a wer bigan
Bitvene a trewe Cristen king
& an heþen heye lording,
 Of Dames þe soudan. (*King of Tars*, ll. 1–6).

The standard pattern of such narratives (represented, for instance, by the Auchinleck *Otuel a Knight*) is a military conflict between Christian and Saracen followed by the conversion

28 Timothy Shonk gives a convincing revisionist account of the theory that Auchinleck was a fascicular production in ‘A Study of the Auchinleck Manuscript: Bookmen and Bookmaking in the Early Fourteenth Century’, *Speculum* 60 (1985), 71–91; see esp. pp. 77–82 for a discussion of Auchinleck’s unity, where it is argued that Auchinleck ‘displays definite signs of planning’ and ‘evidence of unity beyond what one would expect from a compilation of independent booklets’ (p. 77).

29 There are no extant insular French romances whose principal protagonists are female (not counting courtly couples); the only example in Middle English romances before c.1350 is *Lay le Freine*.

of a chivalrous Saracen. A suggestion that the text might take this form is provided by the two-pane miniature at the top of fol. 7r, which shows the sultan before and after conversion, praying to idols and subsequently to a cross (though the presence of a female figure in the right-hand pane has not yet been explained).³⁰ However, the text proceeds differently, as we know. A detailed description of the king's daughter follows (ll. 10–18); her beauty is such that news of it spreads far and wide, coming eventually to the Sultan of Damascus, who desires to take her as his wife (ll. 21–24). At this point a series of generic recognitions come into play: the Saracen is Other, and so the proposal must be rejected; the Saracen is violent, so the rejection will lead to war; the Christian warrior is superior, so this war will end in victory for the Christians; the Christian religion is superior, so the best Saracen will convert. Of course, no romance is perfectly generic (indeed, in the Wittgensteinian model of 'family resemblance' with which the genre or mode of romance is often described, a perfectly generic member of a set is impossible),³¹ but we can plausibly imagine this as the ideal pattern governing all texts of this type, whether or not any such text was ever written. Some divergences from this pattern have the function of developing narrative tension or presenting a character in a particular way. In *Florence de Rome*, Florence asks to be allowed to marry the Saracen king in order to avert the impending war; though her request is refused, the moment serves to paint her as a selfless quasi-martyr. Similarly, the Saracen king in this text initially succeeds in conquering Rome: the audience must wait for the eventual victory of the Christians. However, the divergences of *The King of Tars* are more fundamental than this.

The King of Tars refuses the sultan's demand for his daughter (though, strangely, he

30 The miniature does not represent the change in the sultan's skin colour in the right-hand pane, though the fact that he is praying in front of a cross might suggest that this would be appropriate. This may be evidence that the change of hue is to be understood as being only figurative.

31 Several critics have found this model useful for understanding modelling the set of texts represented by the term 'romance': see Ad Putter, 'A Historical Introduction', in *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance*, ed. Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (Harlow, 2000), pp. 1–2; and Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, pp. 8–9.

gives her the opportunity ‘hirselve to spille’ [‘damn’, line 46] before doing so), and the sultan, incensed, gathers a host and attacks the king. The Christians are no match for the Saracens:

Allas! To wele sped Mahoun;
 Þe Cristen men ʒede al adoun;
 Was nouʒt þat hem wiþstode. (*King of Tars*, ll. 178–80)

Though the king initially gets the better of the sultan in single combat with a mighty stroke (line 185), ten thousand Saracens place him onto a horse so powerful that nobody could injure him (ll. 187–92). His anger causes him to resemble a spark on a coal (line 194), and he fights frenziedly (line 196), crying to Mahoun for help (line 198). The text then offers a description of the subsequent slaughter without conceding causation (ll. 199–204). This leads to a rout:

Þe king of Tars seye him so ride;
 He fleye, & durst nouʒt abide,
 Homward to his cite.
 Þe Sarrazins folwed in þat tide,
 & slouʒ adoun bi ich a side
 Þat Cristen folk so fre.
 Þritti þousend þer were yslawe
 Of kniʒtes of Cristen lawe,
 & þat was gret pite. (*King of Tars*, ll. 205–13).

What we have here is clearly a failure of prowess on the part of the King of Tars, who flees, shamefully, at the sight of the powerful sultan. It may also be a failure of belief. The sultan’s prayer can be read as more than just narrative confirmation of the sultan’s paganism (which is, after all, well established by this point). The conjunction of the sultan’s prayer to Mahoun with his near-demonic appearance and remarkable change in prowess — since, after all, he was nearly killed by the king’s first stroke — can be

reasonably understood as having caused the king to doubt the power of his religion. At the very least, the text makes its readers question the necessity of the link between prowess and Christianity by revealing a standard claim of romance — that Christianity engenders superior prowess in warriors — as an ideological fiction.

In a literary culture so invested in the link between military success and faith, this is a remarkable move. The identity of characters such as Guy of Warwick is predicated on their superior ability in combat, and when these characters are tested against non-Christian opponents, the implication is always that their victory can be ascribed to their religious affiliation. By making the king's daughter the agent of its narrative resolution, *The King of Tars* takes a sharp look at the collocation of Christianity and chivalric prowess. In doing so, I suggest, it attempts a reformation of romance.

One of the two best-known episodes in the poem concerns the 'lump-child' born to the princess and the sultan. It is described as follows:

... when þe child was ybore
 Wel sori wimen were þefore
 For lim no hadde it non.
 Bot as a rond of flesche yschore
 In chaumber it lay hem bifore
 Wipouten blod & bon
 For sorwe þe leuedi wald dye
 For it hadde noiþer nose no eye,
 Bot lay ded as þe ston.

(*King of Tars*, ll. 577–85)

This grotesque image has few parallels in medieval writing. Various critics have noticed the similarities between the lump-child and bear-cubs, which are sometimes described in medieval bestiaries as being licked into shape by their mothers. Isidore's description is representative.³²

³² On this bear, see Jane Gilbert, 'Putting the Pulp into Pulp Fiction: The Lump-Child and Its Parents in *The King of Tars*', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester, 2004), pp. 102–23; and Anna Czarnowus, "'Stille as Ston': Oriental Deformity in *The King of Tars*", *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 44 (2008), 463–74.

The bear (*ursus*) is said to be so called because it shapes [*formet*] its offspring in its ‘own mouth’ (*ore suo*), as if the word were *orsus*, for people say that it produces unshaped offspring, and gives birth to some kind of flesh that the mother forms into limbs by licking it. ... But prematurity is what causes this kind of offspring; the bear gives birth after at most thirty days, whence it happens that its hurried gestation creates unshaped offspring.³³

This idea of giving form to formless matter is one that had enjoyed a great deal of currency during the thirteenth century. The rediscovery of the works of Aristotle (though some were available earlier) during that century had far-reaching effects in the scholastic academy and beyond. One of Aristotle’s metaphysical concepts was that of *prime matter*, ‘the stuff in virtue of which substances count as *corporeal* substances’.³⁴ This stuff was famously understood by Aquinas as ‘pure potentiality’; that is to say, that which, when combined with a substantial form, produces a substance (such as a person).³⁵ The notion of prime matter is clearly highly applicable to *The King of Tars*, and it is not implausible to suggest that the lump-child could invoke this metaphysical concept, especially when we consider that the author of *The King of Tars* was almost certainly Latin-literate (since all of the known direct sources for the story are in Latin) and therefore probably a product of the universities. If we date the composition of the poem to around 1310 at the earliest (as Rhiannon Purdie does in the course of a meticulous discussion of the corpus of tail-rhyme romances),³⁶ then a poet of anywhere between twenty-five and fifty years old would have undertaken his studies in the last quarter of the thirteenth, or the beginning of the

33 *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, trans. Stephen A. Barney, W.J. Lewis, J.A. Beach, and Oliver Berghof, with the collaboration of Muriel Hall (Cambridge, 2006), XII.ii.22 (pp. 252–53).

34 Robert Pasnau, ‘Form and Matter’, in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Robert Pasnau, 2 vols (rev. edn, Cambridge, 2014), II:635–46 (esp. p. 638).

35 *Ibid.*, p. 639.

36 Purdie, *Anglicising Romance*, p. 208.

fourteenth century, well after Aristotelianism had taken hold across the universities of Europe, and after the death of Aquinas in 1274.³⁷

Even if the lump-child is not conceded to be a representation of prime matter — that is, pure potential, substance devoid of form — the idea is an extremely useful tool with which to read the poem. When the child's deformity is discovered, the sultan becomes angry and accuses his wife (correctly) of not believing in his gods (ll. 589–90); she suggests a test with the following words:

... pray þine godes al yfere
Astow art hem leue & dere
 To liue þat it be brouȝt.

& ȝif Mahoun & Iouin can
Make it fourmed after a man
 Wiþ liif & limes ariȝt,
Bi Ihesu Crist, þat þis world wan,
Y schal leue þe better þan
 þat þai ar ful of miȝt.

(*King of Tars*, ll. 610–18)

The poem remains committed to this way of phrasing the desired restitution. The sultan says the following after his prayers go unanswered:

Ich haue don al þat y can
To make it fourmed after a man
 Wiþ kneleing & preier.

(*King of Tars*, ll. 666–69)

He subsequently promises to convert if the Christian God can effect a change in the lump-child:

³⁷ See Stephen P. Marrone, 'The Rise of the Universities', in *Cambridge History of Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Pasnau, I:50–62 (esp. p. 59); and Jane Gilbert, 'Unnatural Monsters and Monstrous Children in *The King of Tars and Sir Gowther*', in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Rosalynn Voaden, Arlyn Diamond, Ann Hutchinson, Carol M. Meale, and Lesley Johnson (Turnhout, 2000), pp. 329–44.

3if þat y may se bifore
 þi God is of swiche miȝt
 Wiþ ani vertu þat he can
 Make it fourmed after a man
 Wiþ liif & limes ariȝt,
 Alle mi godes ichil forsake,
 & to Ihesu, þi Lord, me take,
 As ich am gentil kniȝt.

(*King of Tars*, ll. 689–96)

The princess and sultan are thus very clear in what they hope will happen when they pray: the child will be given the form of a man. It is therefore clear that the text imagines the lump-child as formless — there is no hint that the transformation will involve a change of form, but rather the giving of form to something which did not up to that point possess one. As a previous editor of the poem has noted, the fourteenth-century Augustinian writer Walter Hilton describes baptism as a sacrament by which the child is ‘reformed to the ymage of God’.³⁸ A very similar kind of theology seems to inhere in this episode of *The King of Tars*, but the text goes further; while Hilton sees an unbaptized child as having the quality of form (he describes it as ‘an image of the feend’),³⁹ *The King of Tars* ascribes complete formlessness to the abject, unknowable lump-child. As Jane Gilbert has noted, the poet draws here on the Aristotelian theory of conception, which states that ‘the mother’s contribution was only the basic *matter*: the material, fleshly substance from which the child will be made’.⁴⁰ The Kristevan notion of abjection is highly pertinent here. The lump-child exists where a person was expected, but instead of a person, we have a nameless lump which, although apparently made of the same stuff as people (‘a rond of *flesche yschore*’ [line 580]), is not a subject in the same way that people are; it exists

38 Walter Hilton, *Scale of Perfection*, ed. Thomas H. Bestul (Kalamazoo, MI, 2000), II.6.239; quoted by John H. Chandler, ‘*The King of Tars*: A New Edition’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Rochester, 2011), p. 15.

39 Hilton, *Scale of Perfection*, II.6.238. The idea of sin as spiritual deformity is a pastoral commonplace, and is found frequently throughout Hilton’s work.

40 Gilbert, ‘Unnatural Mothers’, p. 334; also see Siobhan Bly Calkin, ‘Marking Religion on the Body: Saracens, Categorization, and *The King of Tars*’, *JGEP* 104 (2005), 219–38 (esp. pp. 226–27).

somewhere between subject and object.⁴¹

The lump-child cannot be avoided: the text forces us to confront it in order to understand its meaning; as Katie Walter notes, it ‘presents itself as something illegible, defying interpretation’ (but of course, inviting interpretation by this same illegibility).⁴² As others have noted, part of the lump-child’s function in the text is to demonstrate that the sultan does not have a valid paternity claim on the child:

Þe soudan seyð, ‘Leman min,
 Ywis ich am glad afin
 Of þis child þat y se.’
 ‘Ȝa, sir, bi seyn Martin,
 Ȝif þe haluendel wer þin
 Wel glad miȝt þou be.’
 ‘O dame,’ he seyð, ‘hou is þat?
 Is it nouȝt min þat y biȝat?’
 ‘No sir,’ þan seyð sche,
 ‘Bot þou were cristned so it is
 Þou no hast no part þeron, ywis,
 Noiþer of þe child ne of me.’ (*King of Tars*, ll. 805–16)

This exchange also depends on Aristotelian conception-theory, in which the mother was understood to provide the foetus’s matter, and the father its form.⁴³ The implicit argument of the lump-child’s formlessness is thus that the sultan has no form to give — or at least no form proper to the Christian matter from which it is constituted — because of his religious

41 See Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York, 1982, f.p. 1980 as *Pouvoirs de l’horreur: essai sur l’abjection*), pp. 1–2.

42 Walter, ‘The Form of the Formless: Medieval Taxonomies of Skin, Flesh, and the Human’, in *Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture*, ed. Katie L. Walter (Basingstoke, 2013), pp. 119–39. Walter makes the further claim that the lump-child’s cultural illegibility (that is, as a product of inter-religious/interracial marriage) causes its formlessness: in other words, ‘the lump-child is not literally a lump but rather something that cannot be made sense of ... because of the exogamous nature of its conception’ (ibid., p. 129). I do not find this interpretation convincing: as Walter notes (p. 130) the sultan blames his wife’s ‘fals bileue’ (line 594) for the child’s condition; the only way that he could know that his wife’s apparent conversion was not sincere is if the child provided some physical demonstration of that fact.

43 Calkin, ‘Marking Religion on the Body’, p. 228, quoting Joan Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, and Culture* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 121.

identity as a Saracen. However, the text implicitly argues that re-formation is always possible, as shown by the sultan's transformation following his baptism (which must be a reference to Jeremiah 13:23).⁴⁴ The illegible lump-child is thus given form by its ultimate father (God), and its 'biological' father is allowed to assume this role when his own form is such that it can act as an intermediary between God (in whose image humans are made, but out of whose image humans immediately fall by virtue of original sin) and the baptized child. It is worth noting in this context that the princess does not deny the sultan's paternity of the lump-child — only the healthy child that results from the baptism of the lump.

The King of Tars is clearly a text that is deeply preoccupied with notions of form and matter. These diegetic concerns can be put to use in reading *The King of Tars* itself, a poem that exploits the generic connotations of form for its own purposes. As noted above, the 'matter' of the poem (in other words, its basic story) is a substantial reformation of a primarily historical source. The story-patterns and clichés of romance provide the other principal source of the poem's 'matter'. One of the ways in which this matter is 'formed' is by setting it in tail-rhyme stanza, which, as we have seen, has a particular set of connotations at this time: as Rhiannon Purdie has noted, it was more closely associated at this point with religious writing than romance. We may understand the tail-rhyme stanza as a form with at least some pious connotations, though the presence of many texts less controversially termed romances in the Auchinleck manuscript demonstrates that it was also an acceptable form for less obviously religious texts.⁴⁵ And, as we have seen, the name

44 'If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots: you may also do well, when you have learned evil.' (Douay-Rheims) As the *Glossa Ordinaria* explains, such a transformation is made possible by divine intervention: 'Sed quod hominibus impossibile est, Deo possibile est; ut non Aethiops vel pardus suam naturam mutare videatur, sed qui in illis operatur.', *Bibliorum Sacrorum cum Glossa Ordinaria*, 6 vols (Venice, 1603), III:686. The sultan's transformation in *The King of Tars* is a physical realization of this metaphor; it is, as such, pertains more to religion than race — though of course, as is well established, religious and racial Others were fundamentally intertwined categories in western medieval thought.

45 There are thirteen tail-rhyme romances in the Auchinleck manuscript: see Purdie, *Anglicising Romance*, p. 93.

given to the poem by the compiler of the Auchinleck manuscript initiates a series of generic expectations of an heroic, martial conversion-story focused on the eponymous character, a story which, though ultimately fulfilled, is significantly delayed by the principal events of the poem.

What I am, suggesting, then, is the *The King of Tars* is a text about literary form as much as it is a text about race or religious identity (though, of course, as the numerous existing studies of the poem have demonstrated, these concerns are an important part of its cultural work). The maker of a text, is, in an inevitable metaphor, the text's parent (and of course, usually its father at this time). Texts are composed of matter drawn from various sources, but, as the surviving analogues for *The King of Tars* demonstrate, this matter has been substantially re-formed in the making of the text. The constituent narrative parts of *The King of Tars*, then, are like a lump-child — they require a textual father to give them form. We might also say that they resemble it in their illegibility: the lump-child is a thing almost entirely defined by its lack of allegiance, whether ideological, religious, or racial. It is pure potentiality — which is almost the same as saying that it is pure neutrality, since something that is purely potential can be actualized in many different ways. By this reading, the sources of the 'matter' of *The King of Tars* are essentially neutral, and must have their ethical and ideological identities shaped by the maker of the text. For the analogues derived from chronicle accounts, this is understandable: we do not have to accept historical writing's genuine neutrality (and of course, the impossibility of truly neutral history is a fundamental dictum of our understanding of the representation of the past) to suggest that it may have been received as such, especially by an audience whose own ideological and religious positions correlated closely with that of the Christian chronicle-writers. However, the other traceable analogue for *The King of Tars* (romance) presents a slightly more difficult case for this argument: how might we understand

romance as neutral? After all, as I have argued in previous chapters, romance is closely affiliated with the idea of lay piety and its associated ideological positions — but the writer of *The King of Tars* receives romance as a kind of narrative prime matter. Of course, the problem has already been addressed above: romance has lost its ideological affiliations by the time that *The King of Tars* was written, because these affiliations are a product of a delicate discourse between text and context (not explicitly made available by the texts themselves), and can easily be lost when the context changes — when romance ceases to be ideologically self-representative and self-fashioning.⁴⁶ And, as we know, the thirteenth century sees precisely the kinds of shifts in the reception of romance that would cause this discourse to be lost.

Changes of form in *The King of Tars* always follow ethical imperatives, and I would suggest that the same is true for the change of form that takes place in the making of the text itself. The text is an experiment in reforming the matter of romance (and of history) along ethically instructive lines. By reforming his matter in this way, the writer of *The King of Tars* gives us an insight into his understanding of this matter as pure potentiality. This is extremely interesting because all of the twelfth-century polemics against romance discussed in previous chapters are convinced that romance has no ethical potential. By contrast, the writer of *The King of Tars* — almost certainly a cleric — sees it as valid material for an instructive story. This almost certainly reflects the influence of the sermon *exemplum* on vernacular literary culture, and *The King of Tars*, with its many nameless characters and depiction of a religious message powerful in its imagistic vulgarity, bears a close resemblance to an *exemplum* (as Schelp recognized).⁴⁷ It is worth remembering that *exempla* have a directly instructive function, and we must recognize the

46 It is worth stating that none of the texts discussed in previous chapters are narrowly self-representative, but they nevertheless define themselves by reference to this discourse.

47 For Schelp, *Exemplarische Romanzen*, see note 23 above.

same quality of didacticism in *The King of Tars*. However, the poem's lurid, xenophobic argument should not cause us to claim that this is the core or full extent of this message. The sultan does not just stand for the Saracen Other, just as the Ethiopian of Jeremiah 13:23 does not just stand for Ethiopians in general. Rather, the sultan represents all those who persist in a state of sin; the text's didacticism does not make sense if we understand him in any other way.⁴⁸ One of the ways in which this model allows him to be read is as a self-representation of the writer of *The King of Tars*, whose ethical position allows him to father a text that is more than just a formless lump. Of course, as the text degenerates into what we might (somewhat uncomfortably) imagine that medieval audiences saw as the 'good stuff' — lengthy depictions of violence in the course of pitched battle — it leaves itself open to be read in a wider variety of ways, even if the battle is between Christians and Saracens. However, the bulk of this kind of narration comes at the end of the text: we must move through the most exemplary section of the text before delighting in the severed heads. In order to read this part of the text ethically, we must reform our own hermeneutic strategies, and the text provides us with a model for this reformation. The form of the text encourages us to read the violence characteristic of romance at least as instructive, if not necessarily as figurative or allegorical (though such readings are certainly possible). The reader thus emerges as a similar object of reformation; indeed, such a reformation can be regarded as a necessary pre-condition for experiencing all parts of the text consistently. If, like its writer, the readers of *The King of Tars* did not know what to do with romance, the poem attempts to direct them towards an ethically-inflected hermeneutic strategy.

***The Speculum Gy de Warewyke* and hybridity**

⁴⁸ In this context, it is worth recalling an oddity of the Auchinleck miniature: the sultan's skin colour does not change in the right-hand pane, even though it seems to depict the sultan praying after his conversion (see note 30 above).

We can see in the *The King of Tars* an attempt to mould the matter of romance into something that responds to ethical and religious imperatives, and the Auchinleck manuscript contains another example of such a text. *The Speculum Gy de Warewyke* is more directly instructive than *The King of Tars*; indeed, it eschews romance-style narrative almost completely in favour of a text of religious instruction prefaced by a framing discourse involving a famous romance hero.⁴⁹ Alison Wiggins has noted that ‘the inclusion of the preface was presumably intended as a way of appealing to those who enjoyed romance stories’;⁵⁰ this is certainly supportable, but a closer analysis can be attempted. Readings of the relationship between framing discourse and main text can be imagined along a sliding scale: at one extreme the framing device is seen as being essentially unconnected to the penitential, instructive argument of the rest of the text, while at the other, it is seen as an essential part of the text’s cultural work. The sporadic accounts of this text have tended towards the former approach; I prefer the latter. A.S.G. Edwards, in what is one of the only literary accounts of the text outside Morrill’s edition, remarks that the ‘sarmoun’ (l. 55) requested by Guy ‘removes the poem from any connections with the world of romance’.⁵¹ He further remarks

that such an appeal draws, however implausibly, on the figure of Guy of Warwick, seems to suggest a sense of the potentiality of Guy’s name and status for spiritual exhortation that is unique among English romance protagonists.⁵²

This is not controversial, or manifestly incorrect: it is certainly true that the *Speculum*’s

49 Text from *Speculum Gy de Warewyke*, ed. Georgiana Lea Morrill, EETS e.s. 75 (London, 1898).

50 Alison Eve Wiggins, ‘*Guy of Warwick: Study and Transcription*’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Sheffield), p. 75.

51 Edwards, ‘The *Speculum Guy de Warwick* and Lydgate’s *Guy of Warwick: The Non-Romance Middle English Tradition*’, in Wiggins and Field (eds), *Guy of Warwick: Icon and Ancestor*, pp. 81-93 (at p. 83).

52 *Ibid.*, p. 86.

framing discourse does not directly affect the form of the main text, and that Guy was probably the most famous romance penitent in medieval English writing, but it is worth noting that this fact does not stop the writer of the late fourteenth-century poem *Speculum Vitæ* from regarding the story of Guy as ‘nought bot vanyte’ (line 48).⁵³ Edwards’ implicit assertion that Guy’s penitential status would have worked somehow to advance the text’s status is difficult to support in a period which, as Ralph Hanna has shown, was ‘marked by deep suspicions about romance’ expressed in important texts such as *The South English Legendary*, Robert of Gretham’s *Mirour, Cursor Mundi*, and *Handling Synne*.⁵⁴ Religious texts of this period were seldom concerned with removing themselves from the world of romance without first defining themselves in opposition to it. We must not run the risk of constructing the penitential part of the *Speculum Gy de Warewyke* as being a static discourse since, as I have argued throughout this thesis, religious texts of this period always exist in dialogue with romance. Moreover, we should not do medieval readers the disservice of thinking that they would have been swayed in their interests by the utterly transparent framing device: to do so constructs them as credulous and naive. If the *Speculum Gy de Warewyke* took its form as ‘a way of appealing to those who enjoyed romance stories’, it is hard to imagine it as being very successful (and we know that it was).⁵⁵ Indeed, the poem does not seem to have often circulated with a title that would directly indicate Guy’s presence in the framing discourse; furthermore, copies of the poem are most frequently found circulating alongside sober texts such as the *Prick of Conscience*.⁵⁶ We might expect to see the *Speculum* more frequently anthologized with

53 See *Speculum Vitæ: A Reading Edition*, ed. Ralph Hanna using materials assembled by Venetia Somerset, 2 vols, EETS o.s. 331/332 (Oxford, 2008).

54 Hanna, *London Literature*, p. 149ff.

55 It is preserved in ten manuscripts produced over the course of a century: see Edwards, ‘The *Speculum* and Lydgate’s *Guy*’, p. 83.

56 Only one manuscript (London, British Library MS Harley 525) preserves a title (‘*Speculum Gydonis de Warewyke secundum Alquinam heremitam*’) analogous to that by which the poem is currently known: see *ibid.*, p. 82.

romances if its purpose were to appeal to those who enjoyed consuming such texts.

As Vincent Gillespie has noted, one of the antecedent genres for the *Speculum* is the penitential lyric, which often packages religious discourse in a courtly situation.⁵⁷ Indeed, it can be suggested that a playful, characteristically lyric tone can be detected in the opening lines of the poem:

Man, if þu wolt heuene winne,
 Þurw loue to god þu most biginne.
 Þus shal ben þi biginning:
 Þu loue god ouer alle þing
 ...
 If þu wolt þus biginne and ende,
 Þu miht be seker to heuene wende;
 Ac, if þu louest more worldes god
 Þan god him-selfe in þi mod,
 Þu shalt hit finde an yuel plawe. (*Speculum Gy de Warewyke*, ll. 5–8, 11–15)

The text plays on the semantic ambiguity of ‘biginne’, which can mean ‘to undertake’, ‘to begin’, or even ‘to be created’; the ‘biginning’ of line 6 thus covers the full range of meanings: ‘new beginning’ (and hence, ‘new spiritual life’), ‘undertaking’, and even ‘creation’.⁵⁸ In a similar vein, the poem puns on the similarities between ‘god’ (*MED* s.v. god n.²), which probably means ‘possessions’ [sense 11] or ‘prosperity’ [sense 5] here) and ‘god’ (*MED* s.v. God n.¹), which of course refers to the deity). And like the addressee, the poem itself begins with the world — indeed, with a character who was probably, for the first readers of the Auchinleck manuscript, a very well-known fictional representative of ‘worldes god’. The fact that his narrative also famously encompassed a transition from worldly to spiritual concerns is probably also significant here. This clever word- and text-

57 Gillespie, ‘Moral and Penitential Lyrics’, in *A Companion to the Middle English Lyric*, ed. by Thomas G. Duncan (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 68–95 (p. 105: ‘In general, it is true to say that lyrics within [the religious] tradition aim to infuse devotion to Christ and his mother with the appeal and allure of the world of courtly romance, while implicitly contrasting the value-systems of the two’).

58 See *MED* s.v. biginnen v. and biginning(e) ger.

play, — which all takes the liminal space between the worldly and the spiritual as the object of its play — has, in my reading, the basic effect of claiming romance as a potentially productive site for ethical transformation. I am claiming, then, that the *Speculum Gy de Warewyke* is attempting a conjunction of the discourses of romance and lay religious instruction for highly specific reasons, and that these reasons are more to do with literary ethics than with a desire to create a text that would appeal to a credulous audience addicted to any mention of the name ‘Guy’. I consider this latter view to be highly problematic. To make the claim (implicit in the view against which I am arguing) that the presence of the frame-narrative invests the *Speculum* with an appeal that it would not otherwise have, we have to imagine an audience naïve enough to think of the instructional narrative as a ‘genuine’ representation of an episode from the life of Guy. In other words, we must assert that the text makes a truth-claim and imagine an audience for the text that believes this truth-claim. For the argument to work, such an audience would need be uninterested in texts which offer spiritual instruction directly, preferring entertaining narratives, and furthermore, would need to be incapable of distinguishing spiritual instruction from romance narrative. The *Speculum* emerges from this line of thought as a text that either succeeds in fooling its audience into thinking it has something to do with romance (which makes the audience credulous) or fails in so doing (which makes the text ineffective). I want to suggest, by contrast, that the *Speculum* is a highly effective text which participates in a highly specific cultural discourse.

An examination of the text’s presentation of its advisory figure, Alcuin, will help cement this reading. Morrill describes Alcuin as ‘Dean of a brotherhood’ and as a ‘friar-hermit’; however, these descriptions have little textual justification, and might be understood as deriving from Morrill’s interest in placing the frame-narrative of the *Speculum* in the wider ‘Guy-saga’.⁵⁹ The text describes Alcuin in the following way:

⁵⁹ Morrill (ed.), *Speculum Gy*, p. xvi. Morrill is not alone in describing Alcuin as a hermit: see, for instance,

A god man þer was in þilke dawe,
 þat liuede al in godes lawe;
 Alquin was his rihte name,
 And man he was of gode fame;
 Dekne he was, and þe ordre he hadde;
 In holinesse his lyf he ladde;
 Wit of clergie he hadde inouh,
 Þefore to godnesse euere he drouh.
 Off him þe eorl was wel war,
 Þefore his wille to him he bar

...

Sire Gy þe eorl sente his sonde
 To þe holi man Alquin[.]

(*Speculum Gy*, ll. 37–46, 50–51)

Alquin is described as a ‘dekne’ (an office between priest and subdeacon in the ecclesiastical hierarchy); this is the office that the historical Alquin seems to have held.⁶⁰ The words ‘þe ordre he hadde’ do not mean that he was in charge of an order (though Alquin was abbot of Tours in his later years); they mean that he had taken holy orders; in other words, that he was a member of the order of deacons.⁶¹ It is therefore difficult to take the Alquin of the *Speculum* as the reclusive friar-hermit that Morrill characterizes him as being. Morrill’s enthusiasm for the idea of Alquin as a hermit seems to be prompted by the pressure of the Guy-romances, in which the hero does seek advice from a hermit (as is common in medieval romance in general). In fact, as I hope to show, Morrill’s error of identification is a powerful tool for reading the *Speculum* in order to demonstrate the

Cooper, *The English Romance in Time*, p. 453 n. 102; and Alison Wiggins, ‘*Guy of Warwick*: Study and Transcription’, p. 75.

60 Alquin often describes himself as ‘diaconus’ (or as ‘Alcuinus Levita’ or ‘Albinus Levita’) in the salutations of his letters: for one example among many, see the salutation of *Ep. 22*: ‘Venerando patri Cudrado presbitero Alcuinus diaconus salutem’ (*Alcuini sive Albini Epistolae*, ed. Ernst Dümmler, in *Epistolae Karolini aevi*, vol. 2, Monumenta Germaniae Historica Epistolae 4 [Berlin, 1895]). The narrative logic of the idea of Alquin as hermit is certainly appealing; this may be the reason why he is described as ‘heremitam’ in the title of the copy of the poem in MS Harley 525 (see note 52 above). However, this fact is not necessarily strong evidence for the idea that Alquin is meant to be understood as a hermit, and the fact that he clearly was understood in this way by a scribe in a manuscript that dates to the second half of the fifteenth century is not germane to the present argument, which deals with the *Speculum* in a much earlier cultural context. For the dating of Harley 525, see Gisela Guddat-Figge, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Middle English Romances* (Munich, 1976), no. 44.

61 See *MED* s.v. *ordre* n. sense 7.a, where this line from the *Speculum* is (in my view correctly) placed.

cultural work that it undertakes.

As Richard Kaeuper has noted, ‘hermits are clearly the chivalric cleric of choice’ in the romances; he argues that this preference is to do with hermits’ lack of proximity to the ecclesiastical hierarchy, and relates it to their increasing role as critics of the established church.⁶² Literary and historical hermits were ‘closely integrated with the world around them; they were part of lay society’.⁶³ At this point the contrast with the *Speculum* should be explicitly noted: Alquin is part of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, and even if he is sufficiently closely integrated with lay society to advise Guy, the nature of this teaching diverges from what is usual in the romances. While romance hermits generally appear in order to interpret dreams or direct a floundering protagonist (in Kaeuper’s words, ‘like signposts ... pointing questing knights in the right directions, spiritually as well as spatially’),⁶⁴ the Guy of the *Speculum* seeks out Alquin in order to forsake worldly preoccupations (ll. 32–33, ‘Þe worldes blisse him þouhte noht. / Þe world anon he þer forsok’). Guy goes to Alquin, who is previously known to him (line 45), in order that he might learn how to forsake the world:

Make me a god sarmoun
 And don hit write in leczoun:
 Þat were my ioie and my delit
 And to my soule a gret profyt:
 For þe world þurw his foule gile
 Haþ me lad to longe while.
 Þer-of i wole consail take,
 Hu i mihte þe world forsake. (*Speculum Gy*, ll. 57–64)

This withdrawal from the world is obviously inimical to the progression of romance itself,

62 Richard Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence in Medieval Europe* (Oxford, 1999) pp. 57–59; see also Angus Kennedy, ‘The Hermit’s Role in French Arthurian Romance (c. 1170–1530)’, *Romania* 95 (1974), 54–83.

63 Kaeuper, *Chivalry and Violence*, p. 58.

64 *Ibid*, p. 55.

and cannot be allowed to happen until the very end of a given romance narrative. In the Auchinleck *Guy of Warwick*, as in the insular French romance, Guy's penitential turn concerns itself with the question of whom chivalric actions in the world should be directed to; in the first half of the poem, Guy pursues chivalric glory for Felice, and in the second half, he directs half of his actions (sufficient, he says, to secure his salvation) to God, and half to Felice.⁶⁵ Towards the end of Auchinleck's copy of the stanzaic *Guy* romance, as in other versions of the story, Guy retreats from the world after killing the giant Colbrond while disguised as a pilgrim. He rejects Felice's offer of perpetual alms (stt. 281–82), and goes instead to a forest, 'to an hermite he knewe er þan' (282/8), in order to speak to him. Guy discovers upon arriving at the forest that the hermit is already 'dede & loken in clay' (282/12), and then, for reasons that are not made clear in the text, decides that he will never leave the forest while he is alive (283/1–3). This may be a comment upon the narrative function of hermits in romance as agents of narrative progression: without the expected hermit to give him advice about what to do next, Guy must stay where he is. During his time in the forest, he is attended to by a 'prest ... of þat cuntray', who does not fulfil the narrative function that we might expect of a hermit, but instead hears Guy's confession and says mass for him (283/5–6). Guy is also attended by a page in the forest (283/7–9). This situation — a rare moment of narrative stasis in the poem — is interrupted by a vision of the archangel Michael, who appears to Guy, initially in a dream (284/1–3), and then when he awakes (285/1–12). The text's narration of Guy's life in the forest up until this point is notable for its terseness and brevity. It is not immediately made clear why Guy chooses to stay in the forest upon discovering that the hermit has died, and his stay transgresses the

65 *Guy of Warwick: The First or 14th-Century Version*, ed. Julius Zupitza, EETS e.s. 42, 49, 59 (London, 1883, 1887, 1891), stt. 25/1–8, 26/10–12: 'Ac 3if ich hadde don half þe dede / For him þat on rode gan blede ... / In heuene he wald haue quit mi mede, / In joie to won wiþ angels wede / Euer-more wiþ-ouren care. / Ac for þi loue ich haue al wrouzt: / For his loue dede y neuer nouzt. / ... Of alle þe dedes y may do wel / God graunt þe, lef, þe haluendel / And Marie, his moder swete.' References to this text are given by stanza number and line number within that stanza.

text's otherwise overriding desire for narrative movement. The stasis is broken only when Michael tells Guy that he will die in eighteen days (st. 284/7), at which point Guy begins to prepare for his last encounter with Felice: it appears that Guy has literally been waiting for death in the forest.

Institutional piety is not represented favourably in this episode. The mass-priest who attends to Guy is a poor substitute for a hermit, because he does not help to advance the narrative. Instead, the priest provides Guy with repetitive, basic rituals that threaten his status as the exceptional character in his romance. By this point in history, the Church was committed (at least in theory) to giving all Christians access to these rituals; as such, Guy's status as an exceptional penitent is threatened. Why should the best knight in the world have to confess his sins? The obvious answer — that being the best knight in the world does not make Guy sinless — is not sufficient in a narrative mode so committed to the superlative perfection of its protagonist. The situation cannot be allowed to persist for long, and the arrival of Michael demonstrates firmly that Guy does not need sacerdotal mediation in order to access the divinity. His life of penitential chivalry (formulated, we should remember, independently by Guy while gazing at the night sky, without the help of a priest or a chastising vision) is given implicit approval by Michael's assurance that Guy will be taken to heaven after his death. Guy instructs his page to go to Warwick and tell Felice about his situation:

... say icham for godes loue
 In þe forest hermite bicomē,
 Mine sinnes for to bete. (*Guy*, st. 288/1–3)

This is the first indication that this text gives to us that Guy's time in the forest has a specific objective (though, of course, its broadly penitential purpose is implied by the fact that it occurs at the end of a penitential journey), and, unsurprisingly, no mention is made

of the mass-priest — Guy’s penitential journey is presented as an independent one. We might reasonably conclude that the presence of the mass-priest in the text is a way of demonstrating that Guy’s course of action enjoys ecclesiastical approval. However, Guy is not under ecclesiastical control and his spirituality goes beyond the fundamental rituals of Christianity. Guy is given a direct route to divine approval, unmediated by a member of the Church on earth.⁶⁶

It is very easy to imagine Alquin’s character in the *Speculum Gy de Warewyke* as a hermit, because of the strong generic associations of romance with eremitical advice; indeed, he seems to have been imagined in this way by some late-medieval readers, including the person who wrote the text’s rubric in the Vernon manuscript (despite the fact that in the Vernon text, as in all other versions, Alquin is described as ‘dekne’, a word that could never refer to a solitary hermit). This mistake may indicate that the text’s cultural legibility lessened as it moved through the fourteenth century. It is at least possible that some medieval readers thought of the text as an episode excerpted from the ‘Guy-saga’ (as Morrill did). However, I would argue that, for the first decades of this text’s circulation at least, this kind of reading-strategy is difficult to imagine, especially when the text’s ideological position is so clearly opposed to that typically ascribed to romance. As Northrop Frye famously argued, romance is ‘secular scripture’, or an ‘epic of the creature’ contrasted with the Bible, ‘the epic of the creator’: a narrative mode which, through its structures of loss, restitution, and personal heroism, closely resemble patterns found also in the Bible.⁶⁷ In Frye’s model, the hero of romance is a figure for God; for both characters, their eventual triumph is structurally assured by the fact of their perfection. While, as we

66 Cf. Maurice Keen, *Chivalry* (1984), p. 77, on Chrétien de Troyes: ‘The order of chivalry, says Chrétien ... is the highest order God has willed and made: he says nothing of the church instituting its commission, but implies that it comes direct from God.’

67 Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA, 1976), p. 15.

have seen in previous chapters, many medieval romances attempt to work within this essentially Platonic narrative mode, the *Speculum* (of course) does no such thing. Alquin reminds Guy that his sinful nature makes him instead a figure of Adam:

Adam was þe forme man
 þat euere singyn bigan,
 ...
 Boxomere he was to his wif,
 þan to god þat ʒaf him lyf;
 ...
 His fredom was binomen him al
 And put in seruage as a þral,
 Noht one he, but alle þo
 þat of him comen for euere mo. (*Speculum Gy*, ll. 223–24, 233–34, 237–40)

We might recognize echoes of Grossteste's feudal allegory of the Fall in these lines; more importantly, they remind the readers of the *Speculum* that Guy, that pre-eminent romance hero, is not a perfect creature. While fictional texts can imagine a perfect man, untainted by original sin, because its fictional world can easily exclude considerations of this kind, such people cannot be found in real life. This part of the text encodes a subtle reminder that romance fictions are dangerous precisely because they idealize social structures and actions taken (at whatever remove) from everyday life, and because these idealistic narratives percolate back into real life through the naïvety and faddish behaviour of readers. The text reminds Guy that, despite his high status, he suffers from the same tendency towards sin as any other person. While the Guy romances freely admit this fact (or, at least, affect to do so), the tone of Guy's penitence, as we have seen, is nevertheless shot through with the understanding that Guy is that highly paradoxical thing: the best penitent. However, the garment-rending form of chivalry adopted by Guy in the second part of the story is not, as we have seen, entirely religious. Guy still performs half of his actions for Felice, and as such remains tethered to worldly concerns (a central object of

distaste for the writer of the *Speculum*) despite the apparently religious hue of his actions later in the story. As a reward for devoting half of his energies to God, Guy is given two visions of the archangel Michael (the first while he sleeps, and the second immediately as he awakes) and direct acknowledgement that he is to be saved for his good works.⁶⁸ As a reward for devoting half of his energies to Felice, he is given one last glimpse of her face before his death:

Sir Gij loked on hir þare:
 His soule frame þe bodi gan fare.
 A þousand angels & seuen
 Vnder-geunge þe soule of Gij,
 & bar it wiþ gret molodi
 Into þe blis of heuen. (Guy, st. 293, ll. 7–12).

The problem of how to square romance's necessary concern for worldliness and individual heroism with piety is an important part of the Auchinleck *Guy of Warwick*; it shares this concern with the insular French version of the story, whose pattern of incident it follows fairly closely. I would suggest that the *Speculum* shares this preoccupation. However, while the Guy romances tend to eschew institutional forms of piety and religious instruction, the *Speculum* seeks to promote an institutionally directed, catechetical knowledge of Christianity, even if this instruction comes at the expense of heroic individuality, narrative motion, and the ideological independence of the romance hero. The conjunction of instructional treatise and romance frame narrative is a vital part of the cultural work done by the *Speculum*, because it depicts a romance hero doing what he would never do in a romance: learning his creed. Indeed, it is a remarkable fact about the *Speculum* that the character of Guy is apparently a fully fledged knight, 'an eorl of gode fame' (line 29), who

⁶⁸ There is no clear reason for this doublet of visions, though it may be the case that they represent the dipartite form of the story; if this is the case, it might be read as encouraging an understanding of Guy's profane chivalry in the first half of the story as being a faint reflection of the 'real' chivalry of the second part. In this reading, Guy 'wakes' from his knightly vocation in order to experience a more real form of that vocation by altering the object of his devotion.

has nevertheless apparently never learned about the basic tenets of Christianity. Around the turn of the fourteenth century, when the *Speculum* appears to have been written, this would have been close to unimaginable; it may be the case, then, that the text is making a sharp point about a knight's tendency to forget lessons that he should have been familiar with.

The central concern of the *Speculum* is the rejection of worldliness: it begins with an apostrophe to the reader/listener that makes clear that Guy's lessons are to be ours as well. The text is 'no fable' (line 3), an epithet which we may take as merely a useful rhyme for 'profitable' (line 4) but which can easily be read as a reminder that the text that follows is not a fictional narrative, despite the presence of Guy. When man catches the world in his net ('paunter', line 18), he is subject to the will of the world, and follows where it leads (line 19). The text instructs the reader not to be misdirected in this way, noting that some people 'louep more / Þe world and his foule lore, / Þan þeiþ don god.' (ll. 23–25). This reference to these worldly teachings, which some people love more than God, might be taken as a reference to romance stories, especially since the text so clearly wants us to consider it alongside the romance of Guy. Indeed, this passage bears a fairly close resemblance to the castigations of the insular French hagiographers discussed in Chapter 1. The text's preoccupation with the rejection of worldliness is well illustrated by a point in the narrative at which the punning sensibility of the opening lines resurfaces. In the middle of the instructional section, the biblical verse 'Spera in Domino, et fac bonitatem' (Psalm 36:3) is translated as 'Hope to god, and do god' (line 461). The text thus asserts that life after death depends on the performance of good works (or, as the pun implies, God's work) in this life, and the good/God pun reminds the reader/listener of the *Speculum* that good works are not worldly preoccupations, because they are brought about by trusting in God. Another example can be read as making reference to the violent profession of knighthood: if you are wronged by someone, the text instructs, you can take Jesus as an example and

... suffre wrong for þe loue of him;
 For, i dar seie sobeliche,
 He may be martyr, troweliche,
 Wid-oute sheding of mannes blod,
 Þat may ben here þolemod,
 To suffre wrong and vnriht
 For þe loue of god almiht. (Speculum Gy, ll. 608–14)

The irony inherent in advising a famous knight to adopt this emphatically non-chivalric form of conflict resolution would surely have been obvious in the text's original reception-context. This is a primary element of the *Speculum*'s function: to perform the act of instructing a knight in the basic tenets of Christianity, and to emphasize particularly those tenets which do not sit well with the knight's profession.

One other feature of the *Speculum* needs to be discussed. The vast majority of the text's instructional content proceeds by means of direct exhortation. Alquin refers to biblical stories fairly frequently, but his teaching does not, by and large, proceed by means of instructional narrative. A contrast can be drawn in this respect between the *Speculum* and texts such as the *Manuel des Pechiez*, for which the narrative *exemplum* is a central part of its instructional poetics. This is not to say, however, that the *Speculum* has an uncomplicated relationship with the idea of instructional narrative. Of course, the *Speculum* begins by narrating a sequence of events — Guy's desire for repentance, and so on — that contextualize and justify the narrative. But this narration serves principally to bring us away from narrative and towards the direct instruction of a character whose presence in the text is not always assured. The *Speculum* slips occasionally from diegetic to extra-diegetic modes of address, as for instance in ll. 323–34: 'Herkne nu alle to me, / For i wole speken of charite', a feature which (whether or not deliberate) serves to increase our sense that the text intends to speak to a much wider audience than its inscribed addressee.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ It is remotely possible 'alle' is an adverb here with the meaning 'fully' or 'completely', but this would be a very strange construction, and obvious alternatives (if this sense had been desired) are 'fulli', 'aright',

However, the *Speculum* ends (at least in the form in which it has survived) with a narrative *exemplum* without parallel in the rest of the text. After a brief exhortation to fear God, the text continues with a section encouraging almsgiving (ll. 921–44). Unlike any other section of the *Speculum*, this encouragement is followed by a substantial *exemplum* which narrates the story of Elijah and the widow of Sarepta and explains its significance for the idea of almsgiving.⁷⁰ The closest parallels to this kind of narrative excursus in the rest of the text are occasional references to Biblical stories (for example, ll. 355–62, which narrates briefly the story of Moses and the burning bush), but these are never extended beyond a few lines. I would suggest that the text's move from direct instruction to narrative at this point makes a great deal of sense for the structure of the *Speculum* as a whole. The *exemplum* and the exegesis that follows it in the text provide readers of the *Speculum* with a hermeneutic model for narratives (whether textual or lived) that they might encounter in their everyday lives. The *Speculum* begins with the story of Guy, and proceeds to reorient that story and to provide, through its reorientation, a hermeneutic model with which to read romance; namely, that we must understand romance heroes who do not seek the kind of institutionally-directed spiritual instruction exemplified in the text as sinners who desperately need to renounce their preoccupation with worldly pleasure. As I argue below, the *exemplum* that concludes the text attempts to demonstrate that worldly rewards are (counterintuitively) the result of a devotion to spiritual things, and in doing so provides lay penitents with a solution to the perennial problem of the conflicting values of their occupations and their religion.

Remarkably, the *Speculum* teaches that almsgiving will be repaid not only with

and 'treuli'. It should be noted that two relatively late copies of the *Speculum* offer divergent readings: London, British Library MS Arundel 140 (s. xv^{1/2}) omits 'alle', producing an extremely short line (a fact which might suggest a deliberate scribal omission to improve the perceived sense of the passage); and London, British Library MS Harley 525 (s. xv^{2/2}) has instead 'Herken now my ffrende so free'.

70 See 1 Kings 17:8–16.

heavenly rewards, but also with earthly ones. In this move, it departs directly from its principal source, which clearly states in its discussion of the virtue of patience that good works may be followed by earthly difficulties, and should not be performed in anticipation of earthly rewards.⁷¹ In a useful discussion of early medieval almsgiving, Eric Shuler notes that divergences from this line of thinking are unusual: though several writers (including Wulfstan in the *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*) ‘offered the hope of both terrestrial and celestial rewards’ as a result of almsgiving, this idea ‘occurred with surprising infrequency in [Shuler’s] sources and even more rarely in theological texts’. He concludes that this idea of alms ‘as an offering made in partial return for God’s gifts in this world may well have been more prevalent outside the educated religious elite’.⁷² It is precisely this idea which we find in the *Speculum*: though the text describes the spiritual rewards of almsgiving, its claimed temporal rewards are emphasized at greater length, as Arthur Bahr notes.⁷³ Bahr plausibly relates this emphasis on what he calls ‘almost a kind of financial planning here on earth’ to the mercantile audience he claims for Auchinleck.⁷⁴ However, it is worth noting that the composition of the *Speculum* probably predated the production of Auchinleck, and that the audience inscribed by the poem is likely to be wider than any that we might postulate for Auchinleck itself.⁷⁵ Moreover, mercantile audiences were not the only members of medieval society with a clear interest in temporal rewards: aristocratic audiences would

71 Alcuin, *De virtutibus et vitiis* IX, in PL vol. 100, cols 619A–C.

72 Eric Shuler, ‘Almsgiving and the Formation of Early Medieval Societies, A.D. 700–1025’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Notre Dame, 2010), p. 73. Though Shuler’s thesis deals with an earlier period than that discussed in this chapter, it is likely that his findings are applicable to later periods as well; see, for instance, Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 54–98, and esp. p. 87, for a discussion of several high- and late-medieval texts that warn against the ‘sale’ of alms (i.e., ‘giving to those who repay or benefit the giver’).

73 Bahr, *Fragments and Assemblages*, p. 118.

74 Ibid.

75 Edwards, ‘The *Speculum* and Lydgate’s *Guy*’, p. 86. Cf. Hanna, *London Literature*, p. 123: ‘Court and City, City and Court, share inspirations and aspirations’.

clearly have shared this interest to some extent as well (however much they might have affected an indifference to it). The *Speculum*'s divergence from its source's presentation of the rewards of almsgiving does not therefore necessarily indicate a text written for a mercantile audience, but may instead reflect a desire to demonstrate that a rejection of worldly preoccupations of the kind encouraged by the text does not imply a total loss of worldly benefits on the part of the lay penitent. The *Speculum*, I suggest, attempts to solve one of instructional literature's perennial problems: the difficulty of presenting a coherent ethical system for laypeople, whose occupations required them to live in the world, and to be concerned with worldly matters. Texts like the *Speculum* can hardly encourage their audiences to retreat into lives of religious contemplation; such advice would be highly impractical for the vast majority of any lay audience. Instead, such texts must offer an ethical system that navigates between the poles of inflexibility and laxity. The *Speculum*'s unusual claim that almsgiving will cause the giver to reap material rewards does precisely this.⁷⁶ The text is concerned with showing its audience that a spiritually inclined life does not have to entail a complete rejection of the world — in other words, that it is possible to be a virtuous knight. Of course, few medieval romances would disagree; for the most part, they are fundamentally invested in the virtue of their heroes. However, it is clear that the nature of this virtue is very different in the *Speculum* when we compare it to texts such as *Guy of Warwick*. One of the pieces of cultural work performed by the *Speculum* is to argue for a different model of knightly virtue from that presented in the romances — one that concerns itself with balancing the everyday realities of life as a layperson with the need for moral behaviour. Another, related function of the text is to alter the ethical framework in which romances are received. By forcing the worlds of real-life religious instruction and fictional virtue to collide, the *Speculum* asserts that Guy is not the positive exemplary

76 For a well-known *exemplum* that attempts a navigation of this problem, see Francis R. Swietek, 'The Alms Repaid a Hundredfold: A New Latin Version of a Popular Exemplum', *Fabula* 17 (1976), 169–81.

model that his romances claim him to be. The heroic exceptionalism of texts such as *Guy of Warwick* harks back to one of romance's early cultural functions, which seeks to justify the social superiority of the medieval warrior/landowner by presenting a perfected avatar of these people in an ideological fiction. The *Speculum* seeks to deflate that exceptionalism by showing that even the great romance hero Guy must adhere to precisely the same ethical precepts as any other Christian. The extremely basic nature of the doctrinal instruction given by the *Speculum*, then, may be deliberate — this is not an advanced class in piety for an able student who already understands all the basics. We might instead read the *Speculum* as a performance of a remedial course in basic Christian ethics. Guy is the perfect student for such a performance because of his cultural prestige and widespread recognition as an exemplary character; the *Speculum* uses him to remind its readers (who must, for the text to be culturally legible, be readers of romance as well) that romance heroes are not exemplary ethical models, even if romances themselves might encourage such an interpretation. But crucially, we must be familiar with romance to understand the *Speculum*'s lesson; the text assumes that its readers will be familiar with the story of Guy, and makes no attempt to encourage them to avoid such stories in future. Instead, it cleverly re-presents romance as a negative *exemplum* by showing Guy perform a penitential act that supersedes and corrects the penitential acts performed by him in the romance versions of the story. The *Speculum*, then, seeks to change how its readers interpret romances instead of encouraging them to stop reading it. We might see this reorientation of romance hermeneutics as an important indicator of how attitudes towards the widespread consumption of romances had changed by the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Sir Orfeo and the uses of romance

The final section of this chapter asks how romances themselves might have changed alongside (and in response to) the developments in romance hermeneutics argued for in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis. I turn to *Sir Orfeo*, one of the masterpieces of fourteenth-century English romance, and argue that this text occupies a cultural space newly available to romance as a result of changes in the composition of its audiences and in the hermeneutic systems used to make sense of it. Over the course of the thirteenth century, romance's claim to straightforward exemplarity is complicated significantly. This move (which, as we have seen, comes from within romances as much as from their critics) allows for the production of texts that move away from presenting their central characters as exemplars of (and for) their aristocratic audiences. Instead, as a number of previous critics have noted, Orfeo's identity as a harper-king suggests that we should read him as an exemplar of the writer, not the audience.⁷⁷ This is a vital shift, and very few romances from the period treated in this thesis can offer analogues. Hue de Rotelande's *Ipomedon*, with its scurrilous epilogue that presents Hue as a metatextual lover comparable to the hero of the text he has just written, comes closest, but Hue's poem must still define itself in oppositional relation to the dominant hermeneutic mode of twelfth-century insular romance. By contrast, we cannot read *Sir Orfeo* as a reaction to a conception of romance as aristocratic self-fashioning. Instead, the poem encodes a sophisticated view of the nature and power of the textual object, and the powers and limitations of the creator of that object.

As several influential discussions of *Sir Orfeo* have noted, the poem is deeply preoccupied with the idea of artistic representation.⁷⁸ The Auchinleck copy of the poem is

⁷⁷ See in particular Seth Lerer, 'Artifice and Artistry in *Sir Orfeo*', *Speculum* 60 (1985), 92–109.

⁷⁸ See *ibid.*; E. C. Ronquist, 'The Powers of Poetry in *Sir Orfeo*', *PQ* 64 (1985), 99–117, and Anne Marie D'Arcy, 'The Faerie King's *Kunstammer*: Imperial Discourse and the Wondrous in *Sir Orfeo*', *RES* n.s. 58 (2007), 10–33. Robert M. Longworth, in 'Sir Orfeo, the Minstrel, and the Minstrel's Art', *Studies in Philology* 79 (1982), 1–11, argues that the poem's interest in minstrelsy demonstrates a tolerant

lacking its opening lines, so we cannot know for certain whether the famous prologue that begins the Harley and Ashmole versions of *Sir Orfeo* (as well as the Auchinleck copy of *Lay le Freine*), was originally attached to the Auchinleck *Orfeo*. Still, even if we leave this remarkable passage aside, there is much in the surviving sections of the Auchinleck *Orfeo* to demonstrate its preoccupation with issues of fictionality and representation.⁷⁹ Most fundamentally, *Sir Orfeo* is a fiction built on a fiction. In Jeff Rider's useful terminology (which he borrows from Hans Jauss), the text is a 'remythification' of the Orpheus story as it existed in the Middle Ages.⁸⁰ As Rider notes, most medieval retellings of the Orpheus story are allegorized; in other words, the writers who tell us the story of Orpheus tell us what the story means (not, importantly, what it should, or might mean).⁸¹ By refusing to do precisely this, the writer of *Sir Orfeo* allows his subject matter to undergo remythification by 'mov[ing] beyond the allegorization and render[ing] it inadequate'.⁸² *Sir Orfeo*'s refusal

awareness that it will be altered substantially through memorial transmission and rehandling by minstrel performers (on this, see esp. p. 3). In this, he is following A.J. Bliss in his conjecture that at least one of the extant manuscripts of *Sir Orfeo* was the product of memorial transmission: see *Sir Orfeo*, ed. Bliss, 2nd edition (Oxford, 1966), p. xv. I am more inclined to regard the divergence between the copies of this poem as being caused by scribal rewriting, rather than memorial transmission, considering the close correspondence of events between all extant versions.

- 79 It has been suggested by various critics that the prologue should not be taken as an original part of *Sir Orfeo* at all; see, for instance, Lucien Foulet, 'The Prologue of *Sir Orfeo*', *MLN* 21 (1906), 46–50, where it is argued that the prologue originally belonged to the posited French source of *Sir Orfeo*, and was borrowed for *Lay le Freine*; Gabrielle Guillaume, 'The Prologues of the *Lay le Freine* and *Sir Orfeo*', *MLN* 36 (1921), 458–64, where it is argued that the prologue originally belonged to *Lay le Freine* and was re-used by the same author for *Sir Orfeo*; and Ernst Brugger, 'Über die Bedeutung von *Bretaigne, breton* in mittelalterlichen Texten', *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* 20 (1898), 79–162, where it is argued that the prologue was originally intended for the beginning of a collection of lays. Given the physical absence of the prologue from the Auchinleck *Orfeo*, I will not discuss it below.
- 80 Jeff Rider, 'Receiving Orpheus in the Middle Ages: Allegorization, Remythification and *Sir Orfeo*', *PLL* 24 (1988), 343–66 (see esp. p. 347); on remythification, see Hans Robert Jauss, 'Allégorie, "remythisation" et nouveau mythe: Réflexions sur la captivité chrétienne de la mythologie au Moyen Age', in *Mélanges d'histoire littéraire, de linguistique et de philologie romanes offerts à Charles Rostaing*, ed. Jacques de Caluwé et al. (Liège, 1974), pp. 469–99.
- 81 For Rider, allegorization is an interpretative act that consists in a highly ideological denial or constriction of potential meaning. It asserts the dominance of a particular semiotic system by claiming the 'general validity — or perhaps even the universal validity — of an interpretational code and context' (Rider, 'Orpheus in the Middle Ages', p. 344). For a fuller explanation, see pp. 343–47. On the medieval versions of the Orpheus story, see John B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA, 1970).
- 82 *Ibid.*, p. 347.

to inscribe a particular interpretative context is, in my view, closely related to the poem's preoccupation with representation, as I will argue below.

The first surviving lines of the Auchinleck *Sir Orfeo* detail the lineage of its protagonist:

Orfeo was a kinge,
 ...
 His fader was comen of King Pluto,
 & his moder of King Juno
 þat sum-time were as godes y-hold
 For auentours þat þai dede & told. (*Sir Orfeo*, ll. 39, 43–46)⁸³

The text could hardly stress the power of narrative more thoroughly. Pluto and Juno were once believed to be gods, not only because they did remarkable things, but because they retold them (the implication being, surely, that the 'auentours' of Pluto and Juno grew in the retelling). If, as James Simpson has implied, Pluto is to be identified with the unnamed fairy king who later abducts Heurodis,⁸⁴ then Orfeo's encounter with this apparently god-like character is undercut (though this is not quite the right word) from the very beginning. If we enter the narrative world of *Sir Orfeo* with the knowledge that Pluto is only a god by virtue of his ability to construct and disseminate fictions, then we can only read the power of the fairy king (if, indeed, we recognize him as Pluto) as illusory.⁸⁵ Indeed, as Roy Liuzza argues, there are good reasons for understanding the fairy king as a 'king of textuality': the idea of the fairy king as a character whose power is principally artificial is compelling.⁸⁶

⁸³ All quotations taken from Bliss (ed.), *Sir Orfeo*.

⁸⁴ Simpson, 'Cognition is Recognition', p. 29.

⁸⁵ John B. Friedman expresses doubt that the author of *Sir Orfeo* had a close knowledge of the Latin Orpheus tradition (*Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, p. 179). However (as Friedman notes), Pluto is called 'kyng of Fayerye' in the *Canterbury Tales* (The Merchant's Tale, line 2227); moreover, the king of hell is named Pluto in Henryson's *Orpheus and Eurydice*. These examples suggest a relatively widespread familiarity with the collocation of the name Pluto and the character of Orpheus' antagonist in the late fourteenth and fifteenth century; there is little reason to doubt that the same was true of the early fourteenth century.

⁸⁶ Roy M. Liuzza, 'Sir Orfeo: Sources, Traditions, and the Poetics of Performance', *Journal of Medieval*

Importantly in this context, the text never allows us to see a direct demonstration of the king's power. The scene in which Heurodis is stolen away from the imp-tree, 'oway y-tviȝt, / Wiȝ fairi forȝ y-nome' (ll. 192–23) is remarkably coy in its description: we are told only the result of her abduction: 'Men wist neuer wher sche was bicomē' (line 194). The strongest evidence we have of the fairy king's power is the group of enigmatic figures seen by Orfeo in the courtyard of the fairy castle. These figures, which may be intended to be understood as classical statues,⁸⁷ show that the king is capable of enacting the threat of dismemberment he makes to Heurodis in her dream:

... he gan bihold about al
 & seiȝe liggeand wiȝ-in þe wal
 Of folk þat were þider y-brouȝt,
 & þouȝt dede, & nare nouȝt.
 Sum stode wiȝpouten hade,
 & soum non armes nade,
 ...
 Eche was þus in þis warld y-nome,
 Wiȝ fairi þider y-come. (*Sir Orfeo*, ll. 387–92, 403–04)

However, these figures are still only representative: they suggest the king's power, rather than directly indicating it. We are left to make the connection between these figures and the king's words to Heurodis for ourselves. Further, Orfeo's reaction to this gruesome scene is, as Anne Marie D'Arcy notes, surprisingly muted,⁸⁸ in this respect it differs greatly from the poem's other recognition-scene, which provokes a strong emotional response from both Orfeo and Heurodis.⁸⁹ Orfeo's emotional detachment, taken along with the fact that he

and Renaissance Studies 21 (1991), 269–84.

87 D'Arcy, 'The Faerie King's *Kunstkammer*'.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 11 (refuting Lerer's assumption in 'Artifice and Artistry', p. 107): 'it is important to note that the narrator does not register horror on the part of Orfeo, even after he sees [Heurodis], but rather a sense of strangely detached wonder'.

89 *Ibid.* pp. 11–12, and *Sir Orfeo*, ll. 303–42 (esp. Orfeo's emotive monologue in ll. 331–42). For a useful discussion of the interpretation of this scene, see Lewis J. Owen, 'The Recognition Scene in *Sir Orfeo*', *Medium Aevum* 40 (1971), 249–53.

recognizes Heurodis not by her appearance, but ‘bi her clopes’ (line 408), suggests that this Heurodis has a different ontological status from the Heurodis seen by Orfeo in the wilderness. The forest-Heurodis is clearly depicted as a human subject: she is capable of recognizing Orfeo, and of being moved to tears by that recognition (ll. 323–27). Importantly, Orfeo can distinguish her from among a group of sixty ladies which the text works hard to present as homogeneous.⁹⁰ By contrast, the courtyard Heurodis is unexpressive, legible only through an accidental property (namely, distinctive clothing), and forms part of a highly heterogenous group. The sculptural associations of this group of figures, when taken along with the contrasting recognition-scene discussed above, encourage an understanding of the courtyard Heurodis as a sign, rather than an essential subject.⁹¹ In this respect, the courtyard Heurodis has much in common with the ‘kingdom of artifice’ in which she has been placed.⁹² As numerous critics have noted, the poem describes the fairy king’s castle in terms indebted to the description of the heavenly city in the Book of Revelation.⁹³ Taking the fairy king as the artificer of his own castle, we might read its appearance as an attempt on the king’s part to represent himself as God; in other words, the poem describes the castle using biblical language in order to demonstrate the fairy king’s assertion of his own power (without claiming that he actually possesses such power). The frozen figures seen by Orfeo in the palace courtyard can similarly be taken as assertions of the king’s power of artifice.⁹⁴ Importantly, however, it is clear that the king’s

90 *Sir Orfeo*, ll. 303–08: ‘he seiȝe ... / Sexti leuedis on hors ride, / Gentil & iolif as brid on ris; / Nouȝt o man amonges hem þer nis; / & ich a faucoun on hond bere, / And riden on haukin bi o riuere.’ At this level of narrative detail, the ladies are indistinguishable from one another, since they are all ‘gentil’, ‘iolif’, all carrying falcons, and all hawking by the same river.

91 On the courtyard scene and statuary in the round, see D’Arcy, ‘The Faerie King’s *Kunstkammer*’.

92 Lerer, ‘Artifice and Artistry’, p. 102.

93 The most detailed comparison is given in Longworth, ‘*Sir Orfeo* and the Minstrel’s Art’, p. 9. See also D’Arcy, ‘The Faerie King’s *Kunstkammer*’, p. 12.

94 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

power does not extend to the creation of new things. When Orfeo follows the hunting party into the fairy kingdom, he moves from the diegetic reality of the poem into a representation of that reality; as we have seen, the appearance of the fairy king's castle is modelled on the appearance of the heavenly city; and the figures in the courtyard are representations of humans. The fairy king has destructive power over these representations, but he cannot turn them into something that they are not; similarly, the fairy kingdom has to model itself on other, pre-existent places: it is 'superficially like Orfeo's kingdom', with 'hunts, battles, dances, knights, ladies, and castles', but its inhabitants 'have an unreal quality, a shadowy existence that only mimics that of their counterparts in the earthly realm — their actions have no effect, no completion'.⁹⁵ The poem draws a clear contrast between the inhabitants of the fairy kingdom glimpsed by Orfeo in the wilderness (whose performance of the conventional actions of hunting have no effect),⁹⁶ and the hunting party of sixty ladies, each of whose falcons successfully kills its prey. It is clear that the poem wishes to indicate by this contrast the limits of the fairy king's power; I suggest that this can tell us a great deal about *Sir Orfeo's* conception of its own position within the mode of romance.

Sir Orfeo presents the fairy king as a 'king of textuality', as an artificer who can only work with pre-existent materials, and as a performer of evacuated signs, which, as in Baudrillard's third-order signifier, work to conceal the absence of an underlying reality.⁹⁷ On the basis of this presentation, it could be argued that the poem takes a dim view of the communicative powers of fiction. The king's entire realm is an ethically dismembered fiction, because the signs that it employs do not signify their proper referents — although

95 Liuzza, 'Sir Orfeo: Sources, Traditions, and the Poetics of Performance', p. 279.

96 *Sir Orfeo*, ll. 281–88: 'He miȝt se him bisides / (Oft in hot vnder-tides) / Þe king o fairy wiþ his rout / Com to hunt him al about / Wiþ dim cri & bloweing, / & houndes also wiþ him berking; / Ac no best þai no nome, / No neuer he nist whider þai bi-come.'

97 See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor, 1994), p. 6. In other words, the fairy king does not hunt for pleasure or food, but to conceal the fact that he cannot hunt. His power lies in the maintenance of the illusion.

the king goes hunting, no animals are taken, and although the architecture of his castle resembles that of the heavenly city in the Book of Revelation, the resemblance is only superficial.⁹⁸ However, one remarkable moment calls this reading into question. Orfeo has returned to Winchester incognito, and has entered his castle disguised as a minstrel. The faithful steward recognizes Orfeo's harp, and asks him where he found it. Orfeo tells him the following story:

‘Lord!’ quap he, ‘In vncoupe þede,
 Þurth a wildernes as y zede,
 Þer y founde in a dale
 Wiþ lyouns a man to-torn smale,
 & wolues him frete wiþ teþ so scharp,
 Bi him y fond þis ich harp,
 Wele ten zere it is y-go.’

(*Sir Orfeo*, ll. 535–41)

The steward grieves at this news, and Orfeo knows by this reaction that he is ‘a trewe man’ (line 554). Orfeo thus creates a fiction in order to discover something true; the story provokes a telling reaction in the steward. Orfeo's performance, then, despite its obvious kinship with the fairy king's vain signification, engenders truth. Importantly, Orfeo does not proceed to reveal his identity directly after seeing that the steward is faithful, but does so by means of another story:

... ‘Lo!
 Steward, herkene now þis þing!
 3if ich were Orfeo þe king,
 & hadde y-suffred ful zore
 In wildernisse miche sore,
 & hadde y-won mi quen o-wy

⁹⁸ Grosseteste's use of the same imagery in his *Chasteau d'Amour* provides a useful contrast: in this text, the association between Mary's body, the New Jerusalem, and the castle out of which the Christ-knight rides in order to regain Adam's inheritance makes sense within the figurative scheme of the poem (see Chapter 3). Grosseteste uses the imagery to emphasize the allegorical relationship between the literal castle and Mary's figurative body (or *vice versa*); for the *Orfeo*-poet, on the other hand, it functions as a demonstration of the fairy king's assertion of an allegorical relationship between his kingdom and heaven (one which we are implicitly encouraged to disbelieve).

Out of þe lond of fairy,
 & hadde y-brouȝt þe leuedi hende
 Riȝt here to þe tounes ende,
 & wiþ a begger her in y-nome,
 & were mi-self hider y-come
 Pouerlich to þe, þus stille,
 For-to asay þi gode wille,
 & ich founde þe þus trewe,
 Þou no schust it neuer rewe.
 Sikerlich, for loue or ay,
 Þou schust be king after mi day;
 & ȝif þou of mi deþ hadest ben bliþe
 Þou schust haue voided, al-so swiþe.⁹⁹
 Þo al þo þat þer-in sete
 þat it was King Orfeo underȝete,
 & þe steward him wele knewe.

(*Sir Orfeo*, ll. 556–77)

Orfeo thus performs a non-fictional narrative which has been given the appearance of fiction by the use of the conditional construction that runs through the entire speech. The words ‘ȝif ich were’ introduce an ‘impossible present’ conditional clause; if we take the speaker at his words, then, we cannot identify him as Orfeo — what he says is literally untrue. However, everyone in the hall immediately understands that the speaker seeks to identify himself as Orfeo through his speech. A fiction (Orfeo as minstrel) produces a fictive account of his identity, but the result is a true account, immediately apprehended as such by everyone who hears it. This remarkable passage serves to remind us that even that which appears to be ‘non-fictional’ in the diegetic action of the poem is a fictive performance of an invented identity. Orfeo is no more Orfeo than he is a minstrel, after all. Moreover, the story used by the disguised Orfeo to test the steward has, in some senses, a greater truth-value than that apprehended as true by Orfeo’s diegetic audience: as Roy Liuzza notes, Orpheus is torn apart by Maenads in the Ovidian and Virgilian versions of the legend, and it is likely that the disguised Orfeo’s narration of his own dismemberment makes reference to this branch of the legend.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Liuzza, ‘Sources, Traditions, and the Poetics of Performance’, p. 276.

I suggest that, by adopting these features, *Sir Orfeo* seeks to make a distinction between factual and emotional truth, and further, that this distinction makes a point about the value of fictional narratives that manage to extract themselves from a reductive ideological context. The metafictional twists and turns of the poem, which have invited a multiplicity of readings, are meant to do precisely this. *Sir Orfeo* remythologizes itself in order to escape the allegorizing pressure of both clerical and aristocratic ideologies. The poem is under no illusion regarding its fictional nature; indeed, I would suggest that the Auchinleck version's deliberate travesty of identification in its opening lines is enough to demonstrate this. If we accept that the poem inscribes an audience with some knowledge of the Orpheus legend (and, as we have seen, some episodes in the poem — the disguised Orfeo's account of his own death; the possible identification of Pluto, Orfeo's grandfather, with the fairy king — seem to suggest that the poem expects such knowledge), it is hard to take the misidentification of Juno as a king (line 44) and the idea that Winchester was once called Thrace (ll. 49–50) as anything but jokes.¹⁰⁰ Orfeo is presented as an English king in order to distinguish further *Sir Orfeo* from its textual ancestors; it functions as a deliberate misprision of the narrative material on which it depends, as does Orfeo's successful recovery of Heurodis.¹⁰¹ Indeed, both of these changes place the story of Orpheus in a narrative structure of exile-and-return. This structure is highly characteristic of insular romance, and suggests an engagement with the literary history of this mode. The fairy king, by virtue of his desire to turn human subjects into bare ideological signifiers,¹⁰² might be seen as an accumulation of all of the forces that act upon a text in order to make it mean

100 Pace Friedman (*Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, p. 179) who takes 'King Juno' to mean that the poet did not know the Latin Orpheus narratives well.

101 In the Middle Ages, as now, the most familiar versions of the Orpheus legend involve Eurydice being permanently lost as a result of Orpheus' backward glance, although some versions change this part of the story in order to read Orpheus as a type of Christ; see, for an example, Rider, 'Allegorization and Remythification', p. 349,

102 Cf. D'Arcy's argument ('The Faerie King's *Kunstkammer*') for the courtyard figures, reminiscent as they are of classical statuary, as assertions of the fairy king's imperial power.

a certain thing, or mean in a certain way. Heurodis' status as human subject can only be restored when she is freed from the distorting, oppressive forces that have conspired to abduct her, and to turn her accidental features into signs of someone else's power, rather than her own subjectivity. Orfeo's creative acts stand in contrast to the distorting power of the fairy king; he creates textual objects, as we have seen, which stand as signs of reality and have a positive truth-value, whether or not they are fictive. Through Orfeo's refusal to bend reality to his will (even in his refusal to attempt to search for Heurodis after her abduction),¹⁰³ the poem implicitly argues for the value of fictional narrative, but justifies it on very different terms from those most often encountered.¹⁰⁴

I am suggesting, then, that *Sir Orfeo* implicitly asserts the value of narrative itself, when divested of restricting ideologies, as something capable of creating a genuine emotional response by representing individual human subjects. Philosophical and theological developments that were taking place over the course of the thirteenth century made this way of thinking about literature more obvious. Most importantly, the increasing availability of the works of Aristotle steered philosophy away from a Platonic conception of universals.¹⁰⁵ This is important because the kind of exemplarity found in texts such as twelfth-century insular French romances exist much more comfortably in a Platonic framework, in which the text can stand as a Platonic idea of the ideology that it represents, than in an Aristotelean one, which avoids connections of this kind.¹⁰⁶ *Sir Orfeo* is a poem

103 See ll. 204–18, and Dominique Battles, 'Sir Orfeo and English Identity', *Studies in Philology* 107 (2010), 179–211 (p. 198).

104 E.g. the 'recreational justification', the 'hygienic justification', etc. See Glending Olson, *Literature as Recreation in the Later Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1982).

105 On this subject, see Sarah Kay, *The Place of Thought: The Complexity of One in Late Medieval French Didactic Poetry* (Philadelphia, 2007), pp. 10–12.

106 It will be apparent from this argument that I disagree with Robert W. Hanning, *The Individual in Twelfth-Century Romance* (New Haven and London, 1977), which finds a strong sense of individuality in the early French romances — in my view, these individuals do not represent themselves, since exemplarity effaces individuality, and these texts are invariably exemplary.

about itself, but it does not seek to universalize from its own example, or to delimit its own meaning. In this, it is a remarkable assertion of the power of the poet as maker and controller of his material, since the use of a source does not necessarily imply dependence upon it or ideological kinship with it. *Sir Orfeo*, like its eponymous character, effects a rescue which allows the thing so rescued to stand only for itself.

* * *

The examples discussed in this chapter are a clear demonstration of the rich diversity of English romance even at this relatively early stage of its existence. Crucially, they show that, though romance was still an ethically problematic mode for many writers, solutions from within romance were increasingly possible. All of the texts discussed in this chapter attempt to teach their readers how to read them (and, by extension, other texts like them); they are all, in this sense, instructive. The significance of this tendency is difficult to overstate. Twelfth-century insular romance rarely tells its readers something that they do not already know. These early English romances, by contrast, do not make the assumption that their readers will be equipped with the cultural knowledge required to recognize their 'textual face'; a centrally important part of their operation as texts is to indicate how they should be read, and what they should be recognized as being. Because fourteenth-century romance can no longer assume its own cultural legibility, a different kind of diversity from that of earlier insular romance is produced. While the texts discussed in Chapter 2 all position themselves in relation to the broad discourse of romance as aristocratic self-fashioning, these later texts do not need to do this, and a considerable plurality of approaches is the result. What unites all of the texts discussed in these chapters, however, is a profound concern with their own forms and identities. Remarkably, both *The King of*

Tars and the *Speculum Gy de Warewyk* choose to situate their ethical instruction in narrative forms reminiscent of romance to varying degrees; I would suggest that this indicates a growing acceptance of the idea of romance as a mode with ethical potential, or at least, as an inevitable participant in literary culture, one with which instructional literature needs to engage. However, as *Sir Orfeo* shows, this potential does not have to be realized: romance can be (and perhaps, in the poet's view, should be) a mode that prefers beauty to instruction, and self-representation to the representation of an external ideology. This view (whose genesis I certainly do not wish to identify here) is one of the central ideas of European literary history, and *Sir Orfeo* is remarkable for the confidence with which it refuses to make itself useful. These three texts demonstrate a wide spectrum of possible approaches to the hermeneutic vacuum left by the broadening audiences and reception-circumstances of romance in the thirteenth century.

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Note: Medieval authors are alphabetized by first name. Primary texts are alphabetized by first significant word; when the title begins with several unimportant words, I indicate this with square brackets.

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