LIQUID SPACES, LIQUID SELVES: THE CONSTRUCTION OF MERCANTILE IDENTITY IN THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN

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INTRODUCTION

Liquid Histories: Considering Class, Space, and Identity in the Medieval Mediterranean

By the time Marco Polo collaborated with Rustichello da Pisa to write *Le Devisement du Monde* (1289), or what is more commonly known as *Marco Polo's Travels*, the high era of courtly literature in France had more or less come to a close.[1] The text, which follows the merchant family's travels from Venice, to the Holy Land, and across Asia to Kublai Khan in China, was extremely popular in Marco Polo's own lifetime, being translated into multiple languages and diffused across Europe.[2] With the earliest version of the text being co-written in Franco-Italian (c. 1310) and detailing moments when the merchant himself acquires languages, merchandise, and local attire throughout his travels, the text gives us a persona common to the literary depiction of the mercantile identity. Rather than centering on the errant knight seeking glory and adventure in his meanderings, the new hero's tale, written in a Genoese prison, features another sort of adventure in a new realm of value, as well as new peaceful means by which to encounter the "other."[3] With the emergence of *Le Devisement du Monde*, the merchant became the first real

[1] For scholars such as Gianfranco Folena, courtly literature flourished during the twelfth- and thirteenth century in part due to spatial expansion in the minds of readers, where the "kingdom" of France, spread out around the Mediterranean into the Levant, provided the opportunity for romance cultures to come together in one space. For Folena, these two centuries corresponded with the first great literary movement, from the *Chanson de Roland* to the *Roman de la Rose*, where "La dilatazione dello spazio è un elemento essenziale del romanzo cortese d'avventure, diciamo la sua anima gotica, di fronte alla contrazione dello spazio simbolico dell'età romantica" (*Culture* 273-274) [The expansion of space is an essential element of the courtly adventure romance, or what we could call its Gothic spirit, in the face of the contraction of the symbolic space of the romantic age].

[2] See Simon Gaunt's *Marco Polo's Le Devisement du Monde: Narrative Voice, Language and Diversity* (2013) for a recent significant contribution to the field.

[3] Eugene Vance notes a resemblance between knight and merchant in early romance as well, where "The solitary, errant knight of romance who wanders in a marvelous forest in quest of personal honor, fame and love may be a pure fiction […] However, the *fictive* errant knight of romance is strikingly similar to the *real* traveling merchant as a new and important person in the social horizon of Champagne" (48).

protagonist, named and identified within a distinctly Mediterranean (Venetian) family, and figuring as a precursor to the many merchant travelers given a voice in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (c. 1351) and Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (late fourteenth century). Indeed, some scholars have viewed Marco Polo's success (at least as a literary figure) as the natural result of a trend towards the merging of mercantile and noble values in the figure of the chivalric, adventuring merchant.[4]

Merchants, and mercantile spaces, however, have long figured in the literature of medieval France, populating texts from the fabliau to the *chanson de geste* from the twelfth century on. The medieval French canon has often privileged the spaces of courtly literature, as they offer insight into the values and ideals shared among society's elite and those shaping France's political history. However, spaces *outside* of the cultural center appear in the literary text as well, representing another means of viewing this critical moment of cultural and economic evolution in France towards the end of the Middle Ages. The market, the home, the trade route, and above all, the mercantile spaces of the Mediterranean offer readers another realm of activity and connection beyond the court,

[4] Folena, for example, sees this "chivalric humanism" manifest in Venice, which in terms of literary practice was primarily receptive to integrating elements of chivalry in literary practice with a preference for the courtly tradition: "Pensiamo alla grande avventura della IV Crociata, in cui l''avventura' perde i suoi contorni irreali e diviene esperimento di vita dell'aristocrazia veneziana, diviene nella *Chronique des Véniciens* de Martino da Canal vicenda storica tessuta forse più sulla trama vagabonda delle prose di romanzi che sul lucido ordito lineare della prosa di storici come Villehardouin; e pensiamo poi, sullo slancio delle *quêtes* favolose, a quella reale conquista dello spazio, così profondamente ispirata agli ideali cavallereschi, che è il viaggo di Marco Polo, la misura delle sue giornate di marcia in Oriente" (*Umanesimo* 141-2). [Think of the great adventure of the Fouth Crusade, in which 'adventure' lost its fictional contours and became a real life experiment for the Venetian aristocracy, just as it became, in Martino da Canal's *Chronique des Véniciens*, a woven series of events perhaps resembling more the wandering prose plot of the romnace than the clear, linear outline of historical prose as with Villehardouin; and consider then, from the impulse of the fantastical *quests*, to the real conquest of space so profoundly inspired by chivalric ideals, which is the action on the days en route to the Orient in Marco Polo's voyage].

hosting interactions that trouble the stagnant cultural categories which presume the isolation of high and low culture as they appear in the medieval text.

This study provides a new perspective on the appearance and function of mercantile communities in the medieval French literary text, questioning how spaces of mercantile exchange and commerce provide a multitude of ways to negotiate identity and resources. Working with texts such as *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, and *Gui de Nanteuil*, for example, this study seeks to demonstrate how emergent mercantile spaces fundamentally altered the locus of social and political value, supplanting battlefields and tournaments as shapers of identity in the northern Mediterranean. Undermining dominant power structures, these narratives instead envision and reconstruct societal values to favor a new, cultural hegemony. Questions of authority are central to this study, given that literature provides a means for emergent cultures to negotiate and establish new hierarchies, just as they envision and disseminate a world-vision based on a new set of values. This is not, however, a study of social domination, where merchants are pitted against the aristocracy in a desire to rise up and topple a culturally dominant class. Instead, the readings provided in this study speak to both the noble and the bourgeois appropriation of space: from the literary manifestation of a social group's desire to integrate aspects of noble culture, attain greater social status, and protect its own social spaces, to the ways in which spaces of exchange can likewise function to transform an embattled noble culture.

In particular, Mediterranean and market spaces become the sites of transformation, where the 'middling sort' might find greater worth, whether in the

fabliau, epic, or romance. The interaction between "high" and "low" culture in these texts simultaneously reveals a shift in the dominant culture as well, and a means of coping with the financial strength of the ever changing and ever-complexifying bourgeois class. As such, readings of courtly texts within this study will reveal the ways literature negotiates a gradual acceptance of mercantile society and the resources offered by commerce. A range of interactions between noble and bourgeois communities thus speak to a new level of cultural negotiation in an age of transition, when cross-cultural hybridization allows French protagonists to emerge triumphant. Indeed, this study takes an approach in which the worlds depicted in the literature of medieval France signify an unconscious shift towards negotiating the increased presence and influence of mercantile culture in northern France and throughout the Mediterranean, both reflecting and influencing a wider acceptance of commercial culture in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Mediterranean spaces are crucial to the representation of mercantile culture in the medieval text, and the "Mediterranean" provides a useful framework for considering the connections that drive these thalassic encounters. In recent years Mediterranean Studies has witnessed a revival in the academy, with current scholars in literature proposing the possibility of adding a fourth category, *la matière de la mer*, to Jean Bodel's canonical categories of *matière de Bretagne, matière de France*, and *matière de Rome*. Indeed, much of the French medieval literary corpus takes place in lands beyond French territory, and often at sea.[5] Since the beginning of the twentieth century, however, Mediterranean Studies has been primarily oriented towards history and anthropology, with Henri Pirenne and Fernand Braudel authoring monumental historical studies on the vast influence of the

[5] See Kimberlee A. Campbell (2000) for a review of seafaring voyages in the medieval literary text.

medieval and premodern Mediterranean.[6] Among the many studies that have advanced our understanding of premodern economic and mercantile societies in the Mediterranean and beyond, Janet Abu-Lughod, Jean Favier, and Roberto S. Lopez have studied the vast impact of trading networks in the Middle Ages, while more recently, scholars such as David Abulafia, Olivia Remie Constable and Kathryn Reyerson have provided valuable histories of the people and mercantile institutions keeping commerce moving across the Mediterranean.[7] Since 2000, Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell's monumental study *A Corrupting Sea* has provided a guiding framework for a generation of historians and literary scholars seeking to rethink the complexity of community and identity in the medieval Mediterranean, moving past the anachronistic "Clash of Cultures" narratives that dominated many studies concerning interactions between medieval European and Arabs cultures in the Mediterranean.[8] As such, the field of Mediterranean Studies has blossomed and continues to produce research that illuminates the complex networks that crisscrossed the Mediterranean, with a wealth of studies focusing on the trade and mercantile cultures that kept Europe's economy in contact with the Arab world and beyond.

In literature, however, there has been less focus on trade and more on interconnectedness more broadly. Literary critics such as Suzanne Conklin Akbari, Sharon Kinoshita, Karla Mallette and María Rosa Menocal have broken ground in

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[6] See Pirenne (1925) and Braudel (1949).
[7] See Abulafia (2003); Abu-Lughod (1989); Favier (1987); Constable (2003); Lopez (1955, 1971); Reyerson (2002, 2004).
[8] Within an ever growing corpus of studies highlighting the multitude of cross-cultural encounters in the Mediterranean, see Catlos (2015); Epstein (2006); Trivellato (2009); and Husain and Fleming's recent anthology (2007).

analyzing cross-cultural encounters in Mediterranean literature, with their research providing approaches to reading the interaction of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim cultures as represented in the European text, in turn rethinking linguistic hybridity, interfaith encounters, and concepts of race in and around the Mediterranean.[9] E. Jane Burns and Sarah Grace Heller have likewise looked at the ways in which European fashion and sartorial practice was influenced by Mediterranean trade.[10] Mediterranean Studies, to some extent, has provided scholars with a new approach to reading the Middle Ages, and in her 2009 article, Kinoshita addresses the concept of medieval Mediterranean literature, providing ways of thinking about how the "Mediterranean" presents a useful paradigm for literary scholars. Acknowledging that medieval French literature might seem an "implausible" starting point, as the French-speaking part of 'France' lacked even a Mediterranean coastline during the Middle Ages, Kinoshita asserts that "Mediterraneanizing" our frame of reference "furnishes new questions, insights, and perspectives: even the most canonical Old French texts look different in the context of the medieval Mediterranean from the way they look in the context of the French nation and its attendant literary tradition" (601). Indeed, for Kinoshita:

> Mediterranean studies is less a way of defining or delimiting a geographic space (as in the famous formation of the Mediterranean as the region of the olive and the vine) than a heuristic device for remapping traditional disciplinary divides. Most obviously, it displaces the nation as the default category of analysis that, even in our purportedly postnational age,

[9] See Akbari (2000, 2008, 2005, 2009); Kinoshita (2006, 2008, 2009); Mallette (2000, 2005); and Menocal (1987).
[10] See Burns (2009) and Heller (2007).

> continues to 'ghost' our literary imaginings […] Such a move is indispensable for the Middle Ages, a period in which 'nation,' in the sense of the nation-state, is an unwieldy anachronism. (602)

In the wake of this shift in perspective, literary criticism has pushed outside the borders of "France" to give greater consideration to medieval *Francophonie*, for example, bringing much needed attention to French texts authored beyond French borders, just as scholars have intensified efforts to trace the mutual influence of Arabic, Persian, and Turkish narratives on the European literary corpus.

While the Mediterranean Sea and its coastal communities have figured prominently in recent studies, the question of commerce in the Mediterranean, in what is an unquestionably mercantile space, has only marginally appeared in literary criticism.[11] The powerful city-states which dominated Mediterranean trade in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as Genoa, Pisa, and Venice were mercantile empires as much as they were political polities, just as powerful French territories benefitted from the many land and fluvial routes connecting domestic trade to a busy Mediterranean market. In a time before a truly organized naval presence, itinerant protagonists of the medieval text, whether crusader, pilgrim, or exile, depended entirely on the knowledge and resources of mercantile communities to take them across land and sea routes to their coastal destinations. Indeed, literary interactions between mercantile and noble cultures, whether Lombard warriors or a hostel owners in Marseille, provide some of the most frequent

[11] A notable exception is Shirin Khanmohamadi's recent *In Light of Another's World* (2014), which examines ethnographic accounts of European merchants, crusaders and voyagers traveling in the Mediterranean and beyond.

"cross-cultural" encounters in the medieval text and, as we will see, furnish another venue for considering premodern cultural identity.[12]

As the world of the bourgeois, the merchant, and even the peasant is often peripheral to the courtly narrative, and to the French literary canon in general, these communities have been considered only within the context of narratives that centralize the heroic, the courtly, or the sacred. It is no secret that the bourgeois and the merchant were often mocked in the literary text, despite the interdependence presumed in a tripartite *ordo* system. As Charles Taylor observes, "Premodern social imaginaries, especially those of the hierarchical type, were structured by various modes of hierarchical complementarity," and while it was obvious that the three estates relied on one another, "there is no doubt that we have here a descending scale of dignity; some functions were in their essence higher than others" (11). While the third estate was typically reserved for laborers, unquestionably at the bottom of the social hierarchy, elite merchants who traded, bought, and exchanged goods, and who amassed great wealth in doing so, did not fit comfortably in the category. In social practice and wealth, an elite bourgeoisie presented a great threat to the tripartite division between the classes. Thus an elite mercantile class emerging within this schema becomes an inherently deviant—and threatening—contradiction with which to contend. Until the eventual philosophical expansion of the third estate to include a range of "laborers" like the bourgeois elite

[12] Beyond interactions between different races and religions, Peter Burke's *Cultural Hybridity* (2009) considers "class" as a cultural category among the many cultural hybridities. As an example, he notes a certain cultural hybridity is created when the middle class appropriates a practice such as fencing, but this could be seen as the trickle-down effect of the upper classes as well (77-8). The present study instead encourages a framework which considers both options, rather than an either/or scenario, where at least in literature, noble and mercantile cultures appropriated each other's practices here and there with generous room for overlap that might obscure binaries, but which sustains cultural practices despite shared and practiced elements.

themselves, literature was a way by which the mercantile class could envision its own acceptance and dominance in the social imaginary.

A relative dearth of studies addressing commerce or the role of the merchant in the text reflects a continuing presumption that the courtly world commissioning literary texts simply did not concern itself with world of the "middling-sort," or when it does, as Pierre Bourdieu suggests of "legitimate art," it was a source of mockery, and often a foil for the repositioning of a dominant class.[13] For Bourdieu, when artists return to certain popular preferences, this meaning is appropriated and altered, where even the idealization of popular culture is another form of refusal.[14] This assertion carries some truth, and has oriented literary criticism, which often takes for granted statements disdaining the lower classes. One such statement can be found in the author's prologue to the *Roman de Thebes* (c. 1155), the first full *roman* in Old French, which explicitly reserves the courtly text for an aristocratic audience.

> Tout se taisent cil del mestier
> si ne sont clerc ou chivaler:
> ensement poent escouter
> come li asnes a harper.
> Ne parlerai de peltiers

[13] "Quant aux classes populaires, elles n'ont sans doute pas d'autre fonction dans le système des prises de position esthétiques que celle de repoussoir, de point de référence négatif par rapport auquel se définissent, de négation, toutes les esthétiques (Bourdieu 61-2) [As for the working classes, perhaps their sole function in the system of aesthetic positions is to serve as a foil, a negative reference point, in relation to which all aesthetics define themselves, by successive negations (57)].

[14] "These returns to the 'popular' style, which often pass for a return to the 'people,' are determined not by any genuine relationship to the working classes, who are generally spurned—even in idealization, which is a form of refusal—but by the internal relations of the field of artistic production or the field of the dominant class" (Bourdieu, note 53, 567).

ne de vilains ne de berchiers;

mais de deux friers vous dirrai

et lor gestes acounterai. (vv. 13-20)

[Let all those of my profession quiet themselves / if they are not a clerk nor a knight; / together they are as capable of listening as / an ass playing a harp. / I do not speak of leather merchants, / nor peasants nor burghers, / but I will speak to you of two brothers / and I will tell of their feats]

This early rhetorical positioning might function to elevate the text, adding cultural distance between the literary product, its audience, and the general public. It would certainly flatter the listener as well, whose ability to listen (*escouter*) adds additional distinction for the patron commissioning the work, placing the reader among the most cultivated and intelligent of audiences. And yet, the popular histories of the *roman* and the *chanson de geste* often circulated beyond the court and were ultimately performed in public, just as they were appreciated in the markets and public spaces outside the court itself (perhaps adding ironic humor to the street-performance of *Thebes*). Thus while modern critics might take the relation between high and low culture as a binary opposition, as is often depicted in the text, historical studies suggest much more fluidity between social strata from the twelfth century onward, and these binaries present themselves for deconstruction even in the courtliest of literary texts.

One must be open to the possibility that there is some ambiguity here, that in a premodern society these class-lines were not fully developed, that an evolving medieval society furnished multiple opportunities for interactions and interdependency between

different social strata, just as the greater spread of commercial culture offered increasing mobility in figurative and physical social spaces. One might also consider the potential for cultural hybridity, that there are qualities of mercantile culture being appropriated and integrated for the continued dominance of the aristocracy, but that the idea of "legitimate culture" was in evolution. Thus it is possible to reconceive of the mercantile class as essential to shaping French culture even as it is often used as a foil. Rather than considering moments of cultural appropriation or *acculturation*, critics could consider the medieval text from a point of *trans-culturation*, where aspects of high and low culture are integrated and shared across invisible class boundaries.[15] In doing so, we can begin to rethink the reciprocal impact commercial and courtly culture had on one another, as well as the degrees of influence across a diverse society as found in medieval France.

One can likewise reconsider the representation of a tri-partite society, questioning whether this basic schema was widely adopted or noting the subtle ways these conceptual divisions might have been more porous than previously thought. Finally, we can cut through the thick shroud of insecurity that works to subordinate mercantile culture to a courtly society in crisis that is romancing a bygone way of life in order to reckon with social changes that undermine that society's power and authority. In doing so, one discovers the ways in which courtly culture also sought to integrate new practices, adopt new values, and negotiate *another* way just as it sustained an attachment to an idealized past.[16] In turn, the ambitions and values of mercantile society become more visible, while

[15] See Peter Burke (2009) for an exploration of forms of hybridity and appropriation across cultures.
[16] In considering receptivity and rejection between cultures, Burke poses some interesting questions: "Is it, for example, the well-integrated culture that is relatively closed, while the culture open to ideas from outside is divided? Or is the fundamental question one of self-confidence? When people are confident of

their long-term impact on European society begins to emerge through the text. Just as it has been convincingly argued that one cannot read the medieval French *roman* without likewise considering the *chanson de geste* (and that these two genres necessarily intersect and merge over time) this study similarly argues that one cannot consider the courts, battlefields, and gardens of aristocratic life without also considering the markets, merchant ships, and Mediterranean commercial routes of the trader's world that coexist, sustain, and transform ways of life across social strata.[17]

A historical approach to reading literature is critical to this study. Socio-economic shifts in the later Middle Ages, ushered in by the rise of commerce in the twelfth and thirteenth century in France, play an important role in reading mercantile spaces of the text. As Erich Köhler has observed,

> La littérature, même dans ses plus grandes œuvres d'art, reste toujours le miroir d'une société à un moment de son évolution. On peut même dire qu'elle n'atteint au rang d'art que si cet état de société, toujours plus ou moins marqué par des contradictions internes, se retrouve en elle, à la fois reflété et transformé, intégré par la vertu d'une faculté créatrice de formes à un ensemble nouveau, autonome et cohérent. (21)
>
> [Literature, even in its greatest masterpieces, always remains the mirror of a society in a moment of its evolution. One could even say that literature

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the superiority of their culture, they often take little interest in foreign ideas" only opening up to take other cultures more seriously when they pose a threat (86-7). From this perspective one can reconsider the receptivity of a weakening aristocratic culture in thirteenth-century France, and trace the ways in which that culture may have opened up and integrated aspects of mercantile culture for its own survival.

[17] Sarah Kay (1995) brings to light the ongoing dialogue between the *chanson de geste* and the *roman*, allowing readers to reconsider the porous lines between medieval genres.

> does not achieve the rank of art unless this state of society, always more or less marked by internal contradictions, can find itself in its pages, at once reflected and transformed, integrated by the power of a creative talent assembling new, independent and coherent forms].

Thus, this study engages with the work of Fredric Jameson and others who have sought to historicize the text to better understand the impact of these economic shifts in late-medieval Europe. Jameson provides a useful approach to dealing with the suppressed anxieties in the literary text, particularly in a premodern society that is grappling with a moment of intense economic change. In considering the reality of co-existing economies, emergent and in decline, Jameson posits that the ambiguity of the text is a natural result of these shifts, and "the temptation to classify texts according to the appropriate mode of production is thereby removed, since the texts emerge in a space in which we may expect them to be crisscrossed and intersected by a variety of impulses from contradictory modes of cultural production all at once" (95). However, for Jameson the political unconscious of the text shines a light on those moments of cultural revolution within, or "that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic, their contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life" (95). This study seeks to bring to light these moments of co-existence *and* antagonism at the heart of medieval French and Italian culture.

Mercantile spaces, and the figure of the merchant, are crucial to envisioning change in French society in the later Middle Ages, not only for the bourgeois characters encountered in the text, but for aristocratic travelers as well. These spaces and

communities fit into a network of social relations, and indeed often provide the means of connecting one community to another. Seeking to move beyond the simple dichotomies often imposed by church- or court-centered readings of the medieval text, this study instead will seek to flip this dynamic, considering the power and resources furnished by passages through the mercantile communities of the Mediterranean. In part, a more complex reading is possible because high and low discourse has always interpenetrated in medieval literature, troubling widely accepted categories that have neatly separated classes that were always in contact with one another. For Howard Bloch, the linguistic, social, and economic tension found in the Old French text is not isolated, but a widespread phenomenon that indicates a collapse of categories as commercial economy gained in influence, and where literature represented a forum in which to question margins.[18] In turn, Stallybrass and White see spaces of commerce, such as the fair and the marketplace, and eventually the carnival, as fertile ground for these interclass encounters and negotiations of value, where revelry and commerce intermingled in a powerful space that could potentially catalyze political change.[19]

Admittedly the idea of "merchant" here is often ambiguous, anonymous, and often a stock character in many texts. Generally, the merchant or the bourgeois in literature is not described with great detail, and can range from the merchant elite, who profit from selling the goods of others (rather than producing it), to traveling merchants

[18] "In the emerging consciousness of language in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it is a, if not *the*, defining factor. It points to the breakdown of traditional generic classifications; and such a breakdown connects to the rise of the courtly lyric and romance to the rise of towns and the revival of a money economy in heretofore unexpected ways" (Bloch 28).
[19] See Stallybrass and White, p. 14.

selling goods acquired in far off lands, to those who create and sell their own goods.[20] Indeed, historically there is a vast disparity between one who fabricates and sells his own goods, and the mercantile elite who primarily buy and sell products created by another.[21] Usually a man, he may have noble mannerisms but is not often a gentleman nor part of the aristocracy. However, he is neither a peasant, and is often capable of marrying a well-born woman, which no doubt elevates his position in an ever-changing social landscape. Likewise, one will find a vast difference between a female street merchant who is renting her market space from a lord, and elite merchants in Paris who own multiple properties and family residences, or even whole housing islands. Literature does not always make this distinction, and perhaps it is counterproductive to dwell on the details when, in terms of delineating social space and social mobility, it is sufficient for an author simply to identify the merchant to draw a preliminary, if tenuous, distinction between noble and common. For Eugene Vance, the merchant specifically, while relegated to the sidelines in some discourses, was a force "that invaded the discourses of all three orders of the feudal hierarchy of late twelfth-century France as a sublanguage that we are now only beginning to grasp" (43). Thus, this study will take an approach which highlights problems of space, identity, and commerce in order to define the merchant's lasting impact on the literary narrative and in European culture more widely.

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[20] For two studies that provide a more detailed account of the common merchant or *bourgeois* as he appears across literature, see Judith Kellogg (1989) and Marie-Thérèse Lorcin (1979).

[21] See Thierry Dutour (1997), who expands on the diversity among the various strata of the urban bourgeois, or non-noble society in Dijon during the later Middle Ages, which was at a minimum divided by the more élite bourgeois and *habitants*, as well as urban dwellers either so high (nobles, foreigners) or so low (day workers, the poor and destitute) that they were excluded from public discourse and from society more generally (*Supériorité* 306-7).

Space

The question of "space" is our primary entry-point to the discussion of political and social power dynamics as they appear in the mercantile spaces depicted in the text. Numerous historical studies have brought to light the power of envisioning and appropriating space in the Middle Ages, including the importance of map-making, for example, as an instrument of power. Daniel Lord Smail, in particular, has studied the impact of twelfth-century notaries on the "mental maps" of a city before the advent street addresses, noting the ways in which notarial documents strongly tied concepts of identity to space in a city such as Marseille. Indeed, envisioning space is as important for a city's bourgeois residents as it was for the aristocracy, allowing the former to assert themselves and formulate an identity based on notarial categories.[22] Drawing from the socio-spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre, this study seeks to contribute to literary and historical criticism that has sought to bring to light the ways in which landscapes of the text serve to establish identity through the use and control of Mediterranean spaces of exchange.[23]

While literary criticism has only just begun to consider the idea of social space in the medieval text, some recent research has contributed to our understanding of courtly spaces in literature. A recent study by Molly Robinson Kelly has sought to demonstrate the complex relationship to space in the courtly text, focusing on aristocratic and Christian identity, while attending to religious implications and the problem of place in

[22] See also Teofilo Ruiz (2004) has also noted the ways in which notarial documents in the twelfth century Castile began to reflect a *laicization* in Europe, narrating a different concept of identity, and one which reflected "secular sensibilities" shifting attention from the church to family and community.
[23] See, for example, collections of essays edited by John A. Agnew and James S. Duncan (1989); Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels (1988); and Howes (2007). Paul Zumthor (1986) has also written on medieval perspectives on space and distance.

the face of crusades and pilgrimage.[24] While Kelly's study lays important groundwork in considering the depiction of space in the medieval literary text, and particularly one which considers the central role of the sacred spaces of the text, there remains a great deal of work to be done on the broader dynamics between communities and the spaces they occupy, transgress, and master.

Indeed, social spaces and the idea of "place" plays a powerful role in reimagining society, renegotiating power and influence, claiming autonomy, and directing the social discourses that ultimately become policy. As Michel de Certeau has noted, the conceptualization of the city carries much power, eventually affecting its lived reality: "L'alliance de la ville et du concept jamais ne les identifie mais elle joue de leur progressive symbiose: planifier la ville, c'est à la fois *penser la pluralité* même du réel et *donner effectivité* à cette pensée du pluriel; c'est savoir et pouvoir articuler" (143) [Linking the city to the concept never makes them identical, but it plays on their progressive symbiosis: to plan a city is both to *think the very plurality* of the real and to make that way of thinking the plural *effective*: it is to know how to articulate it and to be able to do it (Rendall 94)]. While much of courtly literature tends to pivot around the centrality of courtly life, the urban spaces, from the markets and fairs to the domestic spaces of the merchant, figure prominently across medieval French genres as well, shifting the way urban space was envisioned and appropriated. Broadly speaking, the modest homes and fairs of the fabliaux, as well as the merchant ships and foreign markets

[24] Kelly's study (2009) focuses on seminal texts from three of the most influential courtly genres in medieval France: *La Vie de Saint Alexis*, *La Chanson de Roland*, and *Tristan et Iseut*. As such, her analysis provides groundwork for considering the function of courtly spaces of the text on individual and communal identity.

of the Mediterranean, are common and essential across genres, and they provide a new space of social struggle that figures beyond the traditional battlefields of the courtly text.

The Mediterranean figures prominently in imagining spaces of commerce, where high and low culture interpenetrate to a greater degree. It should be noted, however, that these distinctions were not as clear as they often are in the text. As Martin Aurell demonstrates, this fluidity of cultural practice is evident in history as well, where it becomes more pronounced in the Midi. Here, in Occitan lands bordering the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, both merchants and nobles dabbled in different modes of living. As Aurell observes:

> la fluidité des élites urbaines, prêtes à de multiples brassages, est une constant de notre période. Rien n'empêche un propriétaire foncier, enrichi par la vente des produits de ses terres, ou un marchand, ayant réussi une belle affaire commerciale, de vivre de rentes à l'instar des chevaliers qu'ils fréquentent en ville et dont ils adoptent le genre de vie […] Leurs enfants tenteront de se procurer une monture, d'apprendre à combattre à cheval, de devenir des fidèles d'un seigneur et d'épouser une fille de l'aristocratie. S'ils y parviennent, ils intégreront le groupe des *milites.* Lorsqu'il s'agit de déterminer les véritables contours de la chevalerie urbaine, cette mobilité sociale brouille maintes pistes. (87)[25]

[25]"the fluidity of urban elites, prepared for multiple interactions, is a constant of our period. Nothing prevented a landowner, enriched by the sale of his land's products, or a merchant, having succeeded at a good business deal, to live off of this profit like the knights they encountered in the city and from whom they adopted a way of life […] Their children would try to obtain a horse, to learn to fight on horseback, to become loyal to a lord and to marry a daughter of the aristocracy. If they got that far, they would integrate

Aurell demonstrates that there was some real ambiguity to identity, at least in the south of France, with no incompatibility between knighthood and business in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[26] Social mobility in the Midi effectively blurred the categories at the heart of a tripartite society, reflecting shifts in socio-economic status that were becoming widespread across Europe, and which are similarly envisioned in the text.[27]

While the markets, streets, and homes of the fabliaux are inscribed with the values and concerns of everyday bourgeois, the Mediterranean, inasmuch as it is portrayed in literary texts in France and Italy, comes to symbolize this destabilizing mercantile space. This is a time before naval fleets and policed waters, when travel, whether for profit, in pilgrimage, or on crusade, undoubtedly occurred by merchant ship; the sea belonged to no one. The sea is often envisioned as a chaotic, neutral territory, it is consistently characterized by the presence of merchants, both Christian and Muslim. It is a place of refuge and power, particularly in the case of the Italian city-states during the thirteenth century, many of which were seeking to remain independent in the face of an expanding

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into the military. When it comes to determining the real contours of urban chivalry, this social mobility blurred its many routes."

[26] Here, knights and the bourgeoisie were in fact quite close, with many *milites* investing a part of the profit from their fiefs into commerce. For example, Aurell gives the example of knights in Arles, who controlled the salt flats in the Camargue, and who sold salt all along the Rhone. Likewise, he offers a number noble families near Toulouse who were brilliantly successful in business: "C'est le cas de Bernard de Capdenier (d. 1198), dont la famille est originaire d'un hameau suburbain situé au nord du Bourg: les profits qu'il tire de la commercialisation de ses produits agricoles sur les marchés urbains lui servent à acheter de nombreuses terres en ville. La richesse de son fils Pons (d. 1229), qui vend son bétail et ses grains, qui pratique le prêt sur gages et qui achète et construit de nombreux immeubles, est immense […] *Il n'y a nullement d'incompatibilité entre la chevalerie et les affaires*" (Aurell 92-3; italics mine) [Such is the case of Bernard of Capdenier (d. 1198), whose family came from a suburban hamlet situated to the north of Bourg: the profits which he acquired from the commercialization of his agricultural products in the urban markets allowed him to purchase numerous properties in the city. The wealth of his son Pons (d. 1229), who sold his livestock and his grains, who practiced loaning to profit, and who purchased and constructed numerous buildings is immense […] *there was absolutely no incompatibility between chivalry and business*].

[27] Burke has noted that the metropolis and the frontier zones are typically open to cultural hybridity: welcoming immigrants, creolization, and the emergence of hybrid cultures. See Burke, pp. 72-7.

Holy Roman Empire. The sea is likewise a source of merchandise and resources, from which much power and independence can be derived, especially for a mercantile republic, such as Venice.[28] Broadly speaking, the neutral space of the thalassic mercantile world in literature is indeed free of a dominant hegemony, and consequently one can enter this space to affect a change or to bring change home to the culture of origin. In the Mediterranean, we find a space that supports economy *beyond* polity.[29] Stallybrass and White note the paradox of this market, which exists in a transnational space, and which is "both a common place, a heart of a community, which is also always simply an intersection" (27). As such the market is a *nowhere*, an intersection of anonymity, allowing people from anywhere to trade and travel to their next destination.

Undoubtedly, the Mediterranean Sea is often depicted as a challenging and dangerous space, as well. As with the ebb and flow of investments and the business of commerce, the sea is characterized by a certain unpredictable, chaotic nature that is best managed by merchants. Since Ovid's *Metamorphosis*, and later revisited in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, the Mediterranean has been depicted as a space of shifting fortunes, both mercurial and fluid. Naturally competent in risky investments, the merchant's domain is more often than not located on the water and the busy trading communities along the

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[28] While the first Venetians might have fled into the sea to avoid Germanic invasions, creating their isolated refuge on the water, their location on and frequent trading in the Mediterranean ultimately assured this mercantile community their liberty from successive land-based empires as well. As Elizabeth Crouzet-Pavan has observed, there is a rhetorical device that reoccurs in Venetian texts, that of the *call of the sea*, which both sustains and supports their efforts and in which they are destined to partake: "L'insupportable arrogance des Vénitiens, qu'à travers toute la Méditerranée Grecs et Latins unanimement fustigent, ne s'explique pas seulement par leur richesse: très tôt, les Vénitiens eurent la conviction que cette richesse leur revenait naturellement, très tôt, ils furent persuadés que la mer leur appartenait" (88) [The intolerable arrogance of the Venetians, unanimously criticized by Greeks and Latins around all of the Mediterranean, is not only explained by their wealth; very early on, the Venetians had the conviction that this wealth came to them naturally, very early, they were persuaded that the sea belonged to them].

[29] Engseng Ho, Harvard University conference *Mediterranean, Criss-crossed, Constructed* (April, 2011).

Mediterranean's coast. These spaces of exchange come to reflect the same qualities, where the liquidity of the sea becomes tied to that of the merchant, whose identity is easily appropriated, and whose anonymity places him in opposition to the fixed identity of the noble hero. Often he is depicted as 'mercurial,' Mercury originally being the god of commerce and later associated with exchange and travel.[30] Like the classical god of commerce, the merchant of the medieval text takes on similar attributes, ambiguous in identity and often androgynous as well, a quick and lively trickster who is always capable of accomplishing a resourceful resolution in his thalassic spaces of commerce.

Identity

As such, the question of identity in a space of anonymity is central to encounters in the mercantile space, and literature is crucial to establishing that individual and communal identity. If the battlefields and courts of medieval French literature served as a space for establishing one's reputation by honoring the family name and protecting a shared religious faith, consider the function of the mercantile space, which often erases, negotiates, and re-inscribes that legacy. These spaces provide the potential for transformation, not only for the individual, but necessarily for the individual's community as well. Mercantile communities are potent centers of encounter, which collapse cultural categories, allowing anyone to adopt a new "self," in turn rewriting their role in a stagnant power structure. The effect of these spaces is deeply transformative,

[30] Solidifying his authority over trade and commerce, images of Mercury eventually came to preside over premodern maps of the primarily mercantile and maritime Republic of Venice.

perhaps disturbingly so, allowing for societal changes both in and outside of the narrative.

To understand these changes, it is helpful to have some context for a medieval concept of identity. In a time when "identity" emerged as part of a concept of belonging, literature in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries likewise explored what it meant to be an individual within a given community, and how one's choices affected that status. As Carolyn Bynum observes of this era, "A new sense of self, of inner change and inner choice, is precipitated by the necessity to choose among roles, among groups. A new sense of becoming part of a group by conforming one's behavior to an external standard is necessitated by a new awareness of a choosing and interior self" (15). For Bynum, by the twelfth century, authors were more aware of their own motives, of making choices, and of psychological change, in part because there was a greater variety of social roles and religious groups from which to choose. However, as she asserts, "It was also because people now had ways of talking about groups as groups, roles as roles, and about group formation. Therefore, they could be conscious of choosing" (15). As the individual emerged, so did the sense of community and a vocabulary that allowed one to understand the self in relation to the group, whether that affiliation be religious, linguistic, economic, or spatial.

In considering the power of literature, and of shared histories in negotiating these ideas of community and identity, Maurice Godelier's study of the sacred across societies allows for a deeper analysis of the communal identities being constructed and challenged in the medieval text. Godelier (1999) hypothesizes that "the sacred is a *certain type of*

relationship that humans entertain with the origin of things, such that, in this relationship, the real humans disappear and in their stead appear duplicates of themselves, imaginary humans" (171). For Godelier, humans create a narrative of history where more powerful humans existed, where real humans, (those reading the *chanson de geste*, for example), are incapable of the same feats as the ancestors once did (Roland; Lancelot).

> This then is the function of the imaginary men (and women) who take the place of the real men and women of the original time. They *give them back* their own laws and customs, but in a sacred form, idealized, transmuted into the common good, into a sacred principle which brooks no argument, no opposition, which can only be the object of unanimous consent. It is all of this which is present (and presented) in the sacred objects (174)

While one tends to imagine the Christian church as the realm of the sacred in the European Middle Ages, it is worth considering the power of literature and origin histories as another form of sacred inheritance at this time, establishing a communal identity for France.[31] In recent years, literary critics have traced the importance of cultural transfer from the ancient world to medieval France through the ideas of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* as deployed in the medieval literary text. Just as a medieval French court might have sought to establish a cultural inheritance with the East, this inheritance is increasingly rooted in the creation of nostalgic epics and romances, which were sung and written for the glory of France's beginnings whether in the acts of Alexandrian,

[31] As Howard Bloch and Stephen Nichols have demonstrated in their 1996 anthology, nineteenth-century scholars returned to the medieval courtly text with the goal of rooting modern national identity in its chivalric courtly past.

Arthurian, Carolingian or Trojan courts. Even in its performed form, the *roman* and the *chanson de geste* enjoyed a privileged place in society, canonizing the heroes of French history and the cultural ties to a Greek and Trojan past, and establishing an historical origin story for the noble classes.[32] The value of the manuscripts possessed in aristocratic families, and the tales contained within, likewise offered a level of prestige. Like sacred objects, these manuscripts passed through generations, exemplifying the sacredness of a shared history. As families lost prestige in the course of history, these sacred objects became more common, trickling down among a more popular audience, allowing a national and cultural identity to begin to take form.

On a fundamental level, however, mercantile culture disrupts the sacred, and spaces of commerce allow for the creation of new narratives. In turn, mercantile culture complicates the narratives at the foundation of national identity. For Godelier, all human society is founded on two domains:

> the domain of exchanges, whatever is exchanged and whatever the form of this exchange – from gift to potlatch, from sacrifice to sale, purchase or trade; and the domain in which individuals and groups carefully keep for themselves, then transmit to their descendants or fellow-believers, things, narratives, names, forms of thinking. For the things that are kept are always 'realities' which transport an individual or group back to another time, which place them once again before their origins, before the origin. (200)

[32] Though as we will see in chapter four, the circulation of the literary manuscripts saw greater activity in late-medieval Italy where mercantile culture and the *petite noblesse* overlapped to a greater extent.

Whereas the world of common exchanges fails to establish any form of cultural *identity,* the world of sacred objects instead roots a people in their sacred origins, whether through "things, narratives, names, [or] forms of thinking." Think then how radically different these two groups are. One group, composed of nobility and the Church which ordains their cultural dominance, may possess and ascribe their common history in the sacred object whose power is rooted at the 'origin' of life, where "It is beginning with these fixed, still points, these realities 'anchored in the nature of things' that individual and collective identities are constructed and can develop" (Godelier 200). Opposed to this we find the expressly *unrooted* community of exchangers, of everyday life, of the quotidian—nameless and without origins, or what Godelier would call "real people" to be effaced from the narrative of society.[33]

To contain power, then, there has to be the illusion of strength, of purity and thus unchanging stability. Those in power often create an affiliation with a concept of truth and infallibility through shared histories, and thus the centers of power remain static. This is why centers of power try to spread the idea that they are eternal, all-powerful, ordained by God and grounded in truth. Medieval literature certainly betrays an anxiety in this regard, particularly when the court is corrupt, as is often the case in the troubled histories of the *chanson de geste*. Some have interpreted the romantic quest as a response to this stagnant power, embodied in the search for new authority which often leads the knight into mercantile spaces. Here, society can achieve transformation, where the uncourtly

[33] Mircea Eliade (1957) notes a similar phenomenon with the establishment of sacred religious spaces, and the homogeneity of "profane spaces," which imply disorientation and chaos. Thus the religious (sacred) spaces function to anchor society in a world of chaos and neutral places and the overall relativity of space, which I am suggesting is represented in the spaces of commerce governed by lay society.

figure of the merchant is necessary outsider and a transformer of power, in sorting out anxiety stemming from corrupt courtly culture and to help in rehabilitating and transforming the political center.

Within such a social imaginary, the mercantile world instead presents a space of non-identity, of the dissolution of identity in contrast to the world of the court where family, blood, and conquest in the name of the sacred all serve to root and distinguish a dominant French culture. The typical presumption is that medieval society would not seek to deviate from this sacred history, from a world that perpetuates the "sacred principle which brooks no argument, no opposition, which can only be the object of unanimous consent" (Godelier 174). However, the medieval text is rife with contradictions, corrupt power structures, and weak kings, and thus one must also consider the freedom mercantile communities might provide; as an imagined social space, the Mediterranean offers a temporary invisibility cloak, allowing for protagonists to divest themselves of an otherwise fixed identity and profit from a new world order. Certainly, travelers who find themselves among merchants, both rich and poor, struggle to acquire new values, to wear their anonymity like an awkward costume, and achieve movement through apprenticeship. However, while this temporary transformation might prove difficult for more aristocratic characters, and might ostensibly present a threat to the homogeneity of the cultural center, one's passage through the mercantile space often results in a new, enhanced, affirmed identity in the home culture, as well as augmented resources. Likewise, protagonists often emerge as a hybrid, where the best or noble and mercantile cultures synthesize in the hero, or where Christian and Saracen cultures merge

to produce a utopian solution to endemic corruption. As such, identity, both individual and communal, receives a much needed space of reformation in the mercantile Mediterranean.

Commerce

Commerce is the central element of change at the heart of the mercantile space, opening up access to material resources, and a new value system, which at least in the realm of literature, figures as an opposing social space to that of the court. The Mediterranean spaces of commerce, so dependent on the ebb and flow of the tides and traders circulating around the sea, is a space of flux, and as such, a challenge to static power. Communities of merchants in turn open up static structures, destabilizing and disrupting inflexible regimes of power.

In literature, commerce allows one to circumvent problems of violence, in turn providing another means of cultural appropriation and domination. Stereotypically, merchants were often depicted in literature as abhorring violence, just as the violence inherent to courtly tournaments and battlefields worked to establish noble authority. Sometimes these preferences were manifest in society, for while the noble life was defined through performing music, dance and games, hunting, jousting and voyages, none of which were rejected by the merchant class, Boris Bove notes that "La seule activité qui répugne aux bourgeois de l'échevinage, c'est le métier des armes, qui est l'essence de la noblesse" (*Dominer* 580) [the one activity which the bourgeois aldermen repudiated was the profession of arms, which is the essence of nobility]. Indeed, the

practices of war and commerce were at the very least implicitly conceived of as opposed to one another in the Middle Ages, and later explicitly placed in juxtaposition to one another. Taylor notes that later discourse around "economic" practice often conceived of trade as being analogous to peaceful practice (15). The mercantile spaces of literature provide an arena for compromise and negotiation that are not found on the battlefield, where commerce allows for this "harmonious coexistence" which is particularly notable in the exchanges and interactions between Christian and Muslim communities. As we will later see through an analysis of *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, it is the trickery of the merchant that allows the hero, Guillaume d'Orange, to undermine and overthrow the Muslim ruler of Nîmes. Merchant trickery, while reviled as cowardly and *lâche* across genres, likewise functions as a means to avoid an impossible conflict, allowing for relatively peaceful cross-cultural encounters as well as shifts in power.

Finally, spaces of commerce imply *communication*, emphasizing the merchant's ability to create narratives and to narrate the self, or as *Mad Men's* Don Draper would say "to change the conversation."[34] The deconstruction and reconstruction of identity are, to some extent, accomplished with the help of the mercantile identity; for the ability to *narrate* that self, to invent a new public persona, is likewise in part the ability to *sell* that self in public as well. Here, the circulation of words, information, and self-narratives are essential to the function of mercantile communities in the text. Some of the earliest occurrences of *commerce* in the French and English language connote not only an exchange of goods, but also of words and friendly relations between men and women at

[34] Indeed, Don Draper presents an interesting modern iteration of the medieval merchant; he is the ultimate businessman, creating his own narrative as a wealthy and successful man in advertising, seeking to blend into society's elite, while obscuring his humble origins and the double life he has created for himself.

the heart of a constantly moving network of interactions.[35] Thus communication, and this essential exchange of information in addition to currency, is key to the transformation affected in mercantile spaces, facilitating important conversations in otherwise prohibited exchanges.

In facilitating commerce, the mercantile space likewise provides a forum in which to play with value, where the object's value (or even the *subject's* value) no longer is dependent on a metaphysical hierarchy of worth, but instead is established by the simple economics of supply and demand. As such, value becomes evacuated and renegotiated, particularly with the increased circulation of money. In turn, new systems of value emerge, just as new identities may be bought and sold. As Howard Bloch has observed of the thirteenth century in particular:

> it was precisely *because* of the introduction of money into the circuit of human relations that the difference between noble and non-noble became increasingly unclear. The literary text served as a public vehicle for the articulation of this crisis of difference at a time when the traditional criteria of military and political dominance—that is to say, birth and landed wealth—were no longer sufficient, when the free status, privileges, and possessions of nobility began to become more and more accessible to those who could purchase them. (31)

[35] See the Oxford English Dictionary entries for *commerce* both as verb and noun. Likewise, *commerce* in Latin shares the same connotation of friendly intercourse, rather than commercial exchange.

An analysis of these commercial spaces is essential to understanding the very real impact exchange and the increased circulation of currency had on previously held value systems in late medieval France.

Questions of *liquidity* are central to theorizing the mercantile space and the mercantile identity. While some markets are in fixed locations, most mercantile spaces shift and change; they are found on the coasts and islands of the Mediterranean, moving in boats along liquid trade routes, coming and going along with the schedule of the Champagne fairs, dependent on land routes and waterways. Whether across land, up fluvial paths, or across the sea, the merchant's world is fluid and ever flowing. Likewise, these spaces are populated with identities which can be forged and undone, easily disguised and circulated, assumed and dropped, and ultimately "liquidated" at a moment when revealing one's *true* identity will yield the biggest possible return. While this liquid quality serves to destabilize spaces of commerce, it likewise allows for increased returns in a risky investment. Thus the liquidity of resources and resourcefulness ultimately serves to mobilize individuals, who learn the bourgeois strategies of amassing resources (from material wealth to information and personal connections), calling up those assets, and divesting at the best possible moment.

This study begins its examination by bringing attention to the public and domestic spaces of the Old French fabliaux, considering these northern French tales in the greater context of the trading isthmus that stretched from the Mediterranean to the North Sea. Through an analysis of *Le Sacristain II* (*Du Segretain Moine*) and *Le Bouchier d'Abeville* (or *Eustache d'Amiens*), chapter one theorizes a common theme in the Old French

fabliaux, that of the anticlerical conflict between the merchant and priest, by identifying the appropriate use of social spaces of production and reproduction in the text, as defined by Lefebvre. The successful management of space in the fabliaux—from the marketplace, to the home, to the church—promotes and protects bourgeois values as they emerge at pivotal moments of exchange in the text. The bourgeois' wit and the ability to manage space equate to both a successful trade and a shift in power in these tales, with the fabliaux providing a literary space to envision and play out a new social order. Situating the fabliaux in its historical context, this chapter argues that the genre's preoccupation with "appropriate" behavior within certain social spaces communicates an increasingly cohesive cultural ideology for the rising merchant class in thirteenth century that marginalizes the authority of the church while strengthening these ideas in northern France and throughout the European trading community.

Moving next to Mediterranean spaces, chapter two considers the depiction of mercantile spaces in the courtly text, which are often located on distant shores and ports-of-call around the sea. These spaces are often traversed by young noblemen who, to some extent, are in a state of exile from the cultural center and who must integrate into these mercantile communities so that they may return home triumphant. Engaging with Michel Foucault's theory of *heterotopia*, this chapter questions what is at stake for the courtly hero in texts such as *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, *Enfances Vivien*, and *Floire et Blancheflor*, where passing as a merchant both challenges the noble identity but likewise offers the freedom of anonymity necessary to the knight's rite of passage into manhood. Indeed, questions of masculinity are central to this chapter, for the appearance of mercantile

mentors and father figures, whose social value is established through profit rather than courageous acts on the battlefield, guides young noble heroes towards their chivalric destinies. Thus, this chapter identifies the ways in which mercantile spaces challenge the perceived fixity of the noble identity as well as the limits of what can be appropriated between high and low cultures. In turn, the ways in which courtly culture negotiates the increasing influence of mercantile culture become more apparent, for just as the merchant is openly mocked in these texts, his contributions to the hero's progress is revealed to be indispensable for the survival of the cultural center.

Questions of gender figure prominently in the mercantile spaces examined in chapter three as well, where the freedom of being bourgeois(e) offers maligned women greater control of their public identities. Following chapter two's inquiry into the perceived "fixity" of the male noble identity, this discussion is broadened to consider the women of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, the *Decameron*, and *Li contes dou Roi Flore et de la Bielle Jehane*, who transvest as the male bourgeois, merchant, or jongleur. This chapter seeks to render more intelligible the combined perception of bourgeois anonymity and Mediterranean "fluidity" as crucial to the rehabilitation of a woman's identity. Although female transvestite narratives have typically been viewed as a means to reinforce male aristocratic authority, this chapter engages with feminist theory (Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous) to argue that the female performance of the male bourgeois is inherently subversive, particularly when class and social space are taken into consideration. Setting aside questions of whether female transvestism might have been viewed as empowering by a medieval audience, this chapter instead analyzes what is at stake in the long-term

adaption of the male merchant persona for women and the ways in which this persona destabilizes fixed ideas of identity, whether based on gender or class, while regularly affording both noble and bourgeois women the discursive power to control their own public narrative and personal "value."

This study concludes with the close examination of certain Franco-Italian texts to demonstrate how this corpus can broaden to our understanding of cultural, linguistic, and national identity in the medieval Mediterranean. Chapter four interrogates the literary depiction of cultural hybridity in Mediterranean spaces of the Old French epic-romances *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanteuil*, as well as how this hybridity is translated, read, and valued by a late-medieval readership in the Veneto. Contributing to the emerging field of *la francophonie médiévale*, this chapter brings into focus variations between Old French and the Franco-Italian manuscripts, interrogating passages which are emphasized or devalued in the process of translating these works between Mediterranean communities. By considering issues of cultural hybridity in (and of) the text, and its function as a tool in negotiating identity, this chapter contributes a more nuanced understanding of the significance of intellectual commerce and cultural appropriation between pre-modern France and northern Italy.

Questions of identity are central whenever disguise, and particularly the mercantile disguise, is deployed. What is at stake when one becomes someone that is lower on the hierarchy, perceived as less trustworthy, less established, and less *historied*? How is power undermined, reappropriated, and reclaimed through mastery of mercantile spaces? Indeed, is it possible to take what is useful from another culture or social group

without completely becoming a part of that group, or is one forever transformed in the mercantile Mediterranean space? The medieval merchant emerges in the text as a force of change, pushing the narrative forward through exchanges, helping the hero arrive at his or her destination, made possible only by the existence of a busy and profitable trade route.

Through a study of the literary depiction of mercantile communities, this project ultimately aims to illuminate the greater arc that legitimized in the process of transculturation in the Middle Ages, while pinpointing moments where cultural anxiety remains, particularly with regards to moments when commerce figures as an alternative to violence. As such, this study concludes by making links between what is implicit in the medieval text and what becomes more explicit in early modern economic philosophy which promoted the idea of *doux commerce* as a civilizing agent of considerable power and range. This research will form tighter connections between the earlier literary depictions of 'innocuous' commercial communities, which present a secular alternative to religious and political conflict, and these later economic theses. I argue that this discourse legitimizing commerce, which has been identified as explicit in the economic philosophy of the Enlightenment, has its roots in an implicit desire in the premodern literary text, which in turn can be located in modern discourses around the civilizing qualities of capitalism at the heart of modern democratic national identity today.[36]

[36] See Albert Hirschman (1977, 1986).

CHAPTER ONE

In French Marketplaces:

Negotiating Space and Spaces of Negotiation in the Old French Fabliau

On the fringe of the Old French canon, the bawdy fabliaux are not often exalted as a reflection of medieval French values, except occasionally when they are read as a parody of courtly literature or "negative *exempla*." The ordinary men and women of the fabliaux, as well as the social spaces of their world, are generally unfamiliar to courtly culture and represent the daily life of the lowest tier in a widely held concept of a tripartite social order that persisted in France well into the eighteenth century. With the exception of the occasional knight or lady, most of the characters of the fabliaux are simple bourgeois, peasants, or lower clergy, and they are often ridiculed for seeking to advance beyond social and economic boundaries.[37] However, literature depicting the common folk of medieval France offers readers another route by which to appreciate the complexity of French culture in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, to consider the literary role in the renegotiation of social position, and to observe the crucial role social space plays in the emergence of cultural values. While the *matière de France* and the *matière de Bretagne* may have established a literary space for courtly practice, envisioning, problematizing, and setting standards for behavior among the aristocracy, many fabliaux similarly explore an ethic espoused by a coexisting mercantile society, rewriting the rules of engagement

[37] For more on the reality of daily life as represented in the fabliaux, see Alexandre-Bidon and Lorcin (2003).

through the appropriation and negotiation of spaces for social interaction.[38] The French fabliaux thus present an optimal literary space within which to explore the resulting conflicts in the lives of common people; in turn these tales can be analyzed as envisioning a new cultural matrix that delineates appropriate and inappropriate behavior among the bourgeois and merchant class.

Rethinking "space" is crucial to any consideration of class in the Middle Ages, for while courtly literature foregrounds disputes settled primarily on the battlefield, in the realm of the fabliaux the struggle moves instead to urban spaces of exchange and social interaction as depicted in the home, the market, and even in the church.[39] The need to accommodate a growing bourgeois community that increasingly pushed against the traditionally dominant structures of the church is evident in these tales, where the tension between these two worlds is often the central conflict driving the narrative.[40] The fabliaux reveal some of the fractures and fundamental shifts in the perceived relation of the lay community to church authority, as well as a renegotiation of roles as commercial success brought greater power and the increasing 'laicisation' of the daily dealings of bourgeois

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[38] As B. J. Levy (2005) demonstrates of the power of fabliaux, many tales crossed genres, often to be modified and deployed by priests seeking ways to engage and connect with parishioners. The clergy itself recognized the genre's popularity, and they emphasized sermons through the use of familiar, moralizing narratives. As Levy argues, the appropriation of tales was particularly easy as certain fabliaux already contained lessons in morality and behavior, not unlike the two fabliaux examined in this essay.

[39] For a study of the representation of space in the courtly text, and particularly of the battlefield, see Robinson (2009), whose observations can be considered broadly within the context of the present study as well: "literature holds a privileged status, for it tends to have meaning and interpretation as its focus and even as its reason for being. Among the deep and complex meanings expressed and explored through poetic language, the relationship between humans beings have with their homes and places has been one of the most common and consistent. This is true throughout many different times, cultures, and places" (21).

[40] This conflict should not be read to imply a decrease in piety or religious devotion among the bourgeois. On the contrary, as the family records of the French *livres de raison* and the Italian *ricordanze* attest, the merchant class remained deeply devout despite the sweeping religious and political changes of the thirteenth century. See C. Bec (1967), G. Ciappelli (1995), and J. Tricard (2002) for more on the daily devotional practices of merchants at all levels of success.

communities.[41] Indeed, as Gaunt has observed of the fabliaux, is no longer the *avoir* of the Church that dominates in the fabliau but the *savoir* of the layman, and successful characters "constantly use their *savoir*, their wit and ingenuity, to determine the position of other characters who believe that their *avoir*, their place in a fixed social hierarchy, be it noble, a clerk, or a husband, is God-given and unassailable" (235). Among the many fabliaux, *Le Sacristain II* and *Bouchier d'Abeville* present opportunities to trace these emerging values that promote the *savoir* of the merchant, reflecting a society striving to gain access to spaces of profit and power in thirteenth-century France.

Through a reading of two popular thirteenth-century fabliaux, *Le Sacristain II* (*Du Segretain Moine*) and *Le Bouchier d'Abeville* (or *Eustache d'Amiens*), this study rethinks a common theme in the fabliaux, that of the anticlerical conflict between the merchant and the church, through the lens of spatial theory. Considering the socio-historical impact of these texts, Henri Lefebvre's *La Production de l'espace* (1974) guides this analysis. Lefebvre's thesis of socio-spatial relations provides a framework for exploring the nature of this conflict between evolving social strata, for both tales construct figurative social spaces of *production* and *reproduction* which serve to replace the previous authority of religious space. Moments of exchange are pivotal to maintaining control over these social spaces; in both fabliaux, bourgeois dominance is challenged by local clergy seeking to establish a parallel space of exchange, which is used to subvert the more public forms of trade established and controlled by bourgeois communities. However, the comedy of each fabliau, and the latent fantasies within, deftly dismantle repeated attempts to

[41] Regarding the 'laicisation' of medieval society, see T. Ruiz (2004) who addresses the increasing influence of secular, mercantile endeavors, and the renegotiation of language, identity, and salvation among the mercantile class, as witnessed in Castilian Spain but broadly applicable across western Europe.

undermine bourgeois values. The triumph of the bourgeois in each scenario reveals the subconscious desire of the text, subtly envisioning a cohesive ideology for a rising merchant class that ultimately criticizes and marginalizes the corrupted authority of the church from the spaces of production and reproduction.

The diversity of the French fabliaux thus presents an optimal literary space within which to explore the exchanges and conflicts in the lives of common people; in turn these tales can be read to express and create what Bourdieu has termed *habitus*, particularly for the ways appropriate behavior is modeled within the social spaces of the text. Urban spaces of the fabliaux provide a powerful setting for establishing cultural values, for as Lefebvre has observed, it is within the city space that social classes begin to establish an idea of cultural hegemony. Here, groups can begin to maintain a shared concept of *l'espace social* which "contient, en leur assignant des lieux appropriés (plus ou moins), les *rapports sociaux de reproduction*, à savoir les rapports bio-physiologiques entre les sexes, les âges, avec l'organisation spécifiée de la famille – et les *rapports de production*, à savoir la division du travail et son organisation, donc les fonctions sociales hiérarchisées" (Lefebvre 41) [contains – and assigns (more or less) appropriate places to – (1) the *social relations of reproduction*, i.e. the bio-physiological relations between the sexes and between age groups, along with the specific organization of the family; and (2) the *relations of production*, i.e. the division of labor and its organization in the form of hierarchical social functions] (Nicholson-Smith 32). Of note here is Lefebvre's use of the word *appropriés* for physical and social places (which are in fact, appropriate-ed through this process). A class gaining influence will begin to redefine spaces of interaction, not

only through the appropriated use of architecture and social planning, as with the growth of a city and the general domain of the merchant class, but through the understanding of what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior within these new spaces.

Rephrased, Lefebvre's two primary social spaces are that of the family and that of commerce. The fabliaux thus represent these spaces as the home and the marketplace, respectively. Notably, there is no space here for the church, whose primary occupation is with the afterlife and is therefore consigned outside of the spaces of production to a space of death. According to Lefebvre, religion, like superstition, is relegated beyond social space along with the "religio-political space," which shares this removed, "mysterious" territory, thus allowing the space of trade and family to take priority. In turn, the power and position of the church becomes increasingly diminished in the face of a rising, *productive* commercial culture often depicted in the fabliaux.[42]

Lefebvre's theory provides a foundation for this approach to the fabliaux, for in each of the fabliaux examined in this chapter, struggles for control of the common social spaces of the medieval towns and villages situated in northern France are key to each tale. These brief narratives model socio-spatial norms, and they figure in the social imaginary coding and constructing *new* representational spaces. For Lefebvre the *representational spaces* of literature and art contain complexly coded systems that are linked to the "clandestine" or "underground" side of social life, ultimately serving to affect power shifts beyond the text itself.[43] In both of the fabliaux studied in this chapter the

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[42] See Lefebvre, pp. 44-5.

[43] For Lefebvre, representational spaces, such as those found in literature, represent "(avec ou sans codage) des symbolismes complexes, liés au côté clandestine et souterrain de la vie sociale, mais aussi à l'art, qui pourrait éventuellement se définir non pas comme code de l'espace mais comme code des espaces de

"clandestine" representational spaces of the fabliaux, where protagonists work to undermine those in power, serve as a means for both the author and the audience to envision an alternate world in which to play out the violent or mischievous political fantasies of the fabliaux. In turn, one's ability to dominate and control social space translates to a broader appropriation of power. Thus, in the only known genre where, at least in some cases, the lower classes would have depicted themselves, the use and appropriation of space in the fabliaux can be brought into an analysis that considers how this community envisioned its own ascension through the details of everyday life.

Contexts

For a project on the mercantile Mediterranean, starting with the northern French fabliaux might seem like a curious point of departure. Tales of this genre often focus on small-town life and stock characters which seem to have little connection to the vast Mediterranean trade which connected France to the Arab and Byzantine worlds. However, the busy commercial world of the fabliaux is inexorably linked to the Mediterranean, and as Henri Pirenne has hypothesized, it was the gradual, and profitable, increase in Mediterranean trade following the Carolingian era that allowed European cities to flourish and develop a vast trading network that would have sustained the growth

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représentation" (43) [complex symbolisms, sometimes coded, sometimes not, linked to the clandestine or underground side of social life, as also to art (which may come eventually to be defined less as a code of space than as a code of representational spaces)] (Nicholson-Smith 33).

of cities across northern France while also increasing the influence of merchants in those urban spaces.[44]

Fernand Braudel's monumental study of the Mediterranean (1949; 1995) takes this theory further, allowing historians to reconsider the vast reach of Mediterranean trade beyond ports-of-call and up trade corridors that crossed France, insisting one must study these far-off spaces (such as northern France) to arrive at a history of the Mediterranean.[45] For Braudel, the *isthmuses* of trade which cut across Europe, bringing Mediterranean products and people into European spaces, likewise complicated the idea of Europe itself.[46] France is traversed by one of these trade isthmuses, home to a busy route that stretched between bodies of water, forming various paths between Marseille and Rouen, with Lyon and Paris marking its most important financial centers. Braudel acknowledges that any discussion of this isthmus will lead to speaking of the whole of France, with the alternate pilgrim route along the Chemin St. Jacques representing another great thoroughfare of the medieval world. As he observes, the French isthmus had its ups and downs, but "drew towards it all the active sectors of the western world in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, through the supremacy of the fairs of Champagne" (222). Thus, the gradual flow of goods and people from the shores would have affected the way of life, social ambitions, and economic growth of the people populating the cities and towns of the fabliaux.

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[44] See Henri Pirenne's classic study *Medieval Cities* (1925; 2014) for an early history of the effect of trade on the expansion of the medieval city in France.
[45] See Braudel, p. 223.
[46] The Mediterranean, for Braudel, has always challenged the hegemony of Europe as an entity, where "by its profound influence over southern Europe, has contributed in no small measure to prevent the unity of that Europe, which it has attracted towards its shores and then divided to its own advantage" (188).

For the purposes of this study, this isthmus should be considered as a conduit of change, of cultural influence, and as a liminal space that both influences and connects cultures in premodern Europe. While the trade route, punctuated by villages and cities between the greater metropolitan cultural centers, might have represented the space between two places such as Paris and Marseille, for example, Braudel reminds us of the far-reaching influence these isthmuses offered for the spread of Mediterranean culture, and likewise for mercantile culture more broadly. For in the Middle Ages, trade, rather than political power, defined these isthmuses bringing the Mediterranean into France. Furthermore, we should not underestimate the power of these conduits to disrupt cultural hegemony, to import and export cultural values, and in so doing, to expand or contract local hierarchies.

In considering the subversive power of the fair in medieval culture and literature, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White note the ways in which fairs could transform local discourse and politics, making the global local, and vice- versa:

> Fairs actually promoted a conjuncture of discourses and objects favorable to innovation. The market square was a crossroads, and if it was the focus of 'community' it was also the point of intersection of different cultures. The variety of commodities, buyers and spectators was necessarily linked to the variety of economic and political connections between villages, regions and nation-states. (36)

As Braudel notes, the culture of exchange in northern France, from Rouen to the Champagne fairs (frequently depicted in the fabliaux), was likewise implicated in this

conduit of power and cultural dissemination. On a local scale, the breadth of this network is reflected in the lives of everyday merchants, bourgeois, and *petite noblesse* seeking to increase profits and influence no further than their own city walls: "If, indeed, the fair could be the site of opposition to official ideologies, it was also the means by which emergent mercantile interests could stimulate new desires. Languages, images, symbols and objects met and clashed at the fair and it was their *interconnection* which made for their significance" (Stallybrass and White 38). The world of the French fabliaux, typically located in northern French cities, becomes an ideal crossroads where one can demonstrate the reach of this interconnectivity and examine the transformative power of mercantile culture as envisioned in the literary text. These communities, increasingly vivified by the commerce of these trading isthmuses, reflect power-struggles on a local scale, demonstrating the enterprising spirit of the bourgeois, the subtle capacity to introduce change and to manage resources, and the central importance of appropriating and managing space in a swiftly changing urban society. Just as it was a space for the bourgeois to flex their own power, however, Stallybrass and White note that one could also argue that the fair was instead a site for the cosmopolitan views of the 'center' to trickle down to the provinces and lower orders (38).

This gradual expansion of trade after the eleventh century, which gradually enriched mercantile communities and polities across Europe, served to disrupt hierarchies of power which had long been rooted in a more feudal-agrarian system. Indeed, by the thirteenth century, Europe was in the grip of a significant economic transformation which Roberto S. Lopez terms the "commercial revolution of the Middle Ages," where

populated urban centers began to displace an agrarian economy.[47] Reflected in the vast commercial networks that were established across Europe and the Mediterranean, and more locally to northern France in the Champagne fairs, the increase in micro and macro trading networks essentially facilitated the gradual, large-scale economic shift from feudal to commercial economy in Europe. The mercantile elite in France saw unprecedented wealth during this time, likely resulting in certain changes introduced by Philippe II Auguste in 1205 that gave merchants greater political influence and a place at court.[48] Earlier and more developed signs of this shift were reflected in the medieval towns as well, for while the major cities under Carolingian and Merovingian dynasties were originally built and fortified as spaces of dominance and strength against barbarian attacks, these walled cities evolved over time to accommodate commercial spaces and public markets which profited greatly from an increased connection to Mediterranean trade. Martin Aurell has observed this transformation in the emerging mercantile cities of the Midi, for example, reading the transformation as symbolic of a shift in city spaces once destined for war, now designed for commerce: "La ville cesse d'être forteresse, citadelle impregnable ou repaire de gens d'armes. Elle devient, par contraste, marché. Le milieu des affaires la contrôle dorénavant. Il en découle une nouvelle identité civique, imprégnée davantage de valeurs bourgeoises que d'éthique chevaleresque" [The city ceased being a fortress, the impenetrable citadel or hideout for warriors. It became, by contrast, a market. From now on it was controlled by sites of exchange, from which emerged a new civic identity saturated more by bourgeois values than the chivalric ethic]

[47] See Lopez's (1976) groundbreaking study which traces the shift between feudal and commercial economies in the later Middle Ages.
[48] See Bove, *Dominer* p. 180-1.

(110)[49]. Urban spaces became "rewritten" by the mercantile elite, as in Paris, where the omnipresence of increasingly powerful bourgeois families essentially created a new social topography.[50] According to Boris Bove, this topography "a façonné les esprits des Parisiens au point que ceux-ci ne peuvent se représenter la géographie de leur ville sans y associer les noms des familles des notables qui la dominent" [shaped the minds of Parisians to the point that they could not represent the geography of their own city without associating it with the names of the notable families that dominated it] (*Dominer* 377).[51] In the case of Paris, the control of urban space was of central importance among the bourgeois elite in Paris, for whom the city remained at the heart of their preoccupations and received the investment of the better part of their fortunes. Through the acquisition of space, concentrated both on the wealthy Parisian *rive droite* and in the countryside, socially mobile families sought to consolidate their own power through the acquisition and control of urban space. Thus, in cities across French and Occitan territories, merchants and bourgeois at all levels of society began to make visible changes to the urban landscape.

The thirteenth century was a time of intense reflection on socio-political regulation among the traditional elites of society, in particular the emerging social diversity and the agency of these new groups in relation to one another. Just as European commercial practices reached a peak, sumptuary laws and dress codes as determined at

[49] All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.
[50] Daniel Lord Smail (1999) makes a similar observation concerning the 'mental maps' among urban dwellers in Marseille and the greater Midi.
[51] According to Bove, medieval bourgeois communities centered themselves around the cities which were the pillar of their fortune and the seat of their power and prestige. He emphasizes the central importance of controlling urban spaces among the bourgeois elite in Paris, for whom the city remained at the heart of their preoccupations and received the investment of the better part of their fortunes. See Bove, *Dominer*, p. 158.

Lateran IV (1215) developed in Italy and France.[52] They reflected teachings of the church, seeking to save laity from the excesses of greed, but they were also convenient to determine and reinforce visible divisions between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. On a more fundamental level, the rise of mercantile power presented its own challenges in medieval society, generating tensions and contradictions that defied a social imaginary founded on the metaphysical veracity of a tripartite estate model. Otto Gerhard Oexle has interrogated the social perception of this model and how it may have corresponded to real social conditions during the Middle Ages. The model proposes three orders, or *ordines*: at the top, those who prayed and preached (*oratores*), and those who fought and ruled (*bellatores*/*pugnatores/milites*), and at the bottom, those who labored (*laboratores*). For Oexle, knowledge about society, and particularly interpretive schemes of social reality like the tripartite estate model, are on one hand "'schemes of experience' which allow us to grasp social reality" and on the other hand "'schemes of interpretation' to the extent that what we experience becomes imbued with meaning" (Oexle 95). Thus, he suggests that indeed, the trifunctional *ordo* scheme could be considered as indicative of certain social processes in the Middle Ages in that it focused them and got to the core issues. However, he qualifies this, adding "we may also regard the scheme as a factor that intensified and promoted these processes because it suggested a particular image of reality" (113). This reality was primarily conceived of and perpetuated by those of the *ordo* of *oratores*, or the monks and bishops who authored most texts, while the *laboratores* remained generally voiceless.

[52] See Bove, *L'Image*, p. 205 as well as Sarah Grace Heller's *Fashion in Medieval France* (2007) for more on the effect of medieval sumptuary laws among the classes.

Yet, while even the most elite of the *laboratores* remained at the bottom of the social strata, their function and acceptance within society, particularly in France, changed dramatically during the high Middle Ages. Labor, once viewed as a consequence of sin, eventually became regarded as a vitally necessary service in society, and this shift in perception ushered in a new era; the development of a wealthy merchant class (for example, town-dwelling artisans, merchants, and more generally urban 'citizens' that formed the 'burgher' community) presented a significant contradiction to the conception of a basic feudal model.[53] For Oexle, this shift in perception was not only new, it was epoch making, and the rise of a merchant class (for example, town-dwelling artisans, merchants, and more generally urban 'citizens' that formed the 'burgher' community) presented a contradiction to the basic model. Contemporary with the appearance of the *fabliaux* in France, repeated attempts were made in the late twelfth century "to incorporate the new urban burgher stratum of artisans and merchants into the trifunctional scheme, and to place the *negotiatores* and the various groups of *operarii* alongside the *milites* and *agricolae*, thus transforming the tripartition into a functional quadripartition," (Oexle 118). However, these attempts were largely unsuccessful, and could even be seen as a threat to the metaphysical underpinnings of the schema, for as Charles Taylor observes of the tripartite model, any deviation from the *ordo* could be looked upon as inherently unnatural when one considers the power of the metaphysical ideal embodied in

[53] Earlier theological conclusions, like those of Isidore of Seville (d. 636) that regarded human difference as a consequence of sin and thus removed any hope of social mobility, were later rehabilitated by thinkers like Adalberon of Laon (d. 1031), who interpreted manual labor quite differently. For Adalberon of Laon, "The functional interpretation of manual labor as a vitally necessary service performed on behalf of all those others who do not work dismisses the transcendental interpretation of servitude, and the labor associated with it, as punishment" (Oexle 115).

the schema: "In the Platonic and Neoplatonic traditions, this form was already at work in the world, and any attempt to deviate from it turned reality against itself. Society would be *denatured* in the attempt" (11, italics mine). Thus for many, the existence of a mercantile elite that could rival the aristocracy for power and wealth was in itself a contradiction and a deviation from the natural order of things, eventually culminating in efforts to control, demonize, or outlaw usury from the thirteenth-century on as an unnatural practice.[54]

The fabliau thus emerged during this ideologically tumultuous time when the idealized balance of the tripartite estate order was challenged and further complicated by social shifts that signaled the rise of a more elite, socially mobile bourgeois class. Often taking positions as high as *échevins* or magistrates in the Parisian court, for example, and occasionally marrying into noble families, many bourgeois sought to distinguish themselves and assimilate to more aristocratic social practices. Lisa Cooper and Mary Agnes Edsall have explored the impact of these changes as reflected in the fabliaux, noting their double function to either exalt the social climber or to undermine him entirely.[55] The fabliaux thus provide a unique entry-point for considering medieval French literature, complicating dominant narratives which have privileged a vision of the world where classes and spaces are isolated from one another. In reality, the fabliaux

[54] For a history of usury in Europe see Nelson (1969), who likewise addresses the ways in which rising mercantile power in the thirteenth century threatened the hegemonic power of the Church, in turn provoking increasing restrictions on the practice of usury in both Christian and Jewish communities across Europe.

[55] Highlighting the dynamic between history and literature, Cooper and Edsall look to the ideologies, narratives, and discourses expressed in the chronicle of Charles the Good's murder and a fabliau likely inspired by the event for evidence, demonstrating how social mobility and a heightened class-consciousness emerge as the crux of the conflict of each text.

open doors to a fuller understanding of the fundamental changes Mediterranean trade facilitated across France at all levels of society.

Fredric Jameson's concept of the *political unconscious* assists in considering the significant impact of this commercial revolution in France and in the literature produced across social strata.[56] Jameson's approach allows for a nuanced historical reading of the fabliaux, revealing the depth of discordant relations between two unequal sectors of society, the *laboratores* and the *oratores*, in light of the complex political undercurrents of the text.[57] Building upon Karl Marx's assertion that history is one long narrative of class struggles between oppressor and oppressed, Jameson posits that "It is in detecting the traces of that uninterrupted narrative, in restoring to the surface of the text the repressed and buried reality of this fundamental history, that the doctrine of a political unconscious finds its function and its necessity" (20). Conflicting social desires and tensions are both suppressed in literary creation and drive it as well, and ultimately manifest themselves as thinly veiled political fantasies that reveal the inherent anxiety stemming from the increased social mobility of the mercantile class. Thus a historicized approach is essential to grounding literary analysis, which ultimately not only will reveal a symbolic representation of the desired destiny of a community, but also will present "symbolic resolutions of real political and social contradictions" (Jameson 80) as well. In this light, this chapter analyzes the struggle to dominate social spaces and the symbolic

[56] The two texts used in this study follow the titles used in the *Nouveau Recueil complet des fabliaux (NRCF)*: *Le Sacristain II* (often referred to as *Du Segretain moine*) Noomen, VII, 1-90 (manuscript D, BN fr. 19152) and *Le Bouchier d'Abeville* (often referred to as *Eustace d'Amiens*), Noomen and Van Den Boogaard, III, 237-335, (manuscript H, BN fr. 2168).

[57] While this conflict is central to the two fabliaux studied in this chapter, subsequent chapters in this study will also consider relations as depicted between noble and mercantile communities, as these interactions become more commonly depicted in the Mediterranean spaces of the *chanson de geste* and the *roman*.

resolutions depicted in *Le Sacristain II* and *Le Bouchier d'Abeville*, making more legible the social critique manifesting in the historical moment of their origin.

The literary text provides particularly fertile ground for identifying the dilemma of this contradiction of rejection and acceptance, and the desire to resolve or conceal the socio-economic quandary. As Bernard Ribémont has observed, literature of the late Middle Ages often addresses what he calls "a mutation of the concept of the three orders," particularly for authors of the fourteenth century such as Christine de Pizan and Alain Chartier. For Ribémont, there is a certain interpenetration between classes through literature, where ambiguities, strong reactions, and the margins of uncertainty break through the text. What one finds is "un imaginaire de la société du Moyen Âge qui rompt avec les trois ordres et intègre les mutations qui s'opèrent autour du pouvoir et d'un État moderne en construction" (233) [a social imaginary of the Middle Ages that breaks with the three orders and integrates the mutations which are working around the power and the modern State under-construction]. Similarly, Bove addresses the confluence of bourgeois and aristocratic social practices in Pierre Gencien's late thirteenth-century *Tournoiement des dames de Paris* which features a chivalric tournament among the wives and sisters of the elite bourgeoisie readership. While Bove concedes that the *Tournoiement* is certainly amusing, he insists it should be read with an eye to understanding the ambiguous relationship between the merchant class and the esteemed aristocratic model as well, and to understand how the former sought to distinguish itself from the general bourgeoisie and peasantry. He asserts that the humor of the text is not entirely innocent in nature; instead, "il leur permet de faire éclater le carcan des représentations sociales pour se

donner une place inattendue dans la société, il leur permet de s'affirmer, grâce au travestissement, en 'noblesse de la bourgeoisie'" [it permits them to break the shackles of social representations to give themselves an unexpected place in society, permitting them self-affirmation by means of transvestitism, into the 'noblesse of the bourgeois'] (*L'image* 194-5). The text reveals the subconscious desire for distinction—to integrate aristocratic practices that elevate the bourgeois elite within their own *ordo*.

Likewise, the fabliaux can be read as texts which envision a world that suggests a collective shift in the use of social spaces appropriated from clerics and nobles by the *laboratores*. Indeed, the fabliaux often appropriate common social spaces and convert them for the purposes of the characters within, with narratives shifting power between those managing these public and private spaces, often in favor of the bourgeoisie. In this sense, the fabliaux as a literary product embody what Jameson calls *ideologemes*, or the class fantasy that is repressed by the subconscious desires of the author or the collective. The dramatization of conflict and contradiction in the fabliaux thus reveals "that moment in which the coexistence of various modes of production becomes visibly antagonistic, their contradictions moving to the very center of political, social, and historical life" (Jameson 95). Ideologies are expressed, for example, through the mise-en-scène of the usurpation of clerical power, or perhaps more subtly through the re-organization and domination of social spaces in the text. Beyond the text, these fantasies were far from overt, and they did not express a publicly accepted desire in medieval society. It would be anachronistic to suggest there was a revolutionary spirit within the rise of mercantile culture at this time, or a collective movement to overthrow feudal power. Instead, these

sometimes comic, sometimes violent political fantasies form what Jameson considers the *preconditions* of conscious political activity as envisioned through the text.

Le Sacristain II

The fraught relationship between the merchant class and the Church carries much of the tension during this period of transition. This dynamic is notable in the fabliaux themselves, particularly in *Le Sacristain II* and *Le Bouchier d'Abeville* which, like many other fabliaux, voice an anti-clerical stance and involve a direct conflict between a man of the church and a local merchant. The monk's transgression of productive and reproductive spaces within the text, and the significance of his failed attempts at creating a parallel space for trade in each story, will be pivotal to this study. While these failures will relegate the monk back into a religious space, they will also work to define the proper customs linked to various social spaces effectively managed by the bourgeoisie.

Le Sacristain II tells the tale of a monk who has fallen in love with a merchant's wife, Ydoine. The couple, whose wellbeing is dependent on Guillaume's profession as money-changer and cloth vendor, has fallen on hard times after he is robbed en route from a fair. When the abbey's sexton hears Ydoine praying in church, he seeks to help with the couple's financial problems by offering her money from the church coffers in exchange for sexual intercourse. Ydoine initially refuses his offer, but then seemingly compromises, saying she will discuss the matter with Guillaume. The couple concocts a plan to trick the priest; Ydoine accepts part of the payment in advance and invites the monk to her home for a sexual encounter that will never happen, as Guillaume plans to

intervene before the exchange is complete. Yet the plan goes awry when Guillaume accidentally kills the monk with a blow to the head. The horrified couple attempts to return the monk to the abbey where the corpse is found by the Prior in the latrine. Fearing he would be accused of murder, the Prior leaves the body in front of Ydoine's house because he believes (ironically) that someone as courtly as she would never be accused of murder. The monk's corpse subsequently becomes a problem for others in the village; it is in turn found and re-hidden by the couple, who secretly switch the corpse for the butcher's slaughtered pig. At this point, the butcher must dispose of the body, and the remains of the monk thus circulate through the village. A *vilain* ultimately places the corpse on a horse, knights him as "chevalier" (as he is even decked out with a lance and knight's costume), and sends him off at a gallop in the direction of the abbey. When the horse crashes into the kitchen, it is assumed by all that the monk had not only lost his mind but was killed by the fall. The story concludes in a final tallying of profit and loss: Guillaume and his wife come out on top by profiting both in coin and bacon, the butcher loses both his horse and pig, and the lustful monk loses his life.

Within this framework of exchange, we can read a drawing of both productive and reproductive boundaries in the opening lines of the text. This fabliau is intensely preoccupied with compartmentalizing the actions of everyday life, and particularly those of financial transactions. Traditionally, the church is not a place of exchange but rather of charity, spirituality, and death. The space of production, here the fair and the market, is one of easy transaction and fair exchange, where Guillaume can augment his earnings securely. The space of reproduction, here the home, is sacred to the husband and wife,

which functions on a cooperative dynamic of discussion and teamwork, shared meals, and sexual intercourse. [58]

Since the married couple is made sympathetic to the reader in the opening verses of the fabliaux, their behavior within the home space and the market space can be seen as even more exemplary. As Richard Spencer observes, "Both Guillaume and the monk are closely involved with money, the one as treasurer of the monastery, the other through his trade in money." However in contrast to the monk, Spencer notes, "The author sees the hero and his wife, typical and essential bourgeois, as good-living Christian citizens. They use their hard-earned wealth wisely, neither hoarding nor squandering it, but performing good works as the Church requires" (571). Both the wife and husband are presented as well raised, educated, and comfortable in their roles:

> Ydoine fu bien ensaigniee,
>
> Et cortoise et bien affaitiee,
>
> Et Guillaumes sot bien changier
>
> Molt s'entremist de gaaignier (*Le Sacristain II* v. 7-10)
>
> [Ydoine was well educated, / modest, courteous and refined; / and
>
> Guillaume knew how to exchange well, / applying himself much to
>
> making a profit.]

[58] While the monk's body passes through multiple village spaces in *Le Sacristain II*, this chapter focuses primarily on the spaces he inhabits while alive—i.e. the home and the Abbey—and still the target of social critique and behavioral correction. However, as Levy (2005) has suggested, the multitude of social spaces represented in *Le Sacristain II* itself presents enormous potential for the jongleur performing the spaces of such a tale, as the monk's remains are moved from latrine, to tavern, to barn, perhaps reinforcing norms of behavior in each space.

As with much of the merchant class, their value is rooted in their education and social comportment, not in their inheritance or aristocratic origins; Guillaume is presented as skilled in his work while Ydoine is elegant and courteous in manner, and they are everything a bourgeois audience could reasonably hope to achieve.

When Guillaume and Ydoine fall on hard times they appear to be hapless victims, as the fabliau places the blame beyond their control in naming the devil as the cause of their troubles. However, they are an industrious couple, and to rectify the situation, Guillaume makes a trip to the fair in Provins where he proves himself adept in trade: "Por ce que bon marchié auoit, / Faisoit Guillaumes molt grant joie" (*Le Sacristain II*, v. 30-31) [Because he had made good bargains, / Guillaume was very joyful]. He knows his business and profits at the fair, yet the life of a tradesman is always threatened by pitfalls and dangers, and Guillaume eventually faces a challenge he must surmount when he encounters highway bandits and is robbed of his new fortune. As Lorcin has observed, where the *matière de Bretagne* focuses on the hero's journey, the fabliaux instead highlight the danger of travel and the safe homecoming of the traveler. In turn, any disruption faced once the traveler returns to the supposed tranquility of the home is brought into relief.[59]

This juxtaposition emphasizes the need for a profitable space for trade, but also the crucial importance of socially enforced boundaries when faced with the dangers that lie outside of regulated social spaces. Indeed, in reality as in literature, the danger of the

[59] For Lorcin, the home in the fabliaux figures as an oasis, where "Les personnes quittent sans regrets un monde extérieur dur et peu attrayant et cherchent l'abri de la maison, la vie de famille, la chaleur du foyer" (20) [Characters leave the hard and unattractive world outside without regret, seeking the shelter of the home, the family life, and the warmth of the hearth].

open road and the forest presented a true threat to both the financial and physical well-being of merchants. Reinforcing the importance of socially acceptable norms of behavior in the market, Guillaume's fortune is risked and inevitably lost along with the life of his servant on the trade route. The sharp fluctuation in profit and loss draws the reader's attention to the very real financial risks inherent to trade, which demonstrate the crucial need for the merchant to protect his fortune. The presence of these risks also valorizes his ability to recognize and work within the established social spaces (which are presumably established to mitigate these dangers), and the necessity of wit in order to devise a way to overcome a substantial loss. This ingenuity proves itself useful against the similarly dangerous spatial-transgressions of the monk, who threatens the 'sacred' rules and spaces of exchange in an emerging bourgeois value system.

A harmonious couple, Guillaume and Ydoine have the sympathy of the reader and therefore succeed in modeling the guidelines of this emerging cultural space. Conversely, we see the major transgression of both of these cultural spaces in the disruptive actions of the monk, a transgression which works in turn to strengthen these boundaries all the more. This juxtaposition is highlighted in a scene in the abbey where Ydoine is praying devoutly for help after her husband's financial losses. As she prays, the reader is brought into another realm, that of the mystical, religious space:

> Desor l'autel mist sa'chandele,
> Des elz qui resanblent estoile,
> Plora et de son cuer soupire
> Que s'oroison ne li lut dire. (*Le Sacristain II*, v. 95-98)

> [Upon the alter she placed her candle, / From her eyes, which resembled stars, / she cried and sighed from her heart so much / that she could not say her prayer.]

The description of Ydoine's prayer evokes an emotionally powerful moment with imagery that passes from the heights of the heavens ("Des elz qui resanblent estoile") to the depths of her soul ("Plora et de son cuer soupire,") two spaces that transcend the limits of social space shared among lay society. Here Ydoine occupies an important sacred space, or what John Howe identifies as the "sacred center," where heaven and earth meet, essentially embodied by the worshipper herself.[60] It is then all the more jolting that upon witnessing this moment of sincere devotion, the man of the cloth promptly proposes that she prostitute herself rather than offer her financial assistance through charity, something the church can undoubtedly afford, and which is the only proper financial transaction for the clergy.

The lustful priest is one of many stock characters of the fabliaux, sometimes winning and sometimes losing at the game of seduction, coming out on top as often as he is punished.[61] However, for the monk in *Le Sacristain II*, this desire takes on a new level of depravity when it is combined with avarice and the mismanagement of the abbey's

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[60] Howe identifies three general types of "awesome landscapes": paradisiacal, or the *locus amoenus*; something more desolate, or the *locus horribilis*; and the "sacred center" (210) where heaven and earth meet. As he says of the latter, "A sacred center links earth and heaven, the human and the divine. Thus it combines a symbolic physical point with its associated social and religious constructs. Crowds of pilgrims and worshipers are part of this kind of sacred landscape, often the most significant part" (214).

[61] Lorcin reads the ever present clerk of the fabliaux as similar to the young knight or squire, incarnating the anti-conformity of the fabliaux and a prime motivator for protecting socially coded behavior: "Il est permis au jeune homme d'être vagabond, instable, pique-assiette, amant, mauvais plaisant. C'est, bien entendu, à titre temporaire. S'il prolonge trop cette étape de l'existence, il se met en marge de la société et devient un voleur, un souteneur, un pilier de cabaret…La jeunesse est la soupape de sûreté des fabliaux" (1979, p. 186) [The young man is permitted to be a vagabond, instable, a freeloader, a lover, a prankster. This, of course, is temporary. If he prolongs this stage of life too much, he puts himself on the margins of society and becomes a thief, a pimp, a pillar of the cabaret…Youth is the pressure valve of the fabliaux].

resources. Daron Burrows' work on the stereotyping of the priest in the fabliaux has given some illumination to anticlerical sentiment, particularly the rejection of simony and avarice in the fabliaux. As he notes, priests are often criticized in the fabliaux for involving themselves in financial transactions, for as part of the church, their only financial transactions should be charity. In this case, the lack thereof is notable; "The polarization of the layman depicted positively through charity and the priest depicted negatively through a lack of charity could not be more emphatic" (91). In terms of social spaces, the priest should occupy and tend to a space constructed in the name of charity. The irony is deepened by the fact that it is specifically the sexton's duty to maintain the spaces of the church—buildings, grounds, and cemetery—further associating him with death and the separate realm of religious space. However, in *Le Sacristain II*, the monk neglects his work to seek profit from the misfortune of others, attempting to convert his church into a space of exchange. His deviance is further compounded by the obvious fact that as a monk he has sworn himself to chastity, and his fate is thus sealed by his adulterous desire. He violates not only the boundaries of the productive space and the re-productive space, but also the conventional rules of the sacred space.

Oblivious of the social boundaries he has been charged to maintain, the monk forcefully embraces Ydoine in the abbey, entering her physical space without invitation, and proposes a secret sexual relationship. Her response is to admonish him: "Beau sire, en cest mostier / Ne deussiez pas donnoier" (*Le Sacristain II*, v. 137-138) [Good lord, in this church / you should not delight in affairs], but nonetheless, to the surprise of the monk, she proposes to return to her own home to discuss the matter with her husband.

The scandal of the moment grabs the audience's attention while Ydoine both voices and demonstrates the proper use of space and social behavior: a good monk should refrain from propositioning women in the holy space of the church, and a good wife is obligated to discuss this type of proposal with her husband in the private home-space.

Upon returning home, Ydoine shares the incident with her husband, who identifies the financial transaction proposed by the monk as non-negotiable. He declares, "por tot le tresor / Oteuien ne Abilor / Ne soffreroit il que hom nez / Fust charnelment de li priuez" (*Le Sacristain II*, v. 175-78) [for all the treasure / of Octavian or of Abilor, / he would not tolerate that a man / would know her carnally]. To Guillaume, the bond between husband and wife is more valuable than the treasures of great kings; it cannot be equaled in monetary value, and therefore it cannot enter into the space of negotiation. Yet within the home space, the husband and wife discuss their financial difficulty and the monk's proposal, and Ydoine herself proposes a plan which will capitalize on the monk's ignorance and thereby alleviate their financial crisis. Once the plan is set, Guillaume travels to the market to spend the church's money wisely, and he returns home where the couple dines together and retires to bed to celebrate their plan.

Creating further distance between the monk's indecent proposal and the proper bedroom space, in the language of this fabliau, sexual relations are even farther removed from financial transaction where the couple enjoy each other without any thoughts of their economic hardship: "Onques cele nuit ne parlerent / De pouretez ne de mesaise, / Qu'il sont braz a braz molt a ese" (*Le Sacristain II*, vv. 230-2) [Not once that evening did they speak / of poverty nor of difficulties, / they are so at ease in each other's arms]. In

the context of this fabliau, the bedroom is the heart of the reproductive space, where financial worries and transactions have no place whatsoever. As has been observed of the fabliaux more broadly, marriage is often desired as an oasis of peace from the disruption of the world, with the happiness of the couple dependent on material security, a satisfying sexual relationship, and respect for the authority of the husband.[62] Socio-spatial boundaries serve to protect not only the marriage but the simple *bourgeois* values which hold it together. Thus, the proper behavior within the home in *Le Sacristain II* directly corresponds to the happiness of the couple, and what can be discussed over dinner must be left behind at the threshold of the bedroom to maintain this balance.

Sacristain II breaks with the cycle of violence and tit-for-tat disputes between husbands and wives. Instead, the harmony of Guillaume and Ydoine's relationship demonstrates not only that they are well matched in terms of where they place on the social hierarchy, but that they are perhaps the best exemplars of the bourgeois elite, with their behavior towards each other bordering on the courtly. Above all, Ydoine's compliance with gender expectations is perhaps the more effective social lubricant for the harmony between the couple, for she epitomizes an increasingly widespread ideal of bourgeois female behavior, both in the home and in public.[63]

In contrast with Ydoine's exemplary behavior, the monk appears clueless as to the cultural boundaries of each space. He first attempts to establish a parallel space for trade

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[62] See Lorcin, p. 41.

[63] Compare this with the literature of the late fourteenth century, where this ethic of behavior appeared more explicitly in didactic texts like *Le Mesnagier de Paris* (c. 1393) which served to educate a bourgeois women on being a good wife and companion. The text instructs women to love God and husband, to strive to make the household profitable (economizing along the way), and to behave with decorum in society and properly entertain guests, providing women with a gendered formula for social mobility and a spatial division of tasks.

within the church that shadows the acknowledged space for trade in the market. In this case, the deal is struck between two people who are not generally depicted in the market – a monk and a woman. Burrows marks the irony of the monk's proposal, noting that his attempt at any transaction seems all the more inappropriate in relation to Christ's attitude towards business exchanges in the Temple, where he famously cast out of the money-lenders, pointing out that this is the main argument made towards simony in the thirteenth century at Lateran IV.[64] Yet like Christ overturning the money-changers' tables in the temple, the monk makes his rounds through the church, tipping the donation pots and harvesting these offerings for a sexual encounter with Ydoine. Demonstrating his ineptitude, he seems completely unware of the risk of this investment, along with the possibility that it might be a ruse.

What the monk lacks in knowledge of trade, he also lacks in knowledge of the home space and sexual mores. He twice attempts to initiate a sexual encounter outside of the appropriate space, first embracing Ydoine in the church, and later in her home where the monk rises to take her next to the hearth: "Il'se leua faire li uolt / Deioste le foier en rost" (*Le Sacristain II*, v. 319-320) [He wants to do it to her / next to the hearth in its heat]. Again, the reader and the monk are instructed on the appropriate space for sexual relations by the heroine of the tale, who protests to his graceless advances:

> Por dé merci!
> Endui serions ia honi,
> Quar ge crieg que la'gent nos uoient
> Qui trespassent par mi la uoie.

[64] See Burrows, p. 94.

> En cele chanbre m'en portez
>
> La'si'faites uoz uolentez. (*Le Sacristain II*, v. 321-326)
>
> [By god, have mercy. / We will be both shamed, / for I fear that the neighbors will see us / who pass down the lane. / Take me in this room / There you can do as you wish.]

Leading the monk to the bedroom was always part of the couple's trick; however, her instructions come across as logical and convincing, and the monk obeys. As Bianciotto (1981) has argued, the urban space of the fabliaux is known for its crowds, who likewise act as judges and witnesses to bad behavior, in turn reinforcing proper conduct even in the most intimate of spaces. As it is through Guillaume's transactions at the fair that the reader learns the appropriate use of commercial space, so it is the wife who, with a real desire to avoid public shame within her community, demonstrates the proper use of the home for both the reader and the oblivious monk.[65]

Indeed, what the couple possesses that the monk lacks is knowledge of the rules for trade and resourcefulness. The monk has completely underestimated the solidarity of the exemplary bourgeois couple, for Guillaume and his wife have a *savoir faire* which the monk cannot possess, and the religious man is therefore (re)placed outside the space of

[65] In studying the relationship between fabliaux and town, Bianciotto observes that the city in the fabliaux often generates and shapes the plot itself with the crowded, city spaces of the text revealing something of daily life. He argues that these spaces are structured and defined not by physical descriptors but rather by the practices of those within, according to a shared system of relations, positing "ce lieu n'est pas vide: il s'établit entre les habitants du bourg, toutes classes confondues semble-t-il, un système de relations spécifique qui me parait susceptible de trahir le contexte urbain en dehors d'une localisation explicite: c'est là ce que je nommerai *les fonctions narratives de la ville*"(1981, p. 51) [This space is not empty: here a specific system of relations is established among the inhabitants of the burgh, wherein all classes seem mixed together, which seems to me likely to betray an urban experience that transcends the explicit location: it is there what I will name *the narrative function of the city.*] Thus beyond establishing behavior for inhabitants of Orléans, or a particular bourgeois family, the generic depiction of urban spaces instead generates and reinforces an expectation of behavior applicable across the bourgeois communities of northern France.

production in this new cultural hegemony. These two men no longer speak the same language, and *Le Sacristain II* works to both establish the space of the monk, while also further solidifying the practices of the laity in the everyday spaces of production and re-production.

As the tale continues, the monk utterly fails to function outside of the religious space (or arguably, within the religious space for that matter) and is accidentally murdered by the couple midway through the tale. The murder can be read as an appropriate *re*-placement within a religious space that hosts both rituals and spaces of death (funerals, burials, and cemeteries) and the spaces of the afterlife (such as heaven and hell). Yet this unfortunate incident gives Guillaume the opportunity to demonstrate his growing ability to negotiate social space when the couple finds themselves fenced in by their own city:

> Les portes du borc sont fermees,
> Et les gaites en halt montees (*Le Sacristain II*, v. 368-369)
> [The doors of the city were closed, / and the guards were mounted high up]

Faced with the reality that they are literally walled into their own social space with a dead body of which they must dispose, Guillaume takes a moment to reflect, drawing from his wit rather than material resources. He devises a plan to sneak the monk back into the abbey, which not only (re)places the corpse in the religious space, but the solution also works within the limits of their social and physical confinement as well. The shift in power over and control of space is even further emphasized through the repeated violence

and abuse to the monk's corpse as it circulates around the village through bourgeois and peasant spaces, until it finally comes to rest, once again, at the abbey.

While the gruesome spectacle continues, the merchant and his wife are able to use their mental dexterity to manage the system to their advantage and to profit from the chaos. Guillaume and Ydoine are successful in part because they can manipulate social expectations while negotiating more ambiguous situations to suit their needs. It is the power of the bourgeois who knows the rules (and how to break them) and who will not only survive but *profit* in the political fantasy of an emergent social system.

Likewise, the demise of the priest, caused by a wit dulled by lust and a breach of social space, betrays his inability to evolve and exist within an emergent social structure. With his death, the movement from a way of life ordered by the clergy to one which is reimagined for the bourgeois dominates the fabliau, reimagining mercantile authority at the local level.

Le Bouchier d'Abeville

Le Bouchier d'Abeville, like *Le Sacristain II,* similarly establishes spaces of production in the structuring of the tale, creating an opposition between the *laboratores*, in this case a butcher who can cleverly manage spaces of exchange, and the *oratores*, or corrupt parish priest, who is out of his depth in seeking to control these same spaces for himself. In *Bouchier*, a butcher returns from the market and seeks shelter in the abode of a priest, who rudely refuses him hospitality. The butcher seeks revenge (or justice) by stealing a sheep from the priest's abundant flock and secretly offers the fleece to three of the

priest's household—the priest himself, the priest's female consort, and his servant—in exchange for hospitality (from the priest) and sexual encounters (from the women). The butcher successfully dupes all three of them, and they are left arguing ruthlessly over the ownership of the fleece at the end of the tale, while the butcher walks away satisfied and satiated.

Like Guillaume, the butcher of this tale is introduced early on as trustworthy, likeable, and generous, demonstrating charity with his poorer neighbors (*Bouchier*, v. 9-14), and likely establishing a favorable rapport with the audience. Enhancing this flattering portrait, the merchant is depicted as an adept businessman, as the next few verses give the reader a glimpse of his shrewdness through his experience at the market in Oisemont, where he had hoped to purchase livestock:

> Mais n'i'fist fors uoie gaster:
> Trop i'troua kieres les bestes,
> Les cochons felons et rubestes,
> Felons et de'mauuais afaire,
> Ne'puet a'iaus nul markiet'faire. (*Bouchier*, v. 18-22)
> [But he did nothing but waste his time, / he found the livestock too expensive, / the pigs too young and unkempt, / in a bad state, and poorly priced. / He could not make a bargain for them.]

In this passage the reader gets a glimpse of the marketplace and the standards a good butcher expects from his transactions. A savvy reader would likewise catch the joke in this description, where "bestes" could likewise refer to the merchants he encounters at

market, who, like their own livestock, are both too rude and too vile to work with towards a fair sale. Here we have an opposition between the good merchant and the bad, as well as a renegotiation of the stereotype of the merchant in the medieval text. A good merchant, like the butcher, knows when *not* to engage in an unfair trade. He evaluates merchandise carefully, and he avoids a bad investment despite the long journey to the market. It is of course one of the many risks of the trade. When he sees the meat is overpriced, or that his partners in this exchange are dishonest, he shows his prudence and does not consent to the exchange. His skill is contrasted by bad merchants with poor merchandise, who conduct their business roughly and without skill, and unfairly too. The butcher therefore leaves the market where he *cannot* trade, "ne pot a eus nul marchié fere," and heads back home empty-handed, but without incurring a financial loss.

While in *Le Sacristain II* the reader sees Guillaume scrambling to negotiate mercantile spaces to his advantage (as he eventually does), in this fabliau the butcher is operating within social guidelines with ease. His *sagesse* is even more evident when, unlike Guillaume, he chooses to spend the night in the safe space of a town rather than on the road:

> Molt redoute la'male gent
> C'on ne li toile son argent
> Dont il'auoit a'grant fusion (*Bouchier*, v. 35-37)
> [He greatly feared dangerous men, / who would snatch his money, / which he had in abundance]

The butcher is wise enough to fear the road, demonstrating his wit twice in avoiding financial ruin. In this way, within the opening verses of the fabliau, the butcher shows his ability to discern the value of a fair trade, while he also more literally protects his money from theft in the unregulated spaces along the trade route.

The butcher demonstrates his knowledge of appropriate behavior within a space of production, how to avoid risk outside of that space, as well as an understanding of the proper function of the religious space. Just as he knows the mores of trade, he assumes the clergy will operate appropriately within the religious space through acts of charity, where transactions do not involve an exchange but instead provide charitable assistance without the expectation of reciprocity. The butcher's assumptions are clear, as he politely reminds the priest of his duty:

> Biaus sire se dieus uous ait
> Herbegiés moi par carité
> Si ferés honor et bonté. (*Bouchier*, v. 60-62)
> [Good sir, that God be with you, / give me lodging here by charity, / and thus act in honor and kindness].

When the priest bluntly rejects this request, the butcher changes his strategy to negotiate a more commercial exchange, offering money for the lodging, which fails as well (*Bouchier*, v. 83-92). The priest has designated his home space (that of the church) as off-limits to the butcher and all others, insisting, "Lais hons chaiens nuit ne gerra" (*Bouchier*, v. 65) [No layman will ever sleep the night here]. He refuses to engage in any exchange, hoarding property and resources that are not entirely his to enjoy. In the priest's refusal to

recognize the role of the religious institution in the community, he demonstrates his inability to abide by the rules of charity that once built the religious space itself. His second refusal of financial compensation for a night's lodging marks his further inability to recognize value and the function of an honest negotiation and exchange.

Throughout *Bouchier d'Abeville*, however, the butcher reveals his sharp mind for exchange by continually undermining the priest, whom he recognizes as working according to a social hierarchy whose members abuse their power and neglect their socially established duties. If the world-system of the fabliaux is centered on exchanges, a cleric who refuses to extend charity towards the community, while failing to live as a model of piety through his sinful cohabitation with women, essentially renders himself useless to his flock—he has nothing to exchange for their devotion and tithes. Thus the flock (the common merchant, for example), which has need of the cleric's resources, challenges and seeks to re-appropriate that power and wealth.

What the butcher observes, as does the reader, is that the priest is out of place when he tries to run his household, financed by charity, as if it were space for trade. He is outmatched by the butcher, who easily tricks him by offering him a sheep stolen from the priest's own flock as a gift in exchange for a night's lodging. The priest, blinded by his greed, falls for the ruse. Yet the butcher demonstrates the skill natural to his trade—the *sagesse* of a good tradesman and storyteller—by chatting with the shepherd, slyly selecting the best sheep of the flock, and then marketing it back to the priest. He repeats this skill twice over, offering the fleece in trade to the servant girl and the priest's lover, wearing each person down with his convincing stories. It is the butcher's way with words

and his skill at *negotiation* that determine his triumph in the space of production. The same skills then benefit him when we see him moving from one seduction to the next, profiting well in the space of reproduction and easily convincing the priest's lover to sleep with him too:

> Tant li'dist et tant li pormet
> Li'dame en'se merchi se'met
> Et li bouchiers bien s'en fait. (*Bouchier*, v. 297-299)
> [He said so much and promised so much / that the lady mercifully agreed, /and the butcher did it well].

A natural dealer, the butcher's sales pitch is too irresistible to the women, and his negotiation skills ultimately determine his triumph.

Furthermore, he manages the household space with equal aplomb, cunningly navigating around an unfamiliar home in his nightly visits to the women. In this fabliau, the priest's household has existed as a deviant parallel space to its societal equivalents, inherently violating social and ecumenical rules of conduct for the *oratores*. The priest lives a life of luxury and excess, effecting wealth which is in fact not his. As Bourdieu has observed, economic power (or for the social climber, the *appearance* thereof) is the power to keep necessity at bay, which is why that power asserts itself through "the destruction of riches, conspicuous consumption, squandering, and every form of *gratuitous* luxury" (55). The priest participates in this "continuous spectacle" of excess, whereas the values exemplified by the bourgeoisie discourage wasteful decadence. Furthermore, the butcher knows how to turn this gratuitous lifestyle against the priest,

ultimately reestablishing an equilibrium that instead tends to define bourgeois practices in bourgeois spaces.[66]

As a result, this space poses no challenge for the butcher, for it becomes apparent that in terms of exchange there is not much he cannot do. To the contrary, he moves from one seduction to the next with ease, razing the house of cards the priest has constructed around himself while mastering the art of libidinal exchange as well. The butcher manages the reproductive home space through these seductions behind closed doors and in the priest's own bedroom. His natural skill in both market and home are brought into sharp relief against the priest's ineptitude at managing and protecting these shadow spaces of his own.

The priest is completely outfoxed by the butcher; he is literally unable to manage his own flock (a biblical allusion that would not be lost on the medieval audience), nor is he able to manage his own household. By having a lover and a servant, not only does the priest reveal his hypocrisy and greed, he also violates the sacred space in an effort to mimic the space of reproduction. Yet the more he attempts to possess the less control he has over these possessions. Instead, through the wit of the butcher, the priest's territory is appropriated by another value system in which the possession of wit and dexterity of mind are more valuable and enduring gifts than wealth itself. The butcher momentarily dominates the household, working behind the scene to shift power and master the spaces

[66] Bourdieu identifies this balance in the lives of the bourgeoisie, who have cultivated "the opposition between what is paid for and what is free, the interested and the disinterested, tin the form of the opposition, which Weber saw as characterizing it, between place of work and place of residence, working days and holidays, the outside (male) and the inside (female), business and sentiment, industry and art, the world of economic necessity and the world of artistic freedom that is snatched, by economic power, from that necessity" (55).

of both production and reproduction, while the priest remains oblivious—like his own sheep he is fleeced in the process.

Fair Trade and Breaking the Rules

Emerging during the early years of cultural transition in thirteenth-century France, the fabliaux often reflect the instability of this historical moment, presenting ambiguities inherent to the fabliaux corpus that have perplexed literary critics for years. While both of these tales praise the skill and wit of the merchant, it is clear he is not a flawless character; he is also a thief, a murderer, and licentious, participating in deviant behavior as well. Yet the fabliaux offer an ambiguity that allows some flexibility in negotiating a fair outcome, just as the butcher, Guillaume, and Ydoine work within a flexible framework to achieve the best possible profit under the circumstances.

To understand better how these inconsistencies can continue to produce a new cultural hegemony, it is useful to contextualize these tales within an understanding of the rules of medieval trade. In a period where economic value was constantly in flux, the shared medieval conception of trade itself had three constituent parts: value, consent, and community.[67] These parts were founded in Aristotelian and Augustinian philosophy, which sought to evaluate trade from an ethical standpoint, emphasizing that exchange must be straightforward and honest. Therefore, both parties must agree on the value of an item, both must consent to the exchange of goods, and the exchange itself must be to the benefit of the community.

[67] See Farber, p. 3.

Full disclosure is essential to a fair transaction; if for some reason one party is dishonest about the real value of the traded goods, the transaction becomes voided.[68] However, these rules are bent between theory and action, and the complexity of the fabliaux represents both the idealized form of exchange, as well as the less than honest practices of real merchants. Thus in both *Le Sacristain II* and *Bouchier d'Abeville* the tales simultaneously promote *and* subvert these rules of exchange in establishing the mercantile spaces of production and reproduction, at once envisioning a new system of fairness, while subverting the old with less than honest tactics.

Following these guidelines for exchange, it is notable that the usually honest butcher conducts a dishonest trade with the priest and his household by masking the true value as well as the ownership of the sheep. As such, no one truly consents to the exchange. It is a complicated transaction masterfully achieved by the butcher, working within a political ideology that privileges a rising commercial culture. According to Muscatine, "The 'wicked' victims of fabliau ingenuity are not victimized so much because they are wicked or hypocritical as because they are competitors; they are already self-proclaimed entrants into a contest of beating the system" (94). From another perspective, Jameson views that conflict in comedy offers a means of ushering in a new order; "is not between good and evil, but between youth and age, its Oedipal resolution aiming not at the restoration of a fallen world, but at the regeneration of the social order" (116). Indeed, through the inventive wit of bourgeois of the fabliaux, order is restored

[68] Farber asserts that "at each stage of the [trading] process, then, value, consent and community must not only take place but be recognizable and straightforward so that we can distinguish between a trade that partakes of proportionate equality and one that does not, so that we can distinguish between coercion and exchange" (3).

anew, privileging a new commercial society over the old established order by whatever means necessary.

The figurative appropriation of space is one of those means. Characteristically ambiguous and fluctuating, the control of space allows the most adept of characters to negotiate new rules, invert power dynamics, and create newly coded social spaces. As with Žižek's creative subject (1989), this ambiguity highlights the creativity of the merchant who is both manipulated by an ideological discourse of appropriate and inappropriate behavior, ever seeking to comply with dominant social mores, but who finds ways of working outside of these rules to push and reshape social boundaries as well. Thus, while Guillaume and his wife are fully capable of operating within the established cultural space, they also negotiate the boundaries of that space to reinforce a new social order. The monk fails spectacularly at securing an unfair trade between the wife and himself (an exchange which is already of dubious value), yet the couple is able to manipulate these same rules, not only by feigning consent but also by orchestrating a pseudo-exchange. In the case of *Le Sacristain II,* it is Ydoine herself who maneuvers best in these spaces, proposing the plan for the false trade to her husband (*Le Sacristain II*, vv. 181-206), and demonstrating, like the male merchants of these fabliaux, her ability to bend the rules of trade in her favor. In this case, a woman's mastery of exchange (or rather, pseudo-exchange) shows the continual malleability of these spaces in the medieval text as managed by both men and women in an otherwise misogynistic genre.[69]

[69] While a full examination of the gendering of these spaces in the fabliaux falls beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth noting that Ydoine wields significantly more skill than her husband in space management, as it is Guillaume who unwittingly undermines each ruse, first by accidentally killing the monk, then by unsuccessfully disposing of the corpse in the latrines.

Guillaume, like Ydoine, is also capable of making a profit through a reversal of the accepted rules of trade and his management of space; he achieves what the monk could not in creating a shadow space for trade outside of the market. Indeed, after the failed attempt to deposit the body back at the abbey, Guillaume operates outside of the market space to exchange the monk's corpse secretly for a large pig, which adds profit to the one hundred *livres* he acquired with his wife through the ruse earlier in the tale. His parallel trade works in his favor, despite the dishonesty in exchange, which of course complicates the ideology of the text. As Christian Sheridan notes concerning the complex economy of these tales, "what we see in the fabliaux is not a straightforward evolution from gift to barter to money, but it is a conflict and hybridization of all three models" (102). It is this hybridization that allows for a new socio-economic system to emerge from the chaos in which those who can use their wit to manipulate the system benefit most.

All three bourgeois of these fabliaux navigate this conflict of systems skillfully, mastering both the commercial and the domestic spaces of production and reproduction, respectively. Their choice to operate *outside* of the accepted rules of exchange demonstrates their ability to function within that structure, as well as their knowledge of the boundaries and how to transgress them successfully, fully manipulating this hybrid system to their benefit. Their skills likewise contrast with the lack thereof in the monk, who is inept at operating within these structures; indeed, his ignorance of the socio-economic contract prevents him from identifying when he is being played by the couple. So while they violate the same rules they seem to espouse, Ydoine, Guillaume, and the

butcher are all able to identify and manipulate the system to their own advantage, thus defining new rules in their mastery of these practices. When propositioned, all three bourgeois agree to conduct a false trade in spaces that do not accommodate trade (the church and the home), and yet these pseudo-exchanges work behind the scenes to reinforce the intended purpose of these same social spaces.

When viewed through Lefebvre's theory of social space, laymen can often violate trade contracts and yet still remain virtuous in the eyes of the reader, since their deviant behavior falls within the negotiation and emergence of cultural hegemony. By twisting the rules, these bourgeois can regulate what they deem to be their space of exchange, and similarly, push the politico-religious space of charity to the margins. The fabliaux as a genre are particularly open to this sort of deviance, which creates a literary space for new power structures, where money is linked to the ingenuity and cleverness of the merchant:

> The fabliaux do not honor vice for its own sake, but they do celebrate the getting of money, goods, or pleasure through wit – whether legally or illegally. Wit is one of the few great resources of the powerless and the dispossessed. It is the weapon of the servant, of the woman, and par excellence of the poor scholar. In celebrating this virtue, then, the fabliaux are to an extent subversive of Christian teaching, of the class basis of feudal society, of the conventional notion of sex roles, and of conventional ideas of stability, economy, security and justice. (Muscatine 92-93)

The *sagesse* of the merchant is the strongest protection the merchant has against the wealth and power of the church, and by extension the feudal system, and it emerges as a

strong weapon for social change in these two particular tales. In turn, the audience can trace a clear delineation of social space—be it within the home, the market or a religious space—as well as the roles of those who control these spaces, which works to reinforce the underlying values of the political unconscious of the text. While the fabliaux are at times ambiguous, these inconsistencies can be read as part of the process of societal transformation in northern France of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, allowing the mercantile class to stretch, trade, and redefine the social spaces of their daily life.

Thus, the fabliaux often re-envision these spaces of interaction and the behavior of the actors within them. However playful and transgressive the fabliaux may be, creating a dissident political agenda is a serious endeavor, and the genre's ambiguities allow it the versatility either to envision or to suppress fantasies of socio-cultural revolution. As Jameson notes, the literary or aesthetic act "always entertains some active relationship with the Real; yet in order to do so, it cannot simply allow 'reality' to persevere inertly in its own being, outside the text and at a distance. It must rather draw the Real into its own texture […] whereby language manages to carry the Real within itself as its own intrinsic or immanent subtext" (81). Thus a narrative will, on some level, constantly incorporate a social reality into the fabric of the text. It also generates a new reality and a social ideology that is in turn passed onto the reader: "The symbolic act therefore begins by generating and producing its own context in the same moment of emergence in which it steps back from it, taking its measure with a view toward its own projects of transformation" (81). So while the fabliaux provide a space to dream and play, exemplary

of Bakhtin's theory of the *carnivalesque* (1984), it would be imprudent to assume they were any less powerful than the epic or romance. Such an assumption not only minimizes our grasp of their potential as a force of change and transition for the medieval public (and particularly the non-noble classes), it privileges and perpetuates the ideological values expressed in the more courtly genres, such as the lyric, the epic, and the *roman.*[70]

While these fabliaux may have been marginalized in popularity and status by an aristocratic audience, they were likely well-known and circulated throughout the mercantile community in northern France.[71] Elizabeth Poe has recently drawn similar conclusions regarding the possible public performance and dissemination of a group of fabliaux, positing that certain fabliaux which depict the merchant in his milieu—trading at the fair and interacting with villagers, as well as the more intimate interactions between

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[70] David F. Hult's "Gaston Paris and the Invention of Courtly Love," [*Medievalism and the Modernist Temper*. Eds. Howard R. Bloch and Stephen G. Nichols. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. 192-224], which is one among many essays in this outstanding collection, addresses the influence nineteenth-century scholars and ideologies have had on our modern consumption and valuing of medieval literature, while Sarah Kay's *The* "*Chansons de Geste" in the Age of Romance* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995] has similarly examined the ideological project behind privileging romance in the academy.

[71] The question of audience is admittedly a difficult one for the fabliau, and it has been extensively debated by scholars seeking to rehabilitate the genre to the literary canon. Joseph Bedier and Per Nykrog's studies have defined the contemporary debates around the genre and reception of the fabliaux, yet scholars continue to meet challenges given the range of themes and perspectives, not to mention the generally anonymous origin of the tales themselves. One way to determine fabliaux readership is to turn to the extant manuscripts containing the tales, as a consideration of the fabliaux in their manuscript context renders them particularly suited to express collective desires. While a codicological study of these manuscripts is beyond the scope of the present study, it is worth noting that, as is often the case with the fabliaux, a great majority of them are preserved in larger codices, often interspersed with more courtly material, sometimes harmonizing with the values communicated in the courtly or didactic pieces, and sometimes parodically discordant. Versions of the two fabliaux examined for this study in particular can both be found in BNF, fr. 2168, interspersed with a selection of romances, including the only existing version of *Aucassin et Nicolette* and a version of *Floire et Blancheflor*. *Le Bouchier* in particular can also be found in BNF, fr. 837, known as the most extensive collection of fabliaux in one manuscript. Of these manuscripts in particular, Keith Busby has hypothesized that these short, salacious tales are grouped with certain romances to respond thematically and morally to each larger work, as well as to color the reading of a text with moral gravity (Busby 439-47). While most early manuscripts generally belonged to aristocratic families, many of these particular fabliaux manuscripts may have belonged to traveling minstrels, some of whom were perhaps seeking to cultivate a mercantile audience. As with BNF, fr. 837, which contains *Bouchier*, and Bern 354, which contains *Sacristain II*, both manuscripts contain sets of tales which praise skilled workers of the merchant class and could have appealed to an audience of the urban trade guilds (Busby 447).

men and women—were likely performed during the Champagne fairs.[72] Poe asserts these fabliaux not only depicted familiar, even popularized characters (which were perhaps based on local merchants and villagers), but envisioned a standard of behavior for the merchant, concluding that this material was commonly shared and circulated among participants at the fair, whether written, spoken, or performed. We can thus surmise that the interconnectedness of the trade route in northern France with other parts of Europe further disseminated these fabliaux, along with the standards of behavior the tales envision, throughout Europe and particularly among burgher and merchant communities. Given the regularity of the Champagne fairs, it is likely that these fabliaux were shared frequently and circulated widely beyond the fair in Provins, for example, moving from the local community out into the region and across Europe. Echoes of well-known fabliaux can be found in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1349-51) and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1399), demonstrating their influence beyond the borders of France.[73]

We also have strong evidence that the mercantile public would have widely consumed these tales, and as Charles Muscatine has observed, "if the fabliaux are not bourgeois in origin, they are manifestly impregnated with attitudes that in modern times we have come to think of in part as 'bourgeois' and worse; the fabliau audience must be

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[72] See Elizabeth W. Poe's "Fabliaux as Fair Exchange; *Boivin de Provins* and *La Bourse pleine de sens*." [*The Old French* Fabliaux *Essays on Comedy and Context.* Ed. Kristin L. Burr, John F. Moran and Norris J. Lacy. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2007. 17-29].

[73] From the *Decameron*, the tales of days IV.2 and IX.6, along with many others, share a common plotline with French fabliaux, while many *novelle* of the *Decameron* contain common elements with the fabliaux. Katherine Brown's study (2014) demonstrates how Boccaccio was inspired by both the structure of the fabliaux and the tales themselves. Likewise, a number of Chaucer's tales are analogues of the French fabliaux, including *The Reeve's Tale*, *The Miller's Tale*, and *The Shipman's Tale* among others, with the latter resembling *Le Bouchier d'Abeville*, in which the merchant and the clergy's roles are reversed.

seen as living in an environment in which these attitudes possess an extraordinary interest and validity" (29). Issues such as social mobility may not have taken center stage in every fabliau, but these concerns are ever present in the tales. So while it is likely that the fabliaux appealed to both aristocratic and mercantile audiences, they certainly reflected, be it consciously or unconsciously, concerns and realties of the merchant class.

As we have seen, the political fantasies of the fabliaux express a desire for new practices, beliefs, and values, where the literary appropriation of social spaces is key. Indeed, a more consolidated cultural hegemony emerges in the text to influence the production of a practical space for interaction in the homes, cities, markets, and fairs of northern France. Subsequent chapters will focus on these shifting socio-economic dynamics, moving to courtly genres such as the *roman* and the *chanson de geste*, which continue to engage with imagined mercantile communities on the frontiers of French lands, but from the viewpoint of the aristocracy. Demonstrating the importance of space, these profitable merchant communities are always located at a safe distance from the cultural center, representing a distant, exotic Mediterranean space rather than a local reality. However, in displacing the merchant communities to the periphery of the French world, these genres also negotiate the economic and social change ushered in by the commercial revolution, with mercantile spaces, and the communities within, emerging again as powerful spaces of transformation.

CHAPTER TWO

Along Mediterranean Coasts:

Being Bourgeois in the Old French Epic and Romance

Demonstrating the pervading symbolism of the Mediterranean, the only miniature of *Floire et Blancheflor* manuscript B (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Français 1447) features Blancheflor's recently-captured mother being loaded onto King Felix's boats, with the coastline forming a visual divide between two worlds. Our scribe likewise adds undulating blue filigrees to every page of the manuscript which run from the top of the folio to the bottom, while the text itself opens with thalassic allusions to the East. Indeed, the narrator of BN 1447 speaks of hearing the tale from two sisters while sitting upon a beautiful embroidered silk blanket the color of blue indigo from Tyre, one that is more beautiful than any cloth found in Thessaloniki. The embroidered flowers evoke the gardens the lovers inhabit throughout the tale, just as the blue indigo alludes to the vast Mediterranean itself. While the cloth functions as an indicator of wealth and status for the family, and perhaps the tale itself, it likewise implicitly speaks to the long journey the precious cloth made, presumably by merchant ship, across the Mediterranean to this aristocratic French home.

This Mediterranean world of mercantile activity figures at the heart of many courtly poems and will be the focus of the present chapter. If the previous chapter explored how mercantile culture is depicted in one literary genre as controlling its own spaces of exchange through practices of production and reproduction in northern France,

this chapter extends the concept of mercantile space to the trope of the sea, and specifically the Mediterranean Sea. The fabliau often represent mercantile spaces as familiar, urban, and landlocked, from city markets in Abbeville or Amiens, to the trade routes connecting farmlands and villages across the region. Covert battles to control these spaces, from the home to the market, play out humorously in the fabliaux, in often absurd and hyperbolic scenarios. Perhaps more than most genres, the fabliaux represent a world of commerce that is closest to its lived reality, where the details of the bourgeois' daily life enhance the credibility and humor of plots and denouements.

Turning from fabliaux to northern French courtly texts, however, this chapter will examine how Mediterranean spaces contribute to the destabilization and re-authoring of identity beyond the borders of the political and cultural center in the mercantile northern France. By broadening our scope to consider merchant communities in genres beyond the fabliau, we find that depictions of bourgeois culture in the courtly medieval French text figure quite differently as high and low cultures intersect in imagined spaces on the periphery. The Mediterranean mercantile community instead provides fertile territory for authors seeking to address evolving cultural dynamics that reflect the shifting social realities of the time, from the growing authority of mercantile culture in everyday life to the threat this authority presents to lower nobility.[74] By looking to representations of

[74] Judith Kellogg succinctly summarizes the growing threat accompanying the rise in commercial culture as evidenced from the twelfth-century onward: "[…] by the time the *Chanson de Roland* was composed, two interdependent tendencies were at work in French society. On the one hand, the tight bonds of allegiance between members of the aristocracy were breaking down. Military service was often replaced by a money payment (*scutage*) as the monarchy grew stronger, money began to flow, and the seigneurial classes became accustomed to comfortable and extravagant life styles. Progressively, the individual knight was detached from his original active function in a larger, collective, military community. On the other hand, while traditional warrior institutions were breaking down, urban centers were evolving their own distinct collective forms, such as communes, guilds, and later, universities. Towns fostered a whole new set of

mercantile culture in the *chanson de geste* and the *roman*, as this chapter will do, one finds quite another world of commerce. Moving away from the conventional assumption that the mercantile community figured ostensibly as a foil for aristocratic culture, this chapter instead argues that its role should be considered as significant, not only mediating cross-cultural encounters but also facilitating decisive power shifts at the cultural center.

The "Mediterranean," which can mean in and of the sea itself as well as the communities and polities dotting its shores, often appears in the twelfth- and thirteenth-century text as an apolitical social space of unpredictable and fortuitous encounters. The trope of the Mediterranean in the medieval text, which is typically located on mercantile and pirate ships, provides an early precedent for Michel Foucault's *heterotropia*, long before the naval fleets of early modern European and Ottoman forces began to dominate and partition the waters and shores. The sea becomes an indispensable host, complicating many cultural assumptions typically associated with the *chanson de geste* and the *roman*, where even the epic or romantic hero finds himself at the limits of his authority and at the mercy of a busy, circulating, and cooperative mercantile world. To be precise, "mercantile space" refers to those spaces which are frequented, controlled, and managed by primarily mercantile communities: village and city markets, trade routes on land or sea, merchant fondacos and ships. These spaces are often foreign to the chivalric hero,

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municipal institutions, along with a flourishing commercial economy and a place of relative security for a growing middle class. Ultimately, the rise of towns in France was detrimental to the interest of the class they had formerly served, and these urban centers, allied with royalty and high aristocracy, greatly weakened the power of the lower and middle aristocracy. Henceforth, lower nobility would find itself squeezed between the interests of monarchy and great barons from above and bourgeoisie from below" (175).

frequently located on "pagan" shores, and thus beyond his control. In sum, the alterity of the Mediterranean compromises and transforms his autonomy.

As much as the hero's identity is challenged along Mediterranean coasts, the thalassic mercantile spaces of French courtly literature likewise often provide a beneficent, alternate community which contrasts with the corrupt and stagnant structures of authority represented by the political centers of northern France and England. A world apart from the provincial markets of the fabliaux, the mercantile spaces of courtly literature offer a backdrop for canonical texts' exploration of pivotal questions of identity and authority, particularly for the male hero who finds himself trapped in restrictive structures limiting his upward mobility. Here, rather than simply perpetuating a fixed idea of noble authority, this study seeks to move beyond those structures to recognize the ways in which the courtly text also envisions the benefits of strong ties with the mercantile community and of certain forms of hybridity that emerge. An analysis of these moments allows us to move past anachronistic views that firmly separate and subordinate the third order to a hegemonic cultural center, particularly when considering the means by which mercantile culture offers alternatives to violent crusading rhetoric. Subsequent chapters will thus consider the adaptability of mercantile spaces in the medieval Mediterranean. The question of gender in these spaces of exchange will return in chapter three with study of the stakes of class-transvestism and discursive authority among women in the coastal market space.

This chapter takes as its subject the ambiguity of identity as represented though the male epic or romantic hero in *Le Charroi de Nimes*, *Les Enfances Vivien*, and *Floire*

et Blanchefleur. Each of these texts exemplifies a *rite of passage* for the hero; the aristocratic male hero must leave his sovereign's kingdom for a journey into the spaces along the Mediterranean, where he hides his noble identity to pass as a merchant or bourgeois. Thus, each young man struggles to shed his courtly behavior and moral code, appropriating the role of trickster and performing that of the negotiator. We will consider these moments of "class transvestism" beyond disguise as an act of mimicry within spaces of commerce, examining its power to undermine and reestablish social orders in the text. For in mercantile spaces, the knight can play the merchant, and the merchant can mimic the knight, but there are limits to these identities. Homi Bhabha's views on mimicry and its power to function as a camouflage will allow us to consider the forms of cultural domination and affirmation expressed in the courtly text. Likewise, Bhabha's idea of the "slippage" produced in mimicry, wherein the "real" identity is ultimately impossible to mask, will guide our analysis of the limitations present in fully accepting mercantile culture in noble society.

Foucault's concept of the *heterotopia* frames our approach to considering the power of the mercantile sea-space, which hosts pivotal moments of mimicry, providing the medieval text with an idealized location wherein identities can be destabilized, masked, and renewed. Beyond considering the advantage the hero can derive from moving anonymously in the Mediterranean space and learning new tactics from the merchant community, however, we will consider what he must possess of the "other" in these spaces when transvesting. These moments of appropriation are often comically troubled as each hero attempts to hide his noble identity, embody the merchant, and

assume a new "self" within the context of a new community. Indeed, each hero's struggles with the new mercantile identity simultaneously guides him in a passage from boyhood to manhood. This evolution proves crucial to understanding the power of mercantile spaces in the text.[75]

With their power for both humiliation and renewal, depictions of interactions with mercantile communities in their spaces are fraught with ambivalence, often reflected in the hero's reticence or inability to perform his disguise fully. This chapter thus concludes with an examination of the apparent ambiguities of mimicry as can be read in the hero's interaction with mercantile guides. Despite what many scholars have noted as a social anxiety around the rising mobility of the bourgeois during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and the notable disgust of many noble characters playing the bourgeois, the interactions between heroes and merchants in these texts are not only helpful but, indeed, crucial to each hero's success. While a knight might loudly and humorously voice his humiliation in being brought down to the level of the common man, the merchants of the epic and romance nonetheless appear as perceptive, successful, and compliant guides for each hero. In turn, the noble traveler undeniably benefits from the new paternalistic dynamic that sets him on the path to adulthood.

Challenging assumptions long associated with the social orders depicted in the medieval text, this chapter instead concludes by proposing that these mercantile

[75] Scholars have identified this theme as an underlying motivation for the epic or romantic hero of each text. Lynn Shutters has examined how *Floire et Blancheflor* displaces anxiety of conversion by making Floire's masculinity the main obstacle of the text. Jason Jacobs traces the problems of inheritance and authority in *Charroi de Nîmes* though a psychoanalytical approach, and Adeline Richard identifies Vivien's struggle as primarily one between two worlds—those of the boy and the man. In line with these studies, this chapter seeks to demonstrate how the mercantile community facilitates each success.

heterotopias work to free the young hero to learn from a new mentor, or even a father figure, in the form of a helpful merchant who teaches him new ways and means to succeed on his quest. Acknowledging that the hero's transformation is difficult and limited by his noble identity, the displacement of the aristocratic father by a mercantile mentor who provides a non-violent means to success is nonetheless a radical force, destabilizing many previously held categories about social status in the medieval text. This chapter explores the implications of this displacement, bringing to light an increasing acceptance of advantageous partnerships offered by mercantile culture in medieval Europe.

In recent scholarship, relatively few studies have questioned the significance of the merchant and mercantile discourse in the medieval French text alongside the rise of premodern European mercantile culture.[76] Generally, critics have focused on the shifting linguistic registers that might appear across genres, reflecting the values and daily realities of bourgeois communities, or the comedic elements these encounters inevitably provoke.[77] Likewise, scholars such as E. Jane Burns and Sarah-Grace Heller have drawn attention to the greater detail attributed to clothing, as values and interests of the

[76] Kellogg provides a rare and significant exception with *Medieval Artistry and Exchange: Economic Institutions, Society, and Literary Form in the Old French Narrative* (1989), which examines the rise of commercial exchange in the Middle Ages as reflected in the text. Breaking her study into three genres (epic, romance, allegory) Kellogg looks at the impact of commercial culture on the knight's profession and standing. Once founded on war and battle, she reads this identity as ultimately challenged by the rise of a peaceful mercantile culture.

[77] Critics such as Anna Drzewicka, Mario Mancini, Jean-Charles Payen, Lisa Perfetti, and François Suard have all sought a better understanding of the problems of genre posed by the prominence of comedic elements (as brought though interactions with bourgeois communities) in the *Charroi de Nîmes* and the Guillaume d'Orange cycle more broadly. Likewise, Eugene Vance has provided a study of the shift in register and value in texts influenced by commercial culture.

merchant come to gain more prominence across texts.[78] However, there has not yet been a satisfying inquiry into the depiction and function of mercantile spaces in the more courtly genres of the medieval text, despite the frequency of such encounters with the mercantile world in that realm of exchange.

The importance of space in defining and developing noble characters such as Arthur and Lancelot has received some attention, for both noblemen exemplify courtly behavior and naturally are seen as defining the courtly spaces they occupy. Bernard Ribémont notes how courtly spaces often provided the means to prove one's worth in a value system based on physical strength and valor. "En vantant le retour aux valeurs de la chevalerie, on rappelle alors les vertus de la sobriété, de l'endurance, des rudes chevauchées et nuits en campagne: tous modes de vivre qui éloignent de la ville" (Ribémont 225) [In boasting of the return to chivalric values, one remembers the virtues of sobriety, endurance, rough rides and nights in the countryside: all ways of life which are distant from the city]. The significance of the errant knight's voyage into mercantile spaces remains relatively unexamined, however, despite the increasing juxtaposition of courtly and commercial spaces in the medieval text.[79] Indeed, these two spaces become more interdependent in the text throughout the Middle Ages, with Ribémont noting a

[78] Burns has considered the role of clothing in constructing identity in the medieval text, including the significance of cross-dressing and what she calls "sartorial bodies." Sarah-Grace Heller's *Fashion in Medieval France* (2007) establishes a scholarly basis for approaching medieval ideas of fashion as represented through the medieval text, making connections between the evolution of fashion and the emergence of trade-driven commercial economy in the thirteenth century as well.

[79] Francis Gingras provides an analysis of maritime geography in the romance, proposing readers consider it from a structural perspective, noting how the introduction of cross-Mediterranean voyages offer a structural scaffolding essential to the narrative of the romance, "Car les pérégrinations par voie de mer continuent d'informer la structure narrative du conte puisque la crise (la vente de Blancheflor à des marchands) suppose une nouvelle traverse, cette fois vers Babylone" (25). While limiting, this approach suggests how we might read the importance of these maritime spaces.

gradual contradiction in late models of chivalry, particularly in terms of location, where the hero increasingly finds himself in cities and villages rather than forests and castles.[80] Certainly, the epic or romance hero's experience is rooted in a courtly milieu; however, the courtly hero often finds himself immersed in the mercantile world as well, facing new tests of endurance that demand a new set of skills. Thus, in considering the hero's move to mercantile sea spaces as witnessed in *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, *Les Enfances Vivien*, and *Floire et Blancheflor*, it follows that the new sorts of challenges and lessons before him might require an entirely different skill-set and confirm a new sort of 'identity' for the knight who exits spaces considered typical of the courtly narrative. In certain narratives, the mercantile world proves essential to the concretization of the hero's 'identity' in the courtly French text, for by exiting the hierarchy inherent to the social 'center,' the hero becomes free to interact with a community which presents him not only with guides to a rite of passage, but also a means for altering the home court culture.

Why might this distance prove necessary for a hero in evolution? Why do these moments, often defined by disguise, occur so far from the home culture? The answer may be rooted in medieval concepts of identity and its relation to conceptualizing the self in relation to community. As Caroline Bynum has observed in twelfth-century authors, the "self" was always connected to a concurrently emerging idea of the "group," as well as the categories, resources, and classifications which defined increasingly competitive

[80] While the typical space of the knight might be the Round Table, the forest, or the isolated castle, "des figures emblématiques comme celle d'Arthur, de Lancelot ou de Gauvain sont mises en scène en situation urbaine, dans tel ou tel hôtel; mais elles sont de toute évidence attachées à un mode de fonctionnement excluant largement la ville et les bourgeois" (225) [Emblematic figures such as Arthur, Lancelot or Gawain are placed in an urban setting, in this or that hostel, but they are for the most part tied to a courtly way of life, that largely excludes the city and the bourgeoisie].

communities. The "discovery of the self" that is so often associated with the twelfth century went hand in hand with the discovery of an affiliation with a chosen community.

> A new sense of self, of inner change and inner choice, is precipitated by the necessity to choose among roles, among groups. A new sense of becoming part of a group by conforming one's behavior to an external standard is necessitated by a new awareness of a choosing and interior self. If twelfth-century authors were more aware of their motives for acting, of the process of making a choice, of interior change, it was not only because there were in fact a wider variety of social roles and a new diversity of religious groups which made choice necessary. It was also because people now had ways of talking about groups as groups, roles as roles, and about group formation. Therefore, they could be conscious of choosing. (15)

With these categories and choices came increased cultural anxiety around reinforcing culturally dominant views at the heart of these categories. The identity of the individual and the group hinged on the formation of orders, classes, and social roles, as well as on maintaining these categories, and any transgressions would have disrupted the integrity of these structures.

Disguise and transvestism presented a particular threat; in medieval literature, moments of transvestism are often treated with humor in order to diffuse the tension they hide. As Ad Putter has observed of male transvestism in the medieval literary text, the disguise must often be a fragile one; its fragility allows the audience to identify the

disguise's limits, which likewise reinforce culturally dominant views of specific categories. For there is a danger inherent to playing with what are perceived to be metaphysically based categories, and as Putter observes, the act of cross-dressing meant more than comically obscuring the distinction between the sexes:

> [Medieval writers] realized that once that distinction collapsed, other cultural divisions legitimized by it were likely to follow. Above all, transvestism posed a threat to orders of clerics and laymen, whose mutual exclusiveness had been justified as an extension of the difference between the two sexes […] One category in crisis always leads to another. (281-82)

Distance provides a convenient buffer for these acts of class transvestism, for the noble hero's investment in a mercantile "self" will certainly blur widely accepted social categories. This distance is always physical, located in mercantile ports on the Mediterranean, but also in the social distance between high and low culture. This removed space within bourgeois culture provides the means to destabilize identity safely for a moment, for the farther from the cultural center these transgressions occur, the more this damage is ostensibly mitigated in spaces of normative practices. In considering social spaces and the distance between them, Foucault identifies a number of persistent binaries which govern social perceptions of space, from private and public, family and social space, leisure and work space. Within this relatively rigid structure, however, Foucault observes the presence of the heterotopia across cultures, which hosts the individual crisis and allows for a transformation that cannot occur in the spaces of mainstream society. For Foucault, "il y a des lieux privilégiés, ou sacrés, ou interdits, réservés aux individus

qui se trouvent, par rapport à la société, et au milieu humain à l'intérieur duquel ils vivent, en état de crise" (15) [there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society, and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis]. The heterotopia, and particularly a heterotopia of deviation, is a space that permits deviant behavior in relation to social norms. These heterotopias, once prohibited to the subject, thus become a 'nowhere' where rites of passage and transformations can occur safely outside of established social spaces, and where this deviant behavior can pass unpunished.[81]

The concept of the heterotopia presents a productive way for understanding how the hero can step out of these categories, and the communal identity, to try on (and establish) a new 'self.' Distancing the hero from the heart of his culture, the mercantile communities of the Mediterranean provide a type of heterotopia for young knights on the brink of adulthood, who are seeking to define themselves as they step into their own adult authority. This heterotopia is not simply the Mediterranean Sea, but is more precisely defined by the circulating mercantile communities and ports of entry which primarily characterize the thalassic space.[82] Compared with the seat of political power represented in Charlemagne's French court, the mercantile spaces which appear on the periphery of

[81] As examples, Foucault cites the removal of adolescents, menstruating or pregnant women, and the elderly to heterotopias apart from social spaces as they experience transitions, and speaks to the usefulness of the "honeymoon trip" as a convenient *heterotopia*, where "La défloration de la jeune fille ne pouvait avoir lieu 'nulle part' et, à ce moment-là, le train, l'hôtel du voyage de noces, c'était bien ce lieu de nulle part, cette hétérotopie sans repères géographiques" (15) [The young woman's deflowering could take place 'nowhere' and, at the moment of its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers].

[82] As a point of contrast, the mercantile space is not quite the same as sacred spaces around the sea. Sebastian Sobecki reads a transformation in the representation of the sea, observing how authors began to represent the sea as a space of more secularized and adventuresome romances, contrasting with Christian renderings of saints' lives which instead focus on the sea as a sort of *désert liquide*, where one can escape humanity as would a hermit.

each tale, sometimes literally linking courts across foreign lands and waters, certainly reflect an unappealing "nowhere" beyond courtly culture.

It is likewise in these spaces where a certain deviancy, as represented in the assumption of another identity, goes unpunished.[83] Indeed, each hero discussed in this chapter assumes his role as "other" as part of his state of crisis. This act of deviancy arises primarily because the hero has no inheritance on which to rely and has broken family ties; thus, he must seek to redefine himself in a space *beyond* hegemonic French lands to gain the means to overcome the personal crisis. These spaces are defined by the merchants themselves, who are often depicted as continually circulating, whether moving currency and products to ports across the sea, or traveling to distant lands to obtain exotic treasures.

The most consistent depiction of "mercantile space," however, is no particular space at all, but rather the ever-circulating traveling caravans and the ships themselves. Certainly the ports and fondacos of each tale provide a point of exchange for the itinerant hero, marking the *transformation* inherent to his personal journey. The mercantile ship provides the perfect location for the transformation of characters exiled from their own lands, as well as a new consolidation of power through somewhat deviant means. For Foucault, commenting on the power of merchant and pirate ships in the modern imagination (which naturally has its roots in the medieval), the ship is the heterotopia *par excellence*, providing a space for dreams and adventure:

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[83] Putter notes that the tournament, as well as the stage, present a similar punishment-free play-space of representation rather than presentation, and "a world in which actions take place at one remove from reality and have a certain license, because the play-world frames them as unreal and unserious" (286). Indeed, these spaces thrive on disguise, which might also be said of fictional depictions of the world of commercial exchange.

> le bateau, c'est un morceau flottant d'espace, un lieu sans lieu, qui vit par lui-même, qui est fermé sur soi et qui est livré en même temps à l'infini de la mer et qui, de port en port, de bordée en bordée, de maison close en maison close, va jusqu'aux colonies chercher ce qu'elles recèlent de plus précieux en leurs jardins (19)
>
> [the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens]

It is important to consider the untethered nature of the floating 'space,' the place that is never a fixed spot, particularly in opposition to the static presence of the medieval court or the sovereign's castle. The ambiguity of the space, as well as the 'merchant' who occupies it and guides it, provides a location of limitless potential and mobile transformation, based on a level of anonymity that belongs to the common man.

For Foucault, multiple principles define the heterotopia. But perhaps most pertinent to considering literary mercantile spaces within the present frame is their relation to the space that remains. Often using the language of mirrors and mirroring, particularly of the social center, Foucault observes the reflective quality of the heterotopia:

> Ou bien elles ont pour rôle de créer un espace d'illusion qui dénonce comme plus illusoire encore tout l'espace réel, tous les emplacements à

> l'intérieur desquels la vie humaine est cloisonnée […] Ou bien, au contraire, créant un autre espace, un autre espace réel, aussi parfait, aussi méticuleux, aussi bien arrangé que le nôtre est désordonné, mal agencé et brouillon. (18-19)
>
> [Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (…) Or else, to the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well as arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled].

Stretching Foucauldian principles beyond their original sphere, this chapter proposes that the literary mercantile space, as a heterotopia, can be read as doing both—creating a space of efficient alternate solutions while mirroring a courtly world that gives the illusion of strength and honor, but which is both compromised and corrupt. The mercantile world of the epic and romance certainly exists in full, as an opposing 'real' space with its own system of values, exchange, and success. However, it simultaneously exposes the illusion and fragility of that same real space on which noble identity is founded, questioning the fluidity of that identity and the tenets at the heart of courtly culture.

So what exactly transpires in this Mediterranean mercantile heterotopia? Primarily, merchant spaces provide a locus of transformation for the chivalric hero through the temporary appropriation of a more versatile mercantile identity. These transformations are nonetheless depicted as uncomfortable and unnatural for the hero as

his noble identity is compromised through the successful portrayal of another class.[84] "Transformation" in these spaces of exchange allows for a temporary loss of identity, ultimately facilitating a powerful return to the public self for the noble hero. As Gabrielle Tanase has observed of the masking and unmasking of medieval character, "le déguisement renvoie à une thématique où la folie, l''ensauvagement,' le rire trouble, autant de motifs liés au masquage du protagoniste, occasionnent une réflexion sur l'identité et sur la place de l'individu par rapport à l'organisation sociale" (16) [disguise is linked to a theme where madness, savagery, wild laughter, and many motifs tied to the mask of the protagonist bring about a reflection on identity and the place of the individual in relation to the social organization]. Spaces of exchange provide the medieval reader with a space and a vehicle for considering the fluidity of identity and community, particularly when the hero inevitably faces limitations to that transformation.

Turning to the texts, it will be useful to consider the limitations placed on each hero attempting to pass convincingly as a merchant in foreign spaces, considering where each narrative intersects and deviates from the other. The twelfth-century Old French epic *Le Charroi de Nîmes* opens with the renowned knight Guillaume returning to King Louis' court to ask for the land which is owed to him based on his vassalage. Indebted to

[84] Generally, critics have considered literature a means maintaining distance between social classes, if only in theory. As Jean Alter has noted, the appearance of a powerful bourgeois class in the later Middle Ages certainly created a degree of discomfort for the noble class, if not an "esprit antibourgeois," as the group seemingly contradicted core tenants of a set social hierarchy. For Alter, who examines this anxiety in *La chanson de Roland*, "Le facteur nouveau qui force l'idéologie à leur faire une place dans le système social, c'est le bourgeois qui impose sa présence incompréhensible, son esprit subversif: ni prêtre ni chevalier, l'inconscient ne peut le verser que dans un tiers ordre, et le tiers ordre ne peut être textualité que sous le signe des *laborantes*" (270) [The new factor which forces the ideology to make room for them in the social system, it is the bourgeoisie, which imposes its incomprehensible presence, its subversive spirit: neither the priest nor the knight, the unconscious cannot express it except through the third order, and the third order cannot be literary unless under the sign of *laborantes*].

the knight for his service, but bereft of unclaimed lands, Louis makes a number of offers which Guillaume finds unsatisfactory, if not offensive, often requiring Louis to take land from another family to give to the knight. Eventually, Guillaume asks for permission to claim lands which make up Muslim Spain (here including territory in Languedoc such as Nîmes) and takes with him a number of knights in a similar state of disinheritance to conquer new territory for their own patrilineal legacies. Upon arriving in the region, Guillaume realizes the difficulty they face in taking Nîmes, for the city is well fortified and guarded. A chance meeting with a successful merchant on the trade route gives Guillaume's knight Garnier an idea of how to infiltrate the city; Guillaume will dress as a merchant and enter Nîmes with a caravan of barrels of "merchandise" to sell to the inhabitants. Rather than merchandise, however, the barrels will contain the hidden French knights, who will await a war cry to jump out and take the city once they are safely within the otherwise impenetrable walls. Working with the merchant, the knights pull together carts and barrels from around the countryside to orchestrate this Trojan Horse-like 'gift' for the city. Here, instead of hiding in a massive wooden horse symbolizing the very essence of the chevalier, the warriors find themselves divided among lowly merchant's barrels being pulled by obstinate steers. Ultimately the ruse works, but not without some difficulty on Guillaume's part in successfully imitating an unknown traveling merchant, for while he spins a convincing autobiography for king Otrant, his signature *cort nes* sparks recognition on the part of the Saracen king and must be repeatedly explained away. Through an offense to one of Guillaume's men in the city, a fight ensues, and the Frenchmen are quickly able to acquire Nîmes. The brief battle

results in very little bloodshed on the part of the French, however, the city's ruling brothers are both killed and its citizens converted to Christianity on pain of death. The chanson ends with Guillaume finally acquiring his own lands, in a sense stepping into his own public adulthood. Guillaume will go on to acquire a wife in the next *chanson* of the cycle, *Prise d'Orange.*[85]

While Guillaume's moment of class-transvestism is brief, limited to one day, and performed for the purpose of entering a protected space, for others the appropriation of a mercantile identity requires a much longer investment. The thirteenth-century Old French romance *Floire et Blancheflor* is framed by trade and moves through multiple spaces of exchange across the land and water routes of the Mediterranean.[86] Here, the journey eastward often deliberately recalls the earlier narrative of trans-Mediterranean crossings in its allusions to the Trojan War, often making ambiguous connections between the two.[87] Yet, several versions of this maritime romance tell an origin story of Charlemagne

[85] In considering the function of mercantile spaces in this text, it is worth noting how the tale itself is obsessed with the idea of space from start to finish, from a deep anxiety over apportioning French lands and drawing borders, to the problem of accessing a space that is fortified and off limits, or which was once in the hands of Guillaume's father and now under Muslim authority. Unsurprisingly then, possession of spaces and access to each is closely tied to issues of identity for Guillaume, as well as his nephew, fellow knights, and the "povres bachelers" who followed him south.

[86] Scholars such as E. Jane Burns have noted the unusually high profile mercantile elements in such a courtly text such as *Floire et Blancheflor*, dubbing it "A Mercantile Adventure Story" where "Floire's quest to free a captive beloved is more mercantile than chivalric; it features a hero laden with precious silks and costly fabrics, a Lancelot turned cloth merchant while searching for his ladylove" (212). As she keenly observes, "the voyage itself, staged along medieval trade routes between Spain and Egypt, reframes the standard romance adventure plot of abduction and rescue as a quest based on trade" (216).

[87] The dominance of the sea itself is particularly evident in manuscript BN 1447, whose only miniature for the tale is visually split between land and sea, depicting Blancheflor's captured mother on the shore, soon to be loaded onto King Felix's boats. The scribe likewise adds undulating blue filigrees that repeat throughout the manuscript, running from the top of each folio to the bottom and giving the impression of running water across the page, while the text itself opens with thalassic allusions to the East. The narrator of BN 1447 speaks of hearing the tale from two sisters while sitting upon a beautiful embroidered silk blanket the color of blue indigo from Tyre, one that is more beautiful than any cloth found in Thessaloniki. The embroidered flowers evoke the gardens which feature heavily throughout the narrative, while the indigo brings to mind the vast Mediterranean itself. If the cloth functions as an indicator of wealth and

himself, whose maternal grandparents are revealed to be the titular characters at the opening of the poem. Floire is an adolescent Saracen prince who falls in love with Blancheflor, a slave in the royal household who was born of a noble French lineage. The two children grow up together like twins, resemble each other, and inevitably fall in love as they mature. Their infatuation with one another troubles King Felix, who feels his son, the prince, is destined for someone of higher rank and of the Muslim faith. The king sells Blancheflor to merchants, who in turn sell her to the Sultan of Egypt for a fortune. Upon discovering her departure, Floire is heartbroken and eventually convinces his father to enable his trip east to retrieve his beloved. Disguised as a merchant and charged with an enormous amount of goods, Floire moves from port to port in search of Blancheflor, encountering merchants along the way who have seen the girl on her travels east. At each merchant hostel, Floire's host easily penetrates his merchant disguise, and yet each encounter affords Floire the opportunity to trade his wealth for information bringing him closer to his goal. Finally, upon arriving in Cairo, Floire meets a merchant who gives him invaluable advice for negotiating his way into the impenetrable tower where Blancheflor is kept. Here Floire must play the tower's porter at chess, offering bigger and bigger prizes until he can essentially seduce the porter with a golden cup representing the fall of Troy. This cup, initially traded by merchants for Blancheflor, has followed Floire on this journey and proves enough to gain the porter's undying loyalty. Floire enters the tower hidden in a basket of flowers, not unlike the Trojan Horse, and finally reunites with his love. The two are ultimately discovered and almost put to death by the jealous Sultan, but

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status for the family, and perhaps the tale itself, it likewise implicitly speaks to the long journey the precious cloth made, presumably by merchant ship, across the Mediterranean to this aristocratic French home.

their testimonies of love convince him to allow them to marry. Upon return to Naples, Floire becomes king of the kingdom, as his father has died in the interim, and Floire converts to Christianity through his love for Blancheflor. Like Guillaume, the newly converted king insists his subjects follow suit or meet death. As is recounted at the beginning of the narrative, the united lovers form the foundation of a new empire, producing Charlemagne's mother Berthe from their Christian-Saracen union.

Just as Floire is immersed in and dependent on mercantile culture during his voyage east, the hero's experience embodying the merchant in the early thirteenth-century Old French *Les Enfances Vivien* seems more preoccupied with the limits of mercantile apprenticeship for those born of noble blood. At the opening of the tale, Vivien, still a child, is traded to the Saracen king Marados by Charlemagne in exchange for his captive father Garin. As Vivien is awaiting torture at the hands of the Saracens, his fortune changes and a rival army arrives, burns down the city, and recaptures Vivien as part of the plunder. Having escaped death he is eventually sold to Mabile, the wife of a wealthy merchant named Godefroy, who has been away on the trade route for seven years. In part to preserve his anonymity, but in part to produce an heir for her husband, Mabile convinces Vivien to pretend to be their son during the boat ride home. In purchasing Vivien, Mabile temporarily purchases the aristocratic "roots" unavailable to them as (albeit elite) merchants. Upon return, Godefroy is thrilled to find he has a son and attempts to teach Vivien the ways of merchants, doing his best to instruct him in exchanges and negotiations. Vivien, presumably because of his noble blood, dreams only of killing Saracens and makes a very inept merchant, botching one exchange after another

and pining away at the window for the life he lost. Eventually, on a trading trip to Luiserne, Vivien rallies a group of merchants in his retinue to join him in conquering the city, and for a time the merchants-turned-warriors are successful and happy to follow such a natural leader. However, the city is besieged, and when Mabile finally reveals the truth of Vivien's identity to Godefroy, the couple goes straight to King Louis to seek help for their adopted son. Surprised and skeptical that Vivien is still alive, the king is ultimately convinced by Guillaume to send troops to Vivien's aid. Along with these new reinforcements, the young hero is able to defeat the Saracen forces, prove himself a valiant hero, and ultimately burn Luiserne to the ground. Vivien returns to France a man and a hero by his own right, stepping into his adulthood and shedding his merchant disguise once and for all.

Regardless of the hero's assured success, these disguises are often difficult to sustain for a nobleman attempting to play a convincing merchant. For this reason, many critics have interpreted these moments of class transvestism as upholding rather than challenging a medieval hierarchy that firmly situates nobility at the top of the social pyramid.[88] Guillaume's struggle to hide his true identity certainly plays into the comedy of *Le Charroi de Nîmes*, just as it affirms how unnatural the disguise is for a man of his caliber. The episode is filled with laughter, from the children, to the soldiers, and to Guillaume's reaction to Bertrand's awkward assumption of the merchant persona. Laisse forty in particular speaks to the difficulty with which the chevalier performs the peasant, as the young knight Bertrand becomes enraged and humiliated when his cart and cow get

[88] Perfetti argues that while Guillaume's disguise as a peasant degrades his epic identity (as is claimed by Mancini), it simultaneously works to affirm it as well.

stuck in the mud. As Guillaume remarks, laughing along with the men hidden in the barrels, "Beau niés, dist il, envers moi entendez. / De tel mestier vos estes or mellez / Dont bien I pert que gaires ne savez!" (vv. 1012-14) [Dear nephew, he said, listen to me / You are now involved in a sort of trade / which really it seems you barely know!]. The ribbing pushes Bertrand's fury even further, but the episode is humorous and light as the men in the barrels join in the fun, pleading with him to keep the cart steady for fear they too will fall in the mud. Already within the mercantile context the melancholic, troubled events of the first half of the *chanson* have taken on the comic levity of a lower-class context.

Vivien's attempt to pass as a merchant's son is even more disastrous, seemingly proving that certain behaviors cannot be taught outside of one's social class. When his adoptive father Godefroy attempts to teach his son the ways of commerce and exchange, he finds that Vivien seems not to have inherited any talent for his father's trade. The man's priorities are simple, as he explains his goals to the son whom he hopes to send to market: "Si aprenrois et do poivre et do bleif, / Et des mesurres comment doient aler, / Soier au change les monoies garder, / Riche seras en trestout ton aé; / Tos mes tresors vos iert abandonné" (vv. 845-9) [You will learn all about pepper and wheat/ and how measurements should be used/ You will know how to be custodian of currency exchange / You will be rich your whole life / and as such all my wealth will be yours]. In response, Vivien proclaims his adoptive father's proposal absurd and demands a war horse, two hunting dogs, and a sparrow-hawk so he might go hunting in the mountains. Their exchange continues back and forth, as Godefroy and Mabile make a good-hearted attempt

to redirect Vivien towards the mercantile life by dressing him sumptuously in their best fabrics, thus encoding not only the behavior but the outward appearance that defines being of the mercantile class.[89]

Naturally, Vivien *has* inherited the talents of his (biological) father and continues to view the exchange of money and goods through the lens of lordship and a gift-based economy. Vivien's assumed identity, dressing as a merchant, is undermined repeatedly through humorous failures.[90] Beyond his refusal to perform correctly the activities which define the merchant, he seems *incapable* of doing so, thus simultaneously reinforcing how natural it is for him, as a well-bred aristocrat, to embody generosity and disregard profit. Despite the best efforts of his adoptive parents, Vivien cannot master exchange; not only are his priorities misplaced, he is unable or unwilling to turn a simple profit.

Floire too encounters challenges as he travels east, for his merchant disguise is similarly difficult to sustain, but his journey as a merchant is marked with success as well. At first the beautiful young man is given to melancholy and makes a poor merchant. Indeed, the wife of their first host notices his strange, contemplative behavior, which distinguishes him as unusual in a community of merchants who contemplate profit and

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[89] The importance of dressing the part is evident in both Vivien and Guillaume's experience in portraying the merchant convincingly. E. Jane Burns' contributions on the importance of "sartorial bodies" in the text has brought to light the ways in which social bodies of the text are forged from both fabric and flesh. For Burns, "These sartorial bodies are not tangible objects with an independent existence in literary texts. They emerge from a reading practice that conceives of clothes as an active force in generating social bodies" (12). Thus courtly clothes (and perhaps all manner of dress including bourgeois fashion) create complex sartorial identities.

[90] In another example, when he is given 100 *sous* to go out and make a profitable exchange, Vivien, unable to do simple math, overpays for a 60 *sous* horse, offering the entire 100 *sous* plus his ermine coat in the exchange. The horse, a priority to a nobleman, is of much less use to a merchant, and both mistakes baffle his adoptive father. This sort of misunderstanding is repeated again when Vivien makes numerous bad deals based on an aristocratic value system, which presumes generosity and fidelity over profit. Vivien abandons his exchanges to participate in more courtly activities, from singing to himself in a garden, to hunting and all-out warfare.

strategy over love and sentiment. As she observes, “Son mangier laist por le penser, / souvent le voi molt souspirer. / Par mon cief, n’est pas marceans, / gentius hom est, el va querans” (vv. 1281-4) [He forgoes eating for reflection / frequently I have seen him sighing heavily / I swear he is not a merchant / he is a nobleman who is on a quest]. She expresses a common stereotype: merchants are untroubled by their thoughts, while noblemen are afforded such a reflective and melancholy disposition. This recognition scene will be repeated four times, at every fondaco from Naples to Cairo, where Floire is caught fretting over an internal debate between Wisdom and Love, until his merchant-host Daire provides more practical means of reaching Blancheflor. Fortunately for Floire, the merchants he encounters in these fondacos along the way step in to assist with his disguise as he passes to the next town, teaching him to benefit from an awkwardly-assumed identity on his voyage to Cairo.

It is not just that these aristocratic heroes are simply bad at being merchants, it is rather that their ‘true’ identities constantly need to provide what Bhabha identifies as the slippage essential to the success of the mimicry, and thus the affirmation of the noble hero’s rightful place in the social hierarchy from which he has been exiled. Gabriele Tanase refers to this moment of slippage as “la vérité frôlée,” where the disguise is threatened by a brief brush with truth, and the hero’s identity can be glimpsed for a moment. Looking more closely at *Le Charroi de Nîmes,* we can identify these moments of slippage in even the most successfully executed disguise. To some extent, Guillaume and his men succeed at playing merchants, with the narrator insisting that in this land their disguises were effective: “Por qu’il soit jor qu’en les puist aviser, / Por marcheant

soient ja refusé" (vv. 1030-1) [For if it was daytime and they could be observed / no one would deny they were merchants]. Indeed, Guillaume's costume does enough to present him as a believable merchant:

> Li cuens Guillelmes vesti une gonnele
>
> De tel burel com il ot en la terre
>
> Et en ses jambes unes granz chauces perses,
>
> Sollers de buef qui la chauce li serrent;
>
> Ceint un baudré un borjois de la terre,
>
> Pent un coutel et gaïne molt bele,
>
> Et chevaucha une jument molt foible;
>
> Dos viez estriers ot pendu a sa sele;
>
> Si esperon ne furent pas novele,
>
> Trente anz avoit que il porent bien estre;
>
> Un chapel ot de bonet en sa teste. (vv. 1036-46)
>
> [Count Guillaume redressed in a tunic / of heavy wool as they did in this land / And on his legs he put great pale-blue[91] breeches, / ox-leather shoes which tied over his trousers.

[91] There is some ambiguity in translating *perses* in this context, for while the color is often translated as blue, or blue-green, the annotated edition of *Le Charroi de Nîmes* used in this study proposes two other possibilities, wherein *perse* might signify a deep red or a less-pleasing pale or washed-out blue. In fitting with the general description of Guillaume-as-merchant, whose general appearance is a bit shabby, I have decided to opt for the washed-out blue *perse* in my translation rather than the dazzling teal-blue that might compromise his effort to blend in as an inconspicuous traveling merchant.

> He fastened a harness of the local bourgeois / from which he hung a knife and a beautiful sheath / and he rode a very weak mare / two old stirrups hung from the saddle / His spurs were not newly made / They could have been thirty years old / On his head he wore a hat of wool.]

Here, his identity as merchant is coded in Guillaume's clothing. In one sense, the disguise is simply the inverse of the warrior's armor. As opposed to the shining, new, colorful armor French knights usually wear, Guillaume is pictured in muted, rough fabrics. He still wears an impressive weapon, not unusual for merchants who could often encounter trouble on the trade route; however, his shoes of an unspecified color, are practical. He wears a felt hat in place of a brilliant helmet. His leather harnesses and coin purses replace the chainmail and shield of the warrior. In place of a fearsome *destrier*, he is pictured riding a fragile mare into town. Yet, while he may appear rather shabby in comparison with the typically elaborate spectacle of the epic warrior, Guillaume's humble disguise nonetheless evokes a certain believability through its practicality. For part of the purpose of the merchant disguise is to convey a sense of resourcefulness and acumen, particularly when passing as a successful merchant accompanied by an enormous amount of cargo. Thus, Guillaume's thirty-year-old spurs, rather than reflecting a level of poverty, might instead be interpreted as shrewdness, for the "merchant" spends only on what is necessary.

Adding to the humor of this inversion of class, his men are similarly depicted as common bourgeois traveling in his coterie. In place of armor, they wear leather straps, belts, satchels and large money purses for the purposes of exchanging currency. They all

ride animals in a "pitiful state" (vv. 1024-26). Guillaume likewise lowers the profile of his knights with well-worn outfits, styling himself like the merchant he met on the road by introducing the knights as his sons. The disguise is fantastic, but is not quite right; ultimately these men are a bit *too* shabby for such a valuable caravan, and this is a clue which triggers Harpin's incertitude. Likewise, local peasants cannot help but be in awe of the unusual size of this merchant caravan. Guillaume's men cannot quite pull off the subtlety of moving with the discretion of the merchant, and the slippage in this mimicry produces itself in the almost-but-not-quite of Guillaume's mercantile identity. Suard, like Putter, sees this failure as necessary, for "le déguisement, tel une chrysalide, souligne la valeur qu'il ne peut longtemps dissimuler. Guillaume 'éclate' dans son habit de marchand, la blancheur de sa peau se révèle nécessairement à travers le maquillage qui la recouvre" (358) [the disguise, like a chrysalis, emphasizes the value that it cannot conceal for long. Guillaume 'shines' in his merchant clothes, the whiteness of his skin must reveal itself through the make-up that covers it].

Just as wearing merchant clothes provides a challenge for Guillaume and his men, so does behaving like a merchant, and yet performance is as essential to the disguise as his clothing. In creating the merchant persona, Guillaume creates a complex narrative. He claims he is Scottish based in Canterbury, and invents a family of eight children.[92] Additionally, Guillaume renames himself "Tiacre" and enumerates the goods hidden in the impressive stream of barrels now entering the city, from domestic wares such as ink, incense and winter goods, to fine fabrics, weapons, and armor (vv. 1136-43). These

[92] The merchant family presents a contrast to the errant knight's lifestyle and a strong reinforcement to the disguise, for the young knight is rarely characterized by the domesticity of family life in the medieval literary text.

'goods' are an obvious comical reference for the audience, which is aware of the warriors hidden within and the duplicity of this merchant's language. Guillaume's performance is likewise dependent on the believability of the stories he tells to Otrant, stories that emphasize the merchant's discursive mastery. "Tiacre" narrates his origins and travels, which take him from his home in Scotland to numerous locations known to be frequented by the wealthiest merchants: Lombardy, Tuscany, German lands, Hungary, Spain, Poitiers and Normandy, before passing through Venice to make the most profitable currency exchange (vv. 1190-1202). This persona, who Otrant cannot help but assume is wildly rich due to his extensive travels, contrasts sharply with the landed, epic hero and reinforces a tenuous disguise.

Ultimately the slippage inherent in mimicry becomes increasingly evident, for Guillaume's true identity is always just ready to burst forth from the seams of his disguises, both vestimentary and narrative. Eventually Otrant begins to recognize Guillaume for his nose, and even speaks his name to him, as the disguise begins to unravel, saying, "Tiacre frere, par la loi que tenez, / Cele grant boce que avez sor le nes, / Qui la vos fist? Gardez ne soit celé, / Que me membre ore de Guillelme au cort nes, / Fill Aymeri, qui tant est redoutez, / Qui m'a ocis mon riche parenté" (vv. 1217-22) [Brother Tiacre, by the faith that binds you / This large bump that you have on your nose, / Who did it to you? Be careful not to hide it, / Which now reminds me of Guillaume of the short nose, / Son of Aymeri, who is much dreaded / Who massacred my powerful family]. In response, Guillaume crafts a second narrative to obscure further an unmistakable sign of

identity, attributing it to origins which are far from chivalric. He tells of his youth as a talented thief:

> Quant je fui juenes, meschins et bachelers,
> Si deving lerres merveilleus por embler
> Et engingnierres: onques ne vi mon per.
> Copoie borses et gueilles bien fermez;
> Si m'en repristrent li mestre bacheler
> Et marcheant cui ge avoie emblé;
> A lor couteaus me creverent le nes,
> Puis me lessierent aller a sauveté;
> Si commençai cest mestier que veez. (vv. 1234-42)
> [When I was young, an adolescent and a bachelor, / I became a talented thief to steal / and con; no one could find my peer. / I cut many well closed purses and saddlebags / But some young men and merchants I stole from saw me and captured me / and with their knives they cut my nose / then let me go to safety; / Thus I began this profession you see.]

The story is an inverted storytelling of the real history of the loss of the tip of his nose at Corsolt, cut in an act of bravery against the Saracens. What was a sign of courage for Guillaume is a sign of shame for Tiacre. Perhaps to the audience's delight, "si commençai cest mestier que veez" betrays the easy shift from one who was once a marvelous thief turned highly successful merchant. Ultimately, these stories, and Guillaume's class transvestism, are temporarily effective in hiding his true identity. His

truthfulness, so important to noble values, is no longer binding, and the merchant's skills of negotiation and narrative become the new weapons of war.[93]

While these disguises are at least effective enough to accomplish the hero's goals, the hero's true identity always reveals itself at some point in the narrative. In considering Bhabha's theory of mimicry, this slippage is part of the affirming practice of colonialization, a practice which can likewise be read in a broader context when considering the consolidation of authority by any powerful group. For Bhabha, "Mimicry emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge […] the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (126, author's italics). The practice of mimicry thus encourages the dominated culture to conform to the dominant, while likewise affirming the superiority of the latter. This desire is certainly seen in Vivien's attempt to lead merchant troops into battle and inspire them to embrace chivalric ideals. Their success is necessarily undermined by the narrative if the knight himself is to remain a class apart. It is likewise present in the awkward transformations of Guillaume, Floire and Vivien, who seek to acquire and control some part of the mercantile world, benefitting from behaviors exclusively associated with the merchant, but who unconsciously suggest nobility in their encounters. This ambivalence is central to the discourse of mimicry, for

[93] Kellogg's study of *La Chanson de Roland* reveals the importance of the oath and truthfulness at the heart of courtly culture. Framing Ganelon's motives for betrayal in light of newly emerging views on avarice in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, her study brings attention to the social expectation of taking one's verbal oath at face value, and ultimate treason (and power) behind Ganelon's use of duplicitous oaths and hidden motives in undermining the French social system.

> in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. The authority of that mode of colonial discourse that I have called mimicry is therefore stricken by an indeterminacy: mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus, the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power.
>
> (Bhabha 126)

Such double articulation is central to the discourse of mimicry, reflected in the disguised hero's inability to embody the merchant completely through class transvestism, as the project of mimicry in the context of cultural dominance by definition must "continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference."

Despite the failure of acculturation on the part of the merchant-warrior, there is an aspect of reform in the hero's appropriation of merchant culture as he seeks to visualize new power. For example, in the awkward persona of Guillaume's 'Tiacre,' Floire's pensive traveling merchant, or Vivien's inept young trader, there is a drive to integrate the freedoms and qualities of the mercantile communities gaining status and power across Europe in the late Middle Ages. Accordingly, critics have read the parody of the merchant, which highlights his baseness and concern for profit over honor, as firmly situating the mercantile community outside of courtly culture and courtly interests. Vivien's warrior-merchants similarly produce this slippage in the inverse. For while they are temporarily successful as mercenary warriors and clearly able to recognize Vivien's

innate talents as a courageous leader, the poet essentially depicts them as cowardly and on the brink of desertion. This cowardice is echoed in King Louis' conflict with the Lombards, another mercantile community who have joined in the combat against the Saracens, but who balk when the Saracen army taunts them before battle. A furious Louis threatens the Lombards with being relegated to leading animals and transporting wares, a clear insult to the fighting abilities of these Italian merchants, yet their leader ultimately swears the army's fierce fidelity in the fight to take Luiserne (vv. 2456-2541). This transparency, showing the cowardly merchant underneath the warrior's armor, affirms the superiority of warriors born to noble families, such as Guillaume and Vivien.

In each moment of mimicry, the class transvestite is almost, but not quite, the other, in turn reinforcing the differences which are solidified in the humor of the parody. While the humor might provide a distracting comic relief, Lacan has famously noted the war-like qualities of imitation and its subversive power:

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage… It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare. (*Four* 99)

Brian Massumi identifies this same sublimated though undeniably aggressive force of camouflage. While critics have read these moments of class transvestism as primarily comedic moments in the text, it is likewise worth considering the potential mimicry holds for further obscuring deep animosities in northern French aristocratic communities

towards a mercantile culture on the rise, where mimicry is no longer a project of assimilation but rather an enterprise of dominance:

> An insect that mimics a leaf does so not to meld with the vegetable state of its surrounding milieu, but to reenter the higher realm of predatory animal warfare on new footing. Mimicry, according to Lacan, is camouflage. It constitutes a war zone. There is power inherent in the false: the positive power of ruse, the power to gain a strategic advantage by masking one's life force. (Massumi 91-92)

If mimicry can be considered a covert war-tactic, it is certainly effective as such in the medieval narrative. Becoming the merchant (as best he can) quickly enables each nobleman to breach a space that is normally closed off to courtly culture, to undermine Saracen power, and likewise to appropriate the wealth of mercantile culture for his own purpose. This war tactic is subversive and often non-violent, at least until the mercantile persona has reached its limits and the hero must once again take up arms.[94] Ultimately this camouflage of class-transvestism provides the hero with the means of smoothly achieving an advantage over his adversary through non-violent strategies that set him up for a victorious return to a welcoming home culture.[95]

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[94] As Denise Delcourt observes in *Floire et Blancheflor*, violence resumes upon the assumption of the courtly identity: "The romance has come full circle: the pilgrims killed by the father at the beginning of the story are avenged at the end by the son. The irony of the respective endings of *Floire* and *Roland* is not lost. The peaceful Floire has become a 'soldier' and the proud Charlemagne, a 'pilgrim'" (S47).

[95] Both Suard and Tanase view this victory as a necessary result of the merchant disguise, which beyond the comic elements functions to position an itinerant young man to prove he is worthy of being considered a hero. For Tanase, "Le masque impose un ailleurs au personnage, qui conduit à la révélation de l'héroïsme" (40) [The mask imposes an elsewhere in the character, which leads to the revelation of heroism]. Tanase's use of *un ailleurs* here is notable, evoking the means by which the hero is transported elsewhere, and necessarily far from the political center, to effect this change. Likewise, for Suard, the disguise, while comical and somewhat demeaning, in fact enables the hero to prove his greatness: "vaincu

In upholding courtly culture, however, the text presents a bit of a paradox, for the same culture which vocally disavows the merchant community in favor of noble pursuits can only succeed in those pursuits with the strength of that same disavowed community. There is no doubt that for characters like Vivien and Bertrand, playing the merchant is an enraging and utterly humiliating experience, for they are young male nobles who have yet to prove their military prowess. Yet despite any hostility towards mercantile culture as expressed in the parody of the merchant, the *necessity* of the mercantile heterotopia nonetheless allows for some validation of commercial culture, a partial acceptance, and possible shifts in dynamic. The ambiguity of the animosity expressed in the text tends to obscure the very real contributions of mercantile culture to the hero's success, whether echoing a historical reality of the later Middle Ages, or simply on the level of diegetic movement.[96] As a heterotopia, however, mercantile space exposes the illusion and fragility of that same real (courtly) space at the political center, offering seemingly deviant solutions to resolving recurrent conflicts of the courtly sphere.

A close look at the texts will reveal some of the strengths which frequently characterize the bourgeois and the merchant in courtly literature, and which are in turn appropriated to some extent by the courtly hero. For one, the bourgeois and the merchant

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par la force et par la vaillance du héros, l'adversaire, traître ou Sarrasin, est également victime de l'ingéniosité du bon chevalier […] On comprend, dans ces conditions, que le motif du déguisement, loin de nuire à la valeur épique, puisse la mettre en valeur grâce à l'utilisation d'un registre essentiellement comique" (343) [defeated by the strength and valor of the hero, the antagonist, whether traitor or Saracen, is equally the victim of the ingenuity of the good knight […] It is understood, in these circumstances, that the motif of disguise, far from drowning epic value, can instead reveal this value thanks to the use of an essentially comic register].

[96] Tanase also emphasizes the importance of disguise on a diegetical level, asserting that "Il y a alors une *valeur narrative* du masque qui, au-delà des nombreux detours rattaches au motif de la ruse, permet l'accomplissement de l'action" (348) [There is thus a *narrative value* to the mask which, beyond the numerous detours attached to the motif of the ruse, allows for the completion of the action].

are economically savvy, a quality that is typically considered beneath a noble disposition, yet nonetheless helpful to courtly initiatives. This shrewdness is evident in the merchants who acquire Blancheflor from King Felix, trading the gold cup fabricated by Vulcan himself, among other precious goods. The merchants are satisfied with the exchange, as they are sure to double their profit upon arrival in the East: "Çou l'en donent par droit marcié, / et il s'en font joiant et lié, / k'a double cuident gaaignier / se il s'en pueent repairier." (vv. 505-8) [All this they furnished by the laws of exchange / and it made them joyous and buoyant / for they could double their profit / if they could return home]. They are not mistaken. With good winds they return home, and the Emir, who immediately falls in love with such a beautiful girl, pays seven times her weight in gold. Here, merchants are able to turn a profit from not one but two powerful kings, demonstrating their considerable capacity for negotiation. When Floire taps into this network of trade, he is able to profit from the same savvy negotiations, moving past any obstacle that separates him from Blancheflor. For Delcourt, commerce is the great equalizer in *Floire*: "Where trading is involved, the opposition between Christians and Muslims fades away, replaced by economic competition. As a result, the religious and geographical borders between Europe and Muslim countries become more porous than usually defined in the Middle Ages" (S41). Commerce and negotiation, in this romance, level any obstacle, creating new paths through otherwise hostile territory.

Further coloring this ambivalence about mercantile activity is the repeated allusion to the episode of the Trojan Horse in both *Charroi de Nîmes* and *Floire et Blancheflor*. Both poems draw on the motif of the horse to place the hero within the city

walls, whether hiding troops in a merchant caravan or entering a tower hidden in a basket of flowers. Even Vivien could be seen as participating in this ruse, entering Luiserne as a merchant along with a force of would-be warriors. Each case implicates the hero in the deceptive Greek ruse rather than the courtlier association of Trojan and European culture through the motif of *translatio imperii.* Indeed, while Floire's melancholy musings explicitly draw parallels between himself and Paris, his ruse to enter the tower concealed in a gifted basket of flowers certainly resembles the actions of the Greeks much more than the Trojans, and definitely undermines the honor-bound system of a gift economy. While medieval cultural referents in the twelfth century shifted to look to the Trojans for cultural and political heritage, there is perhaps an easy association between merchants and Greeks as well, the latter being typically depicted as tricky and resourceful, and a favorite of the clever goddess Athena.[97] This duplicity is embodied by Odysseus, originator of the Trojan Horse ruse, and known for his wisdom and wit, two qualities often associated with merchants during the Middle Ages.[98] Furthermore, in texts such as Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* (c. 1155-60) and the later *Historia destructionis Troiae* (1287) by Guido delle Colonne, the Greeks were often depicted as

[97] Generally speaking, medieval European culture, drawing from Virgil's *Aeneid*, sought to link its cultural heritage (and dominance) to the Trojan empire rather than to the Greeks, the latter of whom Virgil depicts as deceptive, pagan, and brutal. James Harper affirms that "through foundation myths and the *topos* of *translatio imperii*, late medieval Europeans were more inclined to identify themselves as Trojans than as Greeks" (166). Medieval audiences did not have access to Homer's texts until the fifteenth-century. As such, to put an epic hero in the position of the Greeks is certainly transgressive, but perhaps a natural aspect of the already deviant class transvestism . (Harper has likewise noted that the glorification of Greek culture comes much later in the nineteenth century when identification with Greeks stemmed from a desire in Western cultures to tie themselves politically to the Greeks—both for the origins of democracy as well as orientalist beliefs that resituate the Trojans as eastern).

[98] For a thorough study of adjectives used most regularly to describe the bourgeoisie in the fabliaux, see Marie-Thérèse Lorcin's *Façons de sentir et de penser: les fabliaux français* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1979).

conspicuously decadent—another common characterization of mercantile culture.[99] The association is unflattering at best and heretical at worst, yet these cultural practices are used well by noblemen in merchant drag, and the results certainly yield in their favor. Playing the merchant in mercantile spaces permits the nobleman to access all the clever tricks associated with the Greeks and allows each man to participate in the ruse without the punishing recompense usually afforded to noblemen with interest in profit. For the ambiguous message concerning duplicity as performed by Guillaume is not the same for Ganelon in *La Chanson de Roland*, who is vilified and ultimately punished for being so thoroughly invested in profit over honor.[100] Thus, while in the cultural and political center the boundaries of mercantile and aristocratic culture might be firmly drawn, when the hero enters into the Mediterranean spaces on the periphery of his home culture there is far more flexibility for delving into and benefitting from associations and qualities of the mercantile world.

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[99] Wilfried Besnardeau makes a convincing argument that authors such as Benoît de Sante Maure might have drawn a comparison between ancient Greek and the typically pagan enemy, observing: "La formule *Grezeis ont tort* invite alors le lecteur-auditeur du XIIe siècle, familier de l'épopée, à superposer l'image du Grec et celle du Païen épique […] A cette égard, le public peut être incité à guetter tout ce qui dans la présentation de Grecs du roman peut rappeler les Sarrasins épiques" (187). However, it worth considering how this traditional opposition between Trojan and Greek armies might have evolved throughout the Middle Ages for other authors include mercantile traits as well, as seems evident in the texts examined above.

[100] As both Kellogg and Alter have proposed, Ganelon comes to represent the worst of bourgeois culture and a true threat to the knightly ideal. For Kellogg, in later versions of *Roland*, Ganelon the traitor "becomes more and more explicitly Ganelon the trader," (179) for his depiction is made possible "not because of a single, overwhelming instance of temptation, but because of basic character traits which will come to be associated with the new bourgeoisie: an individualistic desire for profit, a quantifying mind, and a deceptive, manipulative use of language" (*Ganelon* 178). As a point of comparison, Jean Alter's article on the *Chanson de Roland* looks at the juxtaposition of pride and wit in the poem as embodied by Roland and Ganelon, respectively. For Alter, Ganelon, who is both clever and interested in profit, ends up being an effigy for the bourgeois class, whose rising power and profit provokes increasing antipathy among the noble class.

An example of this sort of social liberation can be found in *Floire et Blancheflor*, where the young prince indeed learns crucial lessons in shrewdness and strategy from his encounters on the trade route. Take, for example, Daire, who directs him towards Blancheflor and instructs the young man on how to manipulate the tower's porter into subservience, playing on the man's desire for wealth:

> De la coupe iert molt covoiteus
> et de l'acater angoisseus.
> Molt offerra por acater,
> mil mars vos en vaura doner.
> Dont li dites rien n'en prendrés,
> mais par amistiés li donrés.
> Dont par ert il si deceüs
> et de vostre amor ambeüs
> que de joie a vos piés karra
> et homage vos offerra.
> Et vos en prendés bien l'omage
> et la fiance s'estes sage.
> Lors vos tenra il a amor
> com li hom liges son signor. (vv. 2153-66)
>
> [He will be very covetous of the cup / and anxious to buy it. / He will offer you much to buy it, / he will want to give you a thousand marks for it. / Concerning this say to him that you will take nothing, / but give it to him

> in friendship. / He will be deceived by this / and drunk with joy from your love / so that he will throw himself at your feet / and offer you homage. / And you will certainly accept this homage / and his oath if you are smart! / From then on he will bind to you with the love / of a man for his liege lord.]

The lesson explicitly speaks to the merchant's awareness of various economies, whether it is a simple exchange or the social obligations implicit in the more feudal gift economy. Floire proves himself quite adept in trade by the end of the narrative and capable of drawing from his own noble upbringing to promote his success as well. Not only is the plan perfectly executable, Floire perfectly executes it, showing he is indeed capable of learning the ways of negotiation and exchange. As Delcourt observes, "By trading gold and his golden cup with the miserly guard in exchange for his beloved Blanchefleur, Floire conducts himself as a shrewd merchant who knows how to exploit to his advantage the economy of desire" (S43).

Merchant spaces are always well connected, powerful resources for each hero, because they concentrate the flow of information, goods and people. The merchant disguise offers Floire greater mobility within such spaces as well as the continuous advantage of being able to tap into a network which is always *informed.* Floire quickly picks up on this economy of information, and when he learns of his lover's whereabouts he returns the favor, commanding more food and wine for the house. As if in response to his generosity, the weather turns in his favor to carry him to the next port: "A tant es vos torné le vent. / Le vespres ert bien avesprés / et li flos tos au port montés" (vv. 1348-50)

[And the wind turned. / The evening advanced / and the tides rose at port]. The sailors cry out around the village that it is time to set sail, and the narrative moves forward as well. In this passage the fluidity of wine emphasizes the liquidity of the mercantile life, this ebb and flow viewed as part of the changing fortunes of exchange, connected also to the constant changing of the tides and direction of the winds that characterize the Mediterranean space. Among its many functions, the merchant's sea is a force of change and transformation in the diegetic movement of the text, but also at the disposal of the disguised hero traveling along its shores. Floire profits from this liquidity of goods and identity, moving from city to city and frequenting markets, following the path of information to Blancheflor: "La nuit se resont herbergié / en une vile u ot marcié. / La oïrent de li parler: par illoec le virent passer" (vv. 1505- 8) [At night they were housed / in a city where there was a market. / There they heard talk of her: they had seen her pass through there]. The value of the instruction he receives from merchants along the way, and from Daire in particular, provides the hero with unique opportunities, found in the hybrid spaces of the merchant fondaco, which is itself open to hybridity and commerce.[101] As a result, the benefits bestowed by the mercantile community is

[101] The fondaco/funduq, a large merchant traveler's lodge that could be found throughout European and Arab territories of the Middle Ages, was an inherently hybrid space. It might have represented both safety and transformation for the European traveler transporting expensive goods. The fondaco was at once appropriated and adapted by Europeans from Arab cultures, making the foreign familiar (if not segregated). These "local" spaces were in turn nestled within the walls of a foreign city. While the fondaco promotes homogeneity by offering foreign travelers familiar foods, languages, and religious customs, the fondaco itself was open to merchants of many origins, at least during the day. Olivia Remie Constable's study of the fondaco (2003) provides an intimate and monumental study of the evolution of the merchant hostel around the Mediterranean and beyond, noting its capacity for bringing together merchant communities just as it allowed merchants to sustain an idea of cultural identity while abroad.

augmented by Floire, who, more than Vivien and Guillaume, is capable of learning and applying advice acquired along the way.[102]

In *Les Enfances Vivien*, the text which is perhaps the most critical of merchants when understood in the context of Vivien's refusal to assimilate, the mercantile community nonetheless represents an alternate source of wealth, protection and military force. As mentioned earlier, merchants are depicted as being quick to support the young Vivien despite their cowardice, easily recognizing his value as a natural leader and jumping to his aid so he might successfully take Luiserne. Likewise, Louis' army is complemented by a faction of Lombards, who are undoubtedly a group of mercantile origins. Despite these moments of slippage when the merchant fails at completely embodying the warrior, these second-rate soldiers are Vivien's "cortois marchëanz," and they remain loyal to him until reinforcements arrive. Similarly, Vivien's adoptive father is a source of much wealth and resources and is characterized as "le marchëant qui fu preuz et nobile" (v. 1329), just as the poet heaps compliments on Mabile (who is born of noble origins) in laisse fifty-one: "La marchëande qui l'enfant ot norri, / - Dex la garisse, li rois de paradis, / n'ot meillor dame en un païs - / n'iert pas vilaine, fille fu d'un marchis, / por grant avoir la dona l'en einsi / a Godefroi, qui est preuz et gentill" (vv. 1804-9) [The merchant-woman who had fed him, / –God bless her, the king of paradise, / there is no better woman in the land– / she was no peasant, she was the daughter of a

[102] Indeed, Floire is perhaps the most successful in transforming his identity throughout the narrative, with the help of the mercantile community. As Burns notes, while the young man is often pictured as contemplative and melancholy, obvious signs of his innate nobility, he likewise is capable of completing numerous exchanges along the way (218). However, it is worth considering that his is ability to completely transform is perhaps assumed on some level with the medieval audience. Floire is the Muslim grandfather of Charlemagne, so it is understood apriori that this man, more than most, could transform on a fundamental level, embracing the ultimate transformation by water through his conversion and baptism at the end of the poem.

marquess / and for great wealth he gave her / to Godefroi, who is brave and noble]. For Viven, both adoptive parents are intercessors on his behalf, not only sending reinforcements to the boy when he is besieged but also traveling to the French court to convince Louis to send in support as well.

Despite the common practice of distinguishing the bourgeois from the noble in the medieval text, "courtly" merchants appear nonetheless as models for behavior among both lower and upper classes. For Mabile this behavior is logical, for she has some noble blood, yet her husband and his merchant community are likewise described as courtly, and they fall short of perfection only on the battlefield. This sort of hybridity, where noble and bourgeois qualities are interwoven, is common among the inhabitants of sea-side communities, which implies the porosity in these spaces and suggests a genuine social mixing not often seen in courtly literature. These moments of acculturation, where the lower class is depicted as adopting behaviors ascribed to the dominant class, figures as another form of cross-cultural encounter and its resulting hybridity. In turn it implies the inverse, and the possibility that dominant cultures may also appropriate the practices of lower cultures. This point will be revisited in later chapters as well.[103]

[103] Pierre Bourdieu has also observed this phenomenon, at least in modern societies, wherein certain behaviors are perceived to come naturally to those of the dominant class. In his study *La Distinction* (1984) this manifests as taste in art and manners, but I would suggest here it is likewise translatable also in such courtly values such as courage, generosity, and bravery). As such, dominant cultures maintain their status by envisioning certain qualities as ultimately unattainable but naturally inherited; while some behaviors can certainly be learned or intellectualized by one or another social class, this is merely a form of imitation (70-83). To some extent these systems of cultural dominance are perceptible in the medieval text and have been emphasized by literary critics who have primarily analyzed the merchant as a foil for noble culture. However, the present study suggests that this approach is anachronistic to some extent and would emphasize both considering *and* thinking beyond Bourdieu's modern study, allowing more ambiguity in the ongoing formation of premodern social categories at a time of economic and social transformation in Europe.

Despite how often the young hero disavows his temporary mercantile identity, it is this identity which reflects a community that is most loyal in facilitating the successes which reunite him with the political center. Indeed, much has been made of the noble rejection of mercantile culture in these narratives, at yet at the same time acknowledged anxieties regarding the crusade project begin to emerge through these narratives. Yet at the same time, the merchant often provides an alternate means for confronting these complex questions of authority and violence, for while he might be denounced as cowardly and greedy, he is likewise increasingly depicted as a mediator leading the way toward negotiation and peaceful resolution. As Stallybrass and White have observed, in the depiction of low culture "A recurrent pattern emerges: the 'top' attempts to reject and eliminate the 'bottom' for reasons of prestige and status, only to discover, not only that it is in some way frequently dependent upon that low-Other […], but also that the top *includes* that low symbolically, as a primary eroticized constituent of its own fantasy life" (5). Thus, in the case of *Les Enfances Vivien*, an idealized merchant can provide an alternate source of wealth and military resources until the *true* reinforcements can arrive, allowing the noble subject to become complete through his association with the low-Other.

To some extent, a binary forms between the world of commerce and exchange, and that of the battlefield, with the latter figuring prominently in the formation of noble identity. Indeed, it has been well established that a knight's identity, along with his virility, was primarily distinguished through the violent dominance of others, for how else could a knight construct his public reputation if not through the physical trial of the

tournament or the battlefield? Merchant culture, by contrast, presents an alternative route, where the merchant gained power not through the glory of battle but through exchange, even though the merchant is often ridiculed for taking the cowardly route.[104] However, this route also presents an indispensable alternative in the face of impossible conflict, such as those faced by Guillaume, Vivien, and Floire, all of whom must reject traditional models of masculinity to establish their own. While wars may be waged on domestic and foreign battlefields, the merchant world continues its business in the background, always presenting a means of working around spaces of conflict, or alternate paths to one's goal.

Take for example the moment in *Floire et Blancheflor* when King Felix, seeking to rid himself of Blancheflor, considers putting her to death. Floire's mother, the queen, proposes an alternative to Blancheflor's beheading, which King Felix ultimately accepts: "Sire, fait el, por Dieu, merchi! / A cest port a molt marceans / de Babiloine, ben manans. / Au port le fai mener et vendre, / grant avoir pués illoeques prendre. / Cil l'en menront, car molt est bele; / ja n'orrés mais de li novele, / si en serons delivre bien / sans estre homecide de rien" (vv. 410-8) [Lord, she said, for God have mercy! / At this port there are many merchants / from Babylon (Cairo), with much goods. / Bring her to port and have her sold, / you can get much in exchange from whoever takes her. / They will take her away, for she is very beautiful; / you will hear no more news of her, / we will be relieved of her / without committing any homicides.] Naturally, King Felix, being of noble origins, is unconcerned with the profit they might make in selling Blancheflor to

[104] As Boris Bove notes of Parisian elites, "La seule activité qui répugne aux bourgeois de l'échevinage, c'est le métier des armes, qui est l'essence de la noblesse" (*Dominer* 580).

merchants; however, he does not wish to commit the sin of homicide and decides to follow his wife's advice.

This is but one example among many where the merchant community offers an alternative to violence, whether it be Guillaume who is seeking a less confrontational way to enter Nîmes; Vivien who avoids torture and death by covertly living among a peaceful and profitable merchant community; or Floire, who, like Guillaume, must find an alternate means to enter a restricted space when he has no army to do so himself. Delcourt likewise points to the non-violent aspect of Floire's success: "the rescue mission involves neither physical prowess nor bloodshed. It is with trickery, negotiation and a creative use of flowers that Floire succeeds in penetrating the emir's heavily guarded harem" (S43). It is thus worth considering the courtly text as envisioning a means of working with and benefitting from ties to mercantile culture, beyond its mere subordination and parody. This view better integrates the complexity of inter-cultural relations in twelfth and thirteenth century France, leaving room for the subversive tactics of mimicry while simultaneously acknowledging the value of mercantile culture. The figurative mercantile communities provide a space wherein alternate solutions can be explored and re-negotiated with the reader, seemingly upholding dominant cultural values while negotiating the true unassailability of the heroic ideal.

As we have seen, in this juxtaposed space of the heterotopia, an interesting reversal takes place, whereby the hero can tap into resources previously unavailable to him in the 'home' culture. Just as the hero is somehow exiled from his home culture, he is likewise alienated from (flawed) figures of male authority, be it King Louis, for

Guillaume and Vivien, or one's own father for Floire. In fact, the mercantile spaces of the Mediterranean are beyond the authority of kings. Instead they are managed and structured by the trade of mercantile communities, insofar as it can be possible. These spaces allow for new models of authority that might otherwise be unprecedented, where a traditional aristocratic hero takes on qualities learned and integrated from an otherwise marginal (and less honorable) community. The wisdom and guidance of a knowledgeable merchant makes its debut, presenting a mentor who essentially guides the hero on his path towards his adult role in society.

The literal 'replacement' of the father figure by the merchant guide or adoptive father is significant and as yet unstudied. Literary critics have primarily regarded these moments as humorous inversions. On the surface, interactions wherein the hero is somehow subordinated to the authority of a merchant *must* be humorous for a medieval public, for otherwise it might border on the profane. But underneath the comedy, the merchant father-figure presents a disruptive force, for if the father symbolizes the patrilineal lineage to some extent, the merchant guide/father represents some manner of destabilizing the old order.[105] This destabilization is desperately needed, particularly if the hero is to mature into his role in society. In the case of Guillaume, who faces a weak and indecisive king in Louis, and Floire, whose King-father has betrayed him in selling Blancheflor, mercantile guides provide an alternate means to reclaim something of value that has been stolen or denied by deficient kings. For Vivien, the father is absent, captive,

[105] In her chapter "Patriarchy" Kay observes the ways in which patriarchy is not as supported in the *chansons de geste* as they are in romances. From competition between fathers and sons, fathers who live forever, sons seeking to sacrifice themselves, and questions of paternity, the central narrative of a solid patriarchy is in fact quite fraught in the genre, opening itself up to new models of fatherhood. See Kay, pp. 79-115.

and replaced by the merchant 'father' for a time. While a Freudian approach might suggest that the true father-figure must 'die' so the hero can come into his own identity (he often does), suffice it to say that the father can likewise be 'replaced' by another of a different class, location, and culture, providing an alternate means for the hero to resolve his inheritance issues and establish his adult identity in relation to the 'father.'

An immediate mentorship is established between Floire and the merchant Daire upon the former's arrival in Cairo. As Floire has been collecting information throughout his voyage to Cairo, his effort culminates in his encounter with Daire, who gives him a strategy for acquiring access to the tower. Until this point, Floire has been at an impasse. The courtly debate going on in his head immobilizes him in sadness, as he cannot rely on violent force to obtain his prize. Observing Floire's angst, Daire implores the young man to be truthful with him, noting, "Vostre estre ne me celés pas: / molt me sanle que çou soit gas / que vos dras vendés a detail; / d'autre marcié avés travail" (vv. 1729-32) [Do not hide your identity from me / much shows me that it is not so / that you sell your fabric at retail; / You struggle with another sort of negotiation]. With affection and humor, he informs Floire that essentially he is not buying what he is selling; Daire's brilliant metaphor of exchange speaks to the identity Floire is trying to "sell" at face value, while this seasoned merchant can see that the boy is in fact hiding his true identity, and thus his own social "value." Once the young prince reveals the truth, Daire generously offers to work with Floire to devise a plan of entry despite the inherent danger. Here, Floire's internal debate between Wisdom and Love, mentioned earlier, associates him more with Paris, and yet Daire's advice puts him instead in the sandals of the Greeks, speaking as

Ulysses does, and giving him the perfect formula for seducing his way into a restricted space. Daire's plan involves a lot of code switching, where the best method he knows involves a new (second) identity change into architect (vv. 2093-2170). As an architect, he must engage the tower's porter in a series of games of chess, where, with the stakes rising at each match, he must finally offer the Trojan cup to the porter not only as a prize, but in exchange for his undying loyalty. The plan facilitates the merchant's seduction of the client, manipulating gift culture as did the Greeks, and ultimately plays off of the strengths of Floire's two identities—noble and merchant. Floire naturally understands the gift economy well, and he draws from his aristocratic upbringing to win at chess. While he might oblige the porter with the gift as a nobleman would, he leads him to desire the gift as would a merchant. As Burns has noted of the episode, "the crucial exchange, which gives Floire access to the captive ladylove, combines mercantile and feudal practices as the hero deploys the richly decorated Trojan goblet to secure courtly service from his eastern rival" (219). Of this gift exchange, she observes, "In fact, the courtly Floire has used generosity here in a questionably uncourtly fashion: to trick and trap his covetous rival, extracting the vassal's aid not for military service but in the service of love" (220).

With Daire's guidance, Floire secures an exchange with gifts, just as a merchant might share a sample of his product to heighten interest in a more expensive item. He likewise engages in a game of seduction, usually played between two lovers: giving a little, withholding, seeking a personal commitment from the 'buyer.' Floire's negotiation is not transparent, he mixes codes and language, he entraps the porter through seduction

as a merchant would. He has learned how to play with the expectations of the seduced, to feed into one's expectations, and to profit entirely from his anonymity, for through mimicry, the unknown opponent can easily reflect the expectations of the adversary. Significantly, the porter receives the cup and after two days possessing it, devises the Trojan Horse-like plan that allows Floire to enter the tower.

This episode, under the tutelage of Daire, is Floire's final transformation into a merchant before he undergoes a rapid shift through disguises and identities: subsequently he plays an architect, blends into a basket of flowers, and then is taken for a young girl by the king's guards. Floire's shuffling through identities so rapidly, and with relative success, speaks to the destabilizing effect of the Mediterranean, and particularly spaces far from the center – wherever that center may be (in this case, Al-Andalus). Notably, this is not a voyage from Christian to Muslim lands. Floire moves between Muslim communities, further emphasizing the power of the mercantile space over any political center, whether Christian or Muslim. In these spaces, Floire can completely submit to and profit from the knowledge of a merchant guide, whose authority and expertise ultimately affords entrance into the most intimate of royal spaces.

The motif of the substitute father figure occurs again with Godefroi de Salindres, Vivien's adoptive merchant father, who presents another example of the transformative power of the mercantile "father" as well. Somewhat of a merchant king, Godefroy is extremely wealthy and good hearted, easily pulling together resources to help his adoptive son. He is so wealthy after his travels that he must be accompanied by 100 soldiers upon his return (vv. 618-21). Given his good nature, he immediately accepts

Vivien as his child.[106] Vivien, when dressed by Mabile, demonstrates the wealth of this childless couple, who are clearly major figures of their community:

> Vivïen fist gentement conreer,
> chemises et braies de chainsil d'outremer,
> chauces de poile, de cordöan soller,
> Vestir le fist d'un poile d'outremer,
> Tote entor lui a fin or painturé.
> Mantel hermine ot l'enfant afublé,
> A sa manere entaillié et ouvré.
> Le chief ot blont, menu recercelé,
> Les elz ot verz comme faucon müé,
> blanche la char comme flor en esté. (vv. 683-92)
> [Vivien was nobly outfitted, / shirts and belts of linen from the East, / silk leggings, shoes from Cordova, / he was dressed in the silks of the East, / all around him was painted in fine gold. / The child wore an ermine cape, / in a tailored and worked manner. / His hair was blond, finely encircling his head, / his eyes were green like a molting falcon / his skin was white like a summer flower.]

[106] Compare with this the merchant father in the popular fabliau *De l'enfant qui fu remise au Soleil*, who returns from a voyage of two years to find his wife with an infant son that could not possibly be his own. The merchant accepts the child as his own after the mother claims she became impregnated by a snowflake she ate while thinking of him. However, once the child reaches fifteen, the father offers to take him on a trading expedition to Italy so he, like Vivien, can learn the ways of merchants. Instead he sells the boy into slavery, telling his wife the boy melted on a hot day while they were crossing the mountains, a logic the wife must accept, having been the original perpetrator of the lie. See De Rudder, cited below, for full text.

The clothes are splendid and exotic, complementing his beauty, yet concealing his true identity. The outfit strikes a contrast to Vivien's outspoken desire to become a knight (vv. 677-80), for these are not the clothes of a warrior: instead he wears the soft furs and colorful embroidery of the east that are found among the most elite within the mercantile community. Other signs establish Godefroy's wealth, for his hostel, which seems to be more of a palace, is certainly large, boasting of a garden and a fountain. With resources to spare, the merchant remains financially solvent, even when Vivien wastes all the goods granted to him. Seemingly drawing from endless resources, this merchant 'king' apparently retains a network of 400 merchants he can send with Vivien at a moment's notice, along with an impressive 300 bales of merchandise. Naturally, Vivien uses these resources to conquer Luiserne, and even when Godefroy discovers his son's true identity, he remains loyal.

Beyond his wealth, Godefroi is an excellent father to Vivien, both caring and patient with a son who seems to have no aptitude for exchange. He attempts to teach him to trade on three different occasions, each time hoping for a better result. Despite the fact that Vivien uses the third try at exchange to try to conquer Luiserne, Godefroy does not hesitate to ride to France with Mabile to inform Louis that Vivien needs reinforcements. In fact, he acknowledges his obligation to assist the young man, rising to the occasion like a nobleman: "Dame, dist il, que nel m'eüstes dit! / Ja a tel honte nel lessasse morir! / Fetes monter mes chevaliers gentis / qui trestuit aient les blans hauberz vestiz, / conduirai les el regne Looÿs" (vv. 1824-8) [My lady, he said, why did you not tell me this! / Never would I let him die so shamefully! / Have my noble knights mounted / all of whom

should be quickly dressed in shining armor, / I will lead them to King Louis]. By this point, Godefroy resembles a king himself, speaking with command, drawing from impressive financial resources, and mobilizing his own militia of (probably mercenary) knights to come to the assistance of his adoptive son. His decisiveness contrasts sharply with the *real* king, Louis, who is indecisive to the point that his own knights threaten rebellion before he agrees to send reinforcements to Vivien (it is in fact Guillaume who convinces him to do so). The poem thus presents the audience with an unusual figure, who guides his adoptive son by embodying the best of noble and mercantile cultures.

Thus while Vivien may be crippled by impotent father figures (be it the captive Garin or the ineffectual Louis), the merchant father allows Vivien a humorous alternate means to transition to manhood, effortlessly providing the material resources necessary to attack Luiserne, from the goods and the merchant disguise, to the capable 'army' of armed merchants. He does his best to teach Vivien to count, exchange, and turn a profit from whatever resources are had. In sum, this rite of passage for Vivien, under the tutelage of Godefroy, provides the future hero with resources, a devoted army, and a loving father and mother. It allows him to set aside the responsibilities of the noble identity for one which permits him unconventional means of domination, by which he can prove himself independent of the family and political structure. Becoming *nobody* in the merchant community empowers him to become *himself*, embodying his full potential.[107] Vivien's alliance with his adoptive merchant father, who sends him men and arms, facilitates this evolution. While Vivien is completely inept at exchange—or more

[107] See Adeline Richard's article for a similar observation, in which she notes how Vivien seems to embody an in-between zone while staying in the merchant couple, where he is a boy between cultures and likewise on the threshold of embodying his noble destiny.

important for his identity, naturally pulled to more chivalric activities such as hunting, leading and fighting—the merchant's lessons also provide the perfect environment in which Vivien can reject the merchant "father," perhaps as a proxy to Garin, in order to become himself. Thus while Vivien's undeniable nobility seems to uphold traditional aristocratic values, he nonetheless benefits from the anonymity of the Mediterranean space wherein he is connected to an undeniably wealthy merchant 'father,' and a loyal merchant community. Each of these alliances would be unheard of outside of the merchant spaces of the Mediterranean.

Guillaume's case is perhaps the most tenuous for establishing this argument, for his interactions with the merchant and his children on the road to Nîmes reveal his lack rather than subordinate him. Guillaume's army is not large enough to take Nîmes, and he does not have enough information to plan a proper siege of the town. However, the appearance of the merchant provides him with a significant amount of leverage and a successful plan to invade the city. Guillaume's interaction with the merchant is famous for its humor, as both men speak on different registers and completely fail to connect on what is valuable information for penetrating the city of Nîmes.[108] Guillaume asks the man if he could share information about the city, clearly interested in strategic intelligence on its military defense, while the merchant's naïve reply speaks more to procedures for entering the city as a merchant and the current value of a *denier* in Nîmes. The misunderstanding is humorous, amplified by Guillaume's indignation, and yet the knight ultimately uses this information to construct his false identity and enter the city

[108] See Anna Drzewicka's article on this scene for a related take on the encounter, in which she sees it as a trope of irreconcilable differences between social classes.

unscathed. Indeed, Guillaume's success in Nimes is perhaps attributable to the concept of the *famille nombreuse*, which he develops as part of his persona after learning that the salt-merchant is able to enter the city easily without paying the toll because the guards saw his children playing.[109] Furthermore, the French knights' plan is successful only with the support of the peasants in the surrounding lands, who (perhaps unwillingly) provide the barrels and carts necessary for the convoy. While it is clear that Guillaume is always in charge, he is nonetheless dependent on the wisdom and resources of the merchant he encounters on the road to Nîmes. Through this dependency, Guillaume learns alternate means of invading a city without violence while in the role of another. As Altmann and Psaki have observed, the encounter displaces the rhetoric of crusading: "In this meeting of armed men with rustic, the concerns of everyday material culture defuse any pretense of ideological conflict" (260), while Guillaume is ultimately freed to consider new tactics: "Guillaume does gain a military advantage as a result of this interchange, but he gains it by adopting the customs, clothing, and implements of the peaceful, hard-working inhabitants of this thriving region" (260-1). Indeed, the means inspired by a decidedly non-noble community provide for the most ideal acquisition of Nîmes possible, with a remarkably short battle scene and no noted casualties among the French warriors.[110]

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[109] See Phyllis Gaffney who notes that "This *famille nombreuse* policy is instrumental in Guillaume's ultimate conquest of Nîmes: taking his cue from the merchant, the hero tells the Saracen leader that he too is a merchant, father of eighteen children, and so he and his men enter the town without suspicion being attached to them" (582).

[110] Kellogg makes a similar observation of the brief battle in *Charroi*, noting the shift in battle tactics from arms to words: "It occupies a mere 83 lines, and does not climax in glorious single combat between pagan and Christian leaders, as did the *Chanson de Roland.* Instead, the Franks dispose of Otrant rather unchivalrously by dumping him out of a window. But the real battle in the epic has not been with arms. The physical encounter is merely the culmination of the clever maneuvering and strategic playing with words and with which has preceded" (*Medieval* 46).

While the dominant narrative might ultimately locate the hero's identity in his inability to truly perform the merchant, and likewise goes against the intermixing of aristocratic and bourgeois families, it is nonetheless undercut by this ambivalence. In *Les Enfances Vivien*, as in *Le Charroi de Nîmes* and *Floire et Blancheflor*, the success of the hero cannot be achieved without appropriating elements of mercantile culture. The male merchant and his milieu provide a space apart from the dominant aristocratic structure to initiate a creative, if somewhat masked, means of warfare that avoids heavy losses on the Frankish side. Indeed, beyond subconscious desires of acquisition and assimilation in each text examined, the mercantile spaces of the Mediterranean provide the heterotopia necessary for the hero's crisis of identity and inheritance. As he divests himself of his noble ties and chivalric codes among the bourgeois, the hero can advance towards reclaiming something which has been lost to him, whether it be family lands, a beloved, or the family itself.[111]

What the chivalric hero truly claims beyond the object, however, is his noble, adult identity, finally affirmed in the eyes of the king and his subjects. Unsurprisingly, Floire and Vivien, and to a lesser extent Guillaume, are all boys or young men when they don the merchant disguise. Phyllis Gaffney notes the importance of this transitional age for the medieval narrative, where certain moments are more important to the transition from boy to man, for this is the moment when public identity is established. Vivien's case is particularly interesting in the context of the fluidity of identity, as Gaffney highlights

[111] Sarah Kay has noted the *chanson de geste*'s potential for criticizing norms of masculinity, as "they put into question both social violence and the symbolic fabric on which a masculine social order might claim to rest" (21). Certainly the existence of an (implicitly masculine) thriving mercantile world would pose at least an alternative masculinity, with mercantile "fathers" disrupting the noble legacy.

the recurrence of the age of seven in the epic, which "marks the end of *infantia* in many sources; it is the time when a child's teeth are fully formed and therefore the capacity for normal speech has been attained" (575). In particular, this age of life, from about five to fourteen, is governed by Mercury, when children "leave the tutelage of womenfolk, and embark on a formal programme of study" (575). Mercury, perhaps not coincidentally, is also considered the god of commerce and mercantile activity, and in this sense the intersection of young man and commerce figures as a necessity for his journey towards adulthood. [112]

Each male hero who wears the merchant disguise seeks the authority of adulthood, particularly the male aristocratic adulthood that allows for personal autonomy not granted by a weak father figure. This rite of passage to adulthood is facilitated through the mimicry of mercantile culture and the authority of a new sort of father figure when the hero first reaches his limits in these alternate spaces. It is no wonder that these heroes arrive at 'themselves' via mimicry and class transvestism, if, as Massumi asserts, imitation is truly "an indication of a life force propelling the falsifier toward the unbridled expression of its uniqueness" (92).

[112] While it falls outside the scope of this study, an analogous episode is included in a text important to the French chivalric tradition: the Norwegian *Tristran Saga* (c. 1226), presumed to be a direct translation of the complete version of the Thomas text, of which we have no complete copy. In the text, which relates sort of an *enfances* for Tristan, he is kidnapped as a young boy by seafaring merchants. Tristan fits in well with the merchants and even enjoys his time with them, learning to negotiate and profit in his transactions. Ultimately his disguise enables him to pass undetected in the lands around the North Sea, and in Ireland where he would likely be killed if his identity was discovered. It likewise allows him to return home unharmed and step into his adult role under Marc's authority. As in the three texts examined here, the mercantile disguise and the commercial spaces bordering the sea ultimately provide Tristan with the freedom to explore and profit from various identities before stepping into this public identity. Naturally, the trope of the merchant disguise is later used in various fragments of the Tristan romance as well, including Tristan's visit to Iseut at court in the Tristan Folie (Oxford).

Whether romance or epic, we witness a double becoming for each noble hero. While the merchant-self might be the imitation of one self and the reaffirmation of a more apposite concept of identity, what is produced is still real—certainly a copy, but likewise a becoming, where "simulation is a process that produces the real, or, more precisely, more real (a more-than-real) on the basis of the real" (Massumi 92). Here the knight becomes both knight and merchant, appropriating the best of both cultures to achieve powerful results.[113] This double becoming is also present in the narrative representation of these heterotopic spaces, for there are most certainly similarities between the author's commerce of words and the merchant's commerce of goods.[114] The mercantile heterotopia, like the text itself, provides a mirroring which highlights deficiencies in the cultural center while affirming that center through the hero's success. It is thus this space of transformation and reflection that can undermine the authority of the political center as embodied by a king, but constructively mitigates its weaknesses as well. Class-transvestism as merchant allows this critique to surface; the hero blends into these spaces, learns to negotiate circumstances with a new set of skills, and at least attempts another kind of "warfare" unknown (and often disparaged) by courtly culture.

Ostensibly, the "enemy" in this warfare is well known—a Saracen Emir or King. However, recent criticism (such as that of Jacobs, Altman, and Psaki) has suggested echoes of discontent in the medieval epic, where the social critique of the text might be

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[113] François Suard has remarked on the lasting impact of the disguise, where, "le déguisement fait émerger un type nouveau de personnage qui participe, dans une certaine mesure, de l'enveloppe qui l'a un instant abrité" (358) [the disguise makes a new type of character emerge who participates, to a certain extent, in the same fold that once sheltered him].

[114] Tanase's chapter "Le Marchand, le jongleur, le fou" delves into the double masking of the author and the hero through the act of transvestism , drawing connections between the poet and the merchant as peddlers of words, both engaging in literary-like practices. See Tanase, p. 250-71.

directed towards failing social hierarchies, stemming from limitations imposed by systems of primogeniture or an increasing disillusion with the project of the crusades.[115] Building on George Duby's famous essay, Jacobs argues that Guillaume's anger pre-exists the negotiation between king and vassal in the opening scenes of *Charroi de Nîmes,* based on a more obscured narrative of landlessness, poverty, and service.[116] Jacobs' study addresses the redirection of violence of disinherited sons, away from their fathers and towards the Saracens, and if Jacobs is correct in tracing this anxiety through the text, readers can look to the mercantile communities to understand how commerce and exchange might function to mediate these issues on his route to self-actualization and a more idealized society.

Altmann and Psaki make a similar argument, observing how *Charroi de Nîmes* does not uniformly praise the noble and ecclesiastical projects of violence and crusading; instead, they note the ways in which medieval epics are ambiguous, sometimes reflecting dissent and visions of alternate modes of living. As they observe in *Charroi*, "the poem shows how simple declarations of altruistic crusading zeal can reveal a deeply compromised and contingent undertaking. From the very beginning, then, the crusading enterprise is scrutinized, not merely in its abuses but in its very ideal" (Altmann and

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[115] Jacobs argues that Guillaume and his band of disinherited bachelors displace their aggression from father to king to Saracen in *Charroi de Nîmes*, where "[…] the epic imaginary conceives the lord/vassal relationship as a secondary effect of aristocratic family troubles, the bond between a lord and his man reproducing and serving as a metaphor for the contentious relationship between fathers and sons. The *Charroi* furthermore reveals that the displacement of the expectation of land from a father to a lord implicates the lord in the privation that characterizes father-son relationships, making the lord into a new target onto which the son projects his grief over what has been lost, his rebelliousness against authority, and his aggression toward both superiors and competitors." See Jacobs, p. 294.

[116] Duby's article, "Dans la France du Nord-Ouest au XIIe siècle: Les 'jeunes' dans la société aristocratique," *Annales. Économies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 19.5 (1964): 835–46, brought to light the tension in father-son competition within the medieval aristocratic family structure and easily lends itself to an Oedipal reading.

Psaki 264). While Altmann and Psaki have proposed that *Charroi de Nîmes* is a negotiation between aristocratic and ecclesiastical crusading ambitions, conflating these two interests in Guillaume's ambitions for Nîmes, no scholarship has acknowledged the influence of the third estate in this conflict despite its unusually strong presence in the text.[117]

This chapter has sought to demonstrate the means by which mercantile culture intervenes to negotiate and facilitate both the noble and ecclesiastical projects, providing a path by which to renegotiate matters, effectively reducing a noble project to a material undertaking. Indeed, through appropriation of mercantile identity, the material becomes privileged over both noble and spiritual objectives, just as the bourgeois identity allows for creative ways to skirt stagnated issues posed by the traditionally aristocratic exploits which dominate the medieval epic and romance.

[117] See Altmann and Psaki, 265.

CHAPTER THREE

Beyond the Dressing Room:

Mastering Discourse and Spaces of Exchange in the Transvestite Narrative

In the previous chapter, gender, and particularly the male gender, played a central role in considering what is at stake in a young nobleman's class transvestism. Questions of virility, patrilineal inheritance, and "father figures" dominate the courtly text, with the assumed merchant persona ultimately complicating social structures that are rooted in a value system that situates the noble male identity in acts of valiance, conquest, and domination. Likewise, for the young nobleman to step into his adult male role in society, he is necessarily transformed by his passage through the mercantile spaces in and along the Mediterranean; these distant heterotopias cause a ripple effect in courtly society.

Young noblemen, however, are not the only voyagers passing through the fondacos and souks of the Mediterranean dressed as merchants. In examining narratives in which women turn to the merchant disguise as well, this chapter will consider the question of gender in spaces of commerce along the sea, questioning the ways in which class transvestism might alternately establish (or re-establish) a woman's authority as well. Where a young knight might be confronted with limitations in his mercantile disguise, the female experience instead presents a curious facility with which women play the merchant, demonstrating alternate ways in which class and gender intersect in the text. For the medieval Mediterranean is a space not only of class ambiguity, but of gender ambiguity as well, and for the transvestite woman traveler in the text, gender and

class become inseparable categories, merging to reveal the limitations placed on each. Through a reading that engages with Judith Butler's gender theory and Hélène Cixous' views on authorship, this study theorizes the ways in which class transvestism offers both bourgeois and noblewomen the means to exercise a new discursive authority over the public and private self.

Take for example the early thirteenth-century chantefable *Aucassin et Nicolette*. In a moment that has drawn much critical attention, the heroine, whose memory of her youth as a Saracen princess of Cartagena has come back to her in a flash, almost as quickly gets to work masking her true identity. As Nicolette plays the role of the dutiful daughter awaiting an unwanted marriage arranged to benefit her father, she is secretly building a disguise for herself as a traveling jongleur. During her brief stay in Cartagena, the girl teaches herself to play the fiddle (*vielle*), and, when the opportunity arises, she flees to the coast line where she can blend into an anonymous peasant population. Nicolette then completes her disguise by blackening her face with an herb and changing into men's clothes:

> Et ele s'enbla la nuit, si vint au port de mer, si se herbega ciés une povre fenme sor le rivage; si prist une herbe, si en oinst son cief et son visage, si qu'ele fu tote noire et tainte. Et ele fist faire cote et mantel et cemisse et braies, si s'atorna a guise de jogleor, si prist se viele, si vint a un marounier, se fist tant vers lui qu'il le mist en se nef. Il drecierent lor voile, si nagierent tant par haute mer qu'il ariverent en le terre de Provence. (XXXVIII 12-23)

> [And she stole away at night, and went to the sea port, and found lodging with a poor woman on the seashore; and took an herb, and rubbed her head and her face, so that she was completely black and stained. And she had made a tunic and a coat, and a shirt and breeches, and attired herself in the guise of a jongleur, and took her vielle, and went to a mariner, and she bargained with him so that he put her on his boat. They hoisted their sails, and sailed much on the high seas that they arrived in the lands of Provence.]

Considering the economy of identity in this episode, Nicolette's value, once reduced by her status as a common servant, becomes fully realized in the moment of recognition. Indeed, just as quickly as she is enriched with the knowledge of her true, aristocratic identity, she is wise enough to take control of and immediately hide this 'wealth,' to be liquidated later in a union of her choice. To control her identity and her own mobility, Nicolette takes on the disguise not just of a man, but of a man who works in the service of the court and the public. As a jongleur she embodies the traveling storyteller, a position that requires her to circulate widely, as well as provides her with increased mobility across social strata. Furthermore, this position demands a practiced skill which earns a profit. Nicolette's choice to travel as a jongleur is an effective one, convincing enough to secure her movement from Cartagena back to Aucassin's court in Beaucaire without recognition.

In Nicolette's case, as with many cross-dressing women in medieval French and Italian texts, taking on the persona of the male bourgeois, merchant, or even the jongleur,

is particularly powerful for women traveling in Mediterranean spaces. While the merchant disguise in the epic or romance provided a means to circumvent and reestablish a Christian, feudal order for the male epic hero such as Guillaume, Floire, or Vivien, this disguise works just as well, if not better, for female characters willing to transvest. Indeed, female characters of the Old French and Italian texts often demonstrate an ease of transformation that consistently eludes male characters, quickly setting aside the female identity to take on the versatile persona of a male merchant or skilled performer.

This chapter proposes a new reading of moments of 'class transvestism' for women characters of Old French and Italian literary texts, a reading which considers the impact that elements of class, social space, and gender have upon the potency of these transformations. While instances of female cross-dressing have garnered critical attention in recent years, these studies do not engage with the complex issues of socioeconomic status that distinguish the narrative impact of a woman portraying a merchant or bourgeois from that of who passes as a knight or monk.[118] Nor have any studies questioned the role of social spaces in facilitating and sustaining the long-term transformation. This chapter argues that these two elements, socio-economic status and space, are essential to understanding the significance of this transformation, not just for female characters, but for a much broader bourgeois community that is emerging in Europe at this time.

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[118] See Jane Gilbert (1997), Valerie Hotchkiss (2000), and Roberta Krueger (2002), cited in the present study, as well as numerous studies of transvestism in the Old French *Le Roman de Silence* and gender change in *Tristan de Nanteuil*, such as Katherine Terrell's "Competing Gender Ideologies and the Limitations of Language in *Le Roman de Silence*," *Romance Quarterly* 55 (2008), Jane Tolmie's "Silence in the Sewing Chamber: *Le Roman de Silence*," *French Studies* 70 (2009), and Kimberlee Campbell's "Acting like a Man: Performing Gender in *Tristan de Nanteuil*," *Cultural Performances in Medieval France: Essays in Honor of Nancy Freeman Regalado.* (2007).

Central to this study are depictions of women characters who find it to their advantage to pass not as a knight or a man of the cloth, but rather as a skilled laborer, be it a jongleur, who adapts just as easily to an audience of sailors as to an opulent court, or the city-dwelling merchants or bourgeois.[119] Through an examination of the Old French *chantefable*, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, the prose romance *Li contes dou Roi Flore et de la Bielle Jehane*, and Zinevra's story in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (II.9), this chapter addresses the following questions. How is this disguise essential to the rehabilitation of reputation and resources, and what cultural categories become reinforced or troubled in the process? In other words, what changes when noblewomen don the disguise of the bourgeois, for example, and what advantages are gained? How do mercantile spaces in particular, and the perceived fluidity of spaces of exchange as depicted in the text, provide an ideal locus for the reappropriation (or reconstruction) of the woman's lost identity? A perceived 'anonymity' to being bourgeois lies at the heart of the success of these acts, where mercantile culture provides a space wherein a woman seeking refuge in that anonymity can likewise tap into the power to transform her public identity through a newly negotiated 'self.' The act of narration, of 'writing' the self broadly conceived, emerges as the bourgeois' most powerful means to undermine and rehabilitate fixed concepts of identity. This chapter argues that this skill is rooted in the

[119] While modern usage of the terms 'bourgeois' and 'merchant' are distinct from one another, they are often interchangeable in Old French narratives, often alternating in use within the same narrative. Likewise, I group traveling entertainers such as jongleurs into the *laboratores* ordo, for while there were a diversity of performers who certainly had access to aristocratic spaces and audiences, the jongleur essentially works for patronage and profit, just as his social 'anonymity' allows him the credibility to embody another or build a performing persona, (which as we have seen in chapter two, is rather difficult for the aristocracy).

bourgeois' perceived mastery of a discursive system, his ability to negotiate and finesse the truth until a deal is reached.

Within the universe of the tale itself, this appropriation and re-dissemination of one's own narrative becomes a powerful tool for maligned women in the medieval text. The act of self-narration itself is a subversive tool, particularly for women. As Hélène Cixous posits in "Le Rire de la Meduse" (1975), writing the body and the self allows women to penetrate male-dominated structures and industries, just as the act opposes a sexism that condemns women to write only privately, in secret. Indeed, her position can be read against moments in the text when men's groundless claims are quickly accepted as truths, as Cixous asserts that while literature has long been a space marked by what she calls phallocentric, masculine forms of economy, she emphasizes that it nevertheless remains a space from which to change these structures, for "*l'écriture est la possibilité même du changement*, l'espace d'où peut s'élancer une pensée subversive, le mouvement avant-coureur d'une transformation des structures sociales and culturelles" (42) [writing is precisely *the very possibility of change,* the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures (*Reader* 261)]. Similarly, Jane Chance points to the inherent subversion of norms in medieval female writing, noting that for women authors such as Christine de Pisan, what is being appropriated in the act of writing is the space and time usually marked as "his" now identified as "hers."[120] 'Writing,' more broadly conceived in the following texts as the woman's ability to disseminate her own narrative, functions in much the same way to take control of cultural structures and carries this same subversive

[120] See Chance, p. 12.

power for change. Making a similar observation about the correlation between writing and power in the Middle Ages, Eugene Vance has observed that "Accession to power of writing by almost all social classes in the late Middle Ages is certainly not one of the least radical sociological developments of the era, since mastery of this tool was inevitably accompanied by new political and economic powers as well" (*Aucassin* 61). While Vance is speaking about the increasing power of the bourgeois, the observation applies to women as well, for whether female, bourgeois, or both, having a narrative voice gives access to space, time and *métier* which were once considered the domain of the aristocratic man.

Aucassin et Nicolette

In the broader European literary tradition, a number of medieval romances and hagiographic *vitae* depict the transformation of women into men, either in the case where a woman literally becomes a man, as in the romance *Tristan de Nanteuil*, or more commonly where women perform masculinity, passing as a monk or a knight for years at a time.[121] Often, this male persona functions to protect women traveling on the trade route, where safe, independent travel would be impossible.[122] This goes for women on pilgrimage as well, where taking on a male disguise made the dangerous trajectory across the Mediterranean to Jerusalem, or on the route to Santiago de Compostela, less

[121] The most well-known literary example of this is the thirteenth-century *Roman de Silence*, where at her father's behest, the heroine takes on the persona of a knight so that she may eventually circumvent laws which would prevent her from receiving her family's inheritance.

[122] As Sergio Zatti has observed more broadly of the women circulating in the *Decameron*, "Nel caso delle donne il travestimento è sempre al maschile per protezione e per consentire la mobilità fisica e sociale in un mondo dove questa è perogativa dell'uomo" [In the case of women, transvestism is always to be male for protection and to permit physical and social movement in a world where these are the privilege of the man] (85), with the disguise opening up circulation beyond the confined, domestic spaces of the woman.

hazardous.[123] Similarly, during the late thirteenth century the literary trope of the woman passing as a knight was being parodied (or emulated) in the literature of Parisian mercantile elite.[124] Thus by the end of the fourteenth century, transvestism was depicted to both comic and dramatic effect, and is a commonly used device in the second day of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which depicts various transvestite women traveling the Mediterranean trade routes, both by land and by sea.

Aucassin et Nicolette deploys the trope of the transvestite woman as well, providing a unique point of entry to examine the phenomenon of class transvestism in mercantile spaces.[125] One primary facilitator of this change is the Mediterranean space itself, characterized by the constant circulation of merchants and their goods, as well as the ever-changing temperament of the sea. The spaces of the maritime trade route, the coastal ports-of-call, and the merchant ships that crisscross the Mediterranean figure prominently in the success of female protagonists, such as Nicolette, seeking to reverse a crisis situation that has threatened both the private love union and the public reputation.

Once outside the courtly milieu of Beaucaire, Aucassin and Nicolette leave behind the constraints of Provence to enter the wild and ambiguous spaces of exchange that lie on the periphery of courtly culture – from the pastures and forests immediately around the city to the Mediterranean itself. These spaces ultimately provide the means for transformation, which is often facilitated diegetically by exchanges of money and

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[123] See Hotchkiss, whose third chapter examines the portrayal of German monk Hildegund Von Schönau, who took on a male persona while on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but who never assumed her born identity and later lived out his days in a monastery.

[124] See Boris Bove's analysis of the unusual depiction of women from this elite mercantile community portrayed as knights in *Tournoiement des dames de Paris* ["L'image de soi dans le jeu des normes sociales: la bourgeoisie parisienne (XIIIe – XIVe siècle)." *Des images dans l'histoire*. Eds. Marie-France Auzépy and Jöel Cornette. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Vincennes, 2008. 179-213].

[125] *Aucassin et Nicolette* exists in a single codex, BN fr. 2168.

information. As with many romances that feature sea voyages to distant lands, economy is prominent in the text, as both Aucassin and Nicolette exchange with a variety of characters that could be broadly conceived of as commoners of the *laboratores* order, including shepherds, cow-herds, and merchants. Eventually, as the stakes of these exchanges augment in value, and as the narrative moves the two lovers farther from home, these exchanges lead to encounters with the Arab world, which in the medieval French narrative is the Mediterranean exchange space *par excellence*.[126]

The culminating 'transformation' of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, briefly analyzed above, is depicted in the realization of her true identity and is both parodied and stressed in her subsequent transformation into jongleur at sea. Setting the stage for Nicolette's transvestism, the tale is full of ambiguities and questions of identity; from the inclusion of characters with mysterious origins, 'inverted' kingdoms such as Torelore, or the unusual, hybrid *chantefable* itself, the narrative constantly plays with social conventions and perceived cultural categories. Critics have often debated the ambiguity of gender roles in the tale, observing a certain androgyny in Aucassin's character, whose *prouesse* as a warrior is juxtaposed with a debilitating desire for Nicolette that renders him wounded and vulnerable.[127] The farther the heroes travel from home, the more fluid gender seems to become; in the kingdom of Torealore, Aucassin finds the king on bed-rest after the birth of his child, while the queen and her women fight on the battlefield

[126] For Maria Rosa Menocal this correspondence is hardly unusual, for the *chantefable*, written at the beginning of the thirteenth century, was composed at a time of the most intense trade between Arabized Europe and the rest of the continent. Menocal reads this influence in both the cross-cultural love affair between an Arab born girl and a French Christian boy, and the heightened presence of circulation and exchange throughout the tale. See Menocal, p. 504.

[127] See Kevin Brownlee's "Discourse as *Proueces* in *Aucassin et Nicolette*" (1986), and Claire Gilbert's "The Practice of Gender in *Aucassin et Nicolette*" (1997).

with fresh cheeses and apples rather than lethal weapons. Kevin Brownlee has drawn further connections between the ambiguity of the *chantefable* itself as a genre and Nicolette's identity, which become intertwined through the indistinct use of a feminine pronoun in the opening lines of the tale.[128] Even the primary location of the tale in Provence represents a degree of cultural distance from the *chantefable*'s Picard-speaking audience, particularly when considered in light of the not-so-distant Albigensian Crusade and the decline of the enigmatic Cathar culture of the region.[129]

However, the most intense ambiguity is reserved for Nicolette. Described as being of Arab origins with a fair complexion and a French name, she can easily obscure her identity enough to pass unscathed through multiple settings, slipping away from possession by both Christian and Muslim 'fathers.' Given the already fluid nature of her identity, it is perhaps unsurprising that Nicolette can don a masculine disguise with such positive results. Marla Segol notes how the heroine is both mysterious and full of cultural ambivalence, gathering together the native and the foreign, the exotic and the mundane on the surface of her body without a clear resolution.[130] Nicolette's 'value,' whether as servant or as wife, is just as ambiguous as her body and figures prominently in the economy of the tale. It is known that she is 'Saracen,' now baptized as Christian by her master, but it is likewise assumed she is of low birth, and her master subsequently raises her with hopes of marrying her to a peasant or bourgeois. As he says, "Je l'avoie acatee

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[128] See Brownlee, p. 169.

[129] See Robert Griffin (1965), who explores some of the possible connections between the foreignness of the depiction of the region and the somewhat contemporary engagement in the Albigensian crusade at the time of the composition of the text.

[130] See Segol, p. 8, who goes on to observe that "[Nicolette is] a site of intersecting discourses of exotic, homely, sacred, and profane, adhering in denotative meaning to the conventional portrait of the European courtly lady but connotatively adding unanticipated and sometimes unprecedented nuance to the description."

de mes deniers, si l'avoie levee et bautisie et faite ma filole, si li donasse un baceler qui du pain li gaegnast par honor" (IV, ln 11-14) [I bought her with my money, raised her and baptized her and made her my goddaughter, that I may give her to a bachelor who would earn bread for her honorably]. Like an object of exchange, Nicolette has been bought and re-valued, and her father anticipates marrying her to a man of her perceived social status—as a laborer who earns his money through services.

The lover's bond, however, undermines this planned exchange, and the two fathers decide to send her away in order to resolve the problem. Faced with separation and imprisonment, Nicolette decides to escape, announcing to Aucassin that she will travel across the sea to remedy the situation, singing, "Car vostre peres me het / et trestos vos parentés. / Por vous passerai le mer, / s'irai en autres regnés" (XIII, 6-14) [For your father despises me / as well as all your kin. / For you I will cross the sea, / and I will go to other kingdoms]. The distant, open space of the sea and the far-off lands of *Outremer* present a refuge from the turmoil in Beaucaire, and thus in her first physical transformation, Nicolette cuts off her golden locks and steals away in the cover of night.

Aucassin and Nicolette's movement through spaces outside of Beaucaire brings into relief the 'knowability' of aristocratic identity, often physically recognizable in inherited beauty, wealth, and social comportment. This aristocratic 'identity' is contrasted against the common 'anonymity' of everyday laborers and merchants who circulate beyond the city walls and filter in and out of most narratives without names or physical descriptions. These spaces (outside city walls, in the forest, on the shores of the sea) are significant, as they are both physically distant from the seat of feudal power and

increasingly populated by those whose daily frame of reference is based on the straightforward exchange of *deniers* for services and goods. While Nicolette's ignorance of her high-born status has essentially created the crisis of the tale, her low-born identity facilitates her movement in these spaces, particularly once she has escaped her captivity in Beaucaire and enters communities driven by exchange.

To regain her autonomy, Nicolette immediately flees the familiar space enclosed by the city walls to the pastures and forests of the region, where it is unlikely she will be recognized. While these spaces are not the bustling markets of the seaports and villages, they are, however, marked by moments of negotiation and exchange that hinge on the constant circulation of information that one typically finds in the depiction of the market space, and they function most fluidly when partners within the exchange are presumably of the same social status. Take for example the arrival of the shepherds, through whom Nicolette can safely relay a message to Aucassin, primarily because she can hide behind her newfound 'anonymity.' Here, Nicolette tells the shepherds of an invaluable beast which Aucassin must pursue in the forest. The description is a metaphor created to describe herself, which simultaneously hides her identity from the shepherds while encoding it within a message to her beloved. In this first moment of freedom, Nicolette is able to narrate herself, albeit through metaphor, and the reader encounters Nicolette's 'transformation' through exchange—from girl to *beste*. While the metaphor is ingenious, the message is nevertheless useless without the financial transaction that carries it to Aucassin. Indeed, the shepherd children, perhaps driving a hard bargain, refuse to communicate her message on the grounds that she is likely a fairy. Nicolette slips by this

obstacle by offering them enough compensation to overlook their reservations with five *sous* from her purse (XVIII, ln. 34). The exchange works, and the shepherds promise to relay her fantastic tale.

The ease with which Nicolette can pass unknown outside of Beaucaire is contrasted in the subsequent experience of her beloved, for once Aucassin enters into this space of exchange his celebrity invites numerous disadvantages. Aucassin is depicted as hunting, an unmistakable sign of courtly culture, and the shepherds immediately recognize him as the son of their liege (though, they are careful to point out, not their lord). He is at a disadvantage here, for Aucassin has the identity of a nobleman with none of the power, and the children remind him of it. Likewise, due to this identity the shepherds know they can fleece him in the transaction: he pays double for the information, and furthermore, the spokesperson for the shepherds refuses to sing him Nicolette's message, but relays it rather as a spoken narrative. [131] In the exchange, Aucassin begs of the shepherds to take his money for the much desired information, insisting, "Se Dix vos ait, bel enfant, si ferés; et tenés dis sous que j'ai ci en une borse" (XXII, ln. 24-5) [For the love of God, good children, sing it, and take ten *sous* that I have here in a purse], to which the shepherd responds, "Sire, les deniers prenderons nos, mais ce ne vos canterai mie, car j'en ai juré. Mais je le vos conterai, se vos volés" (XXII, ln. 26-8) [Sir, we will take your *deniers*, but I will never sing it for you, for I swore to it. However, I will recount it to you, if you wish]. Despite the fact that the shepherd cheekily

[131] It is worth noting that this exchange, and all others within *Aucassin et Nicolette*, appear in sections written in prose, while expressions of love and devotion occur in passages in verse. Thus here the linguistic register of the straightforward and practical language of the exchange alternates and is reflected not only by characters but in the structure of the *chantefable* itself.

takes the liberty to increase his profit from *deniers* to *sous*, Aucassin agrees to the bargain, "De par Diu, fait Aucassins, encor aim je mix conter que nient" (XXII, ln. 24-30) [By God, said Aucassin, I would rather it was told than nothing]. Here, money – be it *sous* or *deniers* – is exchanged for narratives full of valuable information, and just as the exchange implies the circulation of coin, it likewise continues the diegetic motion of the story, moving Aucassin closer to his goal.

Communication and narration are key to this passage, and critics have noted the significant rift in social register, in the use of metaphoric and literal speech, that adds to the confusion of the exchange and the advantage of the shepherds.[132] Indeed, in the art of negotiation and exchange, mastery of language and rhetorical aptitude are essential to achieving a profitable outcome. Eugene Vance underscores the rare inclusion of the voice of the lower classes in *Aucassin et Nicolette*, and therein the ironic replacement of the ingenuous shepherd of aristocratic literature for the practicality and dissatisfied shepherd of the *chantefable*. As he observes of this encounter and the later cowherd vignette, the true subject of the episode is an impasse in communication, demonstrating the prevailing notion that language is "an arbitrary system of signs fixed by social convention" (*Word* 46). Neither the cowherd nor the shepherds can 'read' the figurative language used by Aucassin and Nicolette, and while the latter attempts to communicate her whereabouts through the shepherds using the priceless beast metaphor, the shepherds are dumbfounded, if not insulted, that she would ask them to communicate such an absurd message. However, while they misunderstand her message by taking it literally, and they

[132] See Brownlee (1986) and Vance (1970, 1980).

continue to speak in a straightforward, literal language, the interaction nonetheless facilitates two exchanges that are negotiated to their profit.

This linguistic cultural barrier later recurs when the cowherd Aucassin encounters in the forest similarly stumbles over Aucassin's metaphor of a lost greyhound and in his own turn describes his life of profit and loss in simple terms: "car avoirs va et vient: se j'ai or perdu, je gaaignerai une autre fois, si sorrai mon beuf quant je porrai" (XXIV 62-4) [for wealth comes and goes: if I have lost gold, I will earn it back another time, I will pay for my steer when I can]. Aucassin and Nicolette have entered the realm of capital – of the ebb and flow of resources among the lower classes, and the perspective that what Fortune snatches away will circulate back over time.[133] These encounters reinforce perceptions of bourgeois concerns—having and acquiring—while demonstrating the possible mutability of identity in these spaces, if only for some. For while Nicolette (and to a minor extent, Aucassin) are capable of operating in this realm, and they benefit from a language that exceeds the understanding of peasants, they are not necessarily operating at an advantage either. By the end of these episodes both the shepherds and the cowherd have nicely profited from Aucassin's conspicuous identity.

Nicolette is nonetheless able to orchestrate a reunion by participating in the necessary exchange while also obscuring her identity and "worth" with a finely crafted narrative. Perhaps within the universe of tale she is able to navigate this world more easily due to her ambiguous Saracen identity, for Menocal has observed an occasional

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[133] Howard Bloch reads these encounters as meetings across social spaces, classes, and languages, but also as a meeting of two economic orders that are founded in nominal (Nicolette) and real (shepherd) value. For Bloch, the passage hints at a certain awareness of the shifting value of money and services, perhaps coinciding with the rise of mercantile wealth in the particular historical moment of composition, where the thirteenth-century inaugurated an era of monetary mutation, devaluation, and revaluation. See Bloch, p. 27.

correlation in the thirteenth-century text that associates wealth, material welfare, trading and the nascent bourgeoisie with the Arabs, where in the *chantefable,* cultural tension is complicated by the Saracens and those like them who cultivate wealth. [134] Naturally, the cultivation of wealth is not only beneath the values of the aristocracy, it is also threatening when read in the context of socio-cultural shifts of thirteenth-century France. Nicolette's success among communities which thrive on practices viewed as 'beneath' aristocratic ideals similarly calls into question an apparent dichotomy in the text, and she transcends this dichotomy by embodying any number of identities. Her identity as Saracen royalty, perhaps independent of her experience as a servant, allows her to move easily between the stagnation and prestige of the old (French) order and the motion of the earning classes that is so essential to the parallel movement of the narrative. These early encounters ultimately demonstrate Nicolette's ability to communicate across social registers while retaining her aristocratic ability to transcend the mundane.

The episode referenced at the opening of this chapter, in which Nicolette takes on the jongleur disguise, comes after Aucassin and Nicolette have spent three harmonious years across the sea in Torelore, a land where, perhaps significantly, gender roles are reversed and parodied. The couple's separation and return to their respective native lands precipitate a return from 'anonymity' in the ultimate recognition of both identities. For Aucassin, returning to Beaucaire means the assumption of his public role as heir upon discovering his father has died in his absence. Typical of Aucassin, he is recognized immediately by his subjects as he washes up on the shores of southern France when a

[134] See Menocal, p. 504.

shipwreck liberates him from his captors. Just as easily, he assumes his position as Count of Beaucaire, finally stepping into his adult identity as the head of his family and region.

Nicolette's revelation, not quite as simple, begins with the discovery that she is a prisoner of the King of Cartagena. Notably, this moment of discovery, of fully realizing her biological 'identity,' occurs on a merchant boat. At first it is the Saracen crew who remark on her resemblance to the royal family in her extreme beauty, but she is unable to confirm their suspicions, explaining she was kidnapped as a young child. Once the boat approaches the city walls of her childhood, however, it all returns to her. As the narrative recounts:

> Il nagierent tant qu'il ariverent desoux le cité de Cartage, et quant Nicolete vit les murs del castel et le païs, ele se reconut, qu'ele i avoit esté norie et pree petis enfes, mais ele ne fu mie si petis enfes que ne seust bien qu'ele esté fille au roi de Cartage et qu'ele avoi[t] esté norie en le cité. (XXXVI 9-14).
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> [They sailed until they arrived at the city of Cartagena, and when Nicolette saw the walls of the castle and the country, she knew herself, that she had been raised there and taken as a small child, but she had not been so young that she did not know well that she was the daughter of the king of Cartagena, and that she had been brought up in the city.]

Likewise, her impressions are sung in verse in the following section, as the city rises before her:

Nichole li preus, li sage,

est arivee a rivage,

voit les murs et les astages

et les palais et les sales;

dont si s'est clamee lasse (XXXVII)

[Nicolette the brave, the true, / has arrived at the coast, / sees the walls and the dwellings, / and the palaces and the halls; / for which she calls herself pitiful]

In this moment while approaching the city by boat Nicolette's memory is jogged not by the language or the people of Cartagena, but by the space of her origins – the walls, the dwellings, the palace, the halls. For Nicolette, this space is inscribed with memory and identity, despite how desperately she would wish it otherwise. While the distant spaces of the Mediterranean, occupied by merchants, pirates, and bizarre foreigners are characterized by obscurity and anonymity, her homecoming reveals, with no ambiguity, exactly *who* she is. Here, Nicolette finally remembers her true identity in the most fundamental terms – she is a princess of Cartagena, born with royal blood. While this plot twist will ultimately benefit her eventual reunion with Aucassin, in this moment it is problematic. All the mobility Nicolette has gained in her anonymity, based primarily on her social status as a servant, disappears in the recognition of her 'self.' As we have seen with Aucassin, with 'identity,' and especially a noble identity, comes obligation and immobility. Naturally, one of those obligations will be to form a politically favorable political alliance for her family through marriage, which is problematic not only because

she loves Aucassin, but because she has converted to Christianity. The only part of this inborn 'identity' that serves Nicolette in her new life is her indisputable noble blood.

Throughout the *chantefable*, while Aucassin is essentially fighting for his role in society and the respect of his father, Nicolette must reject her royal birthright and undergo a physical transformation, primarily to control how her identity is disseminated. Returning to the passage examined at the opening of this chapter, we see Nicolette devise a plan to return to France when faced with the crisis of an arranged wedding at the narrative climax of the *chantefable*. Notably, Nicolette reflects on her voyage home and chooses the persona of a traveling musician as her disguise, for in this 'identity' she can easily and anonymously earn wages while passing unnoticed through various communities. For this transformation, Nicolette learns a new skill, to play the *vielle*, and eventually escapes outside of the city walls to find refuge with an old woman who helps the younger woman transform into a man. The unnamed old woman, anonymous in her poverty, is simply located 'sor le rivage' – on the coast of the transformative sea-space. Here, Nicolette changes into men's clothes, darkens her face with herbs, and convinces a seafaring merchant to take her on board, where once again she fully realizes a personal transformation onboard a merchant ship.[135] As she passes through these mercantile spaces, from coastal peasant dwellings to the trade ships of the Mediterranean, the decidedly non-noble social space once again offers a traveler, protected by a cloak of

[135] Indeed, Nicolette undergoes a series of transformations 'facilitated' by water, both included in the narrative or alluded to in earlier events, as in her baptism by water from Muslim to Christian, her childhood trans-Mediterranean journey that reduced her from princess to servant, and the voyage to Torelore which at least temporarily afforded her a new identity in a far off land.

anonymity, the chance to trade services for safe passage outside the restrictions of the traditional seat of feudal power.

The persona of the traveling jongleur ultimately offers Nicolette a form of control—not only of her own narrative, but of the transmission of her own culture as well.[136] It is notable that Nicolette must re-discover her true identity before she can fully appropriate another. This identity crisis in turn produces the conditions necessary for assuming the 'bourgeois' identity so essential to seizing one's own narrative and shifting perceptions. As a jongleur, her primary role is not simply to entertain, but to narrate and communicate stories from around the kingdom and beyond. Once again, Nicolette's experience between identities and between social orders helps her in this transformation, for while she is adept at negotiating situations and operating in the spaces of the lower or middling sort, as a noblewoman she has the natural aptitude for 'higher' discourses of courtly culture as communicated in the jongleur's song, prefigured in text with the inclusion of sung verse. Moreover, while disguised as a jongleur in Aucassin's court, Nicolette is ultimately able to control how her narrative is disseminated and told, both rehabilitating herself to her noble status while ensuring that her lover welcomes her back upon her return as herself to Beaucaire. As she sings of herself:

> D'Aucassin rien ne savons,
> mais Nicolete la prous
> est a Cartage el donjon,

[136] Segol provides insight into this complex moment of race dynamics inherent to Nicolette's transformation, reading her 'blackness' as the culmination of a reacculturation to the outsider's view of her native society. For Segol, Nicolette assumes this identity only as a means to escape it, for "as she rejects her native culture she embodies it, mimicking the native culture and the means of its transmission" (8).

car ses père l'ainme mout

qui sire est de cel roion.

Doner li volent baron

un roi de paiiens felon.

Nicolete n'en a soing,

car ele aime un dansellon

qui Aucassins avoit non (XXXIX 23-32)

[Of Aucassin we know nothing, / but Nicolette the brave / is in Cartagena castle / for her father loves her much / who is king of that kingdom. / They wish to give her as her lord / an evil pagan king. / Nicolette does not wish it, / for she loves a young man / of the name of Aucassin.]

Nicolette presents a conventional narrative of female passivity, situating herself both as a prize, finally legitimized by her royal blood, as well as the female prisoner, fated to be her father's object of exchange. However, in the ironic construction of this tale, which Nicolette sings to her lover in her actual freedom as jongleur, she has in reality entirely wrested her value and authority from others.[137] While the account of her whereabouts appeases a traditional narrative that renders women objects of passivity and exchange, the very fact that Nicolette delivers the message herself undermines the structure it appears to uphold.[138]

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[137] As Menocal has observed, it is a game of hiding and revealing the true identity, for "To affect the necessary reunion at the end Nicolette must appropriate the *appearances* of the things she *really* is but does not, perhaps cannot, on the ordinary surface appear to be: Arab, manipulative, authoritative" (506).

[138] Jane Gilbert notes how Nicolette makes great effort to maintain her "Good Christian Girl" appearance, particularly because Aucassin's evaluation of her will be determined by such a stereotype: "[Nicolette] not only represents herself as the passive partner in their relationship, but also conceals from Aucassin such

Ultimately, Nicolette's disguise works perfectly. Social register once again comes into play here as Nicolette negotiates her return, for while the initial description of her captivity is sung in verse and likely accompanied by the sentimental tones of the *vielle*, the negotiation that follows takes the form of a prose dialogue between Aucassin and Nicolette-jongleur. This verbal exchange with Aucassin results in a profit of twenty *livres* (of much greater value than the *sous* and *deniers* which have changed hands throughout the tale), with a promise that the jongleur will return Nicolette to Aucassin. Empowered by the disguise, Nicolette negotiates the terms of her own marriage, never quite straying from the discourse of Nicolette-as-object, yet covertly taking action as author of her own exchange. Virginia Green proposes that *Aucassin et Nicolette* be read as a parody of the "trans-coding" of the commerce of its period, with Nicolette as the object of exchange, and where "Aucassin only 'acquires' Nicolette after her intrinsic value has been firmly established" (197). Perhaps more significant to understanding the power of the jongleur's persona, it should be emphasized that this value has not just been reestablished, it has been reestablished *by Nicolette herself*. Indeed, not only does Nicolette broker her own exchange, she does so for the largest sum of money and to her greatest advantage.

At the heart of Nicolette's transformation is the ability to (re)invent the self. What medieval narratives of transvestism consistently represent with the persona of merchant, bourgeois, or jongleur is a newfound dexterity with language and identity, and an ability to 'clothe' the self both literally and figuratively that is unique to the perceived anonymity of the lower classes. The narrative is at the core of this transformation, for the

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'unseemly' behavior as her cross-dressing: in short, she hides from him the side of her which is the Belle Sarrasine" (223). Thus while Aucassin is fighting patriarchal authority, Nicolette must fight *him* – like the *chantefable* itself, she is negotiating two identities.

success of her ingenious disguise as a jongleur ultimately rests on her rhetorical skills as she slips between linguistic social registers, drawing from both her bourgeois and aristocratic 'identities' to negotiate most successfully her return to Beaucaire.[139] Most powerful, however, is that becoming a jongleur gives Nicolette authority over her own story, and thus over herself, at least temporarily. While Aucassin's noble identity is so perceptible it often speaks for itself, Nicolette's 'anonymity' as jongleur invests her with the authority to narrate her own noble identity—erasing the servant girl and replacing her with a palimpsest of a woman of even greater social status than the new Count of Beaucaire.

Li contes dou Roi Flore et de la Bielle Jehane

Unique among medieval texts, *Aucassin et Nicolette* is the only known example of a *chantefable*, and as Brownlee convincingly argues, the medieval author both innovatively and self-consciously draws from the ambiguities of this genre to bring out ambiguities in his characters through a mixture of verse and prose, and high and low linguistic registers. While noble and sentimental concepts are expressed in verse, negotiations and narrative movement are more often represented in sections in prose. As this chapter argues, if the subversive power of being jongleur, bourgeois, or merchant resides in the woman's newfound ability to narrate and negotiate her identity in the text, it is worth considering this trope within the context of the gradual movement from poetry to prose in the

[139] Brownlee makes a similar observation, arguing that *prouesse* is being displaced in the narrative in favor of Nicolette's ability to manipulate figurative discourse, where her intellectual (or rhetorical) capacity trumps chivalric prowess, the latter of which is undermined throughout the narrative and is far less effective than her verbal directives (179-80).

thirteenth-century text itself. Indeed, if being bourgeois, like gender, is a performance, tantamount to a simple self-narrative, the increased use of prose in medieval literary practice ultimately presents a discursive space for the bourgeois transvestite to flourish.

As such, the thirteenth-century Franco-Flemish *Li contes dou Roi Flore et de la Bielle Jehane* presents a romance in prose wherein a knight's daughter manipulates both gender and social codes to repair her maligned reputation.[140] Set in northern France on the border of Flanders and Hainaut, class, inheritance, and marriage are at the heart of the narrative, which finds Jehane, a knight's daughter, being married off to his squire, Robiers, due to her father's inability to find her a proper match (as well as his affection for the squire). Almost immediately, her reputation is destroyed by a jealous knight, Raoul, who bets Robiers he can seduce his wife while he is away. When Raoul enters her chambers as she is bathing, she refuses him and is able to evade the knight before he can rape her. However, Raoul has seen enough of her body and a distinctive birthmark that he can convince Robiers he was successful in his seduction. The disgraced husband exiles himself, and he is later followed by Jehane who, hoping to repair this situation, seeks out her husband in Paris.

Along the way, Jehane changes her appearance to pass undetected, and in a simple and straightforward description, the narrator relates she "avoit fait choper ses bielles traices, et fu autresi atirés com uns eskuiiers" (110) [has her beautiful tresses cut, and henceforth dressed like a squire], notably taking on the disguise of a (male) squire

[140] *La Bielle Jehanne* exists in a single codex, BN fr. 24430, and participates in what Gaston Paris named the "*cycle de la gageure*" wherein men wager on the virtue of a wife or sister.

named Jehan.[141] Indeed, in a very real sense Jehane becomes a version of her husband to affect their reunion, performing 'him' better than he does himself, for once Jehane finds Robiers on the road, she convinces him to let her serve him and to start anew in 'Marseille sur Mer.' Protected by the anonymity of this coastal, mercantile hub, she earns them a living for seven years by baking bread 'à la francais,' and eventually opens a merchant fondaco with their earnings. When Raoul one day passes through their hostel on his way back from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, confessing his lie to Jehan, she finally suggests to Robiers that they return to the north as Raoul's confession is now public knowledge. Upon their return Robiers seeks revenge through a tournament while Jehane resumes her identity, shedding the male disguise to happily reunite with her husband.

This main narrative is occasionally interrupted by the less eventful story of the titular King Flores, who has been married to a loving and devoted queen who cannot produce an heir. Thus when Robiers dies after ten more years of childless marriage to Jehane, King Flores hears of Jehane and her exceptional feats of loyalty and resourcefulness. When he sends his advisor to ask Jehane to come before the king for marriage, she refuses, informing him that it is the man's duty to come to her and court her in person. King Flores digests this information and acts accordingly, coming to Jehane to propose marriage. She accepts, and they live a long happy life together, producing two heirs that are ultimately the sign of their balanced, profitable union.

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[141] As Hotchkiss posits of the woman transvestite narrative, "A husband's enforced or voluntary absence serves as the impetus for disguise in all these stories of women's adventures outside the domestic sphere. Without a husband, a woman is no longer a wife; as the male disguise signifies, the absence of the husband literally results in a loss of sexual identity" (96).

Rare for a literary text outside of the world of the fabliaux examined in chapter one, *La Bielle Jehane* depicts the ordinary domestic spaces and the mercantile life of Marseille that are both literally and figuratively distant from the courtly culture of most romance texts. Marseille is a significant choice, for while Jehane makes her transformation before their arrival, the location offers her a densely populated, bourgeois community in which to sustain her persona while making a living. Peripheral to the politically central courts of feudal power, the Mediterranean mercantile port functions as an alternate space in which to pass time and reposition oneself. Beyond the protection of the generally anonymous common masses that seem to make up urban centers of the medieval text, the seaport likewise presents opportunity in its constant motion; here one finds the movement of goods and coin demonstrated in Jehan's success, the constant traffic of travelers and merchants, and the flow of information from one shore to another, as demonstrated in Raoul's appearance and confession.

The central narrative function of Mediterranean seaport is inseparable from the bourgeois social context which dominates it, for this milieu ultimately sustains the heroine's long term ruse. Just as Jehane suddenly and simply becomes Jehan, a shift in social order takes place as she moves from Paris to Marseille, where the inherent aristocratic right to authority and power is displaced, and where it is only through the resourcefulness of the bourgeois that family lines can be renewed.[142] As with *Aucassin et*

[142] As Delany contends, bourgeois spaces in medieval towns always offered some level of freedom. Here, the historical impact of the rise of the bourgeois in the thirteenth century was often acutely felt, for, "Besides challenging feudal political power in the cities, the bourgeoisie challenged the economic interests of landed aristocrats. The bourgeoisie required a pool of free labor, for which it competed with landlords. The latter, in order to retain serfs and tenants on the land, were often forced to make concessions, such as the commutation of feudal services in favor of money rents and wage labor. If such concessions were not

Nicolette, the positive [i.e. useful] depiction of bourgeois communities betrays the presence of corruption, or unfairness, in the court, which is ultimately remedied by a hybrid union bringing in fresh (royal) blood and authority to replace old, static systems of power. The trope of cross-dressing (whether gender or class transvestism) works to amend these problems because it can draw from the perceived resourceful nature of bourgeois society, which for Jehane and Robiers presents a force of positive change while they are exiled to the fringe of society. Jehane, in turn, is revealed to be exceedingly loyal, resourceful, and wise, exemplifying a growing thirteenth-century ideal of the bourgeois wife.[143]

Perhaps unsurprising for a tale that is situated primarily in a bourgeois community, service and loyalty are themes at the heart of *La Bielle Jehane*, where resourceful servants benefit financially, and like the best bourgeois, are sometimes elevated in social status. Thus, the narrative opens with another exemplary woman—Flores' queen—who serves her people and her husband with such loyalty that she offers to join a convent when she is unable to conceive for him. This loyalty, and self-sacrifice, is echoed in Jehane's character, who flees her life to follow her husband, serve him, and rehabilitate both of their reputations back in the home community.

While the women of *La Bielle Jehane* may be paragons of service, there is likewise an expectation of service from the men of the community to protect, trust, and

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made, the labor force of the manor or monastic estate might desert gradually or *en masse* to a town, where employment and legal freedom might be had" (280).

[143] Nancy Vine Durling (1990) has explored preoccupation with Jehane's behavior in this tale, where assumptions about her virtue are often linked to her social status and family origins. However, these categories are somewhat slippery, as a similar idealization of the bourgeois woman becomes more explicit in later fourteenth-century texts like *Le Mesnagier de Paris*, which demonstrates a greater concern for the refined upbringing and grooming of bourgeois wife.

even marry off their wives and daughters correctly. Jehane's exceptionality brings into relief the faults of the men who have exacerbated her crisis, and, as Sheila Delaney has observed, the male knights and clerics of the tale are often cowardly, devious, and irresponsible. For Delaney, this reflects well on the bourgeois, for "the general point of the tale is clear enough: that the present ruling strata are so socially effete that monarchy can expect nothing valuable from them. For political stability and general social well-being, the king's best ally is his upper bourgeoisie" (281-82). Indeed, as we have seen in chapter one, this shift in attitude was well documented during Philippe Auguste's reign, as the elite bourgeois communities of northern France began to find more acceptance at court with the consolidation of the monarchy. More broadly, attitudes towards service and the importance of the lower stratum of society were changing in this period, when theologians emphasized the functional interpretation of manual labor as an essential service performed on behalf of others, rather than as a form of punishment.[144]

With Jehane's service, however, comes power and profit. The bourgeois disguise and the accompanying performance have given Jehane new, lasting skills that are arguably both liberating and empowering. Jehane benefits immensely from her transformation in ways that are far less superficial than has been seen in similar narratives. In taking a closer look at the text, we shall see that Jehane in fact retains all the skills for negotiation she has honed while in Marseille, demonstrated in the way she responds with a counter-offer to King Flore's marriage proposal. Likewise, she is able to market her re-entry back into her home society and 'reveal' her true identity to her

[144] See Oexle, p. 11.

benefit using the right words and the correct appearance, ultimately cashing in on her 'investment' at the most opportune moment.

Upon their arrival in Marseille Jehane gets to work at mending their situation. Like a good merchant she comes up with a practical and profitable solution: she has 100 *sous* and can sell their two horses for a profit that will enable them to get established. Likewise, she boasts she is the best baker Robiers ever met: "si ferai pain françois, et je ne douc mie ke je ne gaagne bien et largement mon depens" (124) [and I make French bread, and I don't doubt one bit that I will earn much and greatly my living from it]. The next day, she puts this plan into action:

> Et lendemain vendi Jehans ses .ii. chevaux .x. livres de tornois, et achata son blé et le fist muire, et achata des corbelles, et coumencha à faire pain françois si bon et si bien fait k'il en vendoit plus ke li doi melleur boulengier de la ville; et fist tant dedens les .ii. ans k'il ot bien .c. livres de katel (124).
>
> [And the next day Jehan sold their two horses for ten Tours pounds, and bought his wheat and it ground, and purchased some baskets, and began to make such good, well made French bread that he sold more of it than the two best bakers in the city; and he made so much during two years that he had a good one hundred pounds in goods.]

What better way to make a profit than to offer exotic goods that cannot be found locally? In a clever reversal of the typical exotic imports such as the silks and spices which arrive in Marseille by southern routes to northern cities, Jehane's ingenious plan is to mark

northern 'Frenchness' to the travelers and residents of the southern sea-port. At the same time, bread was an essential food item at tables across medieval society, and Jehan demonstrates her resourcefulness and intelligence by best using the knowledge she has to profit well from a common staple.

Naturally, the plan works perfectly, and Jehane eventually builds on this success, opening "l'Ostel François" for merchants and travelers passing through Marseille:

> Jehans lous une mason grant et bielle, et si hierbrega la bonne gent, et gaegnoit asés à plenté, et viestoit son segnour biellement et richement; et avoit mesire Robiers son palefroi, et aloit boire et mengier aveukes les plus vallans de la ville; et Jehans li envoioit vins et viandes, ke tout cil ki o lui conpagnoient s'en esmervelloient. Si gaegna tant ke dedens .iiii. ans il gaegna plus de .ccc. livres de meuble sains son harnois, qui valoit bien .L. livres. (125)
>
> [Jehan rented a large and beautiful house, and there she lodged good people, and easily profited much, and dressed her lord beautifully and richly; and master Robiers had his palfrey, and he went to drink and eat with the worthiest of the village; and Jehan sent him wine and meats, so that all those who accompanied him marveled at it. And he earned so much that within four years he earned more than 300 pounds in assets, not including his own possessions (or baggage) which were worth a good 50 pounds.][145]

[145] On monetary value in medieval France, 12 *deniers* equaled one *sous*, while 20 *sous* equaled a *livre*. In this particular passage, *livres de meuble* likely refers to mobile wealth.

Not only is Jehan the bourgeois able to reacquire Robiers' palfrey and 100 *sous*, her 300 pound investment in domestic goods greatly exceeds their original resources. This total does not include their own baggage, worth an additional fifty pounds. After seven years of looking after her husband, bread business, and hostel in Marseille, Jehane has achieved the pinnacle of bourgeois success: "gaegnoit Jehans aukes çou k'il voloit, et estoit si dous et si deboinaires k'il se fasoit amer à tous ses voisins; et aveuc tout çou, il estoit si très eureus conme trop, et maintenoit son seignour si noblement et si ricement ke c'estoit miervelles à veoir. (129) [Jehan earned as much as he wished, and being so pleasant and so debonair that he was pleasing to all his neighbors; and with all that, he was as happy as ever, and took care of his lord so nobly and richly that it was marvelous to see]. They are happy, wealthy, and Jehan, at least, is well-liked and respected by his neighbors.

However, beyond the ebb and flow of material profit, this maritime space of constant change, so often symbolically linked to the Wheel of Fortune as much as it is to the transformative waters of baptism, offers absolution just as much as it transforms. The eventual arrival of Raoul, returning from pilgrimage in the East, provides the needed information which allows the couple to return home. Raoul too has transformed in the Mediterranean space, traveling to Marseille, Acre, and Jerusalem in seeking his own spiritual absolution. As a guest at the hostel he also (unknowingly) confesses his sin to Jehan over dinner, and the now-bourgeois baker seizes her opportunity to return home and repair her reputation through the revelation of her identity.

On returning home, "Jehan" changes back into Jehane with the help of her female cousin, who has four gowns made, of various bright colors and Arabian gold, while

Jehane is bathed and perfumed, finally returning to her feminine beauty after seven years as a man. The description, given twice in the narrative, is much more detailed than the simple transformation from woman to man, emphasizing her shape and the centrality of the body in becoming woman again: "Si fu tant bielle de cors et de vis et tant avenans ke au monde on ne trouvast plus bielle riens" (140) [She was so beautiful in body and in face, and so attractive, that no one could find one more beautiful in all the world]. Jehane's husband is thrilled to see her and to hear of her loyalty during his period of exile, but as mentioned earlier, the revelation of her true identity and her power over her own narrative while 'away' is indispensable. As Valerie Hotchkiss insists, "The dissolution of disguise is as important as the disguise itself, since the woman's achievement cannot be assessed until it is recognized" (128), and ultimately it is Jehane who, like Nicolette, controls how this achievement is recognized. In the moment of the big reveal, the power of narrative and the importance of the merchant disguise come into play for Jehane, finally giving her the authority to resume a life that was stolen away by a fabricated tale spun by a powerful knight.

However, unlike Nicolette's story, Jehane's does not simply end with her re-entry into society and the resumption of her marriage. Instead, after ten years together, Robiers dies, leaving her childless just as King Flores finds himself in a similar state. As the story switches over to the king, the narrator tells of the wide circulation of Jehane's story, which eventually reaches his ears:

> Et li Chevaliers coumenche à conter coument elle s'esmut por aler kesre son segnour, et coument elle le trouva et mena à Marselle, et les grans bontés et

> les grans services k'elle li fist, si conme il a esté dit el conte par devant, si ke li rois Flores s'en esmiervella trop. Et dist au Chevalier à consel ke tel fenme prenderoit il volentiers. (151)
>
> [And the knight began to tell how she motivated herself to go seek her lord, and how she found him and brought him to Marseille, and the grand favors and the great services which she did for him, as the story has already told it, that King Flores marveled greatly over it. And he said to his advisor knight that he would willingly marry this sort of woman.]

Flores is impressed both by her ability to accumulate for her husband and by her loyal service to him. Rather than the typical description that tends to dwell on the great beauty of the woman beyond any other in the kingdom, her resourcefulness and productivity leave the king marveling.

When the king sends his messenger to ask her to join him in court, she further demonstrates that the skills she honed as a merchant in Marseille, namely the ability to negotiate, have not left her in the transformation back into a woman. Jehane, now a widow with solid resources, uses her own wealth as leverage in brokering her own marriage. Ironically, the woman who transgressed gender and social codes for years gives the messenger a lesson in duty, courtliness, and masculinity, telling him:

> Vostre Rois n'est pas si sienteus ne si courtois conme je cuidoie, cant il me mande ensi ke je voise à li et il me prendera à fenme. Ciertes, je ne sui mie soudoiière pour aller à son coumant; mais dites à vostre Roi, s'il li plaist, k'il viegne à moi, se il me prise tant et ainme, et se li soit biel se je

> le veul prendre à mari et à espous; car li segnor doivent rekesre les dames, ne mie les dames les segnours (152-3).
>
> [Your King is not as intelligent nor as courteous as I believed, when he sends for me like this that I go to him and he will take me as his wife. To be certain, I am not one bit a prostitute to go at his command; but tell your King, if it pleases him, that he could come to me, and if he is very worthy and loves me, and if it seems good to him that I want to take him as husband; for lords must seek ladies, rather than ladies seek lords.]

While King Flores may think he can simply acquire a new wife of lower social rank, Jehane instead turns it into a negotiation, countering with her own terms when she finds him neither courteous nor reasonable. Here, she continues to bend the rules of gender roles, manipulating both male and female roles in her message to Flores. On one hand, she gives him a lesson in masculinity. If, as noted earlier, the men of *La Bielle Jehane* have demonstrated their inability to live up to the chivalric code, it is Jehane who, having lived as a man, finally articulates that same code of conduct to the king himself. And yet, while Jehane no longer wears the clothes or persona of a man, she plays with the rules of courtship, insisting that *he* must be the beautiful one who pleases her. Jehane can set the terms for the exchange, and negotiate gender roles to her advantage, for she is wealthy in both resources and wit. While Flores is somewhat vexed by her tactics as he mulls over her response, his advisor notes how well it reflects upon her, encouraging the king to abide by her wishes: “Ciertes, toutes teus parolles doit bien dire boine dame et sage; et si

m'ait Dieus! Elle est et sages et vallans" (154) [Certainly, all her words speak to her being good and wise, by God! She is both wise and worthy].

Flores proves himself amenable to change, and demonstrating his courtliness, he goes to her for their marriage. As the narrative tells it, their union is a happy one: "Si l'ama molt li rois Flores pour sa grant biauté et pour le gran sens et le grant valour ki en li estoit" (156) [King Flores loved her much for her great beauty, and for the great intelligence and great value which was in her]. Above all, it is not just her beauty that is attractive, but the *gran sens* and *grant valour* that she brings to their marriage union.[146] Perhaps underscoring a growing acceptability of bourgeois values, the story emphasizes that Jehane is loved because she is beautiful, but also wise and wealthy. As a woman who transgressed the rules of both class and gender, she demonstrates the lasting effects of this transgression in a life negotiated outside of the typical binary systems of masculine authority and feminine acquiescence, or aristocratic courtliness and a bourgeois shrewdness. In Jehane, these elements combine to offer her some modicum of control over the resources the knight Raoul sought to possess: her personal narrative, physical body, and financial security.[147]

There is something particularly radical about the act of class transvestism and the change from *petite noblesse* to male laborer. For one, it is impressive enough to circulate widely within the context of the story itself, gaining the attention of a foreign king like

[146] Here *valour* is ambiguous enough to translate as both personal worth and financial value.
[147] While it is outside of the scope of this chapter, Jehane's body, along with her dowry, inheritance, and self-made fortune, is itself considered a source of wealth. For as Durling (1990) reminds us, Jehane's body, and more specifically her genitals, are not only the source of the original wager, they are repeatedly described as her 'jewel' (*guiel*) and something which Raoul seeks to take by force. Indeed, this would add greater significance when considering the greater control the bourgeois disguise gives Jehane over her body-as-resource, particularly when she chooses to 'hide,' 'reveal,' and ultimately liquidate the hidden wealth behind her disguise at various points in the plot.

Flores. The radical act is arguably neutralized once the king takes Jehane as his bride, but not before she takes control of the terms of their courtship in a way that is most profitable to her, betraying her nimble grasp of the art of the deal. It is not simply Jehane's transformation into a man that is so radical, but rather her successful mastery of the bourgeois lifestyle that both proves her *valour* and allows her to assume authority through the control of her personal narrative. While critics have focused on the importance of Jehane's ascent from *petite noblesse* to royalty in the text, linking her success to her inborn qualities, it has been overlooked that her transformation from the daughter of a knight into a male bourgeois is just as crucial.[148] As has been explored in chapter two, as well as with *Aucassin and Nicolette*, it is incredibly difficult for the *noblesse* to pass as anything other than aristocratic, for this 'inborn' superiority almost always betrays the disguise. Instead, one should consider Jehane's transformation into bourgeois with greater significance, and Delany keenly observes, "Jehane's success is, as it were, validated both by her knightly origin and her royal destiny, for from the patrician point of view she attains the best of both worlds: bourgeois money with aristocratic status and power" (279).

Ultimately, it is the regenerative power of the market space, the power of *profit* and to produce, that is depicted as so inherent to the bourgeois way of life. In being bourgeois, Jehane replicates this identity through acts that are not simply left behind once she resumes the female gender. Indeed, Jehane is chosen by the king *because* she can produce, but also for the possibility that she can *re*produce, for the king is in need of an heir. In Jehane, the traditional binary systems become troubled, with no clear evidence of

[148] See Hotchkiss, p. 94.

resolution in the narrative. As much as Jehane's time spent in drag is important to her claim to authority over her image and reputation, her experience as a bourgeois likewise develops lasting skills and the financial leverage necessary to make long-term changes to her life as a maligned, aristocratic woman.

Decameron II.9 – Zinevra

The trope of the transvestite woman passing as a male merchant jumps yet again between genre and style, between France and Italy, and between aristocratic and bourgeois audiences in the prose *novelle* of Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron.* Many of the *Decameron*'s one hundred tales can be traced to French sources, such as *Decameron* II.9, which resembles much of *La Bielle Jehane* and similar French romances considered part of the *cycle de gageure*.[149] In this *novella,* Zinevra of Genoa is the unfortunate victim of a wager placed on her virtue between her husband and another merchant. As with Nicolette and Jehane, circumstances that threaten her livelihood and reputation prompt Zinevra to assume the persona of a male merchant, which ultimately gives her an alternate identity through which to rehabilitate her reputation. Zinevra's disguise likewise enables her to plan her revenge, which depends entirely on retaking control of her tarnished reputation and re-narrating her 'identity.'

Cross-dressing as a man is essential to her self-preservation, but as with similar examples examined in this chapter, she gains the greatest mobility in becoming a

[149] Many have also noted the resemblance of the tale of Griselda (*Decameron* X.10) to *La Bielle Jehane,* wherein a loyal wife must prove her fidelity to her husband through years of rather humiliating service. Thus it is notable Boccaccio removes this element of the original narrative from Zinevra's tale, yet preserves Jehane and Zinevra's shared enterprising successes.

traveling, male merchant. Thus when Zinevra's husband orders her death after she is falsely accused of infidelity, the executioner allows her to escape, and she flees to the coast where she crafts her disguise. As the story tells us of her moment of initial transformation:

> La donna, rimasa sola e sconsolata, come la notte fu venuta, contraffatta il più che poté n'andò a una villetta ivi vicina; e quivi da una vecchina procacciato quello che le bisognava, racconciò il farsetto a suo dosso, e fattol corto e fattosi della sua camiscia un paio di pannilini e i capelli tondutisi e transformatasi tutta in forma d'un marinato, verso il mare se ne venne (294)
>
> [The lady, abandoned and forlorn, disguised herself as best she could, and when it was dark she went to a nearby cottage, where she obtained some things from an old woman and altered the doublet, shortening it to make it fit. She also converted her shift into a pair of knee-length breeches, cut her hair, and having transformed her appearance completely so that she now looked like a sailor, she made her way down to the coast] (McWilliam 172)

Zinevra completely transforms herself, becoming a cabin boy and taking the name Sicurano da Finale, as the disguise effectively gives her the ability to "assure the ending" of the tale. On the surface, the transformation is described primarily as physical, for, as with similar narratives, becoming 'masculine' requires a simple change of clothes and a

haircut. And yet, being 'Sicurano' is a seven-year investment for Zinevra, and the transformation turns out to involve much more than a simple costume.

While the narrative does not explicitly address why Zinevra chooses to become a seafaring merchant rather than enter into the safety of a convent, the choice seems obvious when we consider earlier descriptions of the woman. Bernabò, in foolishly boasting about his wife, endows her with the best qualities of men and women alike. Indeed, Zinevra seems to embody an androgyny that naturally allows for her later fluidity in identity. There was no 'womanly pursuit' in which she did not outshine the rest, as he describes her, praising her silk embroidery as well as her fidelity. He also describes her as better skilled than most men: "Appresso questa la commendò meglio saper cavalcare un cavallo, tenere uno uccello, leggere e scrivere e fare una ragione che se un mercatante fosse" (286) [He then turned to her other accomplishments, praising her skill at horse-riding, falconry, reading, writing and book-keeping, at all of which she was superior to the average merchant.] (McWilliam 166). Bernabò's boasting about his wife, who apparently outshines both men and women in her ability to perform both 'masculine' and 'feminine' tasks, ironically prompts the wager, while these same skills ultimately save her life.[150] Her transformation into male merchant appears the obvious choice, as she is already skilled in bookkeeping and writing, among the other 'masculine' skills he lists. Likewise, she quickly acquires languages while at sea to acclimate to her surroundings and which allow her to profit in the distant Mediterranean markets of Acre and

[150] Zinevra's identity as Genoese may also play a part in the 'fluidity' of her identity, particularly when considering the ease with which one could become 'Genoese' or 'Venetian' during the fourteenth century; while it might take decades before one would be recognized as Venetian, Genoese citizenship was more simply assumed, and just as quickly discarded.

Alexandria, as these markets would have hosted trade between Christian and Muslim merchants, providing an environment in which even an anonymous cabin boy can build a small empire.

The success of Zinevra's disguise is ultimately much less about what she wears as a 'man' and more about what she *does* as a man and *where* she can integrate. At the same time, Boccaccio's text speaks to what is valuable in mercantile culture and what it means to be an excellent trader, as well as the crucial function of the exchange space. To perform 'Sicurano' for seven years requires skill and exceptional talent, as well as increased access to communities of exchange. Indeed, Zinevra's new identity is so well complemented by her 'masculine' talents (writing, accounting, languages) that she is eventually promoted by the Sultan as Captain in charge of the special guard, whose duties include the responsibility to protect merchants and merchandise. Providing an alternate reading, Hotchkiss argues that the success of Zinevra's disguise is primarily based on her ability to serve her master loyally without subverting male authority, which is "the very trait that earned Zinevra her spotless reputation as Bernabó's wife" (91). However, as we have seen, loyalty and service were complementary attributes applied to the *laboratoes* order more broadly in the later Middle Ages, and just one of many reasons for Zinevra's success as a merchant.

The bustling, anonymous markets of the East, which provided a lucrative space to trade for merchants from any part of the known world, likewise promote the transvestite's success. Zinevra's increased social mobility is evident once she leaves Genoa, for she rises quickly from anonymous sailor to merchant, and beyond that to assume authority

over a large community of merchants. Compare this trajectory with the hegemonic social and political systems of the home culture, whether those of feudal France or the emergent Italian city-state, where one's status generally remains firmly linked to family name and wealth. By contrast, spaces of open trade present an environment that privileges the social and economic movement of the clever and the resourceful regardless of gender and class.

The effectiveness of Zinevra's disguise also demonstrates the perceived connectivity and cooperation in the practice of good commerce, for as Roberta Morosini observes of the women in the *Decameron*, industrious women who embrace the bourgeois values of *utilitas* often manage to fare better than others, particularly in cases where a "female communitas," reconstructs the values of the commune over the interests of singular individuals.[151] Indeed, this observation can be applied more broadly, for just as Jehane's ability to serve and turn a profit for her husband and estate is so highly valued by her community, Zinevra's success is impressive in part because of her many connections within the market community. Both women build networks of clients and acquaintances that presumably reach far beyond Marseille or Acre, and which also work to strengthen the home community – an objective of singular importance in late-Medieval Italy, in particular.

The social mobility that allows Zinevra access to merchants from all around the Mediterranean works diegetically as well, ultimately bringing her face to face with her accuser whom she one day finds selling the very same items he stole from her bedroom. In a moment of revelation that gives her the proof she needs to exonerate herself, Zinevra

[151] See Morosini, p. 15.

demonstrates one last quality which is valuable to mercantile success in the shrewdness needed to exact her revenge patiently. Upon hearing her accuser's story, Zinevra is described as supremely self-controlled, able to hide any reaction to what would have been a shocking revelation for her. Without betraying any emotion, she gathers the information she needs, and subsequently devises a plan which ultimately brings the accuser and her husband before the Sultan in Alexandria. When her accuser finally confesses his guilt before the Sultan and Bernabò, Zinevra seizes the opportunity to demand punishment for the accuser and pardon for the deceived. The Sultan grants her request, and she finally reveals her true identity, dramatically ripping open her shirt to reveal her breasts to the court: "Fatta adunque la concession dal soldano a Sicurano, esso, piagnendo e inginocchion dinanzi al soldano gittatosi quasi a un'ora la maschil voce e il piú non volere maschio parere si partí" (300) [No sooner had the Sultan agreed to Sicurano's request than Sicurano burst into tears and threw himself on his knees at the sultan's feet, at the same time losing his manly voice and the desire to persist in his masculine role (176)]. In considering the 'economy' of identity in this final exchange, Zinevra's last act as merchant demonstrates her ability to control the narrative about herself as a valuable asset; seizing the best moment to trade in on her seven-year investment in an identity as Sicurano, she finally 'liquidates' her disguise at the most profitable moment. Only once both men have admitted their guilt and gullibility, and her personal 'value' has been reestablished, can she safely reveal her true identity. Otherwise the opportunity for exchange will be thwarted. Zinevra accomplishes her ruse and is ultimately able to return

home to Genoa with her husband, this time crossing the Mediterranean with reclaimed honor, identity, and financial wealth.

Zinevra's story fits well into the second day of the *Decameron* where it is grouped with numerous other tales featuring characters circulating on the Mediterranean trade routes in disguise, including the Princess of England, (II.3); Landolfo Rufolo, (II.4); and Lady Beritola, (II.6). On a day when tales must adhere to the theme of 'misadventures are resolved through a turn of fate,' it is fitting that disguise signals not only a loss in fortune or a shift in social status, but also the means to reclaim what was lost.[152] The woman's disguise is consistently tied to matters of class and social status, for as Zatti has similarly observed, abandoning transvestism ultimately signals the approval of and reintegration into one's status, as well as the restoration of a broken order.[153] Indeed, as we have seen, the apparent triumph of Zinevra, Nicolette, and Jehane depends on their ability to succeed in 'liquidating' the investment made in the performance of masculinity at the perfect moment to reestablish a social order that has failed them as women.

Subversive Transvestism: Performing Gender, Performing Class

Transvestite women in the medieval text have attracted much critical attention, for their performance of gender is as paradoxical as it is provocative. Generally, these episodes of transvestism have been read as a means of upholding the status quo via the reinforcement

[152] As Zatti views this as particularly true for Griselda in *Decameron* (X.10), whose storyline is similar to Jehane's, where: "basti pensare che Griselda si sveste e si riveste ben quattro volte, e il suo mutar da nuda a vestita, e viceversa, segnala ogni volta il cambiamento di condizione sociale e fortuna" [It is enough to consider that Griselda dresses and undresses herself a good four times, and her change from naked to clothes, and vice versa, signals a change in social condition and fortune every time] (84).
[153] See Zatti, p. 84.

of gender norms through social critique.[154] Critics are quick to point out that transvestite narratives ironically refrain from producing a situation of groundbreaking societal change for the women involved, and more often than not, the protagonists' situations before and after the disguise depict a strict gender hierarchy wherein women are ruled by men.[155] Indeed, Morosini has likewise questioned whether the Mediterranean space as represented in the *Decameron* can really be read as an open and changing, suggesting instead that it is extremely limiting for female travelers who are more often exchanged than personally changed.[156]

At the heart of this paradox then is an impasse between reading a woman character's transvestism as a real act, or one that is simply performed. Judith Butler's work on gender provides insight for framing the act of transvestism as it occurs in the text, not just in terms of considering gender performativity but class transvestism as well.

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[154] According to Putter, the frequent appearance of male cross-dressers, and their ultimate rejection of femininity often served to solidify normative gender roles. Attitudes towards female cross-dressing were even more forgiving, where "the transformation of a woman into a man could at least be conceptualized as a change in the right direction" (282). Marilyn Migiel similarly asserts that the women of the *Decameron* actually reaffirm gender roles through transvestism, rather than acting in some form of deviant behavior, where just as female narrators of the text tell of infractions of gender roles, "they reaffirm the necessity of those roles and they reaffirm virtues – among them loyalty, chastity, and deference to men – that traditional gender roles help to foster" (84). In other words, women break the rules in order to abide by it.

[155] See Hotchkiss, p. 12. Similarly, Peter Stallybrass and Allon White argue that, contrary to Michel Foucault, the darker side of the 'poetics' of transgression "often inverts in order to reaffirm social and political norms" (10), while for Michèle Perret "Le scénario du travestissement, qui libère la femme des contraintes de son sexe, se termine dans une impasse, comme si ces textes exploraient les possibilités de rôles sexuels différents et le problème de l'identité sexuelle et sociale de la femme, pour finir par renforcer le *status quo*" (329) [The scenario of transvestism, which liberates woman from the constraints of her sex, ends in an impasse, as if these texts exploring the possibilities of different gender roles and the problem of the woman's sexual and social identity eventually finish by reinforcing the *status quo.*]

[156] As Morosini observes, "il Mediterraneo inteso come 'spazio-movimento' perde la sua valenza dinamica e, di conseguenza, anche il viaggio esaurisce la sua 'fluida' modalità di esistere quando a viaggiare sono le donne. Se la parola chiave che dovrebbe accompagnare 'movimento' è 'cambiamento,' nel caso di molte eroine che incontreremo nel nostro viaggio nel Mediterraneo più che di cambiamento si tratta di 's-cambio'" (4). [The Mediterranean, understood as a 'space of movement' loses its dynamic value and, consequently, also the voyage exhausts its 'fluid' mode of existence when women are traveling. If the keyword that must accompany 'movement' is 'change,' in the case of many of the heroines we encounter in our journey in the Mediterranean, rather than 'change' it should be '(ex)change.']

Butler has long argued against essentialist viewpoints of gender, positing that it is a fluid element of human identity that is constructed through a series of repeated acts rather than rooted in biological origins. As she asserts in *Gender Trouble* (1990), "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through the stylized repetition of acts" (179). As is demonstrated in the medieval, cross-dressing narrative, gender can be convincingly constructed through this stylized repetition of acts—a change of clothes and the mastery of a gendered skill—publically performed over a sustained amount of time. Through this physical repetition of acts, a projection of the self is constructed in combination with coded ways of self-presentation, from clothes and hair to gestures and speech. The performance of gender can therefore be subverted, changed, and isolated from one's identity. Likewise, it can be manipulated to construct an entirely new public identity. As Butler notes, space plays a role in this performance, thus the ever-present ethos of the *carnivalesque* space in the medieval cross-dressing narrative, which ultimately reveals the body as the historical construct it is—part of an ordered system of behavior that becomes inverted once moved to the periphery.

Medievalist Roberta Krueger has engaged with Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity to read the medieval text, pointing out what this approach can provide when considering texts often performed aloud for varied audiences. As she notes, "like romance characters, the men and women in historical courts played roles whose costumes, speech, and gestures were marked for sex and class. Any hint that gender roles

were in fact malleable within the literary performance might draw attention to gender's status as a cultural production, rather than a divinely ordained distinction, in the sphere of the court" (*Debate* 80). This ambiguity would be particularly true of performances of *Aucassin et Nicolette*, where a jongleur might switch between performing various male and female characters multiple times during performance. We can extend this analysis to the performance of class as well, from noble to bourgeois, where the fragility and fixity of these cultural distinctions could be emphasized or parodied in the live performance.

However, there is an important distinction to be made between performed and real transvestism, where the former often reinforces the gender stereotypes, while the latter actively undermines these stereotypes in 'real life.' For according to Butler:

> The transvestite, however, can do more than simply express the distinction between sex and gender, but challenges, at least implicitly, the distinction between appearance and reality that structures a good deal of popular thinking about gender identity. If the 'reality' of gender is constituted by the performance itself, then there is no recourse to an essential and unrealized 'sex' or 'gender' which gender performances ostensibly express. Indeed, the transvestite's gender is as fully real as anyone whose performance complies with social expectations. (*Performance* 527).

While it is at first glance possible to read even fictionalized transvestism in the text as a performance, thus reinforcing the social codes that dictate the hierarchy of masculinity and femininity, at least within the context of the narrative itself this same transvestism

can be read instead as a more subversive challenge to identity, whether constructed through gender or class-based coding.

It is worth taking a closer look at the differences between the performance of male transvestism as a reinforcement of cultural norms, and the lived transvestism of women in the medieval text as a subversion of those same norms. As has been asserted earlier, issues of class and social space figure particularly strongly in female transvestism. One primary differentiation, which has often been overlooked, is that the duration of the disguise is quite different in the case of men and women. More often than not, the female cross-dresser sports her new persona for much longer, often for a period of seven years to a lifetime, whereas male transvestism tends to happen briefly in a very public spectacle. Here the woman character crosses the line between performing a gender as a reinforcement of norms, to the very real embodiment of a gender that is supposedly rooted in a metaphysical reality.

Being the 'other' is likewise a high stakes investment for women. As we have seen in chapter two, men in the medieval text tend to choose to take on disguises, whether as a woman or as a merchant, both to regain glory and to reestablish a world order that conforms to an idealized social hierarchy. While the importance of glory in affirming medieval manhood, or the collective push to christianize Europe during the Middle Ages should not be discounted, male transvestism is nonetheless depicted as comical, while women's transvestism, on the surface at least, it is depicted as a means to secure the woman's safe return to the privilege and stability of an idealized courtly society that has failed her. Thus, the success of the transvestite woman likewise signals moments when

the authority of aristocratic male structures is subverted and appropriated, as maligned women are left with little choice but to take on a male persona to rectify destroyed marriages, reputations, and domestic affairs.[157] The male disguise is rarely assumed as a performance for pleasure or comedic effect, but rather in reaction to the constraints and failure of chivalric, male authority to protect women.

Finally, while each transformation requires a change of clothes and name, for women passing as men, embodying masculinity always requires the additional acquisition or honing of a new skill. As we have seen, to be a man in these tales demands a certain level of skilled activity, be it combat, commerce, or the performance of a traveling jongleur. The cross-dressing woman must invest time into perfecting her disguise for that disguise to work, whether she is passing as a knight or a baker. Ostensibly, it appears that for the female cross-dresser, taking on the male identity means being active—*to be is to do*—and can be read as a reinforcement of a gender roles which define the male as active and the female as passive. Yet, as Sarah Kay has keenly observed, the mimetic function of parody invites the reader not only to identify a model, but in addition to assume that model to be a recognizable norm, and for the modern reader "This process is especially insidious where gender roles are concerned. The more we see Aucassin's behavior as 'exaggerated' the more we are tempted to suppose some norm of masculinity from which it departs; the more we interpret Nicolette's behavior as a 'reversal' of expectation, the greater the temptation to institutionalize feminine 'passivity'" (171). Thus the transvestite narrative carries with it the potential to be read as

[157] Vern Bullough and Bonnie Bullough have argued that in both historical and fictional moments of female cross-dressing, women adopting the clothes of a man was a sign of a personal crisis, with the new gender role marking a dramatic cleavage from a former existence. See Bullough and Bullough, p. 52.

a means of reinforcing stereotypes rather than one which collapses and rebuilds ideas of femininity and masculinity; the ambiguity of the act carries the potential to both undermine and reinforce social practice.

Nicolette, Jehane, and Zinevra make a long term investment in being the male bourgeois, with the hope of a payoff that restores the social standing of the unjustly libeled woman. Once this disguise is dropped, can the reader presume that those learned skills, sometimes performed over the course of seven years, would disappear with the resumption of 'femininity'? On the contrary—despite the return to a system of traditional gender roles, there is something in the performance of gender that forever reveals the ultimate instability of the myth of those roles, particularly in its learnability, its practice, and the continued performance (or potential of performance) of what is 'masculine' by the female gendered character. The real embodiment of 'masculine' skills by women characters reveals the myth of gender for what it is.

Thus, contrary to the general consensus among literary critics that there is nothing particularly radical, or liberating, about the cross-dressing woman in the medieval text, or that this trope is deployed to uphold firmly-rooted social conventions, this chapter posits that the act itself remains deeply transgressive, and perhaps doubly so for aristocratic women passing as bourgeois men. As Ad Putter aptly notes, while cross-dressing may have been a regular occurrence in the world of medieval chivalry, in medieval literature there is an ambiguity to the appearance of the transvestite, whether male or female, who holds the power to unsettle assumptions, status, and hierarchies, a situation that explains

its repudiation in medieval society.[158] Similarly, Hotchkiss concedes that the "illusion of maleness" itself will challenge suppositions about gender differences, just as it offers multiple ways to reconsider medieval definitions of gender.[159] Indeed, as we have seen, the act of transvestism and of undermining entrenched social codes always carries a level of deviance with it, no matter how innocuous it seems on the surface. Women of the transvestite narrative who perform masculinity well for years at a time not only master the skills and behavior of men, they often perform it *better* than their male counterparts in what could be read as an act of intense cultural criticism for a masculine hierarchy gone awry. No matter how temporary, what is key to understanding these moments is that the male merchant disguise opens up a powerful means to alter public discourse; the persona gives women characters a voice and the means to narrate the self, anew, which proves invaluable to reclaiming the public and private 'self.'

Therein lies the deeply subversive desire contained in the cross-dressing narrative, which expresses not only an open critique of dominant power structures, but likewise an outright deconstruction of that same system through the performance of gender and class. Despite the fact that most critics find that there is no enduring female liberation narrative to these tales (which perhaps unfairly downplays the importance of temporary autonomy), transvestism, and particularly class transvestism, nonetheless retain a radical element that troubles fundamental questions of identity. For within the text itself, women like Jehane, Zinevra and Nicolette are quite capable of performing 'male' skills, of literally 'being' something, constructed through repeated practices, which is believed to

[158] See Putter, p. 280.
[159] See Hotchkiss, p. 12.

be so fundamentally inaccessible to women. Often this 'performance' of the other lasts for the better part of a decade, so at what point do these 'masculine' acts stop being masculine? When does performance just become doing and being, for the woman transvestite?

The body, according to Butler, is fundamentally dramatic: "One is not simply a body, but in some very key sense, one *does* one's body and, indeed, one *does* one's body differently from one's contemporaries and from one's embodied predecessors and successors as well" (*Performative* 521, emphasis mine). In taking on the male bourgeois identity over long periods of time, and in truly seeking to pass as men rather than 'performing' this identity, it appears this transvestism figures much more as a subversion of cultural categories than as a simple reinforcement through social critique. While Butler's theory speaks to gender transvestism, it can be extended to considering moments of class transvestism as well, particularly when considering that medieval categories of gender and social station were quite entrenched in an Aristotelian system that situated both categories in a natural and metaphysically ordained world-view. Yet, the regular act of *being* masculine and *being* bourgeois in these texts, rather than briefly performing the other, speaks to a deep contradiction of this system, which along with the everyday performance of these narratives in public, on the medieval stage, or simply during the oral recitation of a manuscript, would have at least implicitly reinforced the possibility of "doing" one's body and one's identity in the eyes of the public.

The trope of the merchant disguise, however, brings us back to the central subversive qualities of the literary Mediterranean, where identity becomes maddeningly

fluid. What is really at stake here is less how people in the Middle Ages viewed gender roles, but rather the influence of an emergent bourgeoisie on those views still in evolution. The performance of gender here is significant, and deserves the analysis it has received, and yet it has its limitations.[160] Instead, class transvestism, as merchant or bourgeois, ultimately facilitates movement and change in the plot for the maligned woman. Once put in a position where she has been unjustly accused of infidelity or otherwise undervalued, the woman has recourse not to taking on the persona of a nobleman or a cleric to fix these problems, but rather to turn to the effective guise of the merchant and the bourgeois. Furthermore, this transvestism can happen only in a space away from home and far from the court: on the trade route, on the road, in the East. The act is inherently ambiguous as we have seen—at once critical *and* subversive, for while dominant social roles are ostensibly affirmed, they are at least temporarily destabilized (and again, temporary is relative here) through a radical act that must happen in a space apart and in an extreme crisis. While values and ideals are seemingly upheld through the narrative, it is likewise the subtext of these tales that the system had gone sour and may be founded on very tenuous ideas of 'identity' indeed. The female transvestite's long-term and tangible success ultimately challenges the fixed ideas of class and gender, as

[160] In "Double Jeopardy" (1989) Krueger cautions against a feminist reading of *La Bielle Jehane* that glosses over the historical reality that most texts were written by and for men, suggesting rather that the representation of 'woman' is, in accordance with Jean-Charles Huchet, a metaphor for poetical discourse that reinforces male aristocratic authority. Ultimately for Krueger, "Whether [female] virtue is conceived as passive devotion or clever ingenuity, the female figure serves to embellish aristocratic and clerical culture" (45). Yet, the trope of the transvestite woman is a powerful critical tool for the male author, and a metaphor through which broader societal criticisms can be made, for as Krueger asserts, it is exactly because the historical woman is marginal to structures of masculine power that the woman as figured in the texts comes to represent opposition and subversion.

exemplified in a metaphysically based tripartite system and entrenched gender coding at the foundation of medieval European epistemological structures.

Concerning the subversive nature of medieval transvestism, Putter make the compelling argument that it meant much more than blurring the distinction between men and women. Instead, medieval writers "realized that once that distinction collapsed, other cultural divisions legitimized by it were likely to follow. Above all, transvestism posed a threat to orders of clerics and laymen, whose mutual exclusiveness had been justified as an extension of the difference between the two sexes […] One category in crisis always leads to another" (281-82). As this chapter has argued, transvestism in the text ultimately functions to reveal the fragility of social categories right down to their metaphysical underpinnings, subversively offering a space wherein identity, gender, and class become as 'real' as the narratives that create them.

This destabilization is facilitated by the narrative itself, which inherently envisions and circulates a new order better suited to the teller. As we have seen, the act of narration, of being able to control the dissemination and veracity of one's own history, is crucial to the agency of a woman seeking to control her own 'exchange value' as much as it is rooted in an essential part of what it means to be bourgeois. Beyond maintaining the *status quo,* control of the narrative constitutes a radical act unto itself when that narrative is disseminated by a woman or a 'middling-sort,' and doubly so when one is both. Within the figurative world of the woman transvestite, this singular *prise de parole* can occur only in the mercantile world, where one can recreate herself by exiting the traditional

genealogical narrative into a space of unknown origins, ultimately using it as leverage quietly to uproot corrosive problems at the center.

CHAPTER FOUR

On Frontiers:

Hybrid Spaces and Itinerant Texts between Champagne and the Veneto

Much like the characters that circulate in the medieval Mediterranean world of the Old French romance and *chanson de geste*, the medieval text itself often traveled between cultures and along trade routes, circulating and transforming in remarkable ways during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Two texts from the Old French *cycle de Nanteuil* demonstrate this textual mobility well. Currently existing in two complete, fourteenth-century manuscripts, one in Old French in Montpellier, France, and another in Franco-Italian at the Marciana Library in Venice, *Gui de Nanteuil* is a continuation of *Aye d'Avignon* and opens with two crisscrossing voyages: Gui's return to France and his mother Aye's voyage back along the route by which he arrived, from Avignon to the Balearic Islands. In *Gui de Nanteuil*, both mother and son must adjust to new lands, new alliances, and new customs, facing challenges in integrating across Mediterranean cultures while seeking to settle an old vendetta as well. The fluidity of the Mediterranean space is essential to this integration, for while in *Aye d'Avignon* it has provided a locus of powerful new beginnings, in *Gui de Nanteuil* these new beginnings develop into complex negotiations of identity which often disrupt simple cultural categories and threaten to erase French familial memory, duty, and identity. Thus identity and cultural hybridity in the Mediterranean are brought to the fore, as diplomatic Christian-Saracen relations work

to transform and heal a French community living with the aftershocks of the treachery at Rencesvales.

Through the later transcription and elaboration of these texts in the medieval Veneto, these same themes are revisited, reconsidered, and recirculated among a new reading community of primarily mercantile origins. Sitting at the nexus of cross-cultural encounters and intellectual exchange, Venice, and by extension the Veneto, is itself a hybrid space where cultures, languages, goods, and faiths cross-pollinated for centuries and traveled far beyond the region. For medieval Venetians, not only was their cultural identity was defined by their city in the lagoon, it was firmly tied to their dominance of their Mediterranean *Stato da Màr* as well. This chapter considers the role of spaces on the maritime frontiers of the text as sites of transformation, demonstrating the ever-shifting nature of identities in movement across the sea. As addressed in chapter three, it is via these thalassic mercantile spaces that characters can invent and re-write their histories, sometimes exchanging old identities for the new in a move to progress towards profit and resolution. However, these *liquid* frontiers likewise emphasize the liquid, monetary value of French culture and history as exchangeable, particularly overseas and across the Alps, where French literature was bought, sold and lent, transcribed and studied, appropriated and re-authored. Many histories, like *Gui de Nanteuil,* were an asset and circulated among the mercantile elite and *petite noblesse* of Venice, serving to strengthen amicable relations between readers, as archival evidence points to their constant exchange by way of a lending network between noble families such as the Gonzaga and Este families.[161]

[161] For more on the Gonzaga lending network, see Francesco Novati, "I codici francesi de Gonzaga." *Romania* 19 (1890). 161-200.

Thus, as French literature is carried across the Alps and around Mediterranean *francophonia* into Italy via pilgrimage and trade-routes, the fluidity of these medieval tales become even more apparent, and the value of French cultural history even more spendable.

While the Old French narratives of *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanteuil* likely originated in Champagne or Ile-de-France between 1190 and 1220, *Gui*'s popularity continued in Occitania, as evidenced in the troubadour lyrics of Raimbaut de Vaqueiras and others, as well as the Occitan romance *Flamenca*.[162] Thus while the *matière de France* may have reached Italy by a trans-alpine route from the north, it is just as possible that it arrived also by more southern Mediterranean routes via troubadours seeking new patronage in the Veneto. Regardless of the route by which it arrived in Italy, *Gui de Nanteuil* was a popular narrative in the region, where extant manuscripts of the text and many others like it demonstrate a cultural interest in narratives which feature heroic travels in a literary sea-space. Despite alterations made during the circulation of the text, travel and the cross-cultural encounter remain central to both the Old French and Franco-Italian traditions of the Nanteuil cycle, which feature coastal areas and islands of the Mediterranean that are often juxtaposed with the more culturally hegemonic and familiar French spaces of Paris, Avignon, and Lyon. By contrast, the spaces along the Mediterranean coast remain somewhat foreign, neither fully Christian France nor Muslim Spain. These contact zones of mixed ethnic and religious communities continually feature

[162] *Gui de Nanteuil* is referenced in Raimbaut de Vaqueiras' "No puesc saber per que.m sia destregz" and "Leus sonetz," and is mentioned in *Flamenca* (v. 692). M.F. Guessard's 1861 edition of *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanteuil* notes a number of other references between lesser known troubadours, acknowledging the possibility that *Gui* may have southern origins (pp. xij-xv).

the emergence and success of hybrid characters that destabilize traditional categories of identity and incorporate various cultural resources that allow for otherwise impossible changes to more hegemonic power structures.

This chapter explores how the ambiance of this literary Mediterranean space—defined by commerce, anonymity, and circulation—is the crucible in which this cultural fusion can take place. Here the characters of Ganor, Gui, and Aye figure prominently as possible versions of a hybrid ideal, all of whom experience individual transformations that successfully integrate the best trappings of Christian and Muslim cultures. Beyond the ever-changing shifts in fortune that dominate the mercantile spaces these texts traverse, there is likewise a spiritual mutability associated with the sea that lends itself easily, and necessarily, to transformation, particularly in encounters with Muslim communities. Indeed, in the narratives of *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanteuil*, this mutability is essential to the spiritual transformation and the renewing waters of baptism necessary to narratives of conversion, which proves that identity can and must be transformable.

Moving beyond the Old French text, this chapter also addresses significant differences in the manuscript tradition itself, the hybridity of the text and the ways in which the narrative shifts in transfer as the text itself moves between medieval France and the Veneto in the fourteenth century. How does this concept of hybridity shift in the process, and what values are reflected in Franco-Italian elaborations? Through an examination of scribal additions to *Gui de Nanteuil,* this chapter ultimately seeks to move observations of hybridity from the text to the textual object, thereby arriving at a more

nuanced understanding of concepts of identity, hybridity, and interfaith unions as the portrayal of each transforms on the journey between cultures.[163]

Mediterranean Space: Commerce, Anonymity, and Circulation

For all extant versions of *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanteuil,* the following basic narrative summary remains the same. In *Aye d'Avignon*, Charlemagne marries the duchess Aye to one of his most loyal and favorite surrogate sons at court, Garnier of Nanteuil. Berengier, one of Ganelon's kin, had himself hoped to marry the wealthy heiress, and he thus kidnaps Aye. Fleeing France, he brings her across the Mediterranean to the Saracen Emir's court in the Balearics. The Emir, Ganor, is an eligible young bachelor who falls in love with Aye. He swiftly claims her for himself, driving Berengier to flee to King Marsile's court in Spain. On the island, Aye remains captive in the remote tower of Aufalerne for three years, during which time she remains untouched by Ganor, for she wears an enchanted ring for protection. In the meantime, Garnier arrives in disguise as a mercenary to help Ganor fight Marsile, who has since claimed Aye for himself, and once Marsile's forces are defeated, Ganor prepares for marriage by traveling to Mecca while Garnier takes this opportunity to rescue Aye. The couple returns to Avignon where they host a fair and she gives birth to Gui. Here the story continues with a different scribe and possibly a new author. Upon Ganor's return from Mecca, the Emir

[163] While they were likely authored separately, *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanteuil* will be analyzed together for two reasons: partly because themes of hybridity transfer and develop from *Aye d'Avignon* to *Gui de Nanteuil* and must be examined together for us to see that evolution, but also because Marciana Fr. X (=253) presents both poems together, linked by a prologue that summarizes the action of *Aye* which flows directly into *Gui*. Thus for the medieval Venetian scribe and the Italian audience, *Gui de Nanteuil* was read and perhaps performed as a unit with *Aye d'Avignon*, and one's reading of the Franco-Italian *Gui de Nanteuil* becomes inseparably influenced by the altered narrative presented in the prologue itself.

discovers Aye's escape and is heartbroken by the loss. He decides to journey to France in the disguise of a French nobleman to re-capture Aye; however at Avignon he instead kidnaps Gui and returns to his islands to raise the boy. Around the time Gui reaches adolescence, Garnier is murdered by Ganelon's kin in a plot orchestrated by Milon, who has been buying favor in court with the unrequited desire to marry Aye. When the news arrives in Aigremort, Gui and Ganor swear their allegiance to one another, with Ganor promising military support in exchange for Aye in marriage. They ultimately return to France to defeat the traitors, and the text ends with a reunion between Aye and Gui, as well as Ganor's conversion to Christianity and marriage to Aye.

Gui de Nanteuil continues the cycle with Gui's return to France to claim and defend his patrilineal lands. In the opening of the text, he expresses his desire to return to his place in Charlemagne's court and to make a reputation for himself while Aye solemnly insists on his obligation to avenge his father's murder. It is an obligation and a vendetta he would rather forget, and upon arrival, Charlemagne welcomes him to court with affection and instantly favors him as the son of Garnier. Mirroring *Aye d'Avignon* this favoritism earns him the hand of Aiglentine, a wealthy heiress from Gascony. This union angers a new generation of traitors from Ganelon's family, and they plot to frame Gui as a traitor to the crown. Their treachery ultimately undermines the union of Gui and Aiglentine, and the conflict escalates to a tournament and siege of Nanteuil. Here, Ganor leaves his islands to come to Gui's aid along with Aye, their sons Antoine and Richier, and a large, mixed Christian-Saracen force which includes the dashing Emir of Coine. During the tournament, Ganor and Gui's forces definitively defeat the traitors. At the

denouement Gui finally marries Aiglentine, the Emir of Coine converts and marries Charlemagne's niece Flandrine, Aye negotiates the family's a reconciliation with Charlemagne's court, and a humiliated Charlemagne returns to Paris.

To consider the role of the "hybrid" in these texts, it will be useful to examine the depiction of various spaces in the text which form these unusual characters. Indeed, matters of space factor in strongly in the composition of both *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanteuil* more broadly. Geography is often mapped with relative accuracy by the author, and urban spaces are placed in frequent juxtaposition to one another. For example, Paris, the seat of Charlemagne's power and his corrupt, traitorous courtiers, is a fixed and familiar location. It is an urban space defined by easily identifiable social reference points such as Charlemagne's court, the Seine and its bridges, the city walls, and Saint-Germain-des-Prés. In these texts, Paris is populated with hundreds of knights and courtiers, hostels, and bourgeois, and it likewise characterized by conflict and power struggles. This urban space is familiar and well defined, as is the social climate of Charlemagne's court, and the description likely reflects the city as known to the author, either from personal experience or from the *chanson de geste* tradition itself, making no significant formulaic divergences.

A bit further afield is the fortified town of Nanteuil, the site of Gui's patrimony. Likely a fictional creation (with no obvious link to contemporary French villages bearing the name Nanteuil), the city can be defined as floating at best, and more than one scholar has noted the impossibility of mapping this city.[164] While some would place it in the north, close to France's eastern border with Germany, it seems more reasonably situated

[164] For two articles on locating Nanteuil, see Callu-Turiaf (1969) and Ferdinand Lot (1904).

farther to the south along with other, locatable cities of the Midi which feature so significantly in the narrative—Avignon, Marseille, and Saint-Gilles. Florence Callu-Turiaf considers this to be an inconsistency common among *trouvères*, who are simply not known for their geographical accuracy.[165] While Callu-Turiaf's point is broadly accurate, it is worth noting that other locations such as Avignon, the Balearic Islands, Spain, St. Gilles, and even passages across the Mediterranean are nonetheless clearly mapped for the reader (to the point that Charles VI took a manuscript of *Aye d'Avignon* with him to enjoy on a trip to Languedoc, presumably both for its geographic and ethnographic representation of the region).[166] So why is Nanteuil so impossible to locate in these texts? Why does it seem to be the only unstable, shifting location in a story with a typically explicit geography? In a time where identity and feudal power are so connected to the land, and to territory, and where the authority over that land is often the *casus belli* of the poem, why is it so impossible for the reader to locate Nanteuil?

One can read this space is intentionally ambiguous, where, unlike the fixed spaces of Paris, Avignon, and Spain, Nanteuil maps as an island between two cultural centers, difficult to pinpoint but somehow fixed in a collective history.[167] The lands of Gui's ancestors thus figure more symbolically in the text, not unlike Prester John's mythic kingdom, with this *terroir* representing a spatial repository for sublimated desires

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[165] Callu-Turiaf, *Fiction* p. 745.
[166] See Keith Busby, p. 654.
[167] Compare this with the following description of the voyage from the Balearic Islands to France, which demonstrates a knowledge of the sea and its geography, as well as the time it takes to cover certain distances: "Il s'enpeingnent en mer, ysnelement s'en vont, / E costoient Aufrique ou li Aufriquant sont, / E a senestre Espengne, que conneüe l'ont; / Assez treuvent des illes, mais ja n'i torneront. / Tost si courent de jor e de nuit a bandon, / A l'onzieme ariverent au port sor Graillemont" (*Aye* vv. 2264-9) [They took to the sea, quickly going / skirting Africa where the Africans are / And to the left, Spain, which they knew, / There the islands are found, to which they will never return. / They fled with abandon, day and night, / And on the eleventh day they arrived at the port of Graillemont].

expressed by the epic. As reflected in Gui's constant battle cry "*Nanteuil!*" it serves as a source of inspiration, particularly in its ambiguity, signifying more than a city and instead an idealized French space that can exist in opposition to the corruption of the Parisian court. Regardless of Nanteuil's location, its physical and symbolic distance from Paris is significant, for as Sarah Kay has observed, peripheral spaces of the epic present a notable juxtaposition to traditional spaces of power as well as a distance from which to satirize them.[168] Likewise, the characters inhabiting these frontiers allow for a contrast that reveals flaws within one's own community, or, as Kay asserts, "The more a hero's allies are marginal to his social group, the more likely it becomes that his enemies will be located within it" (177). Thus the spaces and cultures that lend leverage to Gui—Nanteuil, the Midi, and Ganor's kingdom—are not simply spaces of idealization, or of social revolution, but a space of social critique. Here, Aye and Gui find many of their most loyal allies and a locus of reform from which to negotiate endemic problems that threaten their name.

Situated on the Mediterranean island of Majorca, Ganor's kingdom comes to figure as one of these allies on the frontier. The Balearic Islands exist in a liminal space that escapes simple Christian-Muslim binaries and traditional cultural categories. Neither are they described as French lands nor are they identical to depictions of Muslim Spain, but rather the archipelago incorporates elements of both in a model of hybridity that nonetheless undermines the binaries implied by the terminology. Ganor's court reflects certain elements of the Parisian court, yet his gardens and meeting halls are generally

[168] Kay's chapter "Allies and Enemies" analyzes the social and spatial distance established when the hero's allies are found *outside* the social order, allowing a critical distance for the author and reader to reconsider problems at the center. See Kay, pp. 175-99.

harmonious and entirely free of indigenous treachery and deceit (while the French often bring these problems along with them). In *Aye d'Avignon* the narrator's description of the arrival at Aigremort is privileged with some detail, as it includes not only a geographic and temporal location (somewhere between fourteen and fifteen days away on the island of Majorca) but an introduction to Ganor as well, whose description is woven into that of his surroundings. The passage is evocative of the maritime experience down to the raising of the sails, and the island's landscape provides a genteel *locus amoenus* that contrasts sharply with the constant discord of Charlemagne's court. As the boat makes landfall, the narrator tells us:

> Seignor, icelle terre elle est tote par illes,
> E de bones cités menant e replenies
> De rouge or e d'argent e de pailes d'Aufrique,
> De beaz e de bestaille e d'autre manantie.
> Ganor a non li rois qui de la terre est sires,
> E fu cosin germain a l'aumassor d'Aufrique;
> E estoit jovenceaus, de fame n'avoit mie.
> En .i. moult bel jardin, sous la cité antie,
> La sist li rois Ganor, o li sa baronnie.
> Par devant le baron .ii. chetis escremissent; (*Aye* vv. 1418-27)
> [Lord, here this land is all islands, / and of rich beautiful cities / full of red gold and silver and fabrics from Africa, / of beasts and livestock and of other goods. / The king who is the lord of this land is Ganor, / and was the

> youngest cousin of the African Emir; / He was a young and unmarried man. / In a very beautiful garden, in the ancient city, / there sat King Ganor and his barons. / In front of the baron, two [French] prisoners fenced].

The author here gives the reader a vivid, sweeping description, not only of the wealth and abundance of the islands, but of Aigremort's distinctive African ambiance and character, which contrast sharply with Paris. However, even in these first moments on the island, the influence of French culture is apparent in the skills the fencing prisoners (named Hernaut of Gironde and Garin of Anséunne) bring to the court for entertainment.

Ganor's kingdom is thus somewhat ambiguous from the beginning, neither fully French nor fully Saracen, but rather it integrates elements of both. This complexity is reflected in Ganor's character as well, for while he is a devoted Muslim, having made a pilgrimage to Mecca and still a liege of the Saracen king, he is willing to rebel against this entire social and political structure to protect Aye, and he ultimately rejects Islam to marry her. As the reader later discovers, Ganor's kingdom is also fully capable of defending itself against both the authority of Al-Andalus and is strong enough to defeat Charlemagne's forces, and thus the appearance of wealth and splendor is backed by substantial force and prowess. Ganor's court and kingdom serve as powerful, idyllic counterpoints to the constant treachery among Charlemagne's vassals.

Compare this as well with the description of King Marsile's court in Spain, which represents another Islamic community, but one which occupies a space of memory, deceit, and betrayal. As the narrative takes the reader across the sea with Beringier to the

spaces of the fortified city, it narrows in on a particular location of the past, recalling to the reader the exact spot where Ganelon plotted his treason. Here, the text recounts that there are now four beautiful laurel trees in that spot, however, because of a miracle of God: "Que des loriers qui furent la planté environ / Ainc puis n'en porta nul ne foille ne boton, / Et si son trestuit vert de terre jusqu'en son" (*Aye* vv. 1622-4) [The laurel trees planted in the area / no longer sprout leaves nor blossoms, / and yet they were all green from bottom to top]. Thus while the city is a fortified place of strength and an equal opponent for France, it is scarred forever by Ganelon's treason and divinely recognized as a site of martyrdom. This is not a space of negotiation or atonement, nor for new beginnings. Rather, Marsile's lands are marred forever as pagan, and the sacred memorial outside of the city contrasts sharply with the blooming gardens of Aigremort, which still offer a chance at redemption and conversion. The simple, peaceful existence of Ganor's remote Mediterranean island's multi-cultural space thus presents a middle ground, and a site of possible transformation that challenges the basic binary system of the Christian-Saracen dichotomy so often central to the early *chanson de geste*.

This environment is promoted not only by the intellectual engagement at court, but also by the implicit flow of merchants and travelers who regularly pass through the ports of Aigremort, importing and exporting goods of various cultures along with numerous disguised travelers, both Christian and Muslim. While Ganor's allegiance is to the Emir in Cairo, his archipelago enjoys a degree of independence due to its isolation from land-locked polities. This isolation lends itself to a sort of freedom necessary for real transformation; with such a distance separating the islands from the cultural center,

the inhabitants of these spaces are already prone to the influence of cross-cultural encounters, demonstrating a porosity that opens up the self to hybridity. In the narrative, merchants appear to facilitate this transformation already present beneath the surface.

However seemingly peripheral to the text, the mercantile character of the Mediterranean plays a significant role in facilitating the shifts in identity and allegiance in the *cycle de Nanteuil.* Indeed, Ganor's transformation in initiated when he leaves this idyllic space and travels across the sea, and it is here among a mercantile community that he can shed his public persona for one that enables his incognito travels. Here he uses mercantile transport to arrive unannounced in France, traveling with Italian merchants described in some detail:

> Cil marinier sont riche, de Gennes e de Pise,
> Qui mainnent le navie par toute paienie,
> As grans cités antis e a bours e a villes
> Achatent les espices qu'il ont de maintes guises,
> E canelle e gingenbre, ricolice e baupine,
> O les bonnes racines dont ont fait medecines
> Dont tote Lonbardie sera bien replenie (vv. 2336-42)
> [The sailors are rich, from Genoa and Pisa, / who sailed their ship to many non-Christian lands, / to big ancient cities, burgs and towns, / buying spices of all varieties, / cinnamon, ginger, licorice and white thorn, / and good roots from which medicine was made, / which will soon be found throughout Lombardy].

It is worth noting that for a *chanson de geste*, the description of the merchant boat and cargo is unusually well detailed and relatively accurate, providing a backdrop for a significant encounter. The presence of the Italian merchants in the story is pivotal to Ganor's journey. Seeking to blend in among merchants in Christian lands, Ganor creates a French lineage for himself which he assumes throughout his voyage in France. When asked of his origins, Ganor replies: "De France la garnie, / E sui de Saint Denise, frere Guefier le riche" (vv. 2344-5) [I hail from France, the powerful, / and I am from Saint Denis, brother of Guefier the rich]. This easy "transformation" into French nobility and the exchange of one identity for another notably takes place onboard the merchant ship. The encounter also allows him an attempt at two additional exchanges: the exchange of money, which would buy him a safe voyage to France, and the acquisition of information about Aye and Garnier within a well-informed community of travelers.

Indeed, after introductions, the merchants go on to describe the trip, the long distance that must be traversed, and the destination: a fair at Avignon established in Aye's honor. Somewhat unusual for an epic, this description of mercantile life maps their journey and provides a vignette of the lives of merchants: their exchanges, and the wide distribution, value, and variety of their goods.[169] The information will prove useful to Ganor, for according to the ship's captain, "Se Diex me leisse vivre e vens ne me detrie, / Jusqu'a .xi. jors vous arai mis a rive, / En .x. jors ou en .xv. serez a Saint Denise; / Car Garniers d'Auberive, le fil Doon le riche, / Qui sa fame a conquise conme preudons e sire, / Adun que il revindrent en Avignon la riche, / Une foire establirent. […] / Là ira cil

[169] They travel on the *Saint Clement*, tying them further to the mythology of the sea, as legend has it the saint (often pictured with an anchor) was martyred by being tied to an anchor and dropped into the sea.

navie e autre .iiii. mile." (vv. 2347-56) [If God lets me live and the wind does not destroy me, / within eleven days I will set you down on the shore, / in ten days or in fifteen you will be at Saint Denis, / for Garnier d'Auberive, the son of Doon the rich, / recaptured his wife with prowess and bravery / And on returning to rich Avignon / they will establish a fair […] / and there I will take this boat along with 4,000 others]. In addition to sharing much-needed news of Aye, the captain's speech alludes to the dangerous life of seafaring and the typical bourgeois preoccupation with survival and materiality. It also speaks to the enormous *presence* of merchants at an Avignon fair, busy seeking opportunities and joining in a communal exchange.

The encounter with the Italian merchants is significant for Ganor. While their fair and these mobile communities afford Ganor the information and the opportunity to find safe passage to Avignon, it also due to an environment of *anonymity* in this space of exchange and circulation that Ganor can successfully travel disguised as a French nobleman. It can be observed that a social space founded on principles of open exchange, profit, and survival would likewise value identity, inheritance, and rank to a much lesser degree, and thus disguise and mimicry can thrive, with identity exchanged as easily a currency. While the ease with which he dons the French persona certainly foreshadows his later conversion to Christianity, it also suggests that, along with other moments of disguise in the text, in the Mediterranean space a nobleman can easily pass as a foot soldier, a pilgrim, and a mariner.

It is also key that in this moment Ganor receives news of Aye and Garnier, for the Mediterranean is also depicted as a site of communication, where news circulates

quickly. Among the many informants of this vast social network who all seem to know more than the protagonists, one finds traveling pilgrims and mercenaries, Saracen sailors, Italian merchants, and everyday village dwellers.[170] News is carried primarily by ordinary people, by bourgeois and peasants, and it can often guarantee or imperil the survival of the high-born characters of the text. Thus the mercantile Mediterranean is not only a space of exchange and anonymity; it is a space of constant connectedness that can support or undermine aristocratic structures without the sword or the lance, and where news comes and goes as regularly and reliably as the tides.

Building on the success of this first disguised voyage, and perhaps using some of the skills of negotiation and exchange procured from his trip with the merchants, Ganor profits again two times from his anonymity in Avignon, meeting Aye this time disguised as a pilgrim. The disguise works; Aye is mesmerized by his familiarity, yet stuck in that wonderment of familiarity without recognition. Ganor appropriates the persona of Alfamion l'Armenien, spinning a tale of penitence and pilgrimage from Rome to Provence. Perhaps using some tricks of the trade on board the merchant ship, he wears an identity he appropriated from another traveler on an earlier voyage in the text. During this exchange he essentially swindles Aye using a play on words, tricking her into unknowingly exchanging her son for a magic ring and a glove. Later in the poem he makes another advantageous exchange, offering his support for Gui in exchange for the

[170] Particular encounters in Aye d'Avignon include: a traveling pilgrim who informs Garnier of Aye's whereabouts (vv. 1795-1821), a chance encounter between Ganor and another Saracen traveler near Florimont who informs him of Aye's escape (vv. 2296-2302); a Saracen sailor who actually recounts Ganor's own story back to him (to his delight) (vv. 2500-2), and a peasant that informs Aye of Gui's kidnapping (vv. 2546-52).

boy's mother in marriage, further demonstrating his knowledge of trade, and particularly the kind that incorporate sentimental value and binding ties.

In *Aye d'Avignon* the trope of identity and disguise returns a number of times, and always in the spaces of the Mediterranean and the Midi. Victoria Turner has asserted that the ease with which Ganor shifts identity is meant to signal an easy transition from Muslim to Christian later in the text, however this perspective is later complicated by the fact that Ganor profits twice from the anonymity of the Mediterranean mercantile space.[171] Indeed, on a mission to rescue Aye, Garnier and his French companions leave behind their true identities in France, disguising themselves as pilgrims on the merchant and pilgrimage route of Saint-Jacques de Compostelle, and later pose as mercenaries to slip by Ganor—quite a shift from noble *chevalier* to a hired warrior of purchased loyalties, and yet these incidents are not harbingers of permanent transformation. Rather, it is the contact zone of mercantile activity in lands which border the Mediterranean that destabilizes identity and facilitates this transformation, for it is consistently depicted as a region where money and opportunity reign; Christians fight for Muslims if the Emir will pay enough, and a French nobleman can pass for anyone for the right price. Not only is the shift significant for the French knight; it ultimately inverts the honor-bound seigneurial structure at the root of medieval French society.

Ganor's kingdom and the coastal spaces of Mediterranean transit frequently present as an isolated and idealized archipelago of locations. These islands (whether the Balearics or the floating "islands" represented by the merchant ship) are distant from "dominant" French society, i.e. Charlemagne's court, and they provide a space where

[171] See Turner (2010).

personal and public crisis can be resolved. Geographically and ideologically distant from both Christian France and Muslim Spain, these islands represent an idealized utopian space on the edge of the known world, sharing borders with no one. The physical space is described as perfected and protected—full of lush gardens and strong castles designed in an Oriental style which overlook beautiful vistas of the kingdom, and this space is complemented by political harmony and an intellectually stimulating court. This space is even more idealized by the ease with which this Muslim king, as well as his entire kingdom, is later converted to Christianity for the love of a French family.

Located in the middle of the Mediterranean, Aigremort is naturally accessible only by ship, and thus it is only via the mercantile communities and spaces of the text that noble characters can arrive at this isolated social space. Indeed, in a time before nations could establish navies, to arrive at any utopia, whether it is Ganor's Aigremort in *Aye d'Avignon*, or the fabled paradise of Prester John's lands, one must take up with a mercantile community in transit. As we have seen, mercantile culture is often located on the fringe of the medieval French text, and it is a community whose wealth and mobility does not necessarily fit well with the hierarchy of the tripartite social order. Thus like Foucault's idea of the heterotopia, the mercantile spaces of the text provide the necessary locus of transformation absent in the home culture. As characters journey back and forth across the Mediterranean, usually at the initiation of another phase of life in *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanteuil*, the "nowhere" of mercantile culture facilitates access to the bountiful resources of far off lands, from literal wealth to the more figurative

resources necessary for the transformation of the feudal France, to which it seems so peripheral.

Marking the power of the heterotopia, the eventual emergence of Gui as a hybrid ideal in both texts underscores the corruption and waning strength of Charlemagne's feudal hierarchy for what it is, just as the young knight troubles the simple dichotomy of what is actually a multi-cultural space. It is by making the journey into an environment of constant fluidity and movement that the hybrid ideal can emerge, demonstrating the region's perceived destabilizing effect on identity, the need to adapt, and the strength this produces in characters who master these changes. Indeed, throughout the cycle, Ganor's islands are depicted as primarily a space of cultural exchange; not only has he learned French and fencing from his captive French soldiers, in turn he shares his own culture with those he adds to his menagerie. Eventually, this cross-cultural education fosters Gui's hybridity, for as *Aye d'Avignon* tells us of his upbringing: "Ganor l'Arrabi fet bien norrir l'enfant: / E croist e enbernist, moult est de bel senblant. / Li rois l'a fet aprandre de tot son errement, / E d'eschés e de tables – de ce set il forment – / E du cours des estoile[s] e du trone tornant" (*Aye* vv. 2560-64) [Ganor the Arab nourished the child well and raised and sheltered him, so he turned out beautifully. The king had him learn of all his achievements, both of chess and checkers – and he knows these games very well – and of the paths the stars and of the circling firmament]. Here, Gui is educated in all the ways of Ganor's society, in courtly pursuits such as chess and checkers, as well as in astrology and astronomy. He is eventually knighted, and while he is of French blood, he is raised from infancy as a Saracen.

Aye's receives similar treatment that seeks to assimilate her to new cultural and religious practices while she is Ganor's captive; however, her "education" with respect to her son's differs, particularly in her willingness to integrate at Aufalerne:

> N'ot messe ne matines ne vespres ne sarmon,
> Ne ne set rien du siecle, ne quant le festes sont.
> Il y ot .iii. roïnnes qui bien la serviront, […]
> I li mostrent la loi Tervagant e Mahon.
> Elle est e preus e sage de dit e de raison,
> Ne nulli ne la voit qui en die se bien non;
> Mais foi porte si bone Garnier le fiz Doon
> Onques envers nul honme ne not conversion (*Aye* vv. 1769-76)
> [She could not hear mass, nor matins, nor vespers, nor sermons, / she received no news during her long captivity, nor when holy days passed. / There were three queens who served her well… / They taught her the laws of Termagant and Mohammed. / She was keen and intelligent in words and in thought, / who would say anything but good about her; / but she kept good faith in Garnier the son of Doon, / so she never turned to another man].

It is notable that while she is taught to practice Islam, the text emphasizes Aye's loyalty to her own faith. In other words, she does not convert. This assertion is curiously absent from the description of Gui's upbringing. While the child was likely baptized Christian, there is no mention of his refusal to integrate completely into Saracen culture. To the

contrary, he excels at learning the ways of Ganor's people and is well-groomed for the throne.

There is also the matter of Gui and Ganor's sworn allegiance to one another, which replaces the bond between biological father and son, now broken by Garnier's death. However, this alliance presents in itself a number of particularities, for Gui and Garnier hardly shared a bond other than blood before Ganor spirited him away as a toddler. Furthermore, readers might already have suspicions about the parentage of Gui, who forms bonds so easily with his adoptive father, and who seems to have been born not long after Aye's rescue and return to France. Indeed, the author takes care in explicitly protecting Aye's chastity with a magic ring (and one could speculate that almost *too much* care is taken here), so the reader is clear that Garnier fathers Gui. However, the bond between Ganor and Gui is so unusually strong that perhaps it is imperative to clarify their lack of a biological tie, as for all intents and purposes, they *might as well be* blood relations. In this passage, the men swear loyalty to one another in a bond that is notably never undermined throughout the *cycle de Nanteuil*:

> *Hé* Guy! Car lai le duel que tu fais de ton pere.
> Vois tu cestui grant ost que j'ai ci amenee?
> C'elle estoit departie, jamais c'ert rassenblee.
> Se je passe la mer o mes voiles levees,
> E por la toue amor weil je vengier ton père,
> Or me di verité, dorras me tu ta mere? (3461-6)

[Oh Gui! Abandon mourning for your father. / Do you see this great army that I have led here? / If it were dispersed, it will never be reunited. / If I traverse the sea with my sails lifted, / and for your love I wish to avenge your father, / Now tell me the truth, would you give me your mother?]

To which Gui responds:

‘Oïl, certez,’ dist Guy, ‘ja ne vous ert veë[e];
Car je weil e otroi que vous soiez mon pere.’
Iluec li a li enfes fiancie e juree,
E Ganor sor sez diex sa fiancé livree (3467-70)

[‘Yes, certainly,’ said Gui, ‘Never would I have refused you; / For I wish and accept that you be my father.’ / In this place to him the child promised and swore, / and Ganor delivered his betrothed (by swearing) on his six gods.]

Thelma Fenster has identified this easy replacement of Garnier with an idealized father as Gui’s *family romance*, allowing the son to reject and individualize out of the shadow of the father, in turn surpassing him as well.[172] As she observes, “Gui’s association with Ganor grants him the potential to be himself the founding “father” and leader of a new, hybrid nation of warriors. From that pinnacle he can surpass by his own conduct the emperor Charlemagne and his reprobate, untrustworthy followers” (18). Indeed as Fenster asserts, Ganor’s foreignness is essential to Gui’s success, for no French lord could have provided such an opportunity to the young man, not even his own father.

[172] We have already seen an early precedent for this sort of father-figure replacement in Chapter two, particularly in the case of Vivien in *Les Enfances Vivien*, who temporarily lives as a merchant’s son in far off Mediterranean lands.

Likewise, this sort of idealized family romance carries easy appeal for a second culture appropriating the story as well, for as Donald Maddox has observed of narratives that deploy a gradual recognition of origins on the part of the hero (as with Gui), "the use of specularity to create feudal family romance suggests a capacity for projection on the part of a sometimes fledgling and often highly ambitious nobility which made up the courtly public of these stories" (323). Later in this chapter the implications of this practice will be further examined, as elite Italian merchants and petite noblesse alike increasingly accumulate texts of French origin like *Gui de Nanteuil* while establishing newfound authority.

This flexible, idealized hybridity is central to the continuation of the narrative in *Gui de Nanteuil,* and the act of journeying back to France is key to the full integration of both French and Muslim cultures to his identity. As Gui returns to establish himself in Charlemagne's court, he is a man of French blood but with a culturally Saracen upbringing. Similarly, his adoptive father Ganor demonstrates a degree of cultural hybridity as well; having always been a Francophile, the Saracen king takes on a sort of hybridity in his conversion to Christianity and his marriage to a French woman, and yet his kingdom retains its Arabic architecture, language, and customs. By integrating the best of both cultures, culturally hybrid characters in *Gui de Nanteuil* such as Gui, Ganor, the Emir of Coine, and Gui's half-brothers, Antoine, and Richier, consistently out-perform their French counterparts. The hybrid becomes the paragon of knighthood, courteous and brave, and exemplified though the family Ganor has created with Aye, and

Gui ultimately succeeds, where neither his father Garnier nor Charlemagne could, by rooting out the traitors in France's court once and for all.

As Susanne Conklin Akbari has shown, ideas of race in the Middle Ages were not fixed, but instead were perceived on a spectrum; thus, narratives which romanticize the baptism and integration of the Saracen carried a host of collective desires. Akbari posits that the Saracen body itself was often figured as a site of transformation in the text, in both soul and body, where the transforming body of the Saracen "is a microcosm of the wished-for assimilation and integration of the Islamic world by Christendom." For Akbari, this desired assimilation "comprehends within itself not only military conquest but also the appropriation of the rich intellectual and cultural trappings of the Islamic world, the luxurious commodities and the immense learning revered by Western intellectuals" (157). Indeed, Ganor's spiritual transformation and steadfast loyalty to the Nanteuil family is perhaps a marker of the porous borders of religion and ethnicity in the Middle Ages. His Saracen body becomes a site of transformation on which to act out the desire to acquire and integrate Islamic culture following generations of crusades in the East, with the mercantile frontiers providing a locus essential to that transformation.

However, unlike similar medieval narratives examined by Akbari, where the children of interfaith marriages are born mutated until baptized Christian, the "hybrid" children of Aye and Ganor, Antoine and Richier, are well formed, talented, and courageous. Their household is indeed remarkable in its harmony. Avoiding the typical feud over inheritance, Ganor has clearly articulated his wishes for his sons, which are honored by both. Likewise Antoine and Richier, though eager for battle, respect and obey

the wishes of their father and mother. As for Gui, despite his unusual, cross-cultural education, he is still a French nobleman and manages to balance strengths of both his native and adopted cultures.

Yet despite the harmony of the hybrid family created through the marriage of Aye and Ganor, the preservation of French culture remains central to the text as well, where it is Aye who most *consciously* negotiates this newly acquired hybrid identity. She becomes the keeper of memory in the Mediterranean space where identities, obligations, and histories tend to get overwritten like a palimpsest with the formation of new alliances. When Gui asks after his mother and whether she misses his father, we learn that while Aye has made Aigremort her home she has not forgotten her lost love:

> 'Oïl,' ce dist li mes, 'et mout forment plourer –
> Pour l'amour du baron qu'ele pot tant amer
> A fet une abbey merveilleuse estorer;
> .ii. fix a de Ganor qu'ele puet mout amer –
> Antoisnez li ainsnéz puet bien armez porter
> Et le cheval guenchir et souvent trestorner. (vv. 1699-1705)
> ['Yes,' said the messenger, 'and she still cries a lot / for the baron that she loved so much, / for whom she had a marvelous abbey constructed. / She has had two sons by Ganor who she loves much – / Antoine is the oldest and can carry arms well, / mastering the horse and competing often.']

Here Aye is depicted as continually negotiating two sides of her identity. On one hand she honors her past: not only does she bring French customs and Christianity to the

island, as demonstrated through the architecture and the creation of a sacred space, she does so to mourn her past and keep Garnier's memory alive. On the other hand, she is a faithful wife to Ganor and bears him two talented sons who essentially integrate the best of Christian and Arab cultures.

She also burns for revenge. Aye is depicted more than once reminding Gui of an important element of his French identity – his duty to avenge his father's death and destroy the traitors or suffer further injustice. Aye becomes the keeper of family memory and obligation, refusing to forget their vendetta against Ganelon's kin. As she repeats to him before returning to the Balearics with Ganor, "Se tu as lieu et aise, si pense de vengier" (*Gui* v. 47) [If you have the opportunity and the ability, think to avenge him]. Of course, a young and ambitious man, Gui would rather forget his familial obligations and get on with tournaments and making a reputation for himself in Charlemagne's court, and he chastises his worrisome mother telling her to let bygones be bygones. However, in the subsequent text, *Gui de Nanteuil*, readers see her fears made manifest in the conflict over Gui's desire to marry Aiglentine, when once again he is challenged by Ganelon's kin.

Aye's devotion to their family vendetta is ultimately a means of preserving French cultural memory while also providing an antidote for the seemingly deliberate amnesia suffered by both her son and Charlemagne with regards to the treachery of Ganelon's family. Her insistence on avenging an injustice caused by Ganelon's kin not only serves to close out this chapter of mourning for their family, but by extension, closes out one of French history's most tragic legacies, that of Roland's death at Rencesvales as well. Thus it is in fact Aye who ultimately instigates the resolution and seals the final

truce with Charlemagne at the end of *Gui de Nanteuil*, voicing the treachery of Ganelon's family one last time, and reestablishing peace and fealty with a kiss on Charlemagne's mouth and forehead.

Despite the optimism expressed in the text in negotiating a resolution between Charlemagne and his (justifiably) rebellious barons, even hybridity has its restorative limits. While Aye's new island kingdom is now a loyal ally of Nanteuil and Avignon, it will nonetheless never be *France*, and *Ganor li Arrabi*, as he is still referred to in the final verses, will never *truly* be French. Likewise, Gui encounters conflicts related to his hybrid identity when he returns to France, seeking to establish himself as a new man and marry for love, yet challenged by disputes and treachery that have festered in the French court for generations. Under the best of circumstances, the hybridity that emerges from the Mediterranean heterotopia functions to peacefully *integrate* fixed elements of identity which can never fully be *assimilated*. Thus, cultural integration through marriage and romance emerges as a solution, as treachery can only ultimately be eradicated through the courtly diplomacy of Ganor's alliance with the Nanteuil family, forged in romantic love and sealed in marriage.

Marciana Fr. X (=253) and Elaborating Romance in the Medieval Veneto

Many of the same themes are elaborated upon in the fourteenth-century Franco-Italian manuscript of *Gui de Nanteuil*, Marciana Fr. X (=253) while broadly remaining true to the Old French narrative of the text. Most likely created in Venice and owned by the Gonzaga family of Mantua, Marciana Fr. X (=253) was part of a collection of almost

seventy Franco-Italian texts in the library of this Lombard family; it was also popular in the region and could be found in other family libraries as well.[173] The manuscript was created as part of a larger cultural movement in northern Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth century to transcribe Old French romance and epic into a heavily Italianized French, or a French-Italian hybrid language now called Franco-Italian or Franco-Veneto by literary critics, and which sometimes included original works in the language from epics such as *L'Entrée d'Espagne* and Niccolò da Verona's *La Prise de Pampelune* to Marco Polo's *Le Devisement du monde*.[174] Lorenzo Renzi has characterized the Italian reception of French texts as "dynamic" rather than passive, with Italian scribes going beyond transcription and translation to make significant elaborations to texts which already possess a "connotazione nobilitante" because they are written in French.[175] Many of these texts were commissioned by and for noble families, such as the Gonzaga and Este houses; however, there is evidence that the manuscripts were shared beyond the

[173] For the possible Venetian origins of the manuscript, see Busby, *Codex* 773.

[174] While Paul Meyer provided the first comprehensive study of French in Italy during the Middle Ages (1904), the field has since evolved, with Franco-Italian texts receiving increasing critical interest in academic circles in the late twentieth century. Linguistic and literary scholars in Italy sought to rehabilitate the language from a bastardized French to a more complex understanding of the phenomenon meriting deeper linguistic and cultural analysis. An edition of *Cultura Neolatina* 21 was devoted to the Franco-Italian text in 1961 and has since generated a wide variety of scholarship, primarily in the Italian academy. Scholars such as Gianfranco Folena, Alberto Limentani, and Lorenzo Renzi gave the field foundation, while more recently Leslie Zarker Morgan's annotated edition of *La Geste Francor* (2009) has opened up study in the field. Likewise, emerging projects in the Digital Humanities such as Fordham University's French of Outremer project, headed by Laura Morreal, Stephen McCormick and Zarker Morgan's forthcoming edition and translation of Huon d'Auvergne, and the RIALfrI digital manuscript repository directed by Francesca Gambino at the University of Padova raising the profile of Franco-Italian scholarship online. These projects have certainly benefitted from the work of Peter Wunderli and his colleagues in producing their conference edition Testi, cotesti e contesti del franco-italiano (1989) which did much to rehabilitate these texts, offering a synthesis of the linguistic problems Franco-Italian poses to scholars, and suggesting new ways in which to approach this hybrid language and hybrid text.

[175] See Renzi's "Il francese come lingua letteraria e il franco-lombardo: l'epoca carolingia nel Veneto" (1976).

family libraries among various social classes, and more broadly these French courtly texts were performed in the streets of the Veneto.

Franco-Italian elaborations made to the text can be read as an indicator of both appropriated values from culture to culture, as well as a way to identify notable divergences in the appropriating culture. As Gabrielle Spiegel has argued, when texts are translated across cultures, changes made to the text are revelatory of authorial intentions, where "even literal translations are the product of conscious intentions and that if the Old French texts replicate the substance of Latin texts, it is because the translators believed those Latin works to offer adequate expressions of their own historiographical goals" (7). Spiegel asserts that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon and that texts are heavily contextualized by their social and political landscapes in which they were produced, revealing either positively or negatively, the "social character of the environment from which it emerges" (9). Building on a minority of scholarship that has sought to identify a shift in cultural values as reflected in the Franco-Italian text, this study proposes the possibility of determining some shifts in aesthetic taste among the wealthy mercantile elite and *petite noblesse* who were commissioners and consumers of French texts in Northern Italy and beyond.[176] In this way, we can begin to highlight some of the lived transformations mercantile culture affected in noble practices of taste.

Considering the ambitious rise of the Venetian Republic during the later Middle Ages, it is possible to see how the tale of an island kingdom which successfully integrates

[176] Alfred Adler (1950) has identified moments in the Franco-Italian version of *Berta de li pè grandi* which express bourgeois values and the desire to co-exist with aristocrats (rather than usurp them), while Henning Krauss' *Epica feudale e pubblico borghese* (1980) brought significant attention to the role of bourgeois culture in shaping the Franco-Italian text.

the best of two cultures and emerges as more powerful than a mainland empire might appeal to Venetian scribes and their readers across the region.[177] The Franco-Italian manuscript itself of *Gui de Nanteuil* is an unusual hybrid of a text, not only for its linguistic fusion of French and Italian orthography, but also for its various elaborations including an original Franco-Italian prologue of almost 950 verses, which functions to summarize the action of the second half of *Aye d'Avignon* before seguing into the text of *Gui de Nanteuil.* This transition, which elaborates significantly on the cross-cultural love union, fundamentally changes how *Gui de Nanteuil* will be read, and the prologue is accompanied by two other notable additions to the text which again reshape the tone and the focus of the epic to reflect local interests and perceptions of Mediterranean cross-cultural relations and interfaith love unions.

The prologue closely resembles the second half of *Aye d'Avignon* (BN 2170), opening with a call to war that is founded upon a new vow of fidelity between Ganor and Gui, and their subsequent return to France to rescue Aye from an unwanted marriage to Milon. Significantly, Garnier's entire plot-line is subordinated with the elimination of the

[177] Throughout much of the Middle Ages, the Venetian Republic's influence was felt beyond its archipelago of islands (both within the lagoon and across the Mediterranean), forming strong ties to the mainland that spread into the Veneto, whether through trade, marriage, or military conquest. Élizabeth Crouzet-Pavan has argued against traditional historical narratives that completely isolate Venice from the *terra firma*; for Crouzet-Pavan, Venice's decision to conquer the mainland in the fifteenth-century was not sudden, but a result of centuries of regular and profitable relations and land acquisitions: "D'abord, les terres et les eaux lagunaires, dans les limites du duché vénitien, formèrent une sorte de *contado* aquatique qui fonctionna comme un réservoir d'hommes et de ressources pour la cité capitale. Ensuite, il n'y eut jamais, entre la Terre Ferme et le monde des lagunes, une frontière étanche qui aurait façonné deux histoires distinctes: les hommes, les marchandises et le capital circulèrent. Enfin, avant même le temps de la conquête, les Vénitiens intervinrent dans les affaires italiennes" (146) [First, the lands and the waters of the lagoon, within the limits of the Venetian duchy, formed a sort of aquatic *countryside* which functioned like a reservoir of men and resources for the capital city. Next, between the *terra firma* and the world of the lagoons, there was never a watertight border which would have fashioned two distinct histories: men, merchandise and capital circulated. Finally, even before the time of the conquest, Venetians intervened in Italian matters].

first half of the epic-romance, as are the problematic kidnappings of Aye and Gui by Ganor. Instead, Ganor is a doting adoptive father rather than a kidnapper, and his love-quest for Aye is similarly elaborated throughout the prologue. This significantly affects how the rest of the manuscript will be read, for in obscuring the importance of Garnier's death, the text loses many elements that are essential to the Old French epic narrative. Thus, its place in the tradition of the "rebellious barons cycle," as well as the histories so integral to French identity (such as the longstanding vendetta against Ganelon's kin, and the relationship between lord and vassal) become greatly deemphasized in the process. Instead, the romance between Ganor and Aye is given precedence, which in turn moves the narrative even further away from the traditional epic plot line and towards the desired love union of the romance. The transition from epic to romance is complete in the Venice manuscript.

Minor changes emphasize this shift as well, where brief moments of *Aye d'Avignon* are altered or elaborated: Aye's lamentations over being married to Milon (a variation from earlier versions); her marriage ceremony to Ganor; and Ganor's baptism are significantly elaborated. These alterations extend moments which do not exist or are briefly described in the Old French *Aye d'Avignon* into laisses that emphasize the emotions, ceremonies, and courtly behavior of the protagonists. Materiality is also emphasized, with greater attention to possessions, clothing, and ritualized Christianity. For instance, while the Old French text might describe Ganor's baptism briefly in three lines, "Puis a fet ses barons Ganor crestienner, / Et cil qui ne se vout a ce fet acorder, / Li rois Ganor li fet le chief du bu coper" (vv. 4093-5) [Then the barons made Ganor

Christian / and those [of his subjects] who did not also convert / King Ganor had beheaded], the prologue of Marciana Fr. X (=253) elaborates this scene in laisse thirty-one, where Ganor's baptism is described in detail, down to the church, the stones on the baptismal, the officiating bishops, and a spoken sermon, which is then further detailed in laisse thirty-two.

These elaborations are probably what have kept scholars at bay; they do not make for riveting reading, with Callu-Turiaf concluding that the scribe, likely a cleric with knowledge of and a passion for liturgical ceremony, added these elements simply to fill lacunae in his familiarity of the original text.[178] It is likewise possible that these are either details from other versions of the text, or perhaps general elaborations on topics of interest to suit a local audience that differed much from the original twelfth- and thirteenth-century French readers. Likewise, according to Alfredo Cavaliere, these changes reflect not ignorance but a desire on the part of the author to prepare the reader for Aye's acceptance of Ganor as a husband, as well as his conversion to Christianity, giving their personal evolution a more logical and psychologically grounded trajectory in the overall structure of the poem and greater emphasizing further the importance of a consensual marriage.[179]

As romantic themes are augmented in the prologue, we return to the issue of identity and hybridity that are central to the Old French versions of *Aye d'Avignon* and

[178] See Callu-Turiaf, *Les Versions* p. 400.
[179] According to Cavaliere, "La psicologia dei personaggi è dal nostro autore disegnata e sviluppata con logica e coerente linearità: egli ci ha gradatamente preparati e all conversion di Ganor e all'assenso di Aye" (14) [The psychology of characters and of our author sketches and develops logically and with a coherent trajectory: as such he has gradually prepared us both for the conversion of Ganor as well as the assent of Aye].

Gui de Nanteuil. For while Ganor's Saracen identity is so evident it is practically fetishized in the Old French manuscripts, his identity as a pagan in the Venetian prologue is only indirectly mentioned in the eleventh laisse, then directly in laisse twelve at about 250 verses into the prologue. The hesitation deserves consideration, as the opening alliance between Gui and Ganor is significant: Christians and Saracens united here not only against the kin of Ganelon, but also against Charlemagne. This alliance is however a reversal of Ganelon's Christian-Muslim alliance which led to *Rencesvales* (with "Gano(r)" resolving the original transgression of "Gano"); for the ultimate victory is to conquer the corruption which still festers in the French court, to clear the family name, and to have Nanteuil restored to a place of honor in Charlemagne's court. Thus the late identification of Ganor as Saracen from the beginning allows the audience to embrace him first as the romantic hero and Gui's surrogate father without hesitation, downplaying the significance of this moment of reversal in favor of a more romantically driven plot.

This departure from the Old French manuscript's themes is further exacerbated once the prologue segues into the text itself by privileging the romantic alliance between Ganor and the Nanteuil family in lieu of the more common Old French epic introduction found in the Montpellier manuscript, which dutifully lays out the *casus belli* of the text. In the Old French text of *Gui de Nanteuil* (Montpellier Faculté de Médecine H247) the narrative begins with a traditional introduction, not only describing the parentage of Gui and his family's roots in the cycles of rebellious vassals, but also summarizing their conflict with Ganelon's kin, whose own long history of betrayal stretches back to Roland's death at Rencesvales:

Oï avez de dame Aye, la bele d'Avignon

De Garnier de Nanteuil, le nobile baron –

Pres fu du parente Girart de Roussillon

Et fu cousin germain Regnaut le fix Aymon;

Aye prist a moillier par le congie Kallon.

Tuit furent destourbe par .i. mauvez glouton,

Cil ot nom Berengier, si fu niez Guenelon,

Celui qui de Rollant fist la grant traïson

Qu'il vendi comme fel au roy Marcilion,

Dont furent mort a glesve li .xii. compengnon; (vv 1-10)

[Have you heard about Lady Aye, the beauty of Avignon, / Of Garnier of Nanteuil, the noble baron - / Who was close to the kin of Girart de Roussillon / and was the first cousin of Regnaut the son of Aymon; / He took Aye as his wife with Charlemagne's blessing. / All was ruined by a terrible villan / His name is Berengier, who was Ganelon's nephew, / He who greatly betrayed Roland / when he sold him to King Marsile like a cruel one / For whom his twelve companions died by the blade.]

By contrast, the same opening verses in to the Venetian manuscript eliminate the family history of conflict, in favor of focusing on Ganor's love for Aye and Gui. Here, Ganor's role in raising the latter and his love for the two facilitates the Muslim king's eventual conversion to Christianity along with

Ohi avés por vers et po rasson

Siccom le roi Ganor recuite benision

E prist dam Aie la bele d'Avengnon;

Sol por s'amor sa loi refueron,

Margot e Apolin e son deu Balatron;

Plus de secte cent milie por amor de Guion,

Le valect de Nantol che tant fu jenteosson,

Che tucti croit en Deu e prist bactesçesson; (Marciana Fr. X (=253), vv. 1-8)

[Have you heard by verse and reason / How the king Ganor received the blessing / and took the Lady Aye the beautiful of Avignon; / It was by love that he refused his faith, / Margot and Apollo and his god Balatron; / More than six hundred thousand for the love of Gui, / the valet of Nanteuil who was very noble / Who all believed in God and took baptism; […]

These verses appear in the Old French version as well, but they follow the traditional references to Rencesvales, a history which has been omitted in the Franco-Italian. The opening verses of the Marciana manuscript likewise expand on Ganor's influence as an adoptive father, justifying Gui's generosity in allowing Ganor and Aye to marry, for the king fed the child in his own home, guiding him to grow into a brave, intelligent, and courtly young knight, whom no one can exceed in valor (vv. 11-22).

Ultimately, the Franco-Italian prologue significantly shifts how one reads *Gui de Nanteuil,* to the degree that the narrative leads away from the typical epic preoccupation with revenge and feudal loyalty to the romantic gestures of Ganor's love-quest for Aye,

as well as his sentimental bond with his adopted son Gui. The shift speaks to the desire for innovation, to rewrite and reemphasize what is valuable to a premodern Italian culture. While critics have generally considered these additions the work of a mediocre scribe, it is worth considering the addition of the prologue for what it reveals of the desire to participate in the appropriation of these stories and to make them culturally relevant to the northern Italian reading community. What we find is an epic, which already in its Old French iteration incorporates many elements of the medieval romance, and which in its Franco-Italian elaboration further develops its romantic elements. In her study of the dialogue established between the epic and the romance in medieval France, Sarah Kay has suggested that epics, such as those of the Nanteuil cycle, often "borrowed" elements from the *roman* to negotiate the problems raised in the *chanson de geste.* These elements may likewise reflect a parallel interest in Arthurian romances on the peninsula, for Jane Everson has noted the commonality of this cultural swing, particularly in the Italian appropriation of French texts, where feudal themes become undermined by various conflicting historical realities and cultural tastes. As she observes, "The sense of feudal obligations yields to a more communal understanding of political obligations, natural to the Italian reality of the city-state, whether republic or autocratic" (40).[180]

If it is true that tastes among readers in northern Italy began to move towards the *roman,* or they expected elements of the romance to appear in their epics, this emergent

[180] K.H. Bender has similarly observed that the cultural weight once carried by Charlemagne in France would most certainly be reduced among an Italian readership: "Le Charlemagne des chansons de geste était un personnage mythique et doué d'un caractère normatif pour les rois de France. Comme ces normes féodales, royales et religieuses n'étaient plus valables pour un publique Italien, Charlemagne en personnage mythique, se métamorphosait en un personnage plutôt romanesque" (174) [The Charlemagne of the *chansons de geste* was a mythical and gifted figure with a standard character for the kings of France. As these feudal, royal and religious norms were no longer legitimate for an Italian public, Charlemagne as a mythical figure morphed into a more romantic figure].

cultural preference may have been influenced by structural elements in the text that complement economic practices familiar among a mercantile public. As Kay has observed of the two genres:

> The romance quest, turning the other into a thing to be appropriated, and placing the emphasis on the subject's self-enrichment through acquisition, belongs in rhetoric of the commodity. The conflicts of the *chanson de geste*, by contrast, with their play of encounter and separation, intimacy and hostility, appeal to a rhetoric of the gift: the interminably fluctuating and ambiguous relations between transactors are given priority over the relation of either to any specific transaction (31).

Kay's observations allow for some speculation as to why the "rhetoric of commodity" as demonstrated in the romance might appeal to a primarily mercantile community of readers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Beyond the prologue, two significant Franco-Italian elaborations to the Venetian manuscript of *Gui de Nanteuil* further emphasize questions of identity and the acquisition of a foreign love interest. One addition is a three laisse debate between Aiglentine and a man named "Arnald la Zinois" or Arnold the Genovese (*Gui* vv. 460-517). The passage, written in a heavily Italianized Franco-Italian, retreats from the narrative for a moment to develop a narrative involving a minor character who appears only once in the Old French manuscripts to criticize Aiglentine's desire to marry Gui rather than let Charlemagne pair her in a more politically savvy union. Aiglentine argues in favor of her right to marry a young, exotic, and virile man like Gui rather than settle for a May-December political

marriage, and she very boldly insults the Genovese, holding him up as an example of an older man incapable of satisfying a younger bride. The passage speaks to a variety of fourteenth-century literary tastes in northern Italy; it adds a moment of bourgeois-comedy for readers in the Veneto engaged in a vicious, centuries-long rivalry with Genoa over Mediterranean supremacy, just as it reflects the contemporary popularity of medieval love debate poetry in Italy which flourished at that time. There is also the possibility of the influence of the Occitan *tenso* at play in the text, which perfected the art of the playful back and forth repartee and was broadly popular in the Veneto at this time.[181] And yet the passage, echoing Aye's earlier grief in the prologue over her undesired marriage to Milon, once again privileges love-unions with ties in the East over endogamous political marriages. Reflecting local preference, the conflict over the exchange of women in marriage for political alliance was a theme of particular interest to both Paduan and Venetian writers and was increasingly added into Franco-Italian texts, as with the anonymously authored *L'Entrée d'Espagne* and Marco Polo's *Le Divisament dou monde.*[182]

Another lengthy elaboration in the text depicts the cross-cultural courtship between the Emir of Coine and Charlemagne's niece, Flandrine (Marciana Fr. X (=253), vv. 2793-3050). While this moment is brief in the Montpellier text, it is elongated by the Venetian scribe to give the reader a more intimate picture of the flirtation between a

[181] While it falls outside of the scope of the present study, it is worth considering a tertiary element of hybridity and intellectual commerce introduced by the possible influence of the troubadour lyric on Franco-Italian manuscript, with the debate between Aiglentine and Arnold the Genovese resembling the debate between Raimbaut de Vaqueiras and his (Genoese) lady in the *tenso* "Domna, tant vos ai preiada." As has been noted above, the influence of *Gui de Nanteuil* on Raimbaut de Vaqueiras is traceable in his lyric, so considering the reciprocity of this influence on later elaborations of *Gui de Nanteuil* might yield interesting routes to considering the continual, trans-alpine circulation of French (and Occitan) narratives.
[182] See Limentani, p. 191.

second Saracen romantic hero and a French noblewoman, and their courtship centers on a discussion of his exotic origins and her orphaning. Given the emerging political conflicts and trade opportunities between the Venetian Empire and the nascent Turkish empire by the fourteenth century, the Emir of Coine, or Iconium in Latin, now Konya in modern-day Turkey, would have carried perhaps more cultural currency for the Venetian reader than the French.[183] The elaboration of the character would allow readers to probe what was both culturally appealing and mysterious about the Turks and might explain why the Venetian scribe sought to elaborate this character's history. Like Ganor, he is depicted as particularly interested in French women and much defined by his sexuality, but the elaboration also demonstrates that he is valiant, wealthy, talented, and noble enough to ride a war horse issued from Bucephalus, which instead links his origins more to the classical Alexandrian histories than to Islam.

These two elaborations in Franco-Italian significantly situate *Gui de Nanteuil* more as a romance more than an epic, negotiating (as Kay has implied) the problems of

[183] Indeed, Daniela Branca's "Fortuna e transformazione del Buovo d'Antona" (1989) involves a similar cross comparison of the extant versions of *Beuve d'Hantone/Bovo d'Antonia*, noting differences and relationships between French and Italian versions, as well as Tuscan and Veneto versions. In particular, geographic locations of the Italian text indicate a wide readership and figured in merchants' libraries from Bologna to Venezia. "Lungo l'arco cronologico dei testi italiani assistiamo communque in varia misura al progressivo affermarsi di questa solida mentalità borghese, tendente ad assimilare i modelli romanzeschi e avventurosi, a mettere fra parentesi o a contestare più o meno apertamenti i risvolti feudali della vicenda, introducendo per contro elementi consoni al proprio orizzonte culturale e fantastico" (297) [However, we observe in the long time span of Italian texts various measures in the progressive affirmation of this solid bourgeois mentality, tending to assimilate to romantic and adventurous models, to put between parenthesis or to openly challenge, more or less, the feudal aspects of the story, introducing on the other hand suitable elements for their own cultural and imaginary horizons]. As such, merchants in *Bovo* are courteous and have the gift of perspicacity, just as they know how to argue with finesse thanks to their worldly experience. According to Branca, these merchant characters respond to "certe inclinazioni della mentalità tardo comunale fiorentina, bramosa di titolari nobiliari di nuovo conio, ma sempre ancorata alla realità economica di un mestiere, come testimoniano cronache e ricordanze" (300) [certain inclinations of the attitudes of the late Florentine commune, eager for newly minted noble titles, but always anchored in the economic reality of a profession, as is evidenced in chronicles and memoirs].

the epic inherent to the text. They may likewise figure as a reflection of local interests, for, as Everson has noted, the broad appeal of romantic elaborations and vignettes in late medieval Italian texts, which coincided with a somewhat paradoxical interest in humanist thought, gradually culminated in Ariosto's sixteenth-century masterpiece *Orlando Furioso*, which masterfully weaves them both together. She adds that these elaborated passages also reflect a simple and essential desire among any reading public for romance plotlines, as well as the perennial need of audiences to know more and more about their favorite characters.[184] This desire is particular to medieval Italy, where later rewrites tend to take on a life of their own in order to develop plotlines of beloved characters, but which ultimately break down and dilute the integrity of the original story that has spun out of control. In similar terms, Ruggero Ruggieri expressed this desire for adventure and romance in his concept of *umanesimo cavalleresco* or chivalric humanism, where the adventure of the text, to discover new peoples and new faraway lands, and certainly to master them, formed part of the Italian interest in the narrative. As he observes of the later medieval epic-romance, such as *Gui de Nanteuil* and many others, "Tutto ciò c'induce a scorgere un certo rapport tra l'umanesimo cavalleresco e l'altro – nato anch'esso in clima rinascimentale, e anch'esso alimentato, in qualche modo, da spiriti eroici e romantici – che abbiamo visto posto in relazione con la scoperta e lo studio dei popoli lontani e primitive" (*Umanesimo* 26) [All this leads us to perceive a certain

[184] Marco Boni makes a similar observation of the Franco-Italian scribe, who seems to have no reservations about transforming epics into romances, and who: "non si sottraeva a quella tendenza all'intrusione nella trama delle *chansons de geste* di elementi cortesi e specialemente bretoni, che si nota anche in Francia, in parecchie delle *chansons* più tarde (come, ad es., nell'*Huon de Bordeaux*), e si manifesta anche in Italia (basti ricordare ad es., l'*Entrée d'Espagne*)" (125) [did not escape the inclination for introducing some courtly, and especially, Breton elements into the narrative of the *chansons de geste*, which one observes also in France, similar to the later *chansons* (as, for example, in *Huon de Bordeaux*), and manifesting also in Italy (it is enough to recall *L'entrée d'Espagne,* for example)].

rapport between the humanism of chivalry and the other—also born in the climate of the Renaissance, and also nourished by, in some way, the heroic and romantic spirit—which we have seen placed in relation to the discovery and study of distant, primitive people].

Certainly, the romances that push the hero beyond the borders of the familiar allow for exciting cross-cultural encounters to occur beyond the battlefield, and provoke transformations. Saracen heroes of the Nanteuil cycle are still quite far from being represented as "primitive" (in fact, they are often more courtly than their French counterparts). However, even the courtly Saracen body, such as the Emir of Coine's, figures as a powerful "site of transformation" that is ultimately domesticated through love, as he goes on to marry into French aristocracy and convert to Christianity through his desire for Flandrine. With his conversion, along with Ganor's, French nobility can acquire and integrate the wealth and resources available to an Arab culture often perceived of as more sophisticated and prosperous than that of Charlemagne's France. While it falls outside of the scope of this study, it is worth considering these additions in light of a female readership as well—chiefly the moments of the debated love-union and the supremacy of these hybrid-men who emerge from far-off Mediterranean lands to rescue Christian women from dull marriages. In both textual elaborations, women speak about themselves, their origins, and their priorities. Women characters are given a greater voice, and it is easy to see how this discourse might have reflected analogous experiences and anxieties among merchant families and bourgeois elites in Venice and Padua seeking to form ties with aristocratic families in the Veneto to raise their family status.[185]

[185] Crouzet-Pavan observes this in the thirteenth century, where Venetian aristocrats, or even nouveaux riche, began purchasing land in the Veneto. Marriages between Venetian families and those on the

And yet, beyond the desire to integrate aspects of Islamic culture more rooted in a crusade narrative, perhaps the enhanced role of the Emir in the Venetian text reflects instead a desire to negotiate the problems of the *chanson de geste* and to seek alternative solutions to conflict with cultures to the East at once threatened and promoted exchange between the Veneto, Constantinople, and the Levant.[186] For with the growing threat of Turkish power at the opening of the fourteenth century, Venice finally had to abandon the dream of re-acquiring Constantinople, and focus instead on fortifying its colonial territories. Many of these trading outposts, like Crete or Modon, were key to trading with Arab cultures to the East. Lucrative economic interests in the East could thus complicate a simple Christian-Saracen dichotomy, undermining constraints on trade once introduced by the Church. In turn, increased interest in courtships between Christians and Saracens in the Franco-Italian *Gui de Nanteuil* and elsewhere could reflect a dynamic more

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mainland occurred as well. (154-5). The *terra firma* at the beginning of the thirteenth century "offre bien sûr à la noblesse vénitienne, au plan politique comme au plan économique, une formidable occasion d'élargissement de son champ d'action. Aux grands lignages, de nouveau moyens de conserver ou d'augmenter leur pouvoir, leur fortune, leur honneur sont donnes […] Les riches propriétaires en Terre Ferme ne se désintéressent pas de la Méditerranée et du domaine colonial. *Les carrières balancent entre la terre et l'Empire*" (163, italics mine) [of course offered to the Venetian nobility, in the realm of both politics and economics, a wonderful opportunity to expand their activites. For the great families, they were given new means to conserve or augment their power, their fortune, and their honor…The rich landowners on *terra firma* were not disinterested in the Mediterranean and the colonial domain. *Careers oscillated between the land and the Empire*]. In the Veneto, there was a desire on both sides to balance and integrate the best of both worlds, and thus those newly rich seeking to establish themselves and their families.

[186] Indeed, it was the Venetian Republic's long-distance trade network that allowed it to dominate European trade for a time, figuring as a center of medieval globalization, to borrow from modern terminology. As Yves Renouard asserts, "Ora il secolo XIII è l'epoca in cui la via per l'Oriente cessa di avere un predominio schiacciante fra le rotte del commercio veneziano. I mercanti di Venezia accrescono le loro relazioni con l'Occidente [...] Grazie a questo sviluppo di relazioni con l'Occidente, Venezia resta il centro commerciale più potente della Cristianità, divenendo il centro d'un commercio armonioso, equilibrato e complementare con tutte le parte di mondo, il focolaio d'un commercio universale" (91-2) [Now the thirteenth century is the era in which the road towards the East ceased to have an overwhelming dominance of Venetian commercial routes. Venetian merchants augmented their relations with the West [...] Thanks to this development of relations with the West, Venice remained the most powerful center of commerce in the Christian world, becoming the center of harmonious trade, balanced and complementary to all parts of the world, and the epicenter of universal commerce].

particular to communities living in fourteenth-century Veneto than to those of Philippe Auguste's France, with the former encountering an entirely new brand of communal anxieties concerning identity, assimilation, and integration. The increasingly easy integration of the Saracen, and the appearance of hybrid characters, present interesting complications to the long established alterity of Muslim figures in the text and the perceived inability for real integration into society from the periphery to the center. As such, while the appearance of mercantile spaces may seem secondary to problems of race in the text, they allow for peaceful connections to be made between cultures, which ultimately form lasting political ties to the East through marriage, likewise reflecting a commercial culture's very tangible interest in profitable alliances.

Elements of hybridity, which reflect the influence of a growing mercantile elite, can be observed in the manuscript itself, demonstrating another means by which this text negotiates the cross-cultural encounter. Primarily, the addition of the prologue to Marciana Fr. X (=253) itself is extremely practical, economizing both space and resources in what is already an expensive and well preserved manuscript. While *Aye d'Avignon* is summarized, *Gui de Nanteuil* is contextualized, which thus eliminates the need to obtain an additional (and likely expensive) manuscript of *Aye d'Avignon*. Furthermore, the addition is particularly innovative when put into context with the *chanson de geste* tradition, which often repeats, reiterates, enumerates and revisits earlier histories at length. After all, medieval French epic is not known for its brevity or economy of words, but instead for its privileging elaborate performance of the narrative process. The prologue ultimately adds to the manuscript's marketability, shifting the

focus from the manuscript as a precious commodity (which it remains) to one that is as practical as well, including two narratives in one text. It is likewise rendered more mobile, which is of particular importance for a lending network such as one finds with the Gonzaga and their community, for the presence of combined histories in one text allows for greater and easier circulation beyond the family library.

The appearance of the prologue, though not unique to this manuscript, is intimately tied to the Franco-Italian tradition and speaks to another sort of economy of the text.[187] Written in a heavily Italianized French, the fourteen folio introduction to *Gui de Nanteuil* also allows an Italian reader, in this case the men and women (and perhaps children) of the Gonzaga household who could read or understand French but who were likely not fluent speakers, to become accustomed to a foreign tongue before the text moves into a more standardized, though still Italianized, French.[188] Franco-Italian would likewise have made a French text even more accessible to merchants who would likely have some knowledge of French (or even a common *lingua franca*) which was a common tongue facilitating exchange throughout the Mediterranean, but no formal training in the language.[189] Thus, Franco-Italian would have opened up communication across audiences, with critics such as Gianfranco Folena arguing that the advent of Franco-

[187] As Callu-Turiaf has observed of these prologues more generally, "Cette même structure – un prologue suivi d'une version italianisée – se retrouve dans d'autres poèmes franco-italiens conservés à la Marciana de Venise et semble constituer un trait caractéristique des poèmes franco-italiens" (*Notes* 147) [This same structure—a prologue followed by an Italianized version—is found in other Franco-Italian poems conserved at the Marciana in Venice and seem to constitute a characteristic trait of the Franco-Italian poem].

[188] For Folena, knowledge of French as a sign of the new aristocratic class was specific to the Veneto, rather than Tuscany, and remained the language of high culture amongst women in particular, who generally did not know Latin until the times of Francesca da Rimini (151) in the latter half of the thirteenth century.

[189] Karla Mallette's work on the *linga franca* has demonstrated how the language was both useful and chimeric in its structure, with her chapter in *A Companion to Mediterranean History* (2014) outlining what we know about this slippery linguistic currency that facilitated trade around the Mediterranean.

Italian provided a means to connect different levels of society.[190] Ruggieri makes a similar observation, offering a spectrum of ways in which Franco-Veneto was structurally, culturally and socially "interclassista."[191] As such, the text's *accessability* across social strata, as well as its role in facilitating a point of encounter for different classes, augments with the inclusion of Franco-Italian elaborations throughout the manuscript. As Alison Cornish has shown, linguistic hybridity and vulgarization more generally not only serves to both connect social classes and make texts more available to women readers, with Franco-Italian allowing audiences to bridge literacies between genders.[192]

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[190] See Gianfranco Folena (1990). Henning Krauss (1980) makes a similar observation in his groundbreaking study of the bourgeois elements of one Franco-Italian manuscript, insisting that the Franco-Italian text is not an example of ignorance, but rather of Italian scribes and authors seeking to conserve some of the prestige associated with the genre, with France and the French language, while making the work available to a public whose French may not be perfect (10). If French did present some difficulty to the mercantile class, Franco-Italian is poised as a great marketing tool, making texts available to both ends of the spectrum, nobility and bourgeois.

[191] For Ruggieri, "il francoveneto ci si presenta sopratutto come una lingua strutturalmente, culturalmente e socialmente 'interclassista.' Strutturalmente, perché dei due componenti che, in vario modo, vi sono giustapposti e fusi, l'elemento nobile o nobilitante, anche in senso diacronico, è costituito dal francese, mentre l'elemento popolare è rappresentato da quello italiano, anch'esso del resto non privo – l'ho ripetutamente osservato – d'intenzioni nobilitanti. Culturalmente, perché il francoveneto si palesò un mezzo idoneo ed efficace per diffondere in Italia lo spirito e la forma delle *chansons de geste*, la conoscenza e il gusto del vasto mondo epico-cavalleresco che esse rappresentavano. Socialmente, perché questo mezzo di diffusione trovò favore e successo sia nell'ambiente popolare che tra le classi piú elevate, avvicinando l'uno alle altre con un ideale *trait-d'union* linguistico-culturale, creando tra loro un commune terreno d'incontro e d'intesa" (166) [Franco-Veneto presents itself here primarily as a structurally, culturally and socially 'inter-class' language. This is evident structurally, because of the two components that, in various ways, are juxtaposed and fused: the noble or ennobling element, even in a diachronic sense, and derived of the French, while the popular element is represented by Italian, which is also not devoid of ennobling intentions, as I have repeatedly observed. Culturally because Franco-Veneto showed itself an appropriate and effective way to spread throughout Italy the spirit and form of the *chansons de geste*, as well as the knowledge and taste of the vast epic-chivalrous world that they represented. Socially, because this means of communication found favor and success whether in a popular environment or among the more upper classes, approaching each other with an ideal cultural-linguistic liaison, creating between them a common ground for meeting and agreement].

[192] For more on the possible implications of Franco-Italian for female readership, see Cornish (2000; 2006).

The Nanteuil cycle, down to its Franco-Italian elaborations, stands as a testament to the multitude of ways in which mercantile spaces, whether figurative or real, influence the societal shifts envisioned in the text. Hybridity becomes key to understanding the impact of mercantile spaces, whether figurative or real, on the creation of a manuscript such as Marciana Fr. X (=253) just as it would have an impact on how the manuscript and its narratives are shared. We witness this cultural hybridity in the Christian *and* Muslim characters who pass through and inhabit these isolated, Mediterranean spaces, and who learn to blend into and adapt to new surroundings, but who, like Aye, consciously maintain elements of the culture of origin as well. In this way, *Aye d'Avignon* and *Gui de Nanetuil* negotiate the delicate relations possible in an alliance across cultures and distances, presenting the reader with a rare epic that celebrates the composed family and a justified rebellion from the powerful and corrupt cultural center. These themes of cultural hybridity, and of deep identity shifts in the face of the cross-cultural interaction, become intensified in later additions to the *cycle de Nanteuil* where the Nanteuil family finds itself on increasingly distant horizons. *Parise la duchesse* (c. 1225), the next poem in the cycle, sees Gui's sister Parise exiled in Hungary, separated from her infant son, and surviving as a wet-nurse until reconciliations and recognitions allow her to resume her full identity. In the later, fourteenth-century manuscript of *Tristan de Nanteuil*, the family is separated by a shipwreck and located around the Mediterranean, with female characters both cross-dressing, and, in an unusual turn of events, a Saracen woman, Blanchadine permanently changes into a Christian man. While these iterations of the Nanteuil family history are authored and transcribed by others well into the fourteenth century, they are a

testament to the themes of hybridity, identity, and distance that are attached to the family's peregrinations beyond French frontiers.

Just as these elements of hybridity are traceable in the narrative, they are likewise found in the material text itself. In considering the Franco-Italian language used to tell the story, the appearance of an original prologue summarizing *Aye d'Avignon*, and the more "romantic" elaborations which punctuate a *chanson de geste*, one can note the ways in which manuscript production in the Veneto evolved to incorporate "hybrid" elements to augment the value, marketability, practicality, and movement of the text. Marciana Fr. X (=253) is *both* practical *and* valuable, marking the text's more open reception in the lending networks of northern Italy. This hybridity, where elements of the Old French narrative are merged with local tastes, is locatable outside the manuscript as well, beyond the words and illustrations of the text, marking art and architecture in cities across northern Italy as well.[193]

This hybridity is directly connected to the cross-cultural exchanges facilitated by commerce across the Mediterranean, whether more implicitly alluded to in the text, or more explicitly evident in the late medieval Italian city-state. Commerce promotes hybridity, opening up a space for complicating binaries, and as Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have observed of the market and the fair, it demands hybridity: "At the market centre of the polis we discover a commingling of categories usually kept separate and opposed: centre and periphery, inside and outside, stranger and local, commerce and

[193] In an article preceding her seminal study with Jacques Stiennon on the appearance of Roland in the art of the Middle Ages (1966) Rita Lejune's "Roland et Olivier au portail du Dôme de Vérone" hypothesizes that the figures of Roland and Olivier appear quite early in Italian architecture as well (on a portal of Verona Cathedral), tracing cross-cultural influence of French epic well beyond France, and also beyond the literary form itself. See Lejune (1961).

festivity, high and low. In the marketplace pure and simple categories of thought find themselves perplexed and one-sided. Only hybrid notions are appropriate to such a hybrid place" (27). As the authors note, spaces of commerce allow, if not demand, a great degree of hybridity. However, their description likewise allows us to note how the market completely collapses these categories as well, where identity and value are reduced to fluctuating demands and desires. As a result, the increasing presence of these commercial spaces of personal annihilation and transformation in the *chanson de geste* allow readers to identify moments of desired-for change and a re-envisioned future as France underwent deep transformation on a social, economic, and cultural level.

CONCLUSION

Reconsidering the Third Estate from the Commercial Revolution to "*Doux Commerce*"

> Le commerce guérit des préjugés destructeurs; et c'est presque une règle générale,
> que partout où il y a des mœurs douces, il y a du commerce;
> et que partout où il y a du commerce, il y a des mœurs douces.
> Montesquieu, *De l'esprit des lois*. Book XX, Chapter 1

Through an analysis of mercantile spaces in the medieval French and Italian narrative, this study has sought to offer a different perspective on the appearance of commerce and mercantile communities in the literary text. From the urban fairs and bourgeois households of northern France, to the fondacos and souks of Spain or Egypt, a range of mercantile spaces across genres has been considered for the transformative power these spaces might offer a traveler in transit, as well as their important diegetic role in the narrative. Mercantile spaces are places of change, motion, and resolution. This transformative power is accessible not simply to the nobleman, for as we have seen with the fabliaux, the ability to control and defend spaces of exchange and production are likewise essential to the bourgeois' ascendance in society. Thus, this study has attempted to bring to light the means by which medieval authors envisioned the control of public and private spaces, questioning what social anxieties are being concealed or negotiated through the text.

Necessarily, this study has also been one of the Mediterranean, the source of increasing profit and expansion in the twelfth and thirteenth century, and a space often characterized by communities in circulation, interfaith encounters, and opportunities for

profit and loss. In the courtly text, the Mediterranean becomes a space of alterity, opposed to the cultural center often represented by Charlemagne's court. The Mediterranean is undeniably *other*, despite its frequent appearance across medieval French genres. A mirror to society, Mediterranean heterotopias allow protagonists trapped in a stagnant political or personal crisis to escape the cultural center, learn from alternative mentors, and return to the home culture triumphant. At the heart of these transformative encounters are the merchant communities who facilitate the acquisition of resources, encounters with unlikely allies, and a necessary anonymity that only distance from the home culture can provide.

Contrary to previous readings of the high-low interaction in these narratives, I have argued that a passage through these Mediterranean mercantile spaces is both transformative, and to some extent, permanent. This transformation is most evident in *Gui de Nanteuil*, where Aye, Gui, and Ganor have integrated elements from their Mediterranean island home, modeling an idealized sort of cultural hybridity. For male noblemen, and even more so for female characters, entering into mercantile communities and integrating through the personification of the merchant forever alters the protagonist. More often than not the change manifests in a new linguistic dexterity: characters such as Ydoine, Jehanne, Nicolette, Zinevra, Floire, and Guillaume are more adept at negotiating difficult situations, facilitating advantageous deals, and augmenting the value of what they are "selling" both in the Mediterranean and at home. Embodying the mercurial qualities of the trickster, and freed of the constraints of noble social space, these characters are also capable of deceiving others of their purpose with increasing facility.

Upon return from the Mediterranean, these skills often stay with the traveler, who has rehabilitated his or her position in life or embraced an adult role in society with greater resources.

This study has argued that the power to manage and function within these spaces of commerce, whether along the shores of the Mediterranean or even in the bourgeois home, prove vital to narratives of identity. Distant ports, merchant ships, and busy trade routes provide both bourgeois and noble protagonists the means to establish themselves, first through the appropriation of the merchant identity (and the temporary loss of their own), and subsequently through a return to society in a rehabilitated version of the self. We have looked to social shifts accompanying the increase in commerce in twelfth- and thirteenth-century France to understand better these moments of humor, conflict, and cultural appropriation in the text, ultimately seeking to reveal the *political unconscious* of ambiguous social relations depicted in the text.

Thus, the question of violence has been a constant for each chapter, as mercantile communities consistently provide the means to avoid the armed conflict central to publically establishing an aristocratic identity. Indeed, as we have seen, the merchants of French and Italian courtly literature are often comically incapable of fighting; typically these depictions are interpreted by modern critics as reaffirming the aristocracy's noble pursuit of glory though the physical violence of the tournament, the battlefield, and the crusade. Offering another approach, however, this study has sought to shed light on the ways in which the noble hero benefits from his or her interactions with the profit-driven merchant, who offers the resources and means to avoid violent conflict altogether,

frequently allowing for a peaceful denouement and a new sort of hybrid identity to emerge. The merchant's increasing resourcefulness in the text reflects a shift in attitudes towards the power of commerce and trade in the later Middle Ages, just as his spaces offer a refuge from an identity constructed through violent acts.

Furthermore, it has been a goal of this project to demonstrate that one cannot read the representation of noble or ecclesiastical culture in the medieval text without an understanding of the mercantile world as well, and the ways in which these "separate" sectors of society in fact overlap in diverse and powerful ways. Consequently, this study has attempted to bring to light moments when mercantile culture figures as more than a foil to the ambitions of courtly readers; indeed, beyond tolerating the third order, many medieval texts reveal the subtle ways bourgeois and mercantile values are appropriated and integrated into an evolving noble elite. Likewise, the text reveals moments of cultural domination, when bourgeois ambitions occasionally triumph, and when stagnant hierarchies are, at the very least questioned, and sometimes undermined, in the text.

This project has not been one seeking to make the case for parity between classes, or to reveal the revolutionary spirit of the medieval proletariat, for such a framework would prove anachronistic and indeed counterproductive. Rather, it has sought to trace a shift in attitudes and reception to mercantile values as *real* merchants, artisans, scribes, and what Teofilo Ruiz calls the "middling sorts" began to gain greater power and mobility in medieval Europe. As Ruiz notes, there was a significant shift in the twelfth and thirteenth century, "from a society in which values were to a large extent formulated and guided by a spiritual authority to a society in which, without abandoning religion or a

religious vocabulary, new values emerged from the earthly concerns of the middling sorts (including churchmen)" (10). For Ruiz, this phenomenon, emerging in Castile, was part of the beginning of a process that would sweep across Western Europe, "without fully overthrowing Christian culture—and lead to the emergence of the 'rational state' in the early modern period" (10). The *laicization* of Europe, the movement from Church's time to merchant's time brought the changes we find reflected (and perhaps promoted) in the medieval text, where there is a gradual acceptance and *negotiation* of the value of commerce in the face of unstoppable change:

> That the middling sorts frequented the royal court; that urban militias were led and manned by merchants, artisans, and city dwellers; that important ecclesiastical positions began to be dominated by these same social groups; that as merchants they traveled abroad and transacted business in the great textile and financial centers of northern Europe; that their children began to attend universities from the late twelfth century onward—these are only some of the most obvious changes that took place. The middling sorts served as powerful locomotives for shifts in values. (Ruiz 21-22)

To some extent, courtly literature resists depicting this gradual influence of the third order in the courts, universities, and Church, but many texts featuring mercantile communities provide an outlet for grappling with the shift in values introduced by the vast commercial success of the thirteenth century. This shift is even more evident in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Italy, where, as we have seen in chapter four, the

merchant elite sought to integrate the best of noble and mercantile culture in their education, practices, and history. The transcription and translation of Old French texts in a hybrid language to suit a new readership is one form of integration, where Italian nobility and the mercantile elite produced texts which combined values from both aristocratic and mercantile communities. In his study of fifteenth-century mercantile libraries that were often populated with philosophical and early humanist writings, as well as Old French and Franco-Italian courtly texts, Christian Bec observes how mercantile texts eventually reflected a desire to combine elements of both noble and mercantile cultures, where, "la motivazione profonda della nuova prassi (per non chiamarla etica) dei mercanti, la ragione stessa delle loro azioni, è il profitto, l' 'utile,' come essi lo chiamano, spesso abbinando questo termine a quello di 'onore'" (272) [the profound motivation of the new practice (rather than call it ethics) of merchants, the very reason for their actions, is profit, the 'useful,' as they call it, often combining this term with that of 'honor']. Here honor and profit exist in tandem, eventually displacing older structures which had ordered European society for centuries. Just as Ruiz observes in Castilian lay society, in Italy Bec observes a similar shift away from a world-view ordered by the church, towards one that is structured by profit and loss, ultimately displacing societal structures that had previously subordinated the commercial to the spiritual and to the noble.[194]

[194] "Ma sopratutto questo ruolo assegnato alla Fortuna – che dunque, malgrado gli sforzi dei teologi e dei predicatori, si sostituisce alla Provvidenza Cristiana – implica un nuovo modo di guardare all'universo. Nella mentalità dei mercanti, una visione umana – per non dire umanistica – si sostituisce ad una visione teocentrica del mondo. Inoltre, il concetto di Fortuna, pur implicando il riconoscimento dei limiti imposti all'attività umana, sottende però anche la liberta iniziativa dell'individuo all'interno di tali limiti. Infine, prender coscienza dell'instabilità della Fortuna significa cogliere il corso degli eventi e contemporaneamente cercare di far fronte all'incessante trasformazione del reale con azioni sollecite ed

Little by little, this movement towards greater valuation of commerce and its attendant values, which is implicit in the medieval text, becomes explicit during the Enlightenment. In turn, one can find echoes of this discourse at the root of modern attitudes towards commerce and capitalism as well. Montesquieu's commentary on the subject of commerce in *De l'esprit des lois* (1755) can be read as a culmination of an economic philosophy seeking to rehabilitate the place of mercantilism in society.[195] For Montesquieu, *doux commerce* offers a number of benefits to the nation-state, one of which is a cultural hybridity that is achieved through trade, where cultures can make peaceful connections between nations. In turn, nations benefit from exposure to the customs and traditions of others, integrating the best practices from their trading partners (Book XX, Chapter 1).

The spirit of commerce also brings equality among people, for where there is too much wealth, one finds damaging inequalities. For Montesquieu, mercantilism brings numerous benefits to society: "C'est que l'esprit de commerce entraîne avec soi celui de frugalité, d'économie, de modération, de travail, de sagesse, de tranquillité, d'ordre et de règle" (Book V, Chapter 6) [It's such that the spirit of commerce brings with it a spirit of frugality, economy, moderation, hard work, knowledge, tranquility, order and law]. Indeed, according to Enlightenment apologists for commerce and nascent ideas of

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energiche" (Bec 271) [But above all, this role assigned to Fortune—which however, despite the efforts of theologians and preachers, replaced Christian Providence—entailed a new way of viewing the world. In the merchant mentailty, a human vision—if not humanistic—was substituted for a theocentric vision of the world. In addition, the concept of Fortune, while implying a recognition of the limits imposed on human activity, also implies, however, the free will of the individual within such limits. Finally, to become aware of the instability of Fortune is to grasp the course of events and simultaneously seek to face the unstoppable transformation of reality with prompt and energetic action].

[195] While the subject of commerce and exchange is woven throughout his analysis, in books XX—XXII of *L'Esprit des lois* Montesquieu brings particular attention to the subject of commerce, economy, and money, outlining the benefits to international trade, banking, and resource management for a healthy nation.

capitalism, the practice demands that everyone work and participate in conserving and acquiring, naturally promoting these positive qualities, which were once considered the lower realm of the humble bourgeois and the crude merchant. Naturally, Montesquieu concludes that the practice of commerce is inconsistent with that of nobility, separating realms which may not have been so segregated in practice.[196]

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, commerce promotes peaceful exchange. For Montesquieu, "L'effet naturel du commerce est de porter à la paix. Deux nations qui négocient ensemble se rendent réciproquement dépendantes" (Book XX, 2) [The natural effect of commerce is to lead to peace. Two nations who trade with one another make themselves mutually dependent upon one another]. This sentiment is echoed in the passage used in the epigraph to this chapter as well, where Montesquieu emphasizes the manners which are altered and calmed by trade, where reasonable minds prevail in the interest of profit. Mirroring medieval texts which present us with ever helpful and sympathetic merchants, early modern theorists likewise envisioned a world in which the market produced "a more 'polished' human type—more honest, reliable, orderly, and disciplined, as well as more friendly and helpful, ever ready to find solutions to conflicts and a middle ground for opposed opinions" (*Rival* 109). Like the useful Daire of *Floire et Blancheflor*, or Geoffrey de Salindres in *Enfances Vivien*, the merchant came to be idealized more openly as economic philosophers contemplated new ways to improve the nation.

And yet, this shared portrait of commerce is a philosophical ideal, based on a popular idea of commerce, and the merchant, who has fully been rehabilitated in the eyes

[196] See Montesquieu, (Book XX, 21-22).

of society. As Albert Hirschman has demonstrated, the idea of interest and moneymaking came to be gradually revered in Western culture after centuries of it being perceived as negative. The earliest mentions of *interest* and its constant pairing with the *passions* derives from a Machiavellian world view that passions can be deterred only through appeal to another, lesser sin. Thus avarice becomes softened, and the vice of moneymaking becomes a way to avoid the greater passions such as violence and lust. Indeed, Hirschman notes that over time, "the term 'interests' actually carried—and therefore bestowed on money-making—a *positive* and *curative* connotation deriving from its recent close association with the idea of a more enlightened way of conducting human affairs, private as well as public" (*Passions* 42).[197] As with the merchant communities in the medieval text, it was viewed that when individuals worked together for their own interest (financial or otherwise), it benefitted the greater community, just it was expected that "the expansion of domestic trade would create more cohesive communities while foreign trade would help avoid wars between them" (*Passions* 52). Ideals once valued by courtly culture—primarily glory in love and war—were displaced with a desire for the rational drive towards financial gain, where the personal investment in one's material interests was innocent, or even innocuous.[198]

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[197] Part of this legitimization process undoubtedly began in the Middle Ages as well. For Ruiz, working with Jacques Le Goff's inquiry into the birth of Purgatory, makes the observation that "Whether or not the idea of purgatory predated the twelfth century, and whether or not it was thought of as a space before that date, the important development for our purpose is the nexus of death, purgatory, wills, the notion of defined space, and property […] since masses and charity cost money, purgatory also legitimized the middling sorts' pursuit of material possessions. Property could now be 'sanctified' in the negotiation for salvation" (28).

[198] See Hirschman's reading of Montesquieu, Adam Smith, David Hume, and others who sought to rehabilitate commerce, where, "The very contempt in which economic activities were held led to the conviction, in spite of much evidence to the contrary, that they could not possibly have much potential in any area of human endeavor and were incapable of causing either good *or evil* on a grand scale. In an age

Thus trade came to represent a peaceful, idealized alternative to the European wars of religion and conflicts that plagued the continent, as well as the ongoing struggle for Mediterranean supremacy (and beyond) that brought European nations into conflict with the Ottoman empire. Paradoxically, however, a wealth of research demonstrates that the historical merchant often encountered and provoked violence on the trade route, sometimes with other merchants from rival city-states, as was often the case with Venice and Genoa, for example.[199] Nor were merchants above dipping into mercenary or pirate activities, as numerous sources attest. Hirschman notes this paradox in premodern France as well, where the use of *doux commerce* seems a "strange aberration for an age when the slave trade was at its peak and when trade in general was still a hazardous, adventurous, and often violent business" (*Passions* 62). Later critics of capitalism and these contradictory attitudes of the Enlightenment more broadly have shown that for commerce's promise as a civilizing agent, countries still wage wars, atrocities are committed, and in place of the liberty promised by a free market, the modern state has fostered ever tighter control over the individual.

Diverging somewhat from Hirschman's view that this shift began only in the fifteenth century, I would assert rather that by the eighteenth century this evolution has come full circle, putting into essays and philosophical tracts attitudes about "mercantilism" that were implicitly stated, centuries earlier, in the medieval text. This

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in which men were searching for ways of limiting the damage and horrors they are wont to inflict on each other, commercial and economic activities were therefore looked upon more kindly not because of any rise in the esteem in which they were held; on the contrary, any preference for them expressed a desire for a vacation from (disastrous) greatness, and thus reflected continuing contempt" (*Passions* 58-9).

[199] Freddy Thiriet's study, for example, provides a monumental study of Venetian identity, both in commerce and in war, while Molly Greene's more recent study (2010) examines the porous boundaries between devotion, commerce, and piracy in the individuals circulating around the Early Modern Mediterranean.

study has explored some of the reasons the trope of the helpful merchant has formed in the Middle Ages, serving both those who are seeking to advance socially, as well as those contending with an ever-powerful bourgeoisie. Indeed, for the nobleman (and perhaps the majority of authors in the Middle Ages depicting merchant communities), this mercantile utopia served to curb any true (and violent) fantasies of dominance. As Hirschman keenly observes of Montesquieu, this vantage point was easy to take for an educated nobleman *who was not actually engaged in commerce*: "This idea that had seemed so obvious to those who observed money-making activities from a distance and with some disdain was coupled, as we have seen, with the equally comforting thought that the 'lower orders,' or the 'great mob of mankind,' have only interests to pursue and have little time or taste for the passions" (*Passions* 125). Thus just as much as the figurative world of commerce allows audiences to envision a world opposed to the cultural center that can affect cultural change, and where peaceful exchange provides opportunities to circumvent violence, it can likewise serve to perpetuate a discourse where those culturally dominant centers continue to profit from the tireless exchanges at the root of its economic system.

My hope is that this study has shown that the roots of this way of thinking and these cultural categories run much deeper into the European past than many have assumed, predating a time in the seventeenth and eighteenth century when it was finally ripe for political philosophers to speak explicitly in favor of commerce in connection with national identity, wellbeing, and profit. These philosophies persist today, where commerce is still envisioned as a civilizing agent in the world, and globalization a means of combatting terrorism and violence in far-off countries. As we encounter these

discussions in our own historical moment, it is useful to consider the medieval origins of this conversation, its connection to the vast Mediterranean spaces of encounter, and the complex political fantasies driving the depiction of perfect mercantile heterotopias.

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