

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF LOVE:
THE NEGATION OF THE SUBJECT
IN MYSTICISM AND TROUBADOUR
FIN' AMORS

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation compares the works of select troubadours with three mystical tracts in order to present the similarities found in these two literary traditions. Mystical writings have a far longer history reaching into antiquity and continuing until the present day. The traces in the manuscript traditions situate in the late eleventh century a new poetic form in Occitan with a focus on earthly love. The love as it is described in the songs of the composers who write or sing about it comes to be called *bon amors* or *fin' amors*, the term we use today to name the love of the troubadour tradition. The period of lyrical production in Occitan by troubadours speaking of *fin' amors* does not endure more than three centuries if we begin our count with Guilhem IX (1071-1126) and close with the poet so often called the last of the troubadours, Guiraut Riquier (1254-1292). These two traditions of love literature are thus distinguished by the nature of their literary histories and also by the loves they describe. Despite this, the shape of the loves they discuss as well as the language used to speak about love are not so different.

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INTRODUCTION

This study will explore new ways we can account for this sameness. I propose that though the love objects of troubadours and mystics are worlds apart—one found in the beyond and of a divine nature, the other found here on earth and all too human—the two *érotiques*, or ways of loving, do in fact share a common structure. I suggest that the similarities in the literature of mystics and troubadours can be explained most of all by the fact that both groups share a common understanding of the self and the common goal of dismantling the self before a superior being.

A shared vocabulary of images, notions, and linguistic features sets out the connection. The first section of the dissertation will introduce the discourse of these two traditions as that of the fragile self. Part two will analyze how these images, ideas, and language are used to destabilize the centered self in the work of various troubadours, including Jaufré Rudel, Arnaut de Marueilh, Falquet de Romans, and Bernart de Ventadorn. Part three will look at these same elements in the works of the mystics Angela da Foligno, Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete. The dissertation demonstrates how the negation of the self within the experience of love can account for the sameness in texts in two different love traditions.

The idea of love as transformative is shared by both *érotiques*. In both discourses love has the capacity to better the lover. In troubadour lyric just as in mystical literature it is suggested that through love one should come to resemble the beloved in qualities and character. Both the courtly as well as the religious authors here consider love a powerful force that takes over a willing or unwilling subject. Love is spoken of at once as an act and as a supreme being, or God.

Body parts flee the subject to join the beloved in the images of these authors. At times the subject simply loses parts of the body. Also body parts are willingly given to the beloved as a token of the lover, most notably the heart. At times the heart is imagined as housed inside the beloved, and at times the beloved is imagined to be inside the lover. Both of these images can be evoked within a single work. The image of the lover as an empty vessel before the beloved is also common to both troubadours and mystics. I shall explore the reasons for the shared imagery and vocabulary.

Subject and Self in Comparing Troubadours and Mystics

This dissertation will look to the common notion of subject or self that structures the thinking of both troubadours and mystics. In general “self” and “subject,” and for medieval texts even “soul,” designate the same entity. However, while I use the “self” to refer to the entity itself, the being, I generally use the term “subject” to highlight the self as considered from outside, either by the self through a sort of imaginary mirror, or by another. In this way my use of the term “subject” functions as it does in philosophy by designating the self-consciousness or self-reflexive I who thinks of him or herself. My understanding of selfhood is certainly influenced by my readings of Augustine, medieval mystical and theological writings, and modern writers from psychology, neuroscience, and anthropology. However, for the purposes of this work it is primarily the authors studied here who guide the way through the labyrinth of speaking the self—its construction and deconstruction. The significance of my debt to these authors and the way they work to underpin my thinking will be addressed in Part I.

Each of the authors, troubadours and mystics, suggests that the self is an entity constructed through time and comprised of various parts including the body, the mind or mental

functions, and the emotions or spirit or *cor*, *arma*, and *esperitz*. Each one of these sites represents a possible home for the situation of the subject, and yet at the same time presents a site for the subversion of the subject, as none of these alone can fully explain the unity of the self to the subject. The constructed nature of the self, and the definition of each element, as it is understood by both the mystics and troubadours, will be the subject of the first chapter of this dissertation.

As noted earlier, both mystics and troubadours present the self as fragile and capable of being weakened by outside forces. Also, both suggest that the best way to love and to reach the idolized loved one is to destroy the self. Each author treated here has conceived a process of self-elimination, that is, through creating works with particular images, ideas, and words mystics and troubadours have created a mechanism for dislodging the body, the mind, and the emotions from the frame of the unified self. Each part of the self can then be used to weaken the solidity of the subject. While flagellants and ascetics prioritize the bodily in their attempts to destroy the self, the authors in this study at times refer to the body as enemy to themselves or to their union with the beloved. The emotions obviously play a large role. Desire, the expression of will, lies at the heart of the self and is, paradoxically, a great obstacle to union with the beloved. Both troubadours and mystics explicitly say that the will of the lover must be in complete accord with the will of the beloved or love does not truly exist. While the term *fin' amors* appears in troubadour lyric it is interesting to note that the mystical writer Marguerite Porete, like other religious writers before her, adopted the words to describe the love between religious practicante and God. In all of the authors studied here the way the mind works, the role of language and thinking in the construction, and deconstruction, of the self is peculiar and yet common to each of them. Imagining and contemplating the image of the beloved is one means of reaching the

beloved in the *érotiques* of both troubadour and mystic. For both, language is often said to become inadequate, even meaningless, when faced with the great qualities of the beloved or the experience of love. Language also seems less a means of expressing an experience and more a means of constituting that experience. In this way these images, ideas, and words function within the framework of a type of desire or love that makes use of words to reach the goal of destroying the self.

Previous Scholarship

The first brief discussions that brought together the realms of the religious and the courtly song did so predominantly in hopes of arriving at a definitive declaration of origin for the courtly lyric of the troubadours. Already in the nineteenth century scholars were eager to discover where courtly love originated many focusing their attention on the troubadours. While some scholars suggested that popular song was at the origin of troubadour lyric¹, others² like Guido Errante detailed the structural and rhythmic features³ that found their way from the liturgy into the songs of the troubadours; though he does also speak of the possibility that a musical feature

¹ Those who were most interested in popular forms of poetry were Friedrich Diez, Joseph Bédier, and Ramon Menéndez Pidal.

² Others who focused on the relation between latin sources were Edmond Faral, R. Bezzola, and Dimitri Scheludko. Edmond Faral, *Recherches Sur Les Sources Latines des Contes et Romans Courtois du Moyen Âge* (Paris: É. Champion, 1913). Reto R. Bezzola. *Les origines et la formation de la littérature courtoise en Occident (500-1200)*. Paris: É. Champion, 1944. Dimitri Scheludko. "Religiöse Elemente im weltlichen Liebeslied der Trobadors." *Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur* LIX (1935): 402-21.

³ What he calls the "sviluppi propriamente tecnici," [completely technical developments] Guido Errante, *Marcabru E Le Fonti Sacre Dell'antica Lirica Romanza* (Firenze, Italy: G. C. Sansoni, 1948) 106.

“prende radici da forze profondamente e universalmente sentite, che invadono tutta la *sfera dell'espressione*.”⁴ On the other hand, Gay-Crosier who is also concerned with the question of origins, decides to move away from the scholars who were preoccupied with specific borrowings saying, “I have preferred to emphasize the term sphere of influence rather than the traditional one of source, since the former implies the strict avoidance of any one rigid approach or point of view.”⁵ Instead, Gay-Crosier simply feels the language of one world can glide and slip into the discourse of another.⁶ He suggests that troubadours heard the language and the themes of mysticism for which he says, “the troubadours had a ready ear.”⁷ Gay-Crosier admits his is not more than an introduction to the religious elements found in troubadour lyric and he outlines the topic with broad strokes which it would be hard to refute. He claims that troubadour songs call to mind mysticism because mystical ideas were in the air and troubadours adapted them for their own lyric. Not unlike Errante and Gay-Crosier, Diego Zorzi sifts through the lyric of troubadours in search of explicit references to religious phenomena. His is a morphologically-based study that stands on concrete examples, but it does not explain *why* it is songs that do not refer explicitly to religion remind listeners, medieval and modern, of the love for God.⁸ The

⁴ Take root with a profound force felt universally that permeates the whole *realm of expression*. Errante, *Marcabru E Le Fonti Sacre Dell'antica Lirica Romanza* 109. Errante might be willing to speak of influence in broader, general terms of “sfera dell’espressione,” on occasion.

⁵ Raymond Gay-Crosier, *Religious Elements in the Secular Lyrics of the Troubadours* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1971) 11.

⁶ Gay-Crosier 99.

⁷ Gay-Crosier 90.

⁸ Diego Zorzi, *Valori Religiosi Nella Letteratura Provenzale: La Spiritualità Trinitaria*, Pubblicazioni. 44, ed. Cuore Università cattolica del Sacro (Milano: Vita e pensiero, 1954).

studies in this category are brief and have not explained why people sense some tie between two discourses about love whose love objects are so different.

Given the preoccupations scholars had with elements outside of the texts in question—an interest in origin, hopes of tracing direct influence, and the like— it is no wonder that many scholars are uncomfortable with the idea of a connection between religious love and *fin' amors*. Joseph Anglade refutes the possibility of religious influence at the origins of courtly love saying, “La religion n’eut point de part à la naissance de la poésie lyrique provençale.”⁹ Anglade cannot accept that the two could be related for the message of *fin' amors*, its end, is simply too far from the Christian goal. This is the very problem that led Etienne Gilson to speak of sacrilege:

En fait, pour commencer par le plus évident, l'amour courtois est
une conception ‘mondaine’ de l'amour. Il s’adresse à des créatures,
et s’il était vrai qu’il fût une divinisation de la femme, il serait aux
yeux d'un Cistercien une caricature de l'amour divin, la plus
horrible déformation de l'amour sacré bref un sacrilège.¹⁰

Because the ends were not the same, the nature of the desire or love was completely unrelated, “C’est vraiment la nature même de l’amour qui est en jeu.”¹¹ And indeed never the twain shall meet for Gilson:

⁹ Religion was not involved in the birth of provençal lyrical poetry. Joseph Anglade, *Le Troubadour Guiraut Riquier; Étude Sur La Décadence de L'ancienne Poésie Provençale* (Bordeaux: Feret, 1905) 83.

¹⁰ In fact, to begin with the most obvious point, Courtly Love is an earthly conception of love. It addresses itself to earthly creatures, and if it were true that it were a divinisation of the woman, it would be, in the eyes of the Cistercian, a caricature of divine love, the most horrible deformation of sacred love, in short, a sacrilege. Etienne Gilson, *La Théologie Mystique de Saint Bernard*, *Etudes de Philosophie Médiévale* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1934) 195.

L'amour courtois et la conception cistercienne de l'amour mystique
sont donc deux produits indépendants de la civilisation du XIIe
siècle ; nés dans des milieux différents.¹²

A different approach attempted to leave behind the cumbersome preoccupation with specific points of reference and transmission and instead sought to examine the thematic similarities between *fin' amors* and the mystic's love of God. For Myrrha Lot-Borrodine the language and experience of sacred love and that of profane love are “deux puissances, fraternelles et rivales,” that together carry on a “marche ascendante jusqu'à la fusion ultime.”¹³ In fact, she suggests that secular literary production in twelfth-century France moves from the narrative genres to the lyrical in this push ever upward to purification. The “roman courtois, et avec lui toute la poésie du Moyen Age, ...s'efforce d'épurer le sentiment au nom d'un idéal”¹⁴ and the “service provençal” is part of a divine project, saying that the service of the troubadours: “part d'un principe purement spiritual: de l'amour... Cette refonte de l'être sensible semble promouvoir *l'amour comme instrument humain du plan divin sur la création*.”¹⁵ What allows for the sense that something ties troubadour lyric to mystical experience is then explained by

¹¹ It is truly the nature of love itself that is in question Gilson, *Théologie mystique* 203.

¹² Courtly Love and the Cistercian conception of mystical love are thus two independent products of twelfth-century civilization, born in different milieux. Gilson, *Théologie mystique* 215.

¹³ Two fraternal and rival forces...upward march until the final union. Myrrha Lot-Borrodine, *De L'amour Profane À L'amour Sacré* (Paris: Librairie Nizet, 1979) xii.

¹⁴ Courtly romance, and with it all poetry of the Middle Ages... attempts to purify the sensibilities in the name of an ideal. Lot-Borrodine 43.

¹⁵ Italics mine. Departs from the purely spiritual beginning, that of love... This recasting of the sensitive self seems to propose love as the *human instrument of the divine plan over creation*. Lot-Borrodine 47.

deciding that the lyrics of the troubadours were in fact a part of a divine plan to make creation better. The troubadours are stripped of the ownership of their lyric in order for it to fit into a paradigm of divine love.

While previous scholarship may have left the likes of Anglade and Gilson unconvinced, this dissertation will narrow its focus to the texts themselves, the language that is common to both troubadours and mystics. My goal is to do so to demonstrate that it is a common sense of self— a common belief in its construction and deconstruction— that provides resonances between the words written by worldly troubadours and pious mystics.

Current Scholarship

More recent discussions that bring together Christian thinkers and troubadours have also focused on the thematics of love and desire. The Lacanian Charles Baladier published a book entitled, *L'érôs au moyen âge: désir et delectation morose*, which addresses the possibility that the tradition of the troubadours parallels that of theology in that they both “se rejoignent dans une certaine façon d’envisager le rapport du plaisir et du désir.”¹⁶ Generally speaking, pleasure is a product of desiring itself rather than the consummation of a desire. He claims, as I do, that the structure of desire in both troubadours and mystics is the same regardless of the difference in love object and this because of the nature of desire: “Pour le désir lui-même, il n’a d’objet que nécessairement médiatisé par le fantasme, c’est à dire qu’il n’a pas d’objet qui parvienne à être

¹⁶ Are tied together in a way by their way of understanding the relationship between pleasure and desire. Charles Baladier, *Erôs Au Moyen Âge: Amour, Désir Et Délectation Morose* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1999) 9.

autre chose qu'un semblant d'être, un 'par'être.'''¹⁷ The point of comparison no longer resides on the level of the word alone. However, perhaps because of this, Baladier does not examine what troubadours actually say with any rigor. For Baladier the message of the troubadours is the same as that of monastic theologians, and yet different, because:

les troubadours, en effet, semblent vouloir réintégrer dans leur
célébration de l'amour de l'homme pour la femme les commentaires
par lesquels les auteurs monastiques, spécialistes débridés de
l'allégorie, avaient détourné de leur sens littéral les versets de
l'épithalame biblique attribué à Salomon. Il s'agissait, pour ces poètes
laïques, de rendre en toute justice à Erôs ce qui lui revient.¹⁸

The troubadours thus "literalize" what the monastic authors had rendered allegorical but Baladier also suggests that, "des chants courtois semble dès lors se donner pour mission d'explicitier les latences et de compléter les lacunes de ces écrits scolastiques touchant l'amour humain."¹⁹ He suggests, much like Lot-Borodine that, "la fin' amor ne serait donc autre chose qu'une forme laïcisée et portée à son paroxysme de la délectation morose dont débattait la théologie morale au

¹⁷ For desire itself, there is no object but necessarily mediated through fantasy, that is to say, there is never an object that can ever be anything more than a seeming-to-be, a "through-being." Baladier 20. The placement of par before être allows at once for the idea of a being made through something to emerge and also calls to mind the word paraître which means to dissemble or seem.

¹⁸ The troubadours, in fact, seemed to want to resituate into their celebration of the love of a man for a woman the commentaries that the monastic authors, unbridled specialists of allegory, had, for example, perverted from the literal meaning of the wedding verses of Solomon. It is a question, for these secular poets, of returning, in full justice, to Eros that which belongs to it. Baladier 175.

¹⁹ The courtly love song seems then to have given itself the mission of rendering explicit the subliminal and of filling in the holes in those scholastic texts with touch on human love. Baladier 175.

début du XIIe siècle.”²⁰ But Baladier offers no reason why the troubadours did produce a “laicized” version of monastic and scholastic concepts.

In his article, “A Martyr to Love: Sacrificial Desire in the Poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn,” Simon Gaunt, like Baladier, suggests that the lyric of Bernart de Ventadorn smacks of religiosity because of the nature of desire expressed in his lyrics. He too makes much of Jacques Lacan’s description of desire and self, “it is less the worship of the lady (what Marrou calls *le culte de la dame*) that gives the lyric its quasi-religious flavor, than the importance of sacrifice, or what one might call, following Louise O. Fradenberg, sacrificial desire.”²¹ This is a very promising avenue to follow. Ultimately however, Gaunt thinks the conflation of the religious and the secular in the work of the troubadour tradition is to be explained by a different sensibility of the division between sacred and profane. In fact, Bernart’s words are not to be taken as meaningful or as part of a coherent pattern that expresses a particular sentiment or state of being; instead, Gaunt calls Bernart’s sacrifice “disingenuous”, a “disingenuous sacrificial gift of himself.”²² And this ritualized gifting is performed so that he might be recognized, seen by the Other, “Paradoxically, the act of self-effacement in the face of the Other’s desire that sacrifice entails is precisely what guarantees the subject the recognition he or she craves...”²³ For this he cites the following lines from “Per melhs cobrir lo mals pes e’l cossire,” “I am my lady’s man

²⁰ *Fin’ amor* would be nothing other than the laicized form and one taken to its fullest of that “delectation morose” about which moral theology debated at the beginning of the twelfth century. Baladier 185.

²¹ Simon Gaunt, “A Martyr to Love: Sacrificial Desire in the Poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31.3 (2001): 482.

²² Gaunt, “A Martyr” 490.

²³ Gaunt, “A Martyr” 491.

and friend and servant, and I do not ask for any other type of friendship except that she turn her beautiful eyes toward me, for they do me great good when I suffer.” But Gaunt’s conclusion is a statement that counters everything that Bernart says about being a lover. Bernart claims that he does not “crave” but his Lady or even more precisely what his Lady would want from him:

Bona domna, re no·us deman	Good Lady, I ask nothing of you
Mas que·m prendatz per servidor,	But that you take me as your servant,
Qu’e·us servirai com bo señor,	That I might serve you as a good lord,
Cossi que del gazardo m’an. ²⁴	No matter the prize I obtain.

He has no subjectivity, no “I” when he looks upon her though his outer shell remains:

Cant eu la vei, be m’es parven	When I see her, it is noticeable
Als olhs, al vis, a la color,	In my eyes, in my face, in my color,
Car aissi tremble de paor	For I tremble with fear
Com fa la folha contra·l ven.	Like the leaf against the wind.
Non ai de sen per un efan,	I haven’t the sense of a child
Aissi sui d’amor empres. ²⁵	So much am I taken by love.

In order for Gaunt’s assessment to be true we have to assume that some of what Bernart says is true (that he craves recognition) and that some of it is not true (Bernart’s offers of sacrifice are “disingenuous”). This seems to me a dangerous game to play. This points to the

²⁴ Bernart de Ventadorn, “Non es meravelha,” ll. 49-52. *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons d'Amour*. Trans. And Ed. Moshe Lazar. Paris: Klincksieck, 1966. Carrefour Ventadour, 2001.

²⁵ “Non es meravelha” ll. 41-46.

crux of the issues implied in comparing troubadours and mystics. We read troubadours differently than we read mystics. When reading the accounts of spiritual ecstasy left by mystics we tend to believe, if not that the event(s) happened as recounted, that at least the subject believes it to be a literal, truthful retelling of a lived experience. When reading love poetry by troubadours readers often assume much of what is recounted is to be understood metaphorically and even ironically or as hyperbole. In fact Sarah Kay finds the “most characteristic tropes of troubadour composition” to be “irony and hyperbole; metaphor, metonymy and catachresis”²⁶ much in line with Simon Gaunt’s *Troubadours and Irony* published only a one year before Sarah Kay’s *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*. Like Gaunt, Kay finds Bernart’s descriptions of submission disingenuous or “unreal” in her terms, “The ‘religious’ metaphor, like the ‘feudal’ one, is ironic and ‘unreal’, an acknowledgement of a rhetorical convention.”²⁷

Instead, for the sake of argument, let us read the troubadours as we read the mystics. Allow the words to be meaningful rather than mere literary conventions. Allow the words a function in a process that is *fin’ amors*. It is clear that love is seen as a refining process; let us then accept that the utterances of troubadour songs speak of this process, perhaps even play a role in the process of refinement. When mystics claim life on earth is death and that to die would be to be born to a true life the reader assumes the writer believes in the truth of their words.

The notion of subjectivity led Gaunt and Kay to a treatment of the historical authors as self constructed, in opposition to the society in which he or she moved. In my case, the question

²⁶ Sarah Kay. *Subjectivity in Troubadour Poetry*. Cambridge studies in French. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 17.

²⁷ Kay, *Subjectivity* 118.

of poetic subjectivity will be studied on the level of the psychological rather than the social. I focus then on the individual's psychic transformation as reported by a lyrical piece or a text.

Fin' amors has its own views on life and death, submission, and desire. *Fin' amors* is the name given to the love of troubadours, especially those of the golden era of troubadour production in the twelfth century. When troubadours speak of the betterment love provides I suggest we resist the temptation to see this as only a reference to social climbing. Instead, I suggest we seek to determine what a literal understanding of love service, refinement through love, and loss of will in love might mean in the realm of *fin' amors*. One way to understand the language of betterment and refinement that permeates troubadour lyric is to recognize that the poet can be speaking of social standing. However, the social is not the only way they suggest a lover can be refined and it is not on the social that this dissertation will focus. This focus on the inner sense of self is also what accounts for the discrepancy between my own discussion of refinement, which is indeed a deconstructing and undoing of self, and that of C. Stephen Jaeger who, like Kay, is interested in the individual as inscribed within society.

When mystics claim to have lost the will and instead to live with abandonment or complete disregard for what the self would want, there is a consistency throughout the presentations of their experience. The same consistency can to some extent be found in the songs of the troubadours examined here. Rather than discrete hyperbolic statements about a lover's feelings both mystics and troubadours create a portrait of being and of loving that is completely coherent in its understanding of the lover as selfless.

Justification of the Corpus

The power of love to crush the lover is found in the lyrics of the both *trobairitz* and the troubadours. This study focuses on those poets whose works contain as full an image as possible of the lover. In general this meant working with poets who had a rather large corpus or whose few songs painted a very complete portrait of the lover. No other poet embodies the modern idea of what it means to be a troubadour suffering the *amor de lonh* more than Jaufré Rudel. He is studied here because the structure of the love relationship he presents seems to have served as model for the troubadours who follow him. Bernart de Ventadorn fills out this structural model. Arnaut de Marueilh and Falquet de Romans provide a very clear image of the troubadour self in all its precarity because Arnaut, like Bernart, left us a healthy collection of songs, and Falquet an intriguing account of the lover in slumber.

The imaginary, the role of envisioning or dreaming the beloved is tied to the notion of the fragmented self as the study of Falquet de Romans and Arnaut de Marueilh will clearly prove. The preoccupation with the gaze in the formation of the subject will be traced in the oeuvre of Jaufré Rudel. For all these poets the subjective stance is precarious. Each author in the first chapter of Part II demonstrates the fragile nature of the lover's self. And in each case too we find that this is a fundamental feature of their desire. It is this that gives them hope to arrive at union with their beloved. Yet, it is also desire that prevents these three from truly losing the self.

Bernart de Ventadorn comes much closer to mystical accounts of love or union, or experience of the beloved. He presents love as a state of selflessness and himself as a true *fin' amant*. The careful undoing or divesting of each element of selfhood in this poet-lover's work is

examined in chapter five. Each feature of selfhood presented in the first two chapters of the dissertation is a primal node in the structure of love as Bernart envisions it.

The troubadours never manage to lose the self entirely just as they never manage to arrive at the type of union for which they long. They remain forever caught in a cycle of desiring, even when the desire or will is not their own, but their *domna*'s. As the notion of such behavior is calqued on the structure of desire or will proposed by Augustine in which the subject should align his desire with the divine, this troubadour adaptation does not reach high enough, far enough: it can be called perverse in layman's words. However, this structure of vassal to the *domna* with the will that binds them being the sole property of the *domna* allows the layman's term perversion to coincide with Lacan's idea of perversion. In perversion, "the subject locates himself as object of the drive, as the means of the other's *jouissance* (S 11, 185)...The pervert assumes the position of the object-instrument of the "will-to-enjoy" (*volonté de jouissance*).²⁸ Troubadours ultimately arrive at the stage of annihilation equivalent to perversion without ever reaching the transcendental state of mystics.

From the beginning it was clear that there is a great distinction in the nature of the lyrics produced by troubadours and their northern imitators. While the beginnings of the troubadour tradition, as with the beginning of any literary tradition, the authors have the sense of freedom and experimentation that allows the product to be read as the result of an author's choice. Once a genre is well established, a formula restricts the author's choices. The written product is a collaboration between a tradition with its formulae and an author who makes his mark working within the confines a tradition implies. As suggests the title of his tome, *La technique poétique*

²⁸ Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (Routledge UP: New York, 1996) 139. See "Kant avec Sade" in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, vol. II (1971) 119-148.

des trouvères dans la chanson courtoise, Roger Dragonetti's readings of the *trouvères* are grounded in the notion that the corpus is a series of motifs and formulae composed with a single "technique poétique" that can produce the unique "chanson courtoise" of the *trouvères*. This is the lesson he learns from reading the *trouvère* corpus as he explains in *La Musique et les lettres*, "La lecture de l'abondante production des chansons courtoises du XIIIe siècle nous montre que les motifs lyriques précédemment analysés sont presque constamment repris et traités sinon tout à fait dans le même esprit, du moins selon la même phraséologie. On peut donc s'attendre à rencontrer chez la plupart des trouvères du XIIIe siècle, les formules lyriques les plus traditionnelles..."²⁹ The *trouvères* are in some ways speaking as much about an inherited literary tradition as they are love or the lady. It is in large for this reason that the *trouvère* are not examined here. Another area that the dissertation cannot encompass is that of performance. Because my focus is on lyrical production I will leave for other studies discussions of *joglaría* or the actual performance and reception of the troubadour lyrics discussed.

The *trobairitz* take part in the formation of the *fin' amors* tradition and in fact, as Peter Dronke notes, Occitan is one of the two European languages of the twelfth century to have communicated female thoughts in writing (the other language being Latin).³⁰ However, despite this wealth of female textual representation from the period of *fin' amors* the amount of material left by any single female composer did not provide a complete image of self-negation. There are approximately 2,500 songs composed by troubadours while the number of lyrics by *trobairitz*

²⁹ Roger Dragonetti, *La Musique et les lettres* (Geneva, Switzerland: Droz, 1986) 25.

³⁰ Peter Dronke, *Women Writers of the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984) 84.

varies from twenty-three to forty-nine according to the criteria of editors and other scholars.³¹ Because no single *trobairitz* offers a particularly extensive corpus which would lend itself to offering up repeated themes and syntactical constructions, the presentation of the Occitan tradition of *fin' amors* that is presented here is limited to the male troubadours. As Matilda Bruckner has said, the task of determining whether the *trobairitz* are practicing the very techniques of the troubadours is not simple, "If we would join the lyric's public of connoisseurs, it will be equally important to appreciate where the *trobairitz* do what troubadours do and where they do not, even if sometimes it may be difficult to tell the difference."³² The extant works of the *trobairitz* do not focus on discussions of self, will, dismemberment, and complete disintegration of self. Perhaps one of the reasons this is the case has to do with the unknown (perhaps unknowable) process by which the songs of *trobairitz* were lost. It seems likely that more *trobairitz* songs were composed than we possess today. It also seems possible that the process meant the protection of certain types of songs rather than others. For example, many of the texts we have today that have a female author from the Occitan *fin' amors* tradition are not *cansos* but debate poems like *tensos* and *partimens*. The *tensos* and *partimens* are poems in which at least two poets debate two opposing views on a given topic—in the *tenso* the issue is proposed by the first speaker who allows the interlocutor to choose which side he wishes to defend while in the *partimen* the poets seemingly defend what they truly believe. While the *canso* is an ideal vehicle for exploring the destruction of the self in the love process, the debate

³¹ Liz Bogin's edition includes the fewest number in an edition focusing on *trobairitz* with her inclusion of twenty-three poems, *The Women Troubadours* (New York: Norton and Co., 1980). William Paden finds forty-nine songs to have been the work of female troubadours in *The Voice of the Trobairitz* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

³² From the introduction to *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, ed. Matilda Tomaryn Bruckner, Laurie Shepard, and Sarah White, (New York: Garland, 1995) xii.

poem genres are a place where one should be crushing the opponent and coming out glorious and strong. The purpose of the *canso* in many cases is to destroy the self in an act of sacrifice to the beloved while the objective of the debate song is to destroy the opponent's reputation while bolstering the ego.

Given the parameters I have set for myself meant detouring not only the works of *trobairitz*, female composers of love lyric in romance, and male mystics who wrote in Latin, but in the process, this circumvents or at least changes the demarcations of the very interesting domain of gender in the comparison of *fin' amors* and mysticism. The significance of gender in the production of lyrics of love is not, however, completely irrelevant for, as we shall see, the loss of self includes a step in which all identifiable markers or creators, meaning-makers, of selfhood are rejected. In keeping with the focus of the dissertation, the focus is not on the experience of the author as such but on the text's self, the self that would come into being were the text to effect its changes in subjectivity on a subject.³³

While there are many mystics who produce interesting linguistic accounts of loss of self, the dissertation will focus only on three: Angela of Foligno, Marguerite d'Oingt and Marguerite Porete. However, the references to others throughout the discussion demonstrate that many of those things discussed here can be found in other religious writers from other periods. These three female mystics were selected because they both expressed themselves in the vernacular of romance languages like our troubadours. They are also closer in proximity and dates than many of the other religious figures that could have been studied.

³³ An article on the nature of self as it functions in the *trobairitz* corpus is a future project I would like to pursue along with another study on the different proportions of *cansos* to debate song between *trobairitz* and troubadours.

Considering that this study is about the negation of self, the particularity of the notion of self and self-negation, my criteria for author selection was based on which troubadours had left us a relatively healthy compendium of songs and which amongst these seemed particularly interested in one of the elements of self or self-negation, though these elements seem to permeate all the lyrics of *fin' amors*.³⁴ When choosing mystics to include in this study it was difficult to not look to Teresa de Avila as she was a great fan of romances based on the notions of *fin' amors*. However, the centuries that separated her from the production of the troubadours made her a difficult candidate. Instead we will discuss another author also concerned with *fin' amors* explicitly, Marguerite Porete (d. Paris, 1310), who is both geographically and temporally closer to the world of *fin' amors* lyrics. While the dissertation has largely avoided the importance of influence and explicit borrowings in order to arrive at the why and wherefore of linguistic similarities, chapter seven broaches the subject of conscious calquing on the *fin' amors* of love lyric in Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer*. It is the annihilation of the will that most defines Marguerite's work and that likewise calls to mind the work of Bernart de Ventadorn. Both authors strive to arrive at a state where the will of the subject is completely annihilated. Ultimately Bernart still has a will, the will of his beloved that is still Other while Marguerite's simple annihilated soul arrives at annihilating, losing the personal will as a flame is lost in fire. The similarity between the two authors suggests most clearly that it is not the love-object that should concern us but the structure of desire within the loving subject.

³⁴ Any number of troubadours or *trobairitz* or even *trouvères* might have taken a place within the section on the troubadours. Indeed a different organization of the dissertation might have allowed for even more troubadours to be examined though there are discussions of quite a few who were not given a full chapter to themselves.

It is almost as if Marguerite Porete's work allows us to see what would happen if a *chansonnier* of Bernart de Ventadorn were found by a group of Beguines who wanted to use it as their guide to mystical ecstasy. Also, the images in Marguerite d'Oingt's *Speculum* so resemble those of Arnaut de Maruelh, the work of this Carthusian who also lived in the last half of the thirteenth century and who, like Marguerite Porete, died in 1310. She also left a number of letters allowing us to learn what she thought about the link between her experience, selfhood, and writing. The converted Angela da Foligno (d. 1309) might seem an odd choice given that her story is mediated by her confessor. However, the striking similarity between some of the images she describes and the way she explains images should be described in the process of self-negation recalls a number of troubadours who focus on the image of the beloved for meditative, self-altering reasons.

Outline of the Dissertation

Part I of the present work will outline the ideas of the self as constructed, the possibility of deconstructing the self, and the power of language and music to alter the self as they are described by the mystical and *fin' amors* traditions. It is inevitable that the understanding of a twenty-first-century reader will be colored by the vocabulary and ideas of all the intervening years. But as Paul Strohm suggests, "Analysis conducted on the text's own ground limits itself to what may be described as knowledgeable reiteration or "respectful doubling" of a text's

assumptions.”³⁵ Therefore in this dissertation the discussion of self and the way it is constructed and deconstructed reads as a single discourse woven of many strands of thought.

In chapter one I present the notion of self, outlining the elements of selfhood that will serve as the points of tension or activity in the deconstruction of the self as mentioned above. While chapter one demonstrates the belief in the self as a constructed and fragile entity, chapter two explores the reason mystics and even troubadours would want to destroy the self and how they have suggested this can be done. These two chapters provide a methodological and theoretical introduction to the study of the texts and music of the troubadours and mystics I will discuss in the second half of the dissertation.

For each of the chapters in the second half of the dissertation I begin with one element of selfhood that seems to stand at the center of the author’s concern. So many troubadours are what F.R.P. Akehurst calls “one-hit wonders” or have only a few songs left to us leaving the task of determining any sort of coherence in corpus or delineating driving themes or images particularly difficult. I focus on authors with extensive or particularly interesting oeuvre and so, as I mentioned above, have not included works by any of the female troubadours of the Occitan tradition, the *trobairitz*, though this is not to say their works are necessarily free of any or all of the features examined in the dissertation.³⁶ In chapter three I examine the role of imagining in a few troubadour authors, most especially Arnaut de Mareulh and Falquet de Romans. The corpus of Arnaut de Mareulh is voluminous which allows for a better grasp of the poet’s thinking, loving, and writing as a whole. His preoccupation with the mystical benefits of the practice of

³⁵ Strohm, Paul. *Theory and the Premodern Text* (Minneapolis: U of Minn P, 2000) 166.

³⁶ Indeed the examination of where to situate the language of the *trobairitz* within a study of the features examined here would be an intriguing project to undertake. To have done so here would have led us astray and I hope to see this work done by myself or someone else in the future.

the imagination and dreaming or envisioning the beloved can be traced throughout the breadth of his oeuvre. Falquet de Romans has a particularly charming and quite long account of what the experience of a lover's dream is like. It is intriguing in its depth of psychological reflection and its presentation of self as other and the paradox this implies. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate in what way contemplation, imagining, can lead a subject away from a solid sense of self, and in this instance, towards union with the beloved *domna*. The oeuvre of Bernart de Ventadorn is the subject of chapter five. Bernart's lyrics present a poet-lover intent on serving his lady and convinced of his own lack of worth when compared with the ideal woman. While Bernart refers to all elements of the self, I show that ultimately the *fin' amant* is most defined by the annihilation of the will.

The troubadour description of self and its relation to seeing, being seen, imagining, and contemplating in chapter three is a clear parallel to what we see at work in the texts studied in chapters five and six. The natural inclination to imagine and contemplate the beloved that the troubadours felt, became a cultivated practice for mystics and more orthodox religious. Chapters six and seven examine the way language and image are conflated in very different ways by Marguerite d'Oingt and Angela da Foligno. Chapter eight concludes the analyses of authors with a look at Marguerite Porete – an amazing woman whose work led her to be watched and so eventually condemned as a heretic. Most interesting for my purpose is her direct reference to the *fin' amors* of earthly lovers as they would be sung by *joglars* in lyrics or romances she seems to have known. Her own notion of will and the servitude and eventual annihilation of all and soul shows a remarkable similarity to the descriptions of the lover proposed by Bernart de Ventadorn. The conclusions offered at the end of the dissertation are a call to continue further study on the relation between poetics of experiences from different realm.

PART I: CONSIDERING THE SELF

The mystics and troubadours both consider the self a malleable entity comprised of, characterized by, or accessible through those sites in which human experience is lived, performed, or felt: *cor*, *arma*, and *esperitz*, physical embodiment; drives, will, emotions; and mental functions like imagination, memory, and reasoning.³⁷ This common foundational belief can help us understand why there is a similarity between the mystical and troubadour traditions. This project examines how we arrive at an understanding of a unified subject through a compounding of the elements of which the subject is comprised: the body, emotions, and mental functions including the production of language.

It is tempting to ascribe the seat of selfhood to its fundamental parts of body, mind, and emotions, but on occasion each of these in turn can seem other to the self. Troubadours speak of their own bodies as enemies, obstacles to their goals, in much the way the Christian ascetics, mystics, and theologians of the Middle Ages do. Ultimately, Bernart de Ventadorn and other troubadours problematize the body's situation in selfhood as much as did mystics who sought to denounce the bodily seat of selfhood. Clearly, the situation of self only becomes more difficult once the bodily foundation of the self has been thrown into doubt. The emotive aspects of being likewise become difficult to equate with a definition of the self, for the will can be weak, desire is built upon a lack—something outside the self, and generally the emotions seem to overtake the subject rather than constitute it; and finally love is at once the most self-rooted emotion and the most selfless as it seeks to bring self and other – two distinct entities— into a unique concord.

³⁷ This tripartite division corresponds loosely to Plato's three elements of the soul: the reasoning or mental (λογιστικόν- *logistikon*), the spirited or emotive (θυμοειδές- *thumoeides*), and the appetitive or corporal (ἐπιθυμητικόν - *epithumetikon*).

The imagination, reason, and memory are creations of a thinking subject and are fully dependent on both the embodied and emotive nature of human experience even if they imply interaction with an outside world. In the works of troubadours and mystics it is clear that the authors represent the body, the emotions, and the mind, as constituents of the self. In the words of both groups the description of the soul, the “I” or the self takes the form of an entity comprised of parts that come together in time to make a meaningful unified being. As they strive to reach the beloved, these sites, quintessential borders between self and other, are rendered problematic, then weak, then meaningless.

Modern readers will likely recognize the elements *cor*, *arma*, and *esperitz* that the authors in my dissertation considered the fundamental elements of self for they are the object of current investigations into subjectivity and self currently conducted in the disciplines of literary theory, neuroscience, philosophy, and various theories of reading and writing and literature itself.

If this study recognizes the similarities between the medieval authors’ ideas of self, subjectivity, and love as they appear in modern theoretical parlance, it is for two reasons: the formal or structural similarities themselves warrant mention already, and so many of the ideas of modern theorists have been inherited from the classical and especially medieval authors they studied. I do not consider my methodology to be born of modern theory. On the contrary I believe modern theory is born out of classical and medieval literature, philosophy, and pre-modern linguistic and literary theories. The resonances with psychoanalysis and other modern theoretical discourses found herein pay homage to the debt modern theory owes to the historical origins of so many of its precepts. Bruce Holsinger’s *The Premodern Condition* has convincingly argued that current trends in thought and in particular those developed from the thinkers of the sixties can be ascribed to a certain medievalism. He reminds us that many

theorists influential today were students of medieval studies and the middle of the twentieth century witnessed a “theoretic medievalism” which meant a return to medieval texts themselves but more importantly a re-transmission of medieval thought to modern readers in the form of “new” theories.³⁸ In a sense modern thinkers speak concepts that were proposed by medieval thinkers and have at times even been accepted as truth.³⁹

Finally, even without looking to a chain of influence from medieval authors to modern theorists one can always see the singular preoccupation with the notion of the self and the subject’s desire in particular as common feature of both our medieval authors and modern theory. This project will focus on the formal or structural similarities between troubadours and mystics. Similarities in expression of self and self-negation are to be considered as broad phenomena of the human experience rather than themes or discursive currency of literary traditions.

We will discover in Chapter 1 that the self is for both troubadours and their mystic contemporaries considered a conglomeration of parts. We will examine the way the body has

³⁸ Bruce Holsinger. *The Premodern Condition: Medievalism and the Making of Theory* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2005).

³⁹ The written record of Lacan’s Seminar VII offers an account of just such an encounter. After attempting to convince his students that the ideas of the linguist Benveniste should inspire excitement he says that one of the listeners, Father Beirnaert had wanted to say that all he’d relayed could be found in Augustine. Lacan’s response was, “vous parlez d’or” or “that is a splendid idea what you have just said.” Lacan goes even further to say that

And it is quite telling that the linguists...have taken fifteen centuries to rediscover, like a sun which has risen anew, like a dawn that is breaking, ideas which are already set out in Augustine’s text, which is one of the most glorious one could read...Everything I have been telling you about the signifier and the signified is there, expounded with a sensational lucidity...

Jacques Lacan, *Freud’s Papers on Technique, 1953-1954*. Trans. Jacques-Alain Miller. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1988) 249.

been viewed as the space or seat of selfhood even as it is imagined in its wholeness by one who cannot see him or herself fully without standing in front of a mirror. We will also discuss the tendency to ascribe to the emotions the power to determine, to make up the entirety of the self in classical, medieval, and modern thinking. Within the emotions, love has oft been considered that which differentiates man from other animals. We will explore in the first chapter some of the ways this has been expressed and its importance in the works of both the troubadours and mystics. And finally, one cannot but remember the dictum “Cogito ergo sum” when thinking of what allows “self” to be. We will look at medieval ideas of the mind, the *ymaginatio* as well as modern ideas of the self as a network of brain materials that somehow make being occur.

The dissertation examines medieval authors and their theories but includes reference to the comparable concepts and terms of modern authors which situates the texts of the medieval authors within a continuum familiar to non-medievalists interested in selfhood. I would like to think that Bernart de Ventadorn and Marguerite d'Oingt would say I am expressing in new language, in my own way, what it is they say and believe themselves: I am making explicit the theories that are implicit in their own discussions of love and language and their ties to selfhood.

CHAPTER 1: THE SELF ACCORDING TO TROUBADOURS AND MYSTICS

The Body in the Construction of the Self

*Nous aurions dû être dispensés de
traîner un corps. Le fardeau du moi
suffisait.
--Cioran⁴⁰*

In 1935 Paul Schilder published a study on the “constructive energies of the psyche,” entitled *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body*. After observing disorders like apraxia,⁴¹ agnosia,⁴² and subjects with amputated limbs or paralysis, Schilder found that the body the patients imagine themselves to have does not always fit the physical body they actually have. He concludes that we make use of a “body image” as we carry ourselves in the world. He begins *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* by outlining the “body image”:

The image of the human body means the picture of our own body which we form in our mind, that is to say the way in which the body appears to ourselves. There are sensations that are given to us. We see parts of the body surface. We have tactile, thermal pain impressions...

⁴⁰ We should have been relieved from the duty of dragging around a body. The burden of the “I” is plenty. E. M. Cioran, *De L'inconvénient d'être Né* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) 111.

⁴¹ Apraxia is characterized by the inability to move the body purposefully though there is no question of paralysis.

⁴² Agnosia is characterized by the inability to recognize objects by use of the senses.

Beyond that there is the immediate experience that there is a unity of the body.⁴³

It is this sense of unity that the child finds before the mirror in Jacques Lacan's mirror stage. While Schilder speaks of "sensations" -- the tactile and others-- and sense, Lacan ascribes the formation of the complete unity of the body and its connection with the viewing subject to something external that is seen by the subject.

In his model, Schilder resists separating out the functions of the physical and the mental:

We may call it "body-image." The term indicates that we are not dealing with a mere sensation or imagination. There is a self-appearance of the body. It indicates also that, though it comes through the senses, it is not mere perception. There are mental pictures and representations involved in it but it is not mere representation.⁴⁴

Schilder hopes to prove that the "body-image" is neither an object of the mind nor a simple translation of the body into the language of the mind. Rather, what he proposes is that the image of the body or physical self creates a mind able to "lug" the body behind it.

Earlier, when Edmund Husserl developed the idea of the "living body" he too was seeking to unite the physical body with the mental element of the self. "The living body" as Sara Heinämaa describes it in her discussion of Husserl, "is a specific kind of material reality because it is the meeting point of the physical and the psychical."⁴⁵ The living body is the result of

⁴³ Paul Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body: Studies in the Constructive Energies of the Psyche* (London: Routledge, 1999) 11.

⁴⁴ Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body*.

Schilder's body image at work. The living body, the body image, Lacan's *imago du corps propre*, is created as the (imagined) seat of the self within the world: "La fonction du stade du miroir s'avère pour nous dès lors comme un cas particulier de la fonction de *l'imago* qui est d'établir une relation de l'organisme à sa réalité..."⁴⁶ The body is not self; there is something more self than the body alone. So what is the relationship between body and self? What is the role of the body in the creation of the self? The body must become meaningful; the body must be inscribed within the world and given a particular place within it. Schilder says, "Body and world are experiences which are correlated with each other."⁴⁷ Schilder's statement is a perfect transposition of a similar sentiment expressed by Husserl in *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology*: "Nevertheless, consciousness and physicalness are a combined whole, combined into the single psychophysical unities which we call animalia and at the highest level, combined into the real unity of the whole world."⁴⁸ Heinämäa summarizes Husserl's ideas on the body that brings a self into consciousness within a world saying, "the living body is distinguished from other material things by three features: it appears as the bearer of the field of sensations, as the organ of free movement, and as the center of spatial orientation."⁴⁹ The body

⁴⁵ Sara Heinämäa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003) 27.

⁴⁶ The function of the mirror stage presents itself to us then, as a particular case of the function of the imago which is to establish a relation between the organism and its reality... Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, vol. I (1966) 93. All translations in the dissertation are my own unless otherwise indicated.

⁴⁷ Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* 123.

⁴⁸ Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. F. Kersten (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer, 1983) 83.

image comes into being concomitantly with the self to give the self a center—a space with a boundary created by the nerves on the skin, and with the ability to move to and fro amongst the materials of the physical world. The team of George Lakoff, a linguist, and Mark Johnson, a philosopher, claim to be the first to arrive at Schilder’s and Husserl’s conclusion saying in 1999, “The grounding of our conceptual systems in shared embodiment and bodily experience creates a largely centered self, but not a monolithic self.”⁵⁰ The fact that Lakoff and Johnson seem to have come to conclusions similar to those espoused by the authors studied in this work, despite their claim to have discovered original phenomena warns us that we should remember that discussions of human experience—what it means to be alive and speak the experience—are not going to have a starting point in the twentieth century, nor the twelfth; self-reflection and consciousness of the experience of living is inextricable from the experience itself.

The skin forms the limits of the imagined self, the body image or living body⁵¹. The skin is the furthest our physical sense of self can reach and yet, even if it is the subject’s domain, it is also that space which butts up against the world outside. The skin provides the self one plane of access to what lies beyond. Just as Schilder suggests the feelings of the skin create the outline of the body and so are in a sense the brushstrokes that paint the image of the body, Husserl claims the body becomes “a *living body* only by incorporating tactile sensations, pain sensations etc.—

⁴⁹ Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* 30.

⁵⁰ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999) 6.

⁵¹ Though Schilder does make the point that the “space in and around the postural model is not the space of physics. The body-image incorporates objects or spreads itself into space” Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* 213. So much so that, “a woman’s power of localization may extend to the feather in her hat,” 203.

in short, by the localizations of the sensations as sensations.”⁵² We determine the outline of our shape by this very friction against the world: both physical and symbolic or social. Schilder finds both necessary for the creation of the image of the body, “The building-up of the postural model of the body takes place on the physiological level by continual contact with the outside world. On the libidinous level it is built up not only by the interest we ourselves have in our body, but also by the interest other persons show in the different parts of our body.”⁵³ But if this contact on the limit of the self constructs the self, to what extent is the limit, the skin, part of the self? What is the role of the outer shell of the body? To hold someone, to touch someone is as close as we can get, but the sensations that come from the contact of the flesh serve as a reminder that there is forever a wall of skin preventing one subject from reaching another. The embrace does not join two beings, but instead affirms the inscription within one block of space, impenetrable, unique [lonely?] and horribly finite. Not only this, but Schilder notes that “the hands themselves are an outside world for the parts of the body which they touch.”⁵⁴ There is, then, a fluidity to the perimeters of the self within the body. The self seems to recede into the deepest corners as the outside world closes in. It is this idea that Bernart de Ventadorn wrestles with as he laments the discrepancy between outer and inner self. It is with this idea that Angela da Foligno begins her attempt to strip herself of her own body, her own self, rejecting, wishing to suggest as blameworthy and so with a separate will, each body part. The inexactness of the boundaries of the self gives rise to anxiety in thinkers like Merleau-Ponty who speaks of two

⁵² Qtd. In Heinämaa, *Toward a Phenomenology of Sexual Difference: Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir* 29.

⁵³ Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* 137.

⁵⁴ Schilder, *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body* 125.

levels of the living body—the *corps propre* and the *corps anonyme* or *prépersonnel* and also develops a “gesture theory of expression.” The same anxiety also shapes the theory of self and self-expression that preoccupies the troubadour Bernart de Ventadorn and that makes Marguerite Porete’s descriptions of self, body, and the soul *anientie* so difficult to follow.

The Emotive Unity of the Self

Ben es mortz qui d’amor no sen

Al cor cal que dousa sabor!

-Bernart de Ventadorn⁵⁵

What makes man most himself, individual, a self distinct from God or other things in the world are the passions, in particular, allowing the emotive to take dominion over the body, mind, and soul of the subject. The autistic child or schizophrenic person may test the boundary between self and world through a repetitive infliction of pain or self-injurious behavior [SIB] to the frame of the self—biting one’s limbs or butting the head against the wall for example. The sensorial emotion or feeling, the pain, lets the autistic or schizophrenic self trace the perimeters of the self. As the body image is not available to them it disappears as the sensations subside. Indeed, physical sensations as well as emotions allow the subject to recognize his/her own being. There is a sensation of being; we get a feeling of what it feels like to exist. It is the pervasiveness of this “sense” or “feeling” of being that led to the wildly unexpected popularity of a neurologist

⁵⁵ He is certainly dead who does not feel any sweet savor in his heart.

who takes on philosophers by pulling them from the fireside to the brain-surgeon's table. In *Descarte's Error: Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*, Antonio Damasio, expects his work "might shed light on one of the most vexing of all questions since humans began inquiring about their minds: How is it that we are conscious of the world around us, that we know what we know, and that we know that we know?"⁵⁶ His plan is to write the feelings into the Cogito. Though he hopes to reach the realm of the expressive emotions like fear or anger, he begins, as one might expect with the contiguous feeling of bodily sensations to reach into valued feelings, and ultimately to arrive at a discussion of the emotions. He hooks his reader by suggesting, as had Husserl and Schilder, that the senses define the perimeters of the self. From here he leads his readers along to a discussion of the "glory" of humankind by suggesting that "Were it not for the possibility of sensing body states that are inherently ordained to be painful or pleasurable, there would be no suffering or bliss, no longing or mercy, no tragedy or glory in the human condition."⁵⁷ Damasio's work does seek to reach the human experience that includes pain rather than mere cognition, but ultimately he only feels justified in doing so by making recourse to language of biology— science and body. The "inherently ordained" to which he refers is not subjective/interpretive, but is a reference to his understanding of self as a series of synapses and vessels and physical materials that somehow create and qualify being. As Fonagy et al have put it, "for Damasio, the self is implied in a neural account of emotion and especially feelings."⁵⁸ The mapping of the self according to Damasio includes the following tenets:

⁵⁶ Antonio R. Damasio, *Descartes' Error: Emotion, Reason, and the Human Brain* (New York: Quill, 2000) XVII.

⁵⁷ Damasio, *Descartes' Error* XV.

(1) The human brain and the rest of the body constitute an indissociable organism, integrated by means of mutually interactive biochemical and neural regulatory circuits (including endocrine, immune, and autonomic neural components); (2) The organism interacts with the environment as an ensemble: the interaction is neither of the body alone nor of the brain alone; (3) The physiological operations that we call mind are derived from the structural and functional ensemble rather than from the brain alone...⁵⁹

As the title suggests, Damasio wants to bring the emotions and the physiological brain, into the discussion of that most vexing question of humankind and in so doing dethrone or at least debunk Descartes's supposed distinction between the body and mind; the result would mean, "that reason may not be as pure as most of us think it is or wish it were, that emotions and feelings may not be intruders in the bastion of reason at all: they may be enmeshed in its networks, for worse and for better."⁶⁰ Emotions encroach on reason, and reason for the twentieth-century neurologist is comprised of "networks." The medieval position is quite different. Before the explosion of reflection on the concept of the Will in the twelfth century there were many who proposed – against orthodoxy—that there were two entities with one encroaching upon the other. Before clarifying the role of sin, the passions, the drives and the Will, Augustine too had the impression that the passions "intruded" upon the Will. Twelfth-

⁵⁸ Peter Fonagy, Gyorgy Gergely, Elliot Jurist, Mary Target, *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self* (New York: Other Press, 2002) 79.

⁵⁹ Damasio, *Descartes' Error* xvi, xvii.

⁶⁰ Damasio, *Descartes' Error* xii.

century theologians tended towards this mapping of Will (as slippery as this concept is and was in theology) as opposed to the emotions, passions, impulses, drives. However, this dichotomy, which suggests the self is equal to the Will and attacked by forces without, was ultimately rejected. Augustine and theologians after him realize that the Will is not an object to be attacked, but something the self manipulates by choice. All of which pushes the sense of selfhood back to a space that encompasses the Will while not being limited to it.

In those fields of psychology that extend beyond the realm of the chemico-biological variety, an interest in the emotive has allowed for the development of affect logic which claims that “directed energies of affects are considered as the essential motors and organizers of all action and thought.” What Damasio suggests is proposed by affect logic as well. For Damasio, “in sum, affectivity ‘affects’ subjectivity so deeply that the two notions may almost appear as identical or broadly overlapping.”⁶¹ In truth, this is exactly the problem with pinning down the nature of the self; we seem to believe today, much as our medieval troubadours and mystics thought centuries ago, that the self is a composite comprised of body, mind, and emotions. Each of these seem to offer the temptation to overtake the feeling of selfhood at various moments of thought or experience.

Emotions

The move from the realm of the sensations, the feeling of the body, into the realms of the emotions or the intellect is subtle. What Plato declared and medievals knew through Calcidius’ Commentary has not been abandoned.⁶² In the last twenty-five years or so, neurologists,

⁶¹ Fonagy, *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self*.

⁶² Quibus quidem sensibus minime fuit opus mundo—quippe nihil extra ambitum mundi est aut agitur—, at uero perfectae hominis instructioni sunt sensus admodum necessarii, quia initium et

psychoanalysts, historians, and literary critics have been attracted to an understanding of the self that depends on the emotive qualities of being more than did constructs of the previous decades of the twentieth century.

Here, the emotive element of the self is the experience of self as it is created within the cluster of sensations and drives that are the emotions, the will, and desire. The location of the terrain of the emotions within the realm of the self and world invites the (literary) historian to “speak without fear”⁶³ about the emotions, and emotional climates of other times. The expression of an emotion might indeed be difficult to match to a lived, felt experience as the actor would have actually lived it. But, the study of a particular emotional scene is not the only way to reach to the emotional world of a previous period. While such a study could provide a description or sense of the feeling and shape and significance of a particular emotion, love, for example, this is not the only way in which the emotions structure and give meaning to human experience.

As Damasio’s work demonstrates, the emotions or the passions have long presented an opportunity for people to probe ontological questions. The structure of the emotive in any particular period can be gleaned by looking to the predecessors who have wrangled with humankind’s “vexing question.” Mary Garrison assures the historian that we need not fear the filter through which the “emotions” reach us, usually textual for “[m]odels and topoi...may be able to convey ‘genuine’ statements about experience of the self ... in other words, they are not a barrier to interpreting emotional experience, but a potentially privileged access.”⁶⁴ Niklaus

quasi quaedam intellegendi sapiendique semina sunt in sentiendo. Plato, *Timaeus*. A Calcidio Translatus commentarioque Instructus. Ed. J. H. Waszink. (London: Leiden, 1962) CCXXXIV, p. 247.

⁶³ For other ideas on the subject see Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Writing without Fear About Early Medieval Emotions," *Early Medieval Europe*, 10.2 (2001).

Largier goes even further in his discussion of the practice of emotions in mysticism; not only do metaphors have the ability to “convey ‘genuine’ statements” about the emotive experiences of mystics, but, he claims,

Although the inner or spiritual senses correspond to the five outer senses (in fact they are named in analogous ways), they are not just to be seen as analogous or metaphorical. In other words, they are not to be seen as a set of allegorical poetic means of *expressing* and *representing* spiritual experience. Rather, the texts argue, they *constitute* and *construct* a specific reality of the mind. They form a new and previously unknown life of the soul, and they are— as I argue and show here—intrinsically linked to the experience and the exploration of emotional arousal in medieval spirituality.⁶⁵

While Garrison focuses attention on the ability of language to express the lived experience, Largier notes that the language of emotions in mystical writings might serve a function in the construction and exploration of the lived experience and the encounter with the divine in particular. If this is the case, and I believe it is, then the study of discussions about emotions in song and text can teach us about how language interacts with being—to what extent language is

⁶⁴ Mary Garrison, "The Study of Emotions in Early Medieval History: Some Starting Points.," *Early Medieval Europe* 10.2 (2001): 247.

⁶⁵ Italics mine. Niklaus Largier, "Inner Senses--Outer Senses: The Practice of Emotions in Medieval Mysticism," *Codierungen Von Emotionen Im Mittelalter*, ed. Ingrid Kasten C. Stephen Jaeger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003) 4-5.

viewed as solely a means of self-expression, or whether it can indeed be considered a means of self-construction.⁶⁶

When Bernart de Ventadorn claims,

Ben es mortz qui d'amor no sen

He is certainly dead who does not feel any

sweet savor in his heart!

al cor cal que dousa sabor!

And what is it worth to live without love

E que val viure ses amor

But to cause annoyance to people

mas per enoi far a la gen.⁶⁷

it is tempting to attribute this declaration to the troubadour's great affinity for hyperbole. Despite any possible question of *topos* or hyperbole, the lines should not be altogether dismissed as uninformative. This declaration speaks about what it means to Bernart to live as a human being, what it means to be alive. Glynnis Cropp's attempt to compile and categorize the language of the troubadour courtly ideology in *Le Vocabulaire des troubadours de l'époque classique* demonstrates the primacy of the emotive in the human experience as understood by these poet-lovers. Their lyrics are dominated by words of intense emotion: words of desire like *talen*, of

⁶⁶ It is in this way that I hope to avoid some of the pitfalls McGinn warned haunt the scholar of religious experience. I am not seeking to analyze the words of the authors investigated here for the purpose of reaching a sense of the authors' "experience." Rather I am, admittedly, circumventing the debate as to whether one can arrive at knowing if the experience resembled what is recounted in the mystic's texts or not. See the introduction to Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism. Presence of God. Vol. I.* (New York: Crossroad, 1995).

⁶⁷ "Non es meravelha s'eu chan" ll. 9-11, Lazar, *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour*.

melancholy, affliction, and suffering, like *damnatge, pena, tristesse, ira, rancura, marrimen*, but also of joy and pleasure, *joi, plazer, esbaudimen, alegransa*.⁶⁸ Cropp's study shows the depth of the language of emotion as well as the breadth for he traces this vocabulary throughout the oeuvres of a good number of composers active before 1175. For troubadours, the emotional quality of life overwhelms; they choose at times to represent this as an image or proof of their essence as the ideal or true lover and at other times suggest that love and desire, even jealousy and anger, arrive from somewhere outside in order to attack the self.

The Will as Self or Entangled with the Emotions

You are not flesh or hair, but you are will.

Epictetus⁶⁹

Medieval conceptions of culpability and the nature of sin as progressive likewise reveal a willingness, even theological necessity, to situate the emotions or passions outside the self, which is after all an entity created by the divine and in his own image. In this way, as Knuuttila explains, "the importance of the theological question of culpability was one of the factors that led to the emergence of the logic of the will in the twelfth century."⁷⁰ Though the question of culpability brought new ideas into the discussion of the will, the conversation had been alive for quite some time. While not credited with the concept itself, it was Augustine who, as Sorabji stresses, "did more than anyone to crystallize" the conception of the will.⁷¹ Ruth Stark claims

⁶⁸ Glynnis M. Cropp, *Le Vocabulaire des troubadours de l'époque classique*, Geneva, 1975.

⁶⁹ *The Discourses of Epictetus*, Trans. George Long (London: G Bell and Sons, 1903) 9.

⁷⁰ The twelfth-century also being the period in which *fin' amors* and submission in particular, crystallizes as a concept in the troubadour tradition. Simo Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004) 205.

“in his conversion, Augustine discovers a paradigm of the human will in action.”⁷² Augustine had sought out the stuff of wickedness. Instead of discovering an essential material—the essence of evil—he finds only will affecting matter. It is not an entity or a substance, but the direction of the will that makes evil:

I inquired what wickedness is; and I did not find a substance but a perversity of will twisted away from the highest substance, you o God, towards inferior things, rejecting its own inner life... and swelling with external matter.⁷³

It is through the will that the sinner moves away from God or the penitent toward God. To live a life in accord with the divine one should direct one’s will toward the divine will so that they are the same. Not to do so leads to indulgence in the self as an enjoying subject and “the consequence of a distorted will is passion.”⁷⁴ To direct one’s gaze towards God frees the subject of the emotional torments with which Augustine struggled until (and even after) his conversion was complete. He saw two sorts of wills inside himself for he was both “partially willing and partially unwilling” in a split that will be unified only in the moment that a final choice of action is made. As Saarinen paraphrases Augustine, “although the will is first divided in its inward struggle, it again becomes one and complete in the final choice.”⁷⁵ However, Augustine

⁷¹ Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind*, The Gifford Lectures (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006) 404.

⁷² Judith Chelius Stark, “The Dynamics of Will in Augustine’s Conversion,” *Collectanea Augustiniana: Augustine, Second Founder of the Faith*. Ed. J. Schnaubelt and Fleteren (New York: Peter Lang, 1990) 45-64, 49.

⁷³ Augustine, *Confessions* Book VII, xvi, p. 126.

⁷⁴ Augustine, *Confessions* Book VIII, v, p. 140.

identifies with both wills as Judith Stark explains in her “Dynamics of Will in Augustine’s Conversion.” Stark suggests we imagine “the self can stand over against these two wills to render them subject to approval or disapproval.”⁷⁶ Somehow the will is to be equated with the self, and at the same time as subject to the decisions of the self.

Simo Knuuttila examines the intersection of emotion, will, and sin in his book *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy*. He notes that the twelfth century monastics, “favoured drawing fine distinctions between various movements of the heart and between the degrees of their sinfulness.”⁷⁷ Knuuttila then paraphrases the stages of sin as described in a commentary on Matthew attributed to Geoffrey Babion (d. 1110):

After the suggestion (*suggestio*) there is a pre-passion (*propassio*),
‘a sudden movement which does not involve deliberation about
good and evil and which is venial sin.’ This is followed by a
passion (*passio*), which is the mortal sin of taking pleasure either
in cogitation about the sinful act without an intention to act or the
same together with such an intention.⁷⁸

Knuuttila’s presentation clearly indicates to what extent there are inner-outer elements or even moments of passion and sin in the medieval system. And yet, at the same time the ability to choose to follow the *suggestio* is indeed the result of the God-given gift of free will. In discussing the notion of freedom, Slavoj Žižek finds that “‘freedom’ is not simply the opposite of

⁷⁵ See Risto Saarinen, *Weakness of Will in Medieval Thought* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) 29.

⁷⁶ Stark 51.

⁷⁷ Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* 178.

⁷⁸ Knuuttila 179.

deterministic causal necessity, as Kant knew, it means a specific mode of causality, the agent's self-determination."⁷⁹ Freedom to cogitate, as opposed to not, the freedom to choose to enjoy what can be enjoyed in reflection and imagination, the freedom to pursue and make real the imagined, all of this "freedom" given by God through free will, when used – and it cannot but be used in one way or another, that is towards or away from the will of God—constitutes the actor and the sin. The self determines at once his own essence and that of the *suggestio* in the single moment of choosing his move. This freedom that is not liberating, but ensnares the actor within his own self, as an entity that wills, an entity that moves away from God, as it wills for itself rather than following God's will, cuts the subject from the divine.

The nature of a soul will be determined by its choice to will with or away from God. The soul who has lost all sense of self in the divine will have no will and so naturally wills in accord with the divine. It is therefore willing that creates the divide between man and divine; will creates difference and so identity. What Žižek says of freedom can certainly be applied to free will, "'Freedom' is thus inherently retroactive: at its most elementary, it is not simply a free act which, out of nowhere, starts a new causal link, but a retroactive act of endorsing which link/sequence of necessities will determine me."⁸⁰ The freedom to will, willing creates the possibility of, the space for, an "I." Neither the "I" nor the evil exist without the subject's willing.

The will also allows the subject to live within God's own path, which, as Knuuttila reminds us, is the Christian's objective: "[t]he aim of the Christian life is similarity to God, who

⁷⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View*, Short Circuits (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006) 203.

⁸⁰ Žižek, *The Parallax View* 204.

is free from passions...⁸¹ to arrive at this similarity of wills that is called the mystical rapture or ontological union, as Michael Sells describes, “Rapture entails complete abandon—abandon of will, of works, of reason, of self-vulnerability...the soul annihilated in love of the divine no longer exists in the formal sense as a subject that wills and acts – the only will and act are the will and act of the deity.”⁸² The space of difference between divine and earthly can be erased: “such a Soul, says Love, swims in the sea of joy, that is in the sea of delights, flowing and running out of the Divinity.”⁸³ The soul can be lost like a drop of water in the sea of the divine. To lose the difference of will is nothing more than to love, to love truly, purely, and powerfully.

Love and Self: Will or Emotion?

If I speak in the tongues of men and
of angels, but have not love, I am a
noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.
And if I have prophetic powers and
understanding...but have not love, I
am nothing.

1 Corinthians, 13:1-3, 13

The possibility of willing in accord with the beloved is the manifestation of a love so pure and refined that it transforms and purifies the lover who follows its path towards the beloved, the

⁸¹ Knuuttila, *Emotions in Ancient and Medieval Philosophy* 112.

⁸² Sells 130.

⁸³ Saint Marguerite d'Oingt and Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, *The Writings of Margaret of Oingt, Medieval Prioress and Mystic* (Newburyport, Mass: Focus Information Group, 1990) 109.

journey itself effecting the betterment of the lover as he or she seeks to arrive at the beloved, to join, dissolve into the realm of, the other —though we should be careful to note, not to possess or enjoy the beloved for that would imply a completely subjective stance. The consistency of this claim throughout the oeuvres of so many mystics and troubadours renders possible the comparative analysis of the language of love in their works; the language is not to be misinterpreted as only models, *topoi*, as Garrison said, or as simple labels, “étiquettes” as Moshé Lazar named them in his warning to modern scholars that “certains topiques qui reviennent sans à satiété dans la lyrique provençale ne doivent pas devenir pour nous des simples ‘étiquettes’ vidés de sens et dénuées de vitalité.”⁸⁴

The understanding of love for troubadours and mystics is remarkably similar and what F.R.P. Akehurst claimed as reason to study the troubadours as a group the fact that “les poètes d’amour ont tous un point en commun, grâce auquel on peut les juger et les comparer: ils chantent tous l’amour, c’est à dire qu’ils sont tous engagés dans une relation amoureuse réelle ou imaginaire.”⁸⁵ Akehurst's claim that the troubadours can be studied as a group serves also as a grounds for comparison. Akehurst sees that the structure of the *erotique* of the troubadours can be compared to authors from Antiquity to our day and cites Donatus, Jean de Salisbury, and Ibn Hazm as he begins his study of the stages of love in the works of Bernart de Ventadorn: "Et d'après ce qu'ils disent de leur amour, on peut déceler une structure de la relation amoureuse,

⁸⁴ Certain recurring *topoi* that come up without cease in Provençal lyric should not become for us simple tags emptied of meaning and stripped of vitality. Lazar, *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour* 57.

⁸⁵ Love poets all have one point in common, thanks to which we can judge and compare them: they all sing about/to love, that is to say, they are all involved in a love relationship either real or imaginary. F.R.P. Akehurst, "Les Etapes de l'amour chez Bernard de Ventadour." *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale* 16 (1973) 133.

structure qui a été traitée d'une façon assez uniforme depuis l'antiquité jusqu'à nos jours."⁸⁶

While Akehurst focuses on the stages of love in Bernart de Ventadorn, this dissertation focuses on the language used to move the lover along the path of love. The troubadours and mystics we will examine each claim first that love is essential to the fully lived human life, second that following the laws of love, often spoken of in terms of a path or road, refines and purifies the lover. Each seems to care much more about the nature of the love object than themselves as loving subjects. In fact, the end of love is to arrive at a loving so perfect that all selfishness or trace of the self disappears—the accident of its being or being as accident recedes into the perfection that is the beloved's being.

Without love there can be no human consciousness or life, suggests Bernart de Ventadorn in the very popular song “Non es meravelha s’eu chan.” In another piece he suggests that the song can be no good if love is not its motivating force: “Chantars no pot gaire valer, / si d’ins dal cor no mou lo chans.”⁸⁷ Both sentiments find their precedent in 1 Corinthians. Language without love, says Paul, renders the speaker nothing more than a “noisy gong or a clanging symbol.” Meaning, or the expression of consciousness, can only come if love resides in the heart of the speaker. In fact, just as Bernart claims he who loves not is surely dead, Paul too says that without love one is nothing. In the beginning of this chapter we saw that both the bodily frame as well as the emotions in their totality can seem the quintessential feature of being and the stuff of selfhood. As we move through the chapter it becomes clear that a variety of elements of the self can seem to the subject to stand as the essence of the self. However, more powerful than any

⁸⁶ And, from what they say about their love one can discover a structure to the love relationship, a structure that has been treated in a more or less uniform way since Antiquity until the present day. Akehurst, "Les Etapes de l'amour" 134.

⁸⁷ Singing could hardly be worth it if the song does not come from inside the heart.

of these other components, troubadours like Bernart and in keeping with the Christian tradition and its writers suggest that love is the essential element of being.

John Moore points out that the “Bible gave love a primacy in human affairs unmatched in any other philosophical or religious tradition,”⁸⁸ and “the values of love, friendship, and courtly behavior were as real in courts from the twelfth century on as truthfulness and honesty in our universities” though “just as much violated also.”⁸⁹

Studies smacking of a “scientific objectivity” strive to prove the necessity of love in the development of *homo sapiens* and other animals.⁹⁰ In his study on love and culture, Charles Lindholm’s survey of sociobiologists who follow on the heels of evolutionary theorists, as well as the biochemical revolution of Damasio, Ledoux, et al, characterizes the sociobiologist argument in the following way, “[sociobiologists] have argued that romantic attraction to an idealized other is a mechanism genetically encoded in human beings as a consequence of the inexorable efforts of nature to optimize reproduction and the nurturing of offspring.”⁹¹ The results of studies conducted in this area of research in the last fifty years invariably suggest that love is universal.

⁸⁸ John C. Moore, *Love in Twelfth-Century France* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972) 28.

⁸⁹ C. Stephen Jaeger, *Ennobling Love: In Search of a Lost Sensibility*, The Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999) 151.

⁹⁰ In particular the studies which center on feral children—children who somehow were left to develop on their own or with the help of animals with whom they were able to bond. The bibliography is overwhelming but the following provide a good starting point for enquiry into the subject: Joseph Amrito Lal Singh, Robert M. Zingg and Paul Johann Anselm Feuerbach, *Wolf-Children and Feral Man*, Contributions of the University of Denver; 4 (New York, London: Harper, 1942), Douglas K. Candland, *Feral Children and Clever Animals: Reflections on Human Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

⁹¹ Charles Lindholm, "Love and Structure," *Theory, Culture & Society* 15.3/4 (1998): 245.

Gerald Bond's study of the theories of love held by medieval writers at the turn of the twelfth century, points to "the emerging conviction that *amor* is an integral part of nature to which all humans were subjected," though here he highlights a feature perhaps not shared by all modern theorists for, "in its most optimistic and idealistic form, this dominion of nature derived directly from God."⁹² Ultimately the claims of twelfth-century and current theories agree that love is inextricably bound to the human experience; there can be no development of self without love. Love, love language, theories of love, all provide a space to examine, explore, and manipulate notions of self and states of selfhood.

When the anthropologist Charles Lindholm seeks to determine "how culturally and historically specific is the experience of romantic love?" it is once again the question of selfhood that dominates his sociologically-grounded enquiry and findings. Like the medieval and modern theorists who suggest love is inherent in all human life, Lindholm likewise finds love to be unbound by a number of possible restrictors. He finds that the:

ethnographical material demonstrates that romantic love is not necessarily the prerogative of a leisured class; it does not require a complex society; it is not solely heterosexual, nor does it always lead to marriage; it is not intrinsically linked to capitalism, small families, sexual oppression, a cult of motherhood or a quest for identity; it is neither a disguise for lust nor evidence of evolution at work. ⁹³

The evidence does suggest that the nature of romantic attraction is built on the relation between selfhood and society. Love enables the individual to transcend, to escape the particulars of self—that would be the modern constructed subject—through attachment to the love object. Lindholm defines romantic love in opposition to all of the above saying, "[r]ather, romantic

⁹² Gerald A. Bond, *The Loving Subject: Desire, Eloquence, and Power in Romanesque France*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995) 52.

⁹³ Lindholm 258.

attraction is an attempt to escape from certain types of social contradictions and structural tensions through the transcendental love of another person,” and interestingly enough he comments that “as such, it is experientially akin to the experience of religious ecstasy.”⁹⁴ The particular focus on the love-object which leads to a disinterest, even a hostility towards the loving subject which needs to be transcended resonates with the literature under investigation in this dissertation. Both mystics and troubadours seek to reach the Other despite the fact that this entails disinhabiting the self. Love is at once the proof of a self as well as a means to flee the self.

In his study *Love, Emotion, Myth and Metaphor*, Robert Solomon remarks that “we should expect to find romantic love arise in precisely those epochs and cultures where self-identity is in question, when traditional roles and relationships fail to tell a person ‘who I am’.”⁹⁵ When the self waivers, or is under attack, love provides a means of understanding and valuing the self. Love replaces or eclipses self-identity, or the function of self-designation, as Lindholm explains, “the romantic dream of an erotic bonding to an idealized and unique beloved is understood to serve as a substitute for outmoded loci for identity, offering an experience of self-transformation, personal choice, a meaningful future and sensual expansion.”⁹⁶ Lindholm qualifies the decision to come together as the attempt of lovers to, “find meaning and emotional warmth in the mutuality of romantic relationships.”⁹⁷ Gerald Bond’s *The Loving Subject*

⁹⁴ Lindholm 258.

⁹⁵ Robert C. Solomon, *Love: Emotion, Myth, & Metaphor* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1990) 57.

⁹⁶ Lindholm 244.

⁹⁷ Lindholm 256.

demonstrates to what extent twelfth-century figures were keen to use romantic love as described by Lindholm for self-(re)invention. Like the lovers Lindholm describes, it is through love that troubadours and mystics realigned themselves vis à vis society.

In the case of the “first” troubadour, Guilhem IX⁹⁸, it would seem that he retreats from societal pressures by seeking the pleasure of female company. As Ruth Mazo Karras points out, sexuality in the medieval period does not lean on the notion of mutuality as it does in the present day.⁹⁹ Bond notes the connection between the hostility within the courts as well as the Church’s charges against him both of which begin mounting after Guilhem’s defeat at Antioch and the duke’s liaison with Maubergeonne (Dangerosa) and accompanying lyrical accounts of his amorous encounters. While Guilhem IX did hold a position (or two) of power, it did not save him from attacks on his exercising of that power in the pursuit of his desire. The romantic or— at the least— sexual adventures he undertook afforded him the possibility to transcend the parameters of identity his critical onlookers had prescribed for him. The lyrical accounts of his sexual exploits offer an image of sex in medieval understandings, as a thing one does to another, as Mazo Karras has suggested, but in doing this thing to another he does find the opportunity to

⁹⁸ This is the Occitan designation for the count who is named William in English and Guillaume in French.

⁹⁹ And indeed we have in referring to Mazo Karras’ observation a few *manicula* pointing out the precarious nature of our position as scholars of the 21st century attempting to speak about actors of the twelfth. It is not only her point that “mutuality” is a concept and a term valued by the modern era, not the medieval period, that reminds us to what extent we must take care to peel away our language and the concepts bound within our language to arrive at a true picture of sex, but it is also the very fact that we have exercised a shift from the language of romantic love, romantic attraction, to sex as we link the findings of Lindholm who studies love to those of Mazo Karras who studies sexuality. The shift between the language and notion of love and the world of sex and sexuality is constant throughout a discussion of love and represents one of the pitfalls in the attempts to discuss both troubadour eroticism, love, desire, and language as well as the eroticism, love, desire, and language of mystics. Ruth Mazo Karras, *Sexuality in Medieval Europe: Doing Unto Others* (London: Routledge Press, 2005).

transgress the limits of his identity – to experiment with self construction as Bond has shown. The lyrics of the duke and count offer innovative ways to conceive of and manipulate the self through a dependence on or attachment to an idealized, romanticized, or sexualized female figure.

Attempts by clerics and courtiers to constrict and construct the identity of the duke of Aquitaine were not simply a response to the particulars of his person/a; Poitiers and Aquitaine were not alone in attracting the attention of the traveling Urban II at the end of the eleventh century nor was his criticism of the clerical and courtly practices the only attack lodged on the ideals of the region. The urban centers of Toulouse, Barcelona, Montpellier and Avignon had values and social structures differing from those of nearby courts. There is no center holding the vast space between the Loire and the Pyrenees to a single structural value system. In attempting to introduce the courtly culture of what she calls “Occitania,”¹⁰⁰ Ruth Harvey stresses that “such diverse conditions gave rise to a variety of traditions, customs and socio-political institutions.”¹⁰¹ The attacks on power positions through military, marital, cultural, or religious means were lateral at this time; that is to say, the tugs-of-war for power and dominance occurred mainly between the courts and towns in the region. This created a society of the kind described by Lindholm above: “extremely fluid social relations marked by mobility and competition” and indeed promised little security as courts regularly changed hands through war and manipulative marriages. It is then an

¹⁰⁰ Occitania was not the common designation for the region now named as such by *Occitanistes*. The collection of territories, courts and urban centers, where, to borrow Dante’s definition, the word for yes was “oc” were not unified in any political way during the medieval period. Though there was linguistic similarity throughout the region it cannot be said that all of the languages or dialects spoken from the Pyrenees to the Loire were the language of Occitan.

¹⁰¹ Ruth E. Harvey, "Courtly Culture in Medieval Occitania," *The Troubadours an Introduction*, ed. Sarah Kay and Simon Gaunt (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999) 10.

environment ripe for promoting relationships of escape. While Lindholm and Solomon romanticize the character of relationships that provide escape to the loving subject imagining them to always be warm and reciprocal, the truth is that reciprocity is not a prerequisite to the attempt, to the act of seeking or indeed committing one's self to the transcendental love affair.

Itinerant troubadours dependent on the court's opinion and the lord's generosity were also in a position where the social structure's judging gaze meant adapting to the trends as they moved. The court is a closed social system in which the positions of power constantly shifted. The art of the wandering performer demanded constant attention be paid to the tastes of many courts. The allegiances between courtly figures from one court to another and between the Church or cities and the court needed to be considered as well. The troubadour's own identity needed to constantly be checked against his ever-changing environment. This situation would inspire the desire to experiment with pushing the boundaries and the value of selfhood.

While the wandering poet-lovers of the courts explored the shape of the self through love lyrics, the ever-present message of Christianity offered its own path to transcendence. This way to reach beyond the confines of the earth-bound self became particularly attractive to women after the twelfth century. As Bernard McGinn says regarding Western female piety, "the religious opportunities open to women greatly increased during the course of the first half of the thirteenth century."¹⁰² Despite Kroll and Bachrach's claim that the West only had recourse to physical pain as a means to transcendence, both the desire to transcend or "break down the boundaries of consciousness and selfhood" as McGinn puts it,¹⁰³ and a great variety of practices, including play with apophatic language were available to men and women of medieval

¹⁰² Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism: Men and Women in the New Mysticism, 1200-1350*. Presence of God. Vol. 3. New York: Crossroad, 1998) 153.

¹⁰³ McGinn, *Flowering* 157.

Christianity. The women mystics included here stepped out of the worldly court or city to enter into the religious community. A continuation of this extirpation of the self is made possible, even fostered in the religious communities after 1200. This is not to say that taking up the position of female mystic was particularly easy from the thirteenth century on but instead that the desire to escape the strictures of all that the social structure implied, including those based on gender would be all the more appealing.

The goodness of love and the refining power of loving are for troubadour and mystic the means through which one arrives at a transcendental state of being. The act, the process and progress of loving are present even when the love object remains unattainable.

Love reaches the very center of selfhood, as Augustine says of divine love in his *Confessions*, “You pierced my heart with the arrow of your love, and we carried your words transfixing my innermost being.”¹⁰⁴ Love penetrates through all the layers shielding the self. The idea and the image persist from Antiquity through the medieval period but have not lost their resonance today.

Not only does love reach the innermost being of the self, but love has the power to overtake the nature of the self, transforming it completely. Robinson demonstrates that in the thinking of Marguerite Porete, “the Holy Spirit possesses all that God possesses, and the Holy Spirit, as Love, transforms the human soul into this nature in love.”¹⁰⁵ That entity so often identified with selfhood, the will, manifests the purification or transformation effected by love,

¹⁰⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, Book XI, iii, p. 156.

¹⁰⁵ Joanne Macguire Robinson, *Nobility and Annihilation in Marguerite Porete's Mirror of Simple Souls*. SUNY series in Western esoteric traditions. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001) 62.

as Bernard of Clairvaux points out “Love truly converts the souls because it makes them willing.”¹⁰⁶ Marguerite Porete’s *figura* of Love puts it this way,

Or est un commun vouloir, come feu et	Love: Now there is one common will, as
flambe, le vouloir de l’amant et celluy de	fire and flame, as the will of the lover and
l’amie, car Amour a muee ceste Ame en	the one who is loved, for Love has
luy. Hee! Tres doulce pure divine Amour,	transformed this Soul into Love herself.
dit ceste Ame, comment c’est une doulce	
muance de ce que je suis muee en la chose	Ah! Very sweet Pure Divine Love, says
que j’ayme mieulx que moy! Et tant suis	this Soul, how it is a sweet transformation
muee, que je en ai perdu mon nom pour	by which I am transformed into the thing
amer, qui si pou puis amer: c’est en amour	which I love better than myself!
car je n’ayme fors que Amour” ¹⁰⁷	And I am so transformed that I have lost

my name in it for the sake of Love, I who
am able to love so little: It is through love
that I love for I cannot love outside of love.

All elements of selfhood have been overshadowed by love. Love has completely altered the nature of the Soul. Indeed how could the name remain when there is no entity onto which to tag it? The name as marker of unique identity is completely lost. The emotion that seems in some

¹⁰⁶ Bernard of Clairvaux and G. R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux: Selected Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987) 201.

¹⁰⁷ The final lines can be read both as referring to the physical space of outside of Love, “Fors que Amors” or alternatively as, “It is through love that I love for I love only Love.” Romana Guarnieri and Paul Verdeyen, *Margaretae Porete Speculum Simplicium Animarum*, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis; 69 (Turnholti: Brepols, 1986) 96.

ways the most representative of selfhood in fact does nothing more than destroy the very essence of difference, of self-will, of all that creates a boundary around a being, delineating a difference between self and other. Instead of bolstering the walls of the self, love destroys them allowing difference to be shed, and difference between self and other in particular. Such is the power and purpose of love.

When speaking of the power of love to alter the self, in the literature produced from Antiquity through the present, but particularly in the period between 900-1300, mystics, lyricists, prose writers speak in terms –be it in the vernacular or Latin— of betterment; love refines, purifies, and ennobles the lover. The history of the tradition as well as its appropriation in the medieval period has been outlined in Jaeger’s *Ennobling Love*. In tracing those sources which spoke of an ennobling love that most attracted the lay, clerical, noble, and monastic cultures of the period which fostered the troubadour tradition, Jaeger stresses the significance of the social structure. It is a social system that privileges love and a purifying and self-altering love in particular. Jaeger suggests that the idea of the ennobling and “virtue-giving” element of love is not the only defining element in the make-up of courtly love, but a single strand, and he says, “it is this strand that is charged with the morally refining, purifying, educating purpose of aristocratic love and that is inseparably connected with the social concerns that loom large in clerical circles and are the *primum mobile* of court society;: rank, standing, reputation and prestige.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, the social strictures and tensions that Lindholm says give rise to the “transcendental love of another person” have here indeed given rise to a discourse and appreciation of love, but the phenomenon of courtly love as it is discussed and to whatever

¹⁰⁸ Jaeger, *Ennobling Love* 154.

extent we have traces of its having been lived, stresses the significance of the act of loving itself as that transformation which brings the self to transcendence.

Like Angela da Foligno who claims the steps towards transcendence or union with the divine are slow and difficult, Giraut de Borneil speaks in military terms of his slow advance toward the end his gaze never abandons:

E son aixi frescs e tenders
que per malpas ni per raixe,
si be·m va len ni de pas,
no·m laix a virar l'engejn
si que·l plus de mos afars
puscha tornar a nosojn
que lai vir la forz'e·l gejn.

And, in like fashion, I too burgeon with
new life so that, though I go slowly, step by
step, no difficult ford or flood stops me
from turning the engines of war [towards
my goal], so that I may disregard almost all
my other concerns; for I turn my strength
and my skills to that place where I direct
my eyes and my heart.

O·ls huils e·l coratge tejn.¹⁰⁹

Ruth Verity Sharman points out Giraut's tendency to superimpose geographical metaphors which allow him to lay out his love and will onto imagined territories: "He now gathers his heart, previously scattered afar over many lands, and directs it to one place. He will not allow it to

¹⁰⁹ "Ans que veina·l nous frugz tendres," Ruth Verity Sharman, *The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil: A Critical Edition*, (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989).

deviate from its path for any ford or flood...”¹¹⁰ Throughout the troubadour corpus, poets consistently claim, like their mystic counterparts, that they follow the path of love; that there is indeed only one right path, a single *dreicha via*. The lovers sing of those who have fallen off the path as false lovers and assure their listeners that their own heart, eyes, will and body are turned toward the beloved. Guilhem de Montanhagol sings,

Ben devon li amador	Well should the lover serve with good heart
De bon cor servir amor,	Love, for Love is not a sin, but rather a
Qar amors non es peccatz,	virtue that makes good the wicked and
Anz es vertutz qe-ls malvatz	better the good person. And he puts man on
Fai bons, e'll bo'n son meillor,	the path to acting well every day.
E met hom'en via	
De ben far tot dia!	¹¹¹

The nature of the self is malleable according to such proclamations; one can become better and it is love that improves the self. Peire Rogier, much like Bernart de Ventadorn above, attributes all that comprises his self-identity to love saying:

Tant ai mon cor en ioy assis,	So much do I have my joy placed in love
Per que no puesc mudar no'n chan,	That for this reason I cannot silence my
Que ioy m'a noirit pauc e gran!	singing that joy has nourished me with both

¹¹⁰ Sharman, "*The Cansos and Sirventes of the Troubadour Giraut de Borneil*," 28.

¹¹¹ ll. 11-17, "Ar ab lo coinde pascor," Guilhem de Montanhagol, *Les Poésies de Guilhem de Montanhagol, Troubadour Provençal du XIIIe Siècle*, ed. Peter T. Ricketts (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1964).

E ses luy non seria res,

little and great!

Qu'assatz uey que tot l'als qu'om fay

And without it I would be nothing, For I

Abaiss'e sordey'e dechai,

see it well that all else that one might do

Mas so qu'amors e ioys soste.

debases, worsens, and deceives but love

sustains joy.

It is indeed love alone that allows the self to direct the will towards the good ; the quality of self depends entirely on love. Such is the claim of Gaucelm Faidit in his song “Tot mi cuidei”:

Nuills hom non pot ses amor far que pros

Without love no man can act nobly for

Si non enten en joi et esperans sa

he'll not turn his mind/spirit/soul towards

Que-l jois d'amores tant fis e tant bos

joy and hope; the joy of love is so good and

Q'en contr'aicel non es mais benanssa.¹¹²

so perfect, that in comparison with her,

there is no well-being.

The loving that at first seems so necessary to the fulfillment of human experience in fact would seem to imply a movement away from selfhood and towards the good and the perfect. As Kierkegaard says of love, “The emotion is not your possession but the other’s. The expression of it is his due, since in the emotion you belong to him who moves you and makes you conscious of

¹¹² ll. 46-49, “Tot mi cuidei de chanssos far sofrir,” Jean Mouzat, *Les Poèmes de Gaucelm Faidit, Troubadour du XIIIe*, Editions critiques. ed. (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1989).

belonging to him...”¹¹³ Love therefore does not lead us deeper into the self unless through the other.

The Cognitive Functions and Selfhood

Cogito ergo sum.

-Descartes

*God created the soul before the body
and gave it precedence in time and value,
and made it the dominating
and controlling value.*

-Plato¹¹⁴

In the *cogito* we have an equation comprised of two verbs: thinking and being. For whatever reason, being, the “*sum*” has never proved completely satisfying and so many variables have been plugged into the other side of the equalizing “*ergo*.” Thus far we have examined in what way the physical body serves as marker of a subject’s being and have also seen the great ease with which the emotions also can plug into the equation as a proof, a requisite, a fabricator of being. Augustine says, “I do not myself grasp all that I am,”¹¹⁵ the verb “grasp” directs our attention is brought to the missing but implied subject of the *cogito* equation. One side of the

¹¹³ Soren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love; Some Christian Reflections in the Form of Discourses* (New York: Harper, 1962) 29.

¹¹⁴ Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. Donald J. Zeyl (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2000) 47.

¹¹⁵ Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X, ix, p. 187.

equation always has, as we have quoted it from Plato, “precedence in time and value”; one depends on the other—one can only imagine it to be temporally the case if it is materially the case. And yet, though we would seem to have a unique subject—“I”—, it is evident that in fact we have one “I” capable of grasping and another “I” that handles the “being” on some other plane. The “I” or subject that concerns us at the moment is not the “I” that thinks or grasps the “I” that is, but our concern is with the self, the entity that simply is. We, and our mystics and troubadours, would thus seem relieved of the duty of defining consciousness. Alas, “being” and subjectivity, the self, cannot be reached, experienced or examined either one without mental activity, without consciousness. It would seem impossible to break the self free of its mental functions. And yet, to what extent are these mental functions fully subject-centered or subject focused? Where is the mind, or the *esperitz*, to be situated?—what would be called the Cartesian Theater. What is the functioning of mental functions? What is the process of thought and where in it do we discover the self?

Ymaginatio

Lacan’s idea of the mirror stage is in fact a theory of self-consciousness that translates Schilder’s notion of the body image in such a way as to privilege image and minimize the physical, material, or the bodily in the construction of the subject. While Schilder suggested that the body itself, its nerve-endings, its physical shape, weight, boundedness, is registered by the moving conscious subject who remembers and “imagines” the outlines in an imaginary map, Lacan concentrates on the “imagining” and the image. In fact, rather than consider the myriad ways that the body boundary offers the subject a means of recognizing a shape to equate with him or her self, Lacan speaks of image and imagining almost exclusively, “La seule fonction

homogène de la conscience est dans la capture imaginaire du moi par son reflet spéculaire et dans la fonction de méconnaissance qui lui en reste attachée.”¹¹⁶ While the skin’s nerve-endings define the outline of the self in one way, consciousness through the mental function of the imagination provides another.

Imagining falls under the auspice of mental activity; analytical thought and meditative contemplation can both depend upon the capacity to call up an image in the mind or push one’s mind into abstract considerations. Augustine’s declaration of self-ignorance, “I do not myself grasp all that I am,” is found in his discussion of memory, language, and images. It is clear that self-reflection or examination of selfhood inevitably brings us to the imagination and the manipulation through time of images that is the memory. For him, reasoning is nothing more than using the storehouse of sensory memories to determine what the future might be: “I combine with past events images of various things, whether experienced directly or believed on the basis of what I have experienced; and on this basis I reason about future actions and events and hopes, and again think of all these things in the present.”¹¹⁷ But all plans for the future come through language, a language that is dependent upon the images stored in the memory: “I say these words to myself and, as I speak, there are present images of everything I am speaking of, drawn out of the same treasure-house of memory. I would never say anything like that if these images were not present.”¹¹⁸ The dependence of reason upon mental imagining is a debate held through the centuries amongst philosophers. Though many—Aristotle, Hobbes, Hume, Kant—

¹¹⁶ The only homogenous function of consciousness is its imaginary capture of the “I” [ego] by its mirror reflection and the function of misrecognition which remains attached to it. “Position de l’inconscient,” Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, vol. II (Seuil: Paris, 1971) 196.

¹¹⁷ Augustine, *Confessions* Book X, ix, p. 187.

¹¹⁸ Augustine, *Confessions* Book X, ix, p. 187.

would suggest that thinking is somehow possible without imagining and holds a supremacy over imagining, there is a good deal of modern discussion suggesting just what Augustine believed: images and memory of those images stored in the mind and only linguistically possible if the imagination precedes are fundamental to the capacity of man to reason.¹¹⁹

Douglas Kelly's *Medieval Imagination* demonstrates to what extent this mental faculty is appreciated and cultivated in the medieval world. Though he claims that the "notion of Imagination has not been studied in its theoretical and practical applications to courtly literature,"¹²⁰ it is not because material is lacking. Kelly's study allows him to declare in unison with Augustine and other phenomenologists that the "Imagination is a mental faculty. It governs the invention, retention, and expression of images in the mind."¹²¹ Even if Aristotle and thinkers who follow him do not give precedence to the imaginary capacities of the mind, Kemp reminds us that it is nonetheless a part of the mental process of thinking as he explains of Aquinas saying, "Aquinas follows Aristotle believing that thinking is impossible without an image of some kind, and the production of these images is the province of the inner senses,"¹²² and that "intellect acquires understanding by abstraction from these sensations and images."¹²³ Though the

¹¹⁹ For more current discussions and accounts of previous thinking see E.S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), R. Kearney, *The Wake of the Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1988). For a somewhat tangential discussion that looks at the way the imaginary informs life see Vincent Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

¹²⁰ Douglas Kelly, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) XI.

¹²¹ Kelly, *Medieval Imagination* XI-XII.

¹²² Simon Kemp, *Medieval Psychology*, Contributions in Psychology, No. 14 (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) 69.

declaration “*cogito ergo sum*” is in some sense a sentiment present in medieval philosophy and the thinking of the mystics and troubadours we study here, the imagining that leads one to thought and consciousness or awareness of self is equally capable of pulling the contemplative out of the self completely, as was the purpose of some meditative practices which incorporated the contemplation and creation of images both real and mental. Indeed Jaroslav Pelikan notes that Descartes' *cogito* is one that leads to selfhood as opposed to the mystics that precede him:

In Bonaventure, the Augustinian method of introspection within the context of divine grace led, through experience and reflection, to a transcendent Goodness than which nothing better could be imagined, the God whose mercy, made known in Christ, made it possible for one to sound the depths of his own experience and to affirm himself in nature as well as in grace. In Descartes, on the other hand, despite its undeniable ancestry in Augustine, Anselm, and Bonaventure, the “*cogito*” led through doubt to thought and from thought to the affirmation both of the self and of God.¹²⁴

I would suggest that our troubadours and mystics seek, like Bonaventure, to reach beyond the confines of an affirmed selfhood.

In providing a succinct yet complete portrait of the mental apparatus of medieval monasticism, Jean Leclercq explains that while our own modern imagination has become weak and lazy, such was not the case in the Middle Ages, “[b]ut in the men of the Middle Ages it [the imagination] was vigorous and active. It permitted them to picture, to ‘make present,’ to see beings with all the details provided by the texts,” and notes that “[t]his strength of the

¹²³ Kemp, *Medieval Psychology* 70.

¹²⁴ Jaroslav Pelikan. *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*. The Christian Tradition, A history of the Development of Doctrine 3. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 306.

imagination had great consequences in the field of iconography, and in literary expression as well.”¹²⁵ Various authors who study visionary literature and those who study devotional art remind us that Christians were instructed to use the imagination as they attempted to understand the Word. Denise Despres reminds us that “[w]hen they were listening to the Gospels, individuals were encouraged to Imagine or recreate those scriptural scenes in detail to experience salvation history in an omnitemporal present.”¹²⁶ Jeffrey F. Hamburger studies a series of images associated with the female community of St. Walberg and so demonstrates the tie between *imitatio Cristi* and artistic representations which allowed the nuns to come closer to the divine through meditation upon actual images. He notes that in fact, “[w]ith a view to the mystic’s ultimate goal, the beatific vision, sight itself becomes not only the end, but also the means, of achieving union with God,”¹²⁷ a sentiment which the work of Angela da Foligno reaffirms. Indeed the link of literature and image with the power of imagination in the practice of contemplation and meditation demonstrates the importance of the imagination in the quest to take leave of the self in search of the divine.

Hugh of Saint Victor explains that what begins in reading can lead to meditation by directing the gaze towards beneficial images and in so doing the soul can reach a state similar to that of the divine:

¹²⁵ Jean Leclercq, *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God; a Study of Monastic Culture* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1961) 75.

¹²⁶ Denise Despres, *Ghostly Sights: Visual Meditation in Late-Medieval Literature* (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1989) 9.

¹²⁷ Jeffrey Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 102.

Meditation takes its start from reading but is bound by none of reading's rules or precepts. For it delights to range along open ground, where it fixes its free gaze upon the contemplation of truth, ... The start of learning, thus, lies in reading, but its consummation lies in meditation; which, if any man will learn to love it very intimately and will desire to be engaged very frequently upon it, renders his life pleasant indeed, and provides the greatest consolation to him in his trials. This especially it is which takes the soul away from the noise of earthly business and makes it have even in this life a kind of foretaste of the sweetness of the eternal quiet... From this it follows that in meditation is to be found the greatest delight.¹²⁸

Hugh's instructions would seem to structure the praxis of Angela da Foligno and Marguerite d'Oingt, who both endeavor to allow their gaze to lead them to the divine. Angela begins with actual representations of the passion and the crucifix and Marguerite with an abstraction of the body and the text that allows the concepts of image, body, and text to conflate into a single entity that leads the penitent toward union with Christ. Marguerite Porete, on the other hand, attempts to produce a language that follows the "free gaze" while allowing it to roam without language's "rules or precepts" and produces a text that is at once text and beyond text at the same time.

In her enquiry into image-making, thinking, and meditating in medieval scholastic and monastic societies Mary Carruthers offers her modern readers an interpretation of the cognitive

¹²⁸ Hugh of Saint Victor, *Didascalicon; A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor, Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies No. 64 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) 92-93.

and doctrinal theories of these intertwined practices. She concludes that the “craft of monasticism” is what Hugh of Saint Victor describes and is what is practiced by the mystics to be discussed here. As she explains in the introduction to her *Craft of Thought*:

The craft of making prayer continuously, which is the craft of monasticism, came to be called *sacra pagina* in Latin, the constant meditation based on reading and recollecting sacred texts. The early desert monks called this set of practices *mneme theou*, ‘the memory of God.’ This kind of ‘memory’ is not restricted to what we now call memory, but is a much more expansive concept, for it recognizes the essential roles of emotion, imagination, and cogitation within the activity of recollection. Closer to our term ‘cognition,’ the construction of thinking. Monastic meditation is the craft of making thoughts about God.¹²⁹

The eye that has gazed upon the image of the divine comes to carry the image within; the great schism between the earthly sinner and the divine is brought together; spatial difference is overcome through imagining. Bonaventure, the Franciscan mystical theologian who stresses the significance of the imago, the image of the world and of man as being made in the image of God and meditating upon the image to see God, begins his work, *Itinerarium mentis in Deum* claiming that, “prayer, then, is the mother and the source of the ascent.”¹³⁰ Ruth H. Cline in her

¹²⁹ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature ; 34, 1st pbk. ed. (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 2.

¹³⁰ Oratio igitur est mater et origo sursum-actionis. English translation from *Bonaventure: The Soul's Journey into God, The Tree of Life, The Life of St. Francis*. Trans. By Ewert Cousins. The

article “Heart and Eyes” claims that two motifs—the motif of love penetrating the heart through the eye and the motif of the beloved being carried within the heart of the lover— “cannot be strictly separated.”¹³¹ Bernard of Clairvaux, Origen, Augustine, and Hugh of Saint Victor are among those cited in her discussion. However, though the practice of imagination and meditation we have been discussing seems limited to the monastic or mystical practices, the following lines she offers from Bernard of Cluny could just as easily be attributed to Bernart de Ventadorn or one of the other troubadours: “the eye within, the keen vision of the mind, beholds thee...Because I cannot with the body, I often make way to thee in spirit.”¹³² While the religious practicante seeks transcendence, the troubadour seeks at least to transcend his own position in an attempt to reach his beloved, who so often is depicted as unreachable.

Conclusion

Both troubadour and mystic consider the self a construction of parts that come together in time, much as current trends in psychoanalysis propose. The definition of the “mental apparatus” provided by Luc Ciompi attests to as much, “the whole ‘mental apparatus’ (Freud) can be understood as a partly innate but mostly acquired flexible hierarchy of operationally integrated experience-based feeling-thinking-behaving programs that constitute the essential ‘building

Classics of Western Spirituality. (Chicago: Paulist Press, 1978) 60. Edition of Bonaventure from *Doctoris Seraphici S. Bonaventurae opera omnia*. Edita studio et cura pp. Collegii a S. Bonaventura. 10 vols. (Quaracchi: Collegium S. Bonaventurae, 1882-1902) 297.

¹³¹ R. H. Cline, “Heart and Eyes,” *Romance Philology* 25 (1971-72): 286.

¹³² Qtd. In Cline, “Heart and Eyes,” 288.

blocks' of the psyche."¹³³ Each of the elements of selfhood can at times take over to suggest that consciousness or the limits of the self are defined by one more than the others; the body provides the easiest means of demarcating the space of the self in the world; the emotions overwhelm the subject and seem to be what gives meaning and drives actions; the mental functions—imagining, thinking, meditating—seem at times to be the very stuff of self as Descartes's famous declaration, "cogito ergo sum," demonstrates. And yet, the fact that the feeling of self-consciousness can be shifted between these three entities already hints at the fragility of the construction. It leaves us with the words of Augustine, cited earlier, who says of that the hodgepodge of images, past events, memories and experiences, that it might be a great power, but, "[t]his power is that of my mind and is a natural endowment," but cannot allow the self to "grasp the totality of what I am."¹³⁴ There is too much to grasp, too many parts, and there are two in the self that examines itself: the "I" that grasps and contemplates and the "I" that simply is and allows itself to be grasped. This division and the possibility of situating one of each of the three elements of selfhood—*cor*, *arma*, and *esperitz*—on one side of the divide is what allows the determined individual to begin to chip away at the self. The reasons troubadours and mystics would seek to transcend the self and their means of doing so will be the focus of the next chapter.

¹³³ Luc Ciompi, "Reflections on the Role of Emotions in Consciousness and Subjectivity, from the Perspective of Affect-Logic," *Consciousness & Emotion* 4 (2003): 183.

¹³⁴ Augustine, *Confessions*, Book X, ix, p. 187.

CHAPTER 2: DECONSTRUCTING THE SELF IN TROUBADOUR AND MYSTICAL THOUGHT

The writings of great lovers, divine and secular, offer many lessons on how to behave as a humble servant to the beloved. The lyrics of troubadours and the texts of medieval mystics provide definitions of the perfect lover, declarations of love's power to transform the lover, and instructions on how to join the beloved. In order to highlight the similarities between these two discourses this chapter will provide a brief introduction to the issues by placing the words of troubadours beside the words of mystics. In this chapter we will examine the explicit references both lovers make to the love's power to transform the lover. The chapters on authors in parts II and III will focus on the preoccupations of the authors individually.

Love as Transformative

In the long history of attempting to understand human existence love has consistently appeared as an element that can explain not only what man is from the outset but how he can arrive at the goal the universe has set for him. Love in many instances is presented as a force which changes the lover, for better or for worse.

Love, loving, and the beloved transform mystics and troubadours alike. For each, love has the power to make the lover arrive at the ideal: for the mystic it is self-annihilation and complete integration with the divine, for the troubadour perfection of character and complete submission to the lady. The beloved transforms the lover into someone better says the poet-lover in Arnaut Daniel's song entitled "En cest sonet coind' e leri,"

Tot jorn meillur et esmeri
car la gensor serv e coli
del mon—so ·us dic.¹³⁵

Each day I become better and more refined
because I serve and revere the most
gracious lady in the world, this I tell you.

Gaucelm Faidit tells his beloved, “car m’etz enans e respiegs, e guirensa, / gaug e delitz, caps et comensamens” and for this reason “en amar be meillur outra poder”¹³⁶ And Raimbaut d’Aurenga emphasizes: “Si ben en amar leis m’esmer”¹³⁷ Bernart de Ventadorn goes so far as to proclaim that “Ben a mauvais cor e mendic / qui ama e no·s melhura”¹³⁸ The theme is a common one in the lyrics of the troubadours and courtly romances, but it has clear counterparts in the declarations of mystics. Like the troubadours, Jacopone da Todi, writing in Italy in the thirteenth century—where most of the troubadour songbooks we have today were being compiled¹³⁹—composes a song praising divine love in which he addresses her saying, “Amor che dai forma /

¹³⁵ *The Poetry of Arnaut Daniel*, James J. Wilhelm (New York: Garland, 1981) ll. 14-24. Translations of troubadours are mine unless otherwise noted. This song is not included in the later editions of Arnaut Daniel by Maurizio Perugi or Martin de Riquer.

¹³⁶ because you are beneficial, my hope and my well-being, joy and pleasure, end and beginning, ll. 5-6. through love I grow exceptionally better, “Ges de chanter non aten ni esper,” *Les Poèmes de Gaucelm Faidit, Troubadour du XIIe siècle*, line 12.

¹³⁷ in loving her I grow fine. “Ben sai c’a sels seria fer” *The Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut D’Orange*, ed. and trans. Walter Thomas Pattison (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952) ll. 33.

¹³⁸ He who loves and does not improve himself certainly has a bad and false heart. “Lancan folhon bosc e jarrie” Moshe Lazar, ed., *Bernart de Ventadorn, Chansons D’amour* (1966; Moustier-Ventadour: Carrefour Ventadour, 2001) ll. 17-18.

¹³⁹ It is interesting to remember that the world that Jacopone inhabits is one where love songs in the style of the Occitan troubadours held great esteem.

ad omnia cha forma / la forma toa reforma lom che deformato.”¹⁴⁰ Man is a deformation, is material that has lost its shape until Love returns it to an original form. The original form is that of Love itself, who gives its own shape to whatever it overpowers. De-forming happens through the process of willing. De-forming allows for a different form to be produced. Man should remain in God’s image and Love’s form. If he has strayed by willing, introducing difference and so constructing an entity distinct from God and Love, he should strive to return to an intermingled state, a union that means a dissolving of difference. Like in Jacopone, Marguerite Porete proclaims this the power of Love:

Ce don [of his love] occist ma pensee	This gift of his love kills my thought by the
du delit de son amour,	delight of His love, which delight lifts and
lequel delit	transforms me through union into the
me soubhauce et mue par union	eternal joy of the being of divine love.
en la permanable joye d’estre de divine	
Amour. ¹⁴¹	

The *fin’ amant*, the annihilated soul, to use the names Marguerite Porete provides, becomes the thing itself, eradicating the difference that makes a separate subject. Love, loving, and beloved—divine or earthly—seem for these lyrical poets to elicit a common type of change in

¹⁴⁰ Love, You who give form to all / Take poor deformed man / and reform him; Jacopone and Giuseppe Mazza, *Il Laudario Jacoponico*. (Bergamo: San Marco, 1960) 119.

¹⁴¹ Old French is taken from the edition by Romana Guarnieri and Paul Verdeyen, *Margaretæ Porete Speculum Simplicium Animarum, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis*. 69 (Turnholt: Brepols, 1986) 346, ll. 116-121. English translations are my own and subsequent references will be referenced by a shortened version of the french title, *Mirouer*, so as not to confuse Marguerite d’Oingt’s *Speculum* with Marguerite Porete’s *Mirouer*.

the lover-poets. Just as troubadours often repeat the words “esmeri” or “refining” and other verbs of bettering and transformation, Marguerite Porete returns to the idea of the soul changing or transforming with her consistent use of the word “muer” in her description of the soul.

To love fully the self must be transformed. Further exploration reveals that in fact both troubadours and mystics describe a process that is less a trans-forming and more a de-forming or deconstructing of the kind described by Jacopone above, an un-forming of the subject. As Augustine explains in his Sermon, the self must be left behind entirely, forgotten, “For she [the soul] is less than God; yea, less by far, and by so much less as the thing made is less than the Maker. It was God then That ought to have been loved, yea in such wise as ought God to be loved, that if it might be so, we should forget ourselves.”¹⁴² In her study of the concept of love in the work of Augustine, Hannah Arendt determines that in forgetting the self, the subject has to give up its very being, “Dans cet oubli, il cesse d’être lui-même, un être particulier.”¹⁴³ The elements or very thingness of the self must be shed to reach God.

The lover places at the feet of the beloved the lover’s will, pleasure, and body parts; that is, all the various elements of the self. One of the most obvious gifts of self the lover can offer is the heart. Arnaut de Marueilh no longer holds his own heart; it is now in the hands of the lady, “Domna valens ab avinens lauzors, / Ren de mon cor non ai mais la bailia / de vos lo tenh...”¹⁴⁴ The heart consistently represents the self in troubadour lyric. Bernart de Ventadorn situates his

¹⁴² Augustine, *Sermons on Selected Lessons of the New Testament*. A Library of Fathers Trans. Members of the English Church, (Oxford: James Parker, 1875) 569.

¹⁴³ In that forgetting, he ceases to be himself, a being in particular. Hannah Arendt, *Le concept d’amour chez Augustin*, Trans. Anne-Sophie Astrup (Paris: Payot et Rivages, 1999) 47.

¹⁴⁴ Noble lady of gracious praise I have no control over my heart, from you I hold it. “L’ensenhamens e-l pretz e la valors” R. C. Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil* (Paris: E. Droz, 1935) ll. 29-31.

identity, his being, in the heart, describing a self that is at its most condensed and solid in the *cor*.¹⁴⁵ In “Can la freid’ aura venta” Bernart de Ventadorn offers both his will and his heart to his lady “per amor de la genta / vas cui eu sui aclis, on ai meza m’ententa / e mo coratg’ assis...”¹⁴⁶ but in “Non es meravelha” he offers up a more complete inventory of self: “Cor e cors e saber e sen / e fors’ e poder i ai mes.”¹⁴⁷ The features of individual identity have been handed over to the beloved. While it is common to expect troubadours to speak of physical union, their words indicate that a loss of self-love is also a priority.¹⁴⁸

In the text that led Marguerite Porete to the flames, *Mirouer des simples ames anenties et qui seulement demourent en vouloir et desir d’amour*, Marguerite creates a dialogue which gives a voice to the allegorical figures of Reason, Love, the Soul. Here too the figures speak of a soul who relinquishes the will, for Love says of the Soul,

car son vouloir n’est mie a elle ne en elle, for her will is no longer her own nor in her,
mais ainçoys est en celui qui l’ayme, et ce but instead is in the One who loves her, and

¹⁴⁵ Eric Jager discusses the semantic inheritance of the language of the heart by medieval authors in his *The Book of the Heart* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000). See in particular the introduction and first chapter, “Origins.”

¹⁴⁶ For love of the noble one towards whom I gravitate, where I have placed my affection, and set my heart... ll. 5-8

¹⁴⁷ heart and body, wisdom and mind and strength and force and power I have placed in it(love). ll. 5-6

¹⁴⁸ The question as to why troubadours might seek to escape the self can have answers on a variety of levels: psychological, social, and more. These are in fact the very levels on which one can find answers for the reason mystics might want to escape the self. While some scholars concentrate their attention on the fact that women were offered a voice through religious positions (Amy Hollywood and Laurie Finke), others are interested in diagnosing some of the more exciting characters. This was particularly popular at the end of the 19th century when Charcot’s designation of Theresa of Avila as suffering from hysteria becomes the first in a long line of diagnoses. I have outlined my interest in the psychological rather than the social above.

n'est mie son oeuvre ainçois est l'oeuvre	it is not at all her work but is the work of
de toute la Trinité, qui oeuvre en telle Ame	the Trinity who performs work in this Soul
a sa voullenté... ¹⁴⁹	as It wills.

Marguerite uses the image of flame and fire to explain the conflating of wills that happens and means transformation for the simple soul:

Or est ung commun vouloir, come feu et	Now there is one common will, as fire and
flambe,	flame, the will of the Lover and the one
le vouloir de l'amant et celluy de l'amie,	who is loved, for Love has transformed this
car Amour a muee ceste Ame en luy. ¹⁵⁰	Soul into Love itself.

As the lover gives his or her parts to the beloved, the distance or difference, between lover and beloved weakens. Lover and beloved pull closer together. Distance and difference are overcome with this transforming, *muer*, that turns the lover not only into someone different, but someone better. Further the Soul says “tant suis muee” that all individuality and unique, separate identity is lost. She can have no name for she has disappeared into the union with the beloved:

Et tant suis muee	And I am so transformed that I have lost
que je en au perdu mon nom pour amer,	my name in it for the sake of love [loving],
qui si pou puis amer. ¹⁵¹	I who am able to love so little.

¹⁴⁹ *Mirouer* 96, ll. 25-28.

¹⁵⁰ *Mirouer* 96, ll. 9-11.

¹⁵¹ *Mirouer* 96.

Self is lost entirely; only Love, the divine, exists. The name as marker of unique identity is completely lost. Such is the power and purpose of love.

In the compilation of texts left by Angela da Foligno, the mystic recounts the story of her transformation to the Fra Arnaldo who transcribes her words.¹⁵² She provides an outline of, “the degree of transforming love” in which she too emphasizes that the transformation is in fact a deconstructing of all the elements that make a self resulting in a selflessness that is that is the loss of the lover’s individual identity:

Et allora la virtù de l’amore	Then the power of love transforms the
Transforma l’amante ne l’amato	lover into the beloved and the beloved into
e l’amato ne l’amante. ¹⁵³	the lover.

A transformation takes place, demolishing all boundaries between loving subject and beloved object. The two entities become blurred through this process. Self is lost; the beloved too has been described as turned into the lover, “e l’amato ne l’amante.” In order for the space between divine and human to be narrowed, dissolved, all one needs is to acknowledge the

¹⁵² The problematic nature of our access to Angela being mediated through her confessor’s transcription has been addressed in the essays collected by Giovanni Pozzi and Claudio Leonardi in *Scrittici mistiche italiane* (Genoa: Marietti, 1988) and is the significance of male-mediated accounts of female spirituality is discussed in the essays collected by Catherine Mooney, *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters* (Philadelphia, PA: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999). Also see, Daria Valentini, “In Search of the Subject: Angela of Foligno and Her Mediator.” *RLA: Romance Languages Annual* 6 (1994): 371-75.

¹⁵³ Ludger Thier, and Abele Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela da Foligno: Edizione Critica*, 2. ed., *Spicilegium Bonaventurianum*; 25 (Grottaferrata (Rome): Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Quas, 1985) 687.

pervasive nature of divine being. For the individual to persist in existing as a unique entity is to deny God the power to be all. It is in this sense a deconstruction, an un-forming of self.

Mystics and troubadours agree that some sort of transformation takes place in the loving subject. The process is one of deconstruction and it is this common goal—for it is a goal and not a passive result—that brings these two lovers to speak of love with similar words. Love and loving alone do not effect change of mental state, but alterations in the components of being a loving subject. The goal of love according to troubadours and mystics is a state in which there is a total eclipsing of the self, and the role of language in deconstructing the self is the common link between these two types of lovers. It is a paradox of language that moves these lovers: they struggle within the confines of language and yet employ speech and writing to push the boundaries of world and self. Their love and loathing of words and facility with language games allow mystics and troubadours to become perfect lovers.

Losing the Self for Love

For both mystics and *fin' amants* of earthly *domnas*, to strive to become the perfect lover is to lose all selfish preoccupations, to disappear. If the construction of the self happens in the world, through language, and a move towards a sense of the body, as well as feelings, so too does the deconstruction of self. The deconstructive tools of which we find traces in the works of the mystics and the troubadours center on three particular fields of play: the body, the imagination, and language.

The Body and Loss of Self

Attempts to deconstruct the self by devaluing the body begin with acts—in speech and body—which paradoxically enough put the human form center stage. Both extreme asceticism and self-inflicted wounding offer clear examples of subjects whose desire to minimize the importance or role of the body and the bodily in the construction of self-identity leads them to a grand preoccupation with all things corporeal. Pain would seem to draw attention to the body as a self. Instead, self-inflicted pain holds a prominent place in practices of self-destruction, as Gavin Flood notes: “Pain, willingly accepted, becomes the method for the body’s transcendence. This is a common feature of ascetic traditions.”¹⁵⁴ While hagiographies and the texts of mystics indicate that lovers of God do undertake some of the other methods a subject employs to destroy the self, some accounts by troubadours suggest that self-injurious practice is adopted by those in love with a human on earth. This is true because these practices have nothing to do with the character of the beloved but everything to do with the complete destruction of the loving subject.

Ariel Glucklich tracks the mystifying question of why one would expect pain to lead to identification with God in his study *Sacred Pain*. He does not make too much of the uses of language though he does include prayer and chanting in the list of practices he says mystics use to “unmake their own profane selves.”¹⁵⁵ Glucklich presents his objective in the following terms:

Sacred Pain argues that religious individuals have hurt themselves
because the pain they produced was meaningful and is not only

¹⁵⁴ Flood, Gavin D. *The Ascetic Self: Subjectivity, Memory and Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 6.

¹⁵⁵ Ariel Glucklich, *Sacred Pain: Hurting the Body for the Sake of the Soul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 43.

subject to verbal communication but also figures in our ability to empathize and share. In other words, the symbolic and experiential efficacy of pain derives from the way it bridges ‘raw’ sensation with our highest qualities as human beings in a community of other humans.¹⁵⁶

By claiming that pain is key in connecting humans with symbol, he sets himself up against the very well-known declaration by Elaine Scarry in *The Body in Pain* which posits that pain is “language-destroying.”¹⁵⁷ Not only this but he is situating himself within the prickly question of how to speak about, understand, or even simply witness or identify the mystic or ascetic’s experience. We only have texts as a window onto the experiences of mystics of old is text alone. However, are texts nothing more than the pure account of an experience? Is writing itself a part in the process of self-negation and so more about the writer’s act in writing than any message conveyed? Is the language we find today left by or about a religious figure the product of the intent to speak to us? Glucklich does seem to think that language is a communicative tool rather than one that can change the speaker/writer or listener/reader’s experience in any way. Glucklich says “the hurting body does not suffer silently. It offers a potential voice, if one has the tools to make the soul listen.”¹⁵⁸ He suggests that “religiously-conceived pain” can “potentially be

¹⁵⁶ Glucklich 44.

¹⁵⁷ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 11. Glucklich takes on Scarry explicitly stating, “her fundamental axiom, that pain eludes language and is therefore completely subjective and objectless, is incorrect.” Glucklich 42.

¹⁵⁸ Glucklich 42

transformed into good pain: educational, healing, bonding with God.”¹⁵⁹ However, many are the mystics who claim that language falls away along with all things worldly when union with God is achieved and Glucklich himself recognizes that the shaking off of all things earthly is the goal and the reason they employ techniques of various kinds: “Ascetics and mystics know that they possess effective techniques, short of raw pain, for unmaking their own profane selves: First is a rigid diet, then isolation, sleepless nights (vigils,) ongoing prayer or chanting, hard physical work, and other psychotropic techniques.”¹⁶⁰ When union with God is achieved, a “potential voice” is no longer necessary. Union renders mediation, communication through voice, sign, *through* anything, completely unnecessary.

While I do not agree that the purpose of ascetic practices or even self-inflicted pain is not to “find a voice,” as Glucklich says, it is true that the visual image of these acts can convey something to onlookers. That cannot be denied. Bruce Holsinger’s chapter, “The Musical Body in Pain” in *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture* attempts to widen his scope to “a number of approaches to the musical body in pain.”¹⁶¹ His discussion of the flagellants suggests that the objective of the flagellants was indeed to “produce painful music as public, civic spectacle” though Holsinger does recognize that the musicality in devotional practice could also serve to alter the experience of the practicante.¹⁶² In fact Gavin Flood suggests in his work, *The Ascetic Self*, that “asceticism is always performed, which is to say always in the public domain

¹⁵⁹ Glucklich 40.

¹⁶⁰ Glucklich 43.

¹⁶¹ Bruce W. Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire in Medieval Culture Hildegard of Bingen to Chaucer* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001) 196.

¹⁶² Holsinger, *Music, Body, and Desire* 198-99. See particularly “Musicality and Suffering” 196-216.

(even when performed in privacy).”¹⁶³ For the subject that inflicts pain upon the self, the goal is not only to speak to a public but also to test the possibility of escaping selfhood even when surrounded by onlookers, even when their existence brings the eyes of others upon them. The loss of self that can come with pain is accompanied by the loss of language. As Scarry’s work suggests, self and language are in symbiosis and lost simultaneously.

Hurting the body with God in mind is about devaluing all the elements of individual selfhood through the assortment of means available. Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach have recently proposed another reason for the widespread use of self-inflicted pain in the religious of the Western Christian tradition in their book *The Mystic Mind*. They posit as their fundamental hypothesis “that one major and heretofore overlooked motivation for medieval heroic ascetic behaviors is the effectiveness of self-injurious behaviors in bringing about an altered state of consciousness.”¹⁶⁴ While Glucklich stresses the effects of pain within community and with God, and Holsinger the meaningful spectacle, Kroll and Bachrach focus on mental states; self-induced pain serves a very intimate purpose working on the mind of the subject. Kroll and Bachrach build their book upon the idea that mystics of the Western Christian tradition, at least during the Middle Ages, “employed harsh self-injurious practices as a method of inducing altered states of consciousness,” and this because “Western Christianity during much of the Middle Ages did not have available, ... as strong a tradition of meditative practices as those found in Eastern religions.”¹⁶⁵ If pain was used by so many of those seeking to destroy the self, it is because they

¹⁶³ Flood 7.

¹⁶⁴ Jerome Kroll and Bernard S. Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind: The Psychology of Medieval Mystics and Ascetics* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

¹⁶⁵ Kroll and Bachrach 2.

had limited means available to them. However, familiarity with monastic practices cannot but challenge their claim. Caroline Walker Bynum suggests that the “peculiarly bodily” focus of spirituality in the Middle Ages was because “theology and natural philosophy saw persons as, in some real sense, body as well as soul.”¹⁶⁶ Not only, then, is pain a method available to medieval ascetics, but the body itself holds meaning in a particular way for the medieval subject.

While descriptions of extreme asceticism and self-inflicted physical pain—the bodily means of altering the state of the religious practicante—are more readily found in hagiographies than in the writings of mystics this is to be expected as hagiographers have an agenda that necessitates a focus on the worldly. Even so, traces of the significance of the body in the construction of selfhood surface in mystical texts and even troubadour lyric. Angela da Foligno in her book of visions describes an experience prompted by looking at the crucifixion which leads her to distance herself of her body parts:

Ma in questo cognoscimento de la
croze m’era dacto tanto fuoco che,
stando apresso de la croxe, me
spolgiai tute le vestimente e tuta me
ofresi a lui. Et avegnaché con
tremore, ma alori promisi a lui de
observare castitade perpetua, e de
non ofender a lui con algun di mie

Nonetheless, this perception of the
meaning of the cross set me so afire that,
standing near the cross, I stripped myself of
all my clothing and offered my whole self
to him. Although very fearful, I promised
him then to maintain perpetual chastity and
not to offend him again with any of my
bodily members, accusing each of these

¹⁶⁶ Bynum, Caroline Walker, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991) 183.

menbri, e accusando li peccati de tuti one by one.
i membri.¹⁶⁷

Her bodily members she doffs one by one by giving them a name and in so doing an identity apart from her own. Angela da Foligno strips herself of all that had been draped on her by denying them to be acting under or in accord with her new willing which is in accord with God's; once stripped, she offers herself completely to God. She explains that she was

“iluminata e fòme insingnata la via de la inspired with the thought that if I wanted to
croxe in questo modo, zioè ch'io mi go to the cross, I would need to strip
spolgiàse e fosse piui liziera, e nuda a la myself of my very self in order to be lighter
croxe andàse, ...¹⁶⁸ and go naked to it...;

She would need to rid herself even “of my very self.” The clothes, then the shell that is the body, must be lost. In a *laude* known through the provocative title, “Self-Annihilation and Charity Lead the Soul to What Lies Beyond Knowledge and Language,” Jacopone da Todi admits that he had once foolishly thought that the rational and the bodily through the senses offered a means of finding God:

Auerte cognosuto I used to think

¹⁶⁷ Ludger Thier and Abele Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela da Foligno: Edizione Critica, Spicilegium Bonaventurianum* ; 25, 2. ed. (Grottaferrata: Editiones Collegii S. Bonaventurae ad Claras Quas, 1985) 137. This passage is discussed in the chapter on Angela da Foligno in part III.

¹⁶⁸ *Il libro della beata Angela* 139.

¹⁶⁹ “Sopre omne lingua, amore,” Mazza, *Il Laudario Jacoponico*.

Credeua per intellecto	That through the intellect I knew You,
Gustato per affecto	Had a taste of you through feeling
Uiso per simiglianza	I saw you in similitudes,
Credendo auer tenuto	I believed I held you, knew You in Your
Ti cosi perfectio	perfection.
Prouato quel dilecto	I know now that I was wrong,
Amor de smesuranza	that that truth was flawed.
Or par me che so fallanza	Tasted the delight of
Non ei quel chio credeua	Love without measure
Tenendo non auea	Now, it seems that this was false
Ueritate senza errore. ¹⁶⁹	It is not what I believed
	I did not have the truth without error.

In this *laude*, the opening suggests that for one who has truly arrived, joined the beloved, all intellect, sensory perception, sense of self and self-consciousness, “are swept into infinity.”¹⁷⁰

The state and space of union is devoid of all a self can produce or access. As he says in opening the *laude*, “Love beyond all telling, Goodness beyond imagining.” Love, the divine, is beyond the mental capacities of the individual.

¹⁷⁰ Jacopone da Todi. “Self-Annihilation and Charity Lead the Soul to What Lies Beyond Knowledge and Language” 265.

Mental functions and the Loss of Self

In claiming that this experience of love is “Sopra omne lingua amore / bontate senza figura”¹⁷¹ Jacopone highlights the two other means of self destruction commonly used by good lovers stemming from the mental elements of selfhood: language and imagination. The importance of meditation upon images will be a large part of the discussion presented in part III. Angela da Foligno explains that one day she heard God say “Io te voglio mostrare la mia potenza,”¹⁷² and explains she was able to see a vision through the eyes of her soul. Angela discovers the mental phenomenon of a vision can affect change upon her being. She learns the power of imagining; the imagination as a method of focusing her attention on her smallness, her tiny place within an immense creation; her own worth is comparable to only the smallest grain for she continues saying, “E comprendea tuto lo mondo quaxi una piccola cosa.”¹⁷³ She has lost herself in the immensity and grandeur of the imaginal, of the contemplation of an image of the divine which encompasses and suffuses all leaving nothing outside the parameters of God’s being. Angela loses herself less by crushing her physicality, as would an ascetic, than by creating and focusing on images of the divine. The book we have today is a collection of visions and reflections Angela da Foligno dictated to the Franciscan Brother Arnaldo. Imagining as we see it in the descriptions provided by Angela da Foligno but also other mystics and even some troubadours is a type of concentration that summons visions.

¹⁷¹ Love beyond all telling, Goodness beyond image [or imagining], Line 1. Mazza, *Il Laudario Jacoponico*, line 1.

¹⁷² I want to show you my power; *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 261, 263.

¹⁷³ Wherefore I understood how small is the whole of creation, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 263.

Angela's preference for imagining rather than writing as a means of arriving at the feeling and experience of the divine is demonstrated by reluctance to speak of God and the frustration she feels when she tries to express her experience. The image is the way to reach the divine, experience union, words are nothing the expression, faulty and weak, of a strong and perfect experience. As Angela da Foligno recounts what she has seen, she, paradoxically, consistently claims the impossibility of speaking her visions by adding preambles or postscripts to the descriptions of her visions:

<p>Ancora me disse a me, frate scriptore, essa fedele de Cristo, exponiéndome tute queste cose scrite, che tanta passione vide l'anima sua, che quantonque santa Maria ne vedèse più che nulo santo in molti modi como essa asegnava, inpertanto essa intendeva che per nessuno modo Ella la potesse dire, né santo alcuno.¹⁷⁴</p>	<p>[At this point, Christ's faithful one, in an explanation of the above, told me, brother scribe, that her soul had seen so much of the passion that it understood that even though the Blessed Virgin had seen more of it and mentioned more of its details than any other saint, still she herself could not— neither could any other saint—find words to express it.</p>
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The passion is shown to her in such a way that the power of the image goes beyond the power of the tongue, “Questo dolore acuto, fo sì grande che lingua no zi basta a dire nì cuore a pensare...”¹⁷⁵ Language ceases to have any power: Love is beyond telling:

¹⁷⁴ *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 293.

¹⁷⁵ This acute pain, so intense that the tongue cannot express it nor is the heart great enough to imagine it. *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 295, 297.

E vego et intendo che quelle operazione	I am convinced that there is no saint, angel,
divine e quello profondissimo abisso, nullo	or creature which has anywhere near the
anzolo e nula criatura è sì larga e capace	capacity to understand these divine
che la possa comprenderé; e tuta queste	workings and that extremely deep abyss.
cosse cue ora dico si può sì male dire e	And everything I am saying now is so
meno dire, che sono biastemare quelle. ¹⁷⁶	badly and weakly said that it is a
	blasphemy against these things.

Angela da Foligno dictates her visions to Brother Arnaldo but her ecstasy comes from the moments of her rapture, the moments when she “sees” the glory of God, the suffering of Christ. Angela seems much more interested in the imaginary than in the rhetorical. Indeed her reluctance, at least as we hear it through the words penned by her confessor, might in some part explain why her account was written by this mediator. For other religious figures writing is a part of religious devotion. Both Marguerite d’Oingt and Marguerite Porete associate their religious experiences with the acts of the word, both reading and writing. It is always necessary to remember that we only have accounts when an experience was put into words, either by the practican or someone else. In fact, all we have are words. The text is a phenomenon in and of itself, apart from the experience that may or may not be described by a work or even inspired by writing.

The manipulation of the law of language, of the signifier-signified relationship, is the means of re-examining the solidity of the self and its place in the world chosen by at least some

¹⁷⁶ *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 381.

troubadours like Arnaut Daniel, Raimbaut d'Aurenga, and Bernart de Ventadorn and numerous mystics from Jacopone da Todi, Marguerite Porete, Teresa de Avila to Thérèse de Lisieux. Because the subject comes into being through language, because the world is accessed by a subject through the symbolic, tinkering with language in such a way that the link between the world and the word, the signifier and the signified is thrown into doubt, affects not only the stability of the symbolic, of language and grammar, but the frame of reality and the stance of the self as well. For this reason attempts to explore selfhood and the space beyond can involve play with language. To speak of the divine is to leave entirely the world of the sayable.

Even Marguerite d'Oingt, whose *Speculum* focuses on the image of an intricately decorated book placed in the heart and covered with letters, mirrors, and colors, believes the act of writing directs the heart and the mind to God: “Je n'ai escrit ces choses manqué por ce que quant mes cuers seroyt expanduz parmi le monde que je pensaso en cetes choses, por ce que puisso retorner mon cuer a mon creatour et retrayre du mundo”¹⁷⁷ She claims that she who has had visions wrote them all in her heart until it was so full she was unable to eat or sleep and so “elle se pensa que s'ela metoyt en escrit ces choses que sos cuers en seroyt plus alegiez.”¹⁷⁸ The need to speak, to write, to make some utterance before the ineffable has less to do with successful and truthful communication than it does with the effect of love. For Marguerite Porete, one of the effects of love is the desire to speak about it:

¹⁷⁷ I did not write these things but so, when my heart was wandering the world, that I think about these things, so that I could return my heart to my creator and pull it from the world. Antonin Duraffour ed., *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt, Publications de L'institut de Linguistique Romane de Lyon ; Vol. 21* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1965) 142. English translations my own.

¹⁷⁸ She thought that if she wrote those things down that her heart would be freed of the burden. Duraffour 142.

Mais j'en vueil parler et n'en sçay que
dire. Non pourtant, dame Amour, dist
elle, mon amour est de tel arbitrer, quie
j'aime mieulx a oïr chose mesdire de
vous, que que on ne die aucune chose de
vous. Et sans faille ce fais je: j'en
mesdis, car tout ce que j'en dis n'est fors
que mesdire de la bonté de vous.¹⁷⁹

But I want to speak about it and I don't
know what to say about it. Nevertheless,
Lady Love, she says, my love is so certain
that I would prefer to hear something
slanderous about you than that one should
say nothing about you. And without fail I
do this: I slander because everything I say
is nothing but slander about your goodness.

When facing the beloved, language fails. Speech, all speech, is slander. It is to mis-speak, speak wrongly, *mesdire*. The relationship signifier-signified cannot stand as it does for *cow* or *chair*, or *horse*; God is simply too much for any signifier to fully signify. And no signifier can avoid pointing in some way to the all-encompassing divine. In *Mystical Languages of Unsayings*, Michael Sells finds there are three linguistic options open to the one who faces “the primary dilemma of transcendence” which is the fact that anything that is beyond, that transcends, is beyond language, and yet to speak of it, to talk about it or point to it, one immediately is pulled back into the confined nontranscendent realm of language.¹⁸⁰ In illustrating the first response, silence, Angela admits that “e ziò ch’io dico me pare dire niente, over dire malle. E poi disseme:

¹⁷⁹ Duraffour 46, ll. 123-128.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 2.

parme de biastemare”¹⁸¹ and ultimately decides there is no way to talk about God or union with the divine:

E perciò non si può dire nulla	Therefore, there is absolutely nothing that can
assolutamente, e perché non si può	be said about this experience, for no words can
trovare nessuna parola che esprima	be found or invented to express or explain it;
queste cose divine e nessun pensiero e	no expansion of thought or mind can possibly
nessuna intelligenza può estenderi ad	reach to those things, they are so far beyond
esse, tanto soperchiano ogni cosa, como	everything—for there is nothing which can
Dio per chivele non si può comendare,	explain God. I repeat there is absolutely
inperzioché Dio al postuto non si può	nothing which can explain God. Christ’s
comendare. E dicea la predita fedele de	faithful one affirmed with utmost certitude and
Cristo con grandísima certeza e dava at	wanted it understood that there is absolutely
intendere che Dio non si può per	nothing which can explain God.
nessuno modo comendare. ¹⁸²	

And yet Angela speaks to her confessor for hours; Marguerite Porete disseminates her doctrine so resolutely that it leads to her being condemned to burn; Marguerite d’Oingt writes for her correspondent and herself. It would seem the need to speak is tied to human experience and the will to utter exists even when the words do not. The language produced in an attempt to speak the unsayable is *apophasis*. The features of *apophasis*, the language that signifies without

¹⁸¹ Everything I say now about it seems to say nothing or to be badly said. It seems that whatever I say about it is blasphemy. *Il Libro della Beata* 385, 87.

¹⁸² *Il Libro della Beata* 213.

pointing beyond itself, appear in texts from all periods though Michael Sells notes that “the 150-year period from the mid-twelfth to the beginning of the fourteenth century constitutes the flowering of apophatic mysticism.”¹⁸³

The intensity of the drive to speak that comes from encountering the *primum mobile* is not foreign to the troubadours. Troubadours consistently stress that they cannot help but sing. Peire Vidal swears to this drive: “Quan n’ aug dir bon resso,/ Gaugz entiers mi somo/ Qu’ en deja far chanso.”¹⁸⁴ Arnaut de Mareulh finds in the qualities of his beloved not only his desire to sing but the knowledge or skill to do so as well:

La grans beutatz e.l fis ensenhamens	The great beauty and the perfect education,
E.l verais pretz e las bonas lauzors	the true worth and the beautiful praise and
E.l cortes ditz e la fresca colors	courtly words and the fresh color that you
Que son en vos, bona domna valenz,	have, noble lady of worth, give me the art
Me donon gienh de chantar e sciensa,... ¹⁸⁵	and the skill to sing...

The words are not prompted by the singer, but by the lady herself—her perfection demands praise. Peire Rogier says much the same thing, even going so far as to suggest that because it is inspired by the perfect lady the song itself cannot be flawed, “Ges non puesc en bon vèrs falhir /

¹⁸³ Sells 5.

¹⁸⁴ Because I swear to you, when I hear her good fame spread one simple joy summons me to make a song of it. Peire Vidal, “Ajostar e lassar,” Joseph Anglade, *Les Poésies de Peire Vidal*, Les Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 11, 2. éd. revue. ed. (Paris: Librairie H. Champion, 1966) ll. 71-73.

¹⁸⁵ Arnaut de Maruelh, “La grans beutatz e-lh fis ensenhamens,” ll. 1-6. R.C. Johnston ed., *Les poésies lyriques du troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil*. (Paris: E. Droz, 1935).

nulh' ora que de midons chans.”¹⁸⁶ The intense love for the beloved, her very nature as an ideal being, inspire song—the suggestion is that he who looks on her cannot but begin to praise her. The transposition of such a thought into the register of the divine in Mariology, songs about the Virgin Mary, is not difficult to understand.

Troubadours singing of earthly ladies claim the lady is so great that song comes naturally; that she is so great there are not enough words to convey her greatness; that one could never go wrong in saying positive things about her for all good is in her; that it is right and good to sing the lady's praises. All of these claims are present in the corpus of marian songs written in Occitan by troubadours arriving late on the scene when tastes had become far more pious. Often the exordia of marian songs are the same as those in the lyrics of earthly *fin' amor*: The thirteenth-century troubadour Folquet de Lunel creates an opening stanza to a prayer to the Virgin Mary that cannot really be distinguished from the openings of songs written in earlier centuries for courtly ladies.¹⁸⁷ Folquet begins “Tant fin' amors totas horas m'afila” saying:

¹⁸⁶ I could never err in a good vers if I sing of my lady. How could I say anything bad? For no man is so poorly educated, [mal essenhatz] that if he speak to her one word or two that all villainy turns courtly. Let it be known then that it is true that the good [things?] that I say all come from her. “Ges non puesc” Peire Rogier, *The Poems of the Troubadour Peire Rogier*, Ed. Derek E. T. Nicholson. 2d ed. (Manchester Eng.: Manchester University Press, 1976).

¹⁸⁷ In discussing the move of Guiraut Riquier from the production of profane lyric to religious works, Joseph Anglade says that most troubadours who compose religious lyric “en empruntent à la lyrique profane ses expressions et ses formes, au point qu’il est parfois difficile de déterminer à quel genre appartiennent leurs poésies.” [by borrowing from profane lyric its expressions and its forms to such an extent that it is sometimes difficult to determine to which genre the poems belong.] Joseph Anglade, *Le Troubadour Guiraut Riquier; Étude Sur La Décadence de L'ancienne Poésie Provençale* (Bordeaux: Feret, 1905) 283-84.

Tant fin' amors totas horas m'afila	So much does <i>fin' amor</i> at all hours refine
Ma voluntat, qu'ieu de lauzar m'afil	My will, that I through praising my lady
Midons ; qu'en re tan mais no s'assubtila	refine myself; for in a thing so great my
Mos cars sabers, qu'ieu no'n ai ta subtil	precious <i>sabers</i> cannot have the subtlety
Que pogues dir l'una parte de las mil	needed—for I have not so refined a one--
Lauzors qu'om pot de lieys dir ; que d'ans/ mil a	That I could speak a fraction of the thousand praises that could be said of her; that in a
No nasqueth homs la pogues dir, non guil,	thousand years no man born could say them,
Ni lunhs per lieys lauzar non pot dir guila. ¹⁸⁸	without lie, and no one can speak a lie while praising her.

In this poem the poet uses the term “midons,” –a term earlier troubadours borrowed from feudal vocabulary to speak of their earthly woman— to speak of the Virgin.¹⁸⁹ Love again here overtakes the will of the composer who wishes to sing praise to “midons” but knows that his words, no matter how much he writes or sings, will never speak even a fraction of the thousands of glories that could be said of her. What Folquet sang in his song for the virgin had been said by troubadours who came before him, such as Arnaut de Marueilh, who says of his lady, “hom non pot lauzan mentir, ni del be que-y es dire-l tertz”¹⁹⁰ and again in his *tornada* for “Aissi cum

¹⁸⁸ Francisco J. Oroz Arizcuren, *La Lirica Religiosa En La Literatura Provenzal Antigua: Edición Crítica, Traducción, Notas Y Glosario* (Pamplona: Excma. Diputación Foral de Navarra Institución Príncipe de Viana, 1972) song 13, stanza I.

¹⁸⁹ For a discussion of the term *midons* and its feudal context see chapter 5.

¹⁹⁰ No one can lie while praising her, nor say even a third of all the good that is in her. R.C. Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil* (Paris: E. Droz, 1935).

mos cors es” says, “Gen Conquis, la lauzor/ e·l bos esseignamens, que Dieus vos a donat,/ en un jorn de pascor no serion comtat.”¹⁹¹ Bernart de Ventadorn claims his own beloved is of an essence that cannot be captured by any signified or even all signifieds put together, “Om no·l pot lauzar tan gen/ com la saup formar Natura.”¹⁹²

Despite the repeated notion that words cannot fully reveal the perfection of the lady—earthly or saintly—troubadours and trouvères singing of their beloved *Domna* or the Virgin cannot resist the urge to sing, inspired by the Lady and Love: “Fine amor et bone esperance/ me fait un noviau chant chanter/ de cele qui touz ceaus avance / qui de cuer la vuellent amer”¹⁹³ begins an anonymous French song. Bernart d’Auriac recognizes the great distinction between an earthly lady and the heavenly Virgin, even as the formula for the start of his song does not:

¹⁹¹ Gen Conquis, of all the glory and good instruction God has given you one could not hold within a spring day. Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil*.

¹⁹² No man can praise her as well as Nature knew to create her. Lazar, ed., *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour*.

¹⁹³ *Fin’ amor* and good hope urge me to sing a new song of her who benefits all those who wish to love her with their heart. Marcia Jenneth Epstein, *Prions en Chantant: Devotional Songs of the Trouvères*, Toronto Medieval Texts and Translations, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997) 11.

Be volria de la mellor
de totas far chonso plazen,
quar d'otra chanter non enten
mas de la verge de doussor;
qu'estiers non puese mielhs mos bons
motz despendre
qu'en la doussa dona de paradis
on Dieus pauzet totz los bes e·ls assis;
per qu'ieu li prec que·l plassa mon chant
prendre.¹⁹⁴

Well I'd like to make a lovely song of her
who is the greatest of all, for I cannot
intend to sing but of the sweet virgin.
For I cannot spend my words better than
on the sweet lady of paradise in whom
God placed and all good, for this reason I
pray that it please her to accept my song.

The poet recognizes that he could sing for an earthly woman but he chooses to sing for the Virgin. The language to speak of the one is the same as the discourse to speak of the other.

The second response to an encounter with perfection, after silence, is to scientifically and surgically filter the entity into parts: elements of common nontranscendence and others of transcendence.

The third response to the ideal beloved is that which assists us as we try to understand the incongruous lists of words produced by linguistically playful mystics of negative theology: "The third response begins with the refusal to solve the dilemma posed by the attempt to refer to the transcendent through a distinction between two kinds of name. The dilemma is accepted as a genuine *aporia*, that is, as unresolvable; but this acceptance, instead of leading to silence, leads

¹⁹⁴ "Be volria de la mellor" Oroz Arizcuren, *La Lirica Religiosa En La Literatura Provençal*.

to a new mode of discourse.”¹⁹⁵ Language can be used to speak of God and the ideal lady, just not *of* the ideal, the divine. Signs can no longer fully capture the power of reference necessary to refer to a signified once we enter the realm of perfection. Bernart de Ventadorn, like many troubadours, says so explicitly¹⁹⁶:

Qui be remira ni ve	For whosoever looks and observes her
Olhs e gola, fron e faz,	eyes, her neck, her forehead and face, her
Aissi son finas beutatz	beauty is so fine that neither more nor less
Que mais ni menhs no i cove,	would be appropriate to add, her slender
Cors long, dreih e covinen,	body, straight and attractive, nobly
Gen afliban, conhd’e gai.	adorned, charming and joyous. No person
Om no-l pot lauzar tan gen	can praise her so well as Nature made her.
Com la saup formar Natura.	¹⁹⁷

The sign cannot work as it does for the common, mundane thing; a word of human speech simply cannot depict the perfection that nature created. We must remember that there are two discourses to keep track of here: that which speaks of or about the bankruptcy of language in the realm of the ideal beloved and the actual discourse produced from this bankruptcy of language which mocks the linguistic or symbolizing process such as can be found in the very non-holy

¹⁹⁵ Sells 2.

¹⁹⁶ We must remember that there are two discourses to keep track of here: that which speaks of or about the bankruptcy of language in the realm of the ideal beloved (which is what we discuss here in this chapter and the next chapter) and the actual discourse produced from this bankruptcy of language which mocks the linguistic or symbolizing process such as can be found in the very non-holy *fratras* but also the poetry of negative mysticism.

¹⁹⁷ “Conortz era sai eu be” Lazar, ed., *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D’amour*.

fratras but also the poetry of negative mysticism. Angela da Foligno describes a scene in which the divine Himself appropriates the sign as He refutes the efficacy of the everyday sign or word with its divorce from its signified, and indeed the whole nature of signifying—the standing in for, and pointing toward something outside. God responds to Angela’s wish for a sign saying, “Questo che tu adimandi è uno segno che te darà senpre letizia quando lo vedèsi e tocàsi, ma non te trarà de dubio e in *cotale* segno poresti esser inganata.”¹⁹⁸ Instead of “such” a sign, God proposes that He place inside her heart a sign of his kind:

E questo è lo segno lo quale laso entro ne	Here then is the sign which I deposit in the
l’anima tua lo quale è melgio che quello lo	depths of your soul, one better than the one
qualle adimandasti: Làsote uno amore di	you asked for: I place in you a love of me
me per lo quale l’anima tua continuamente	so great that your soul will be continually
serà calda di me. ¹⁹⁹	warmed with me.

Love is what He places in her heart—the thing itself, the “authentic sign”—His presence itself is more than sign, it is the thing, and yet at the same time, He says, a sign of it. The divine sign is different from a regular sign that speaks, that signifies, points to something not there—something that might have been there, but is no longer. The sign is fleeting, dependent on those moments when she “sees” or “touches” it, that is, uses the tools of the imagination or the body. What God bestows upon Angela is congruent with the feeling of it and is also eternal. In this

¹⁹⁸ This which you are asking for is a sign which would always give you joy whenever you see it or touch it, but it would not take away your doubt. Furthermore, in *such* a sign you could be deceived. *Il Libro della Beata* 205.

¹⁹⁹ *Il Libro della Beata* 207

scene God describes the “meaning event” as defined by Sells: “Meaning event indicates that moment when the meaning has become identical with existence, but such identity is not only asserted, it is performed.”²⁰⁰ The type of sign God speaks of no longer points to the signified, but is truly the thing itself—as one would expect.

Writing is a cure for the cluttered mind, the confused heart. Marguerite d’Oingt describes an experience with the divine that moves from visions to writing: the visionary wrote all of the visions in her heart until it was so full she was unable to eat or sleep and so “elle se pensa que s’ela metoyt en escrit ces choses que sos cuers en seroyt plus alegiez.”²⁰¹ The need to speak, to write, to make some utterance before the ineffable has less to do with successful and truthful communication than it does with the effect of love.

One means of conceptually/linguistically breaking down the spatial distance necessarily implied between fallen man and the divine being can be found in a declaration that functions like Russian *matryoshka* dolls, which hold smaller dolls inside, but, as M.C. Escher might have depicted them. Just like Escher’s staircases that turn on themselves leading always upward thanks to the artist’s skillful mastery of optical illusion, words can lure us into places logic cannot find. In words, in grammar, each container can turn into the content—something not possible in the finitude of the physical world. Again and again we hear troubadour and mystic evoke a variation on the same impossible image. As Michael Sells notes, this is one of the hallmarks of apophatic writing, while his comments are describing “Classical Western

²⁰⁰ Sells 9.

²⁰¹ She thought that if she wrote those things down that her heart would be freed of the burden. Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d’Oingt*, 142. English translations my own.

apophasis” and his book on unsaying and apophasis speaks only of mystics it is clear that the following declaration is true of both our mystics and our troubadours:

In apophatic discourse, the overflow develops into a series of logical and semantic dilemmas. The dualisms upon which the language of “flowing out” is based, such as the distinction between vessel that receives the flow and the content it receives, are ultimately fused into paradoxes (the vessel is the content) as the apophasis unravels its initial premise about the source of emanation” 6-7

Arnaut de Marueilh refers frequently to visions of the beloved, and even to her image carried inside his heart, “Amors, que mi a pres, / m’en fai plus enveios, / que m te vostras faissos / dedinz e mon coratge.”²⁰² Arnaut is imprisoned inside love but then his love, his beloved is carried within his heart. Peire Vidal also claims Love has forced him to place the lady in his heart, “Qu’ins en mon cor m’a fait Amors escrire / Sa gran beutat, don res non es a dire, / E son gent cors ben fait e ben assis!”²⁰³ Yet in the song, “Una chanzo ai feita mortamen” the poet-lover explains that he is the one whose heart is not in his possession at all. “Qu’ anc n’ueg ni jorn, de ser ni de mati, / Non tinc mon cor ni nulh mon pessamen!”²⁰⁴ The heart is both

²⁰² Love, which has taken hold of me, makes me desire, for it has put the image of your face inside of my heart, “franq e norrimens,” ll. 24-27, Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil*.

²⁰³ For Love has made to be written inside my heart her great beauty, about which there is nothing to be said, and about her noble body well-formed and well-set “Per mielhs sofrir lo maltrait e l’ afan,” ll. 18-18 Peire Vidal, Anglade, *Les Poésies de Peire Vidal*.

²⁰⁴ For no night nor day, nor by evening nor by day, do I have my heart nor by any means my thoughts, ll. 3,4 Anglade, *Les Poésies de Peire Vidal*.

container and contained. Love is what carries the lover but at the same time émanâtes from the lover. Bernart de Ventadorn is penetrated to the *cor(e)* by his beloved: The lady reaches the lover through his eyes in “En cossirer et en esmai”:

Negus jois al meu no s' eschai,	No joy can reach mine when my lady looks
Can ma domna·m garda ni·m ve,	at me and sees me. Then her sweet
Que·l seus bels douz semblans me vai	beautiful image goes to my heart and
Al cor, que m' adous' e·m reve! ²⁰⁵	softens and revives me.

He claims in “Lancan folhon bosc e jarric” that this image remains in his heart always, “e port el cor, con que m'estei, / sa beutat e sa fachura.”²⁰⁶ Raimbaut d'Aurenga enjoys carrying his beloved in his heart:

Dompna, d' als non ai a parlar	Lady, of other affair I have not to speak,
Mas de vos, dompna, que baisar	but only of you. For I think I am kissing
Vos cuig, dompna, quand aug nomnar	you, lady, when I hear your name
Vos, dompna, que ses vestimen	mentioned, you, lady, whom I watch
En mon cor, dompna, vos esgar;	without clothing in my heart. For now I
C' ades mi·us veig inz dompn' estar	see your beautiful, attractive, pure body.
Vostre bel nou cors covinen. ²⁰⁷	

²⁰⁵ ll. 41-44.

²⁰⁶ ll. 39, 40. and I carry in my heart, wherever I am, her beauty and image.

²⁰⁷ ll. 43-49.

To allow one's self to feel the beloved inside one's heart renders geographic distance—that fretful obstacle to both adulterous and divine encounters—completely insignificant.

The notion that it is possible to carry another in one's heart is fundamental to Christian belief. Christian theology, and in particular that of the twelfth century, stressed the tenet that man is made in the image of God. Medieval Christianity is in large part also defined by its belief that through the sacrament of the Eucharist one can actually ingest the body of Christ.

The mystic, however, reaches more fully the union implied in the apophysis of container as what is contained. Again, while the troubadour can defeat the physics of space and containment, they are stuck staring within at their beloved or being held captive by the *domna*. They are Narcissus staring, trapped in unfulfillment—situating themselves, their image inside the form or image of the other, but without melting one into the other. As we will see with Bernart de Ventadorn, the stage of narcissus is the end for the troubadour and without any chance for union. The mystic, as discussed earlier, allows the logical conclusion of this paradox of container as contained to reach its full meaning: union, singleness of identity though they too take steps along the path of container/contained and the narcissistic stage to arrive at union. Angela da Foligno adds further dimension to the image saying, “pensàndome poi che Dio m’aveva fate le predate cose ch’el mio cuor senpre fosse nel cuor de Dio e lo cueor de Dio senpre fosse nel cuor mio”²⁰⁸ The heart holds inside it the thing that holds inside it the heart. This is not only a linguistic puzzle but a visual or imaginary one as well. And yet, this is an image favored by both mystics and troubadours. Teresa d’Avila also takes up both the position of

²⁰⁸I thought that since God had conceded me this aforesaid favor, my heart would always be within God's heart, and God's heart always within me. 139

container and the contained in her poem “Muero porque no muero”, which begins “Vivo sin vivir en mí”:

Vivo ya fuera de mí	I already live outside of me
Después que muero de amor	After I die of love;
Porque vivo en el Señor	For I live in the Lord,
...	...
Esta divina prisión	This divine prison
Del amor con que yo vivo	Of the love with which I live
Ha hecho a Dios mi cautivo	Has made of God my prisoner,
Y libre mi corazón;	And freed my heart;
Y causa en mí tal pasión	And it causes such great pity
Ver a Dios mi prisionero,	To see God my prisoner,
Que muero porque no muero	That I die because I do not die. ²⁰⁹

However, Teresa d’Avila’s poem proceeds further down the path of aporia as it introduces a play in linguistic possibility. The poem offers lines that function as a diptych with contradictory halves. How linguistically bold to declare “que muero porque no muero.” While what usually follows the word “porque”, or because, is a reason or a summing of the parts that equal the thing that precedes it; here the reason is simply a negation of what came before.

These passages broach what Sells calls the “high end of the scale of performative intensity.”²¹⁰ These are moments in which “the mystical discourse turns relentlessly upon its

²⁰⁹ ll. 4-6, 11-17, Efrén de la Madre de Dios. *Obras completas: edición manual*. Ed. Otger Steggink Biblioteca de autores cristianos ; 212. 9 ed. (Madrid: Editorial Católica, 1997).

own propositions and generates distinctive paradoxes that include within themselves a large number of radical transformations, particularly in the area of temporal and spatial relationships”.²¹¹ In a remarkable passage, Marguerite Porete explains “Comment ceste Ame noe en la mer de joye” or How this Soul swims in the sea of joy. The division between container/contained blurs in yet another example of the way language can be called into question when possibilities of being afforded by experience of the divine are put into words. The linguistic logic – a container cannot be its contents linguistically or even physically on the mundane plane—is challenged by the infinite possibilities afforded by Godliness.

<p>Telle Ame, dit Amour, nage en la mer de joye, c'est en la mer de delices fluans et decourans de la Divinité, et sin e sent nulle joye, car elle mesmes et joye, et sin age et flue en joy, sans sentir nulle joye, car elle demoure en Joye, et Joye demoure en elle; c'est elle mesmes joye opar la vertuz de Joye, qui l'a muee en luy.²¹²</p>	<p>Such a Soul, Love says, Swims in the sea of joy, that is in the sea of delights, flowing and running out of the Divinity. And so she feels no joy, for she is joy itself. She swims and flows in joy without feeling any joy, for she dwells in Joy and Joy dwells in her. She is Joy itself by the virtue of Joy which transforms her into Joy itself.</p>
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What contains the soul resides inside her. The permeability between the Joy that envelops the soul and the inner essence of the soul means there is no skin to sense the division. The essence without is that which is within. The boundary simply becomes meaningless, it

²¹⁰ Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* 3.

²¹¹ Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* 3.

²¹² Romana Guarnieri and Verdeyen, 26.

disappears. Without distinction between the essence of the object that possesses and the essence of the thing possessed there is no way to recognize the move from one into the other; in losing the distinction between container and contained, difference dissolves.

The troubadour Arnaut de Marueilh returns again and again to the motif of either beloved as holder of his heart or his own heart as lockbox for his beloved. He does not consider himself, his essence, those elements so often taken to be very stuff of selfhood—the will and desire, this troubadour claims are foreign to his self:

Qu' aissi m' ave, dona.l genser que sia,	Like this it happened to me, most
Qu' us deziriers, qu' ins en mon cor s' abranda,	gracious lady that exists, that a desire
Cosselh' e.m ditz qu' ie·us am e·us serv' e·us	which in my heart sparked advises
blanda,	and tells me to love you and to serve
E vol que·m lays d' enquerr' outra paria	and woo you, and it wishes that I
Per vos en cuy an tug bon ayp repaire! ²¹³	cease pursuing other companions for
	you in whom all good finds its home.

The lover admits that it was desire that inspired his love and *cortezia* but it is not his, but “us deziriers.” It is a fluid and unattached abstract figure. He cannot claim it as his own. It is this unclaimed and unspecified desire that inspires the love that he has for his lady. This desire enters into his heart with a spark or flame and “cosselh e·m ditz” (counsels and tells me) what he should feel, what he should do, and how he should behave. The *matryoshka* doll in infinity breaks down

²¹³ “Aissi cum selh que tem qu’ Amors l’ aucia” ll. 8-12, Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil*.

not only the physical laws of space, but, as shown in these passages, it also raises questions regarding the property rights of identity and the place of the will in the self.

The idea of the will or desire that burns inside though not one's own is a concept perfectly understood by Marguerite Porete if not all of her audience. She provides many passages within her *Mirouer* that attempt to explain the phenomenon.

The problem, the difficulty is presented as a linguistic one rather than simply a metaphysical one. A lengthy passage presents Reason seeking a lesson in language from Love. Marguerite Porete's Reason, confused by the paradoxes of mystical discourse, asks Love: "Et que peut ce estre, dame Amour, dit Raison, que ceste Ame peut vouloir ce que ce livre dit, qui desja a dit devant qu'elle n'a point de voulenté?"²¹⁴ Reason here expects the world and words to function according to the standards and rules she knows, as does Hugh of Saint Victor who writes: "The divine deeper meaning can never be absurd, never false. ...the deeper meaning admits no contradiction, is always harmonious, always true."²¹⁵ The linguistic and grammatical laws can be respected in mystical discourse even as the laws of logic are abandoned. To do so, however, means to resort to quite a bit of play. And so Love answers in this way:

Raison, dit Amour, ce n'est mie sa voulenté	Reason, says Love, it is no longer her will
qui le vieult, mais ainçoys est la voulenté	which wills, but now the will of God wills
de Dieu, qui le vieult en elle; car ceste	in her; for this Soul dwells not in love
Amen e demoure mie en Amour qui ce lui	which causes her to will this through

²¹⁴ And how can it be, Lady Love, says Reason, that this Soul can will what this book says, when before it said that she had no more will? Romana Guarnieri and Verdeyen, 26, ll. 17-19.

²¹⁵ Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, ed. Jerome Taylor, Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies no. 64 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961)149-50.

face vouloir par nul desirer. Ainçoys	desiring something. Instead, Love dwells in
demoure Amour en elle, qui a prinse sa	her who seized her will, and Love
voulenté et pource fait Amour sa voulenté	accomplishes Love's will in her. Thus
d'elle, et adonc oeuvre Amour en elle sans	Love works in her without her, which is
elle, par quoy il n'est mesaise qui en elle	why no anxiety can remain in her.
puisse demourer. ²¹⁶	

The physical and metaphorical heart as container has been traded for the will. Love attempts to explain to Reason how it is that the soul at one with God and Love can at once “will” when without a “will” at all. How can a being without the capability to will perform the act of willing? A split is introduced between “to will” the predicate, and the “will” as thing. The linguistic split allows for a union of souls. The soul joined with the Godhead has no will, for as Love reminds Reason, and us, over and over, this soul has nothing, “n’a nyent.” Nor can this soul act in any way that distinguishes her from God—there is no distinct self to act. Thus Love clarifies the paradox by using the language of container / contained in regard to will. In so doing, we are able to see the significance of containment in the process of deconstructing the self. Once the physical boundaries have been penetrated, determining where the will begins and ends becomes more difficult. The certainty in the centered self which is the building block of the construction of self has been shaken.

Selfhood is a construction built of a “sense” of self, that is, it relies on a “sense” of one’s body as distinct; a “sense” of one’s feelings as unique and tied to an “I” that cannot be touched by others; and a “sense” of a mind that thinks—an intellectual mechanism tied to the sensation of

²¹⁶ Marguerite Porete, *Le Mirouer* 26, ll. 20-26.

being and necessarily detached from all outside. These sensations of a centered “I” that feels and perceives and contemplates the world are the centerpiece in the construction of the self. As the certainty of the distinctiveness, that is the truth or meaningfulness of these sensations wavers, the self is deconstructed. The line of demarcation can be erased from both sides, that of the mystic or lover or that of the beloved. Definitions that allow the lover to extend their being into the territory of the beloved bring the lover closer to union with the beloved. As Angela da Foligno says to God, “tu sii io e io sia tu.”²¹⁷

Just as all words are not enough to signify the divine, so too, for the lover, do all signs point to the beloved. When Arnaut de Marueilh thinks he is contemplating something else, he finds his mind looking once again upon his lady:

Can cug pensar en outra res,	When I think I am contemplating
De vos ai messatge cortes,	something else, I have a courtly message
Mon cor, q'es lai vostr' ostaliers ;	from you, it's my heart, that is your guest
Me ven de vos sai messatgiers,	there, that comes to me as a messenger, to
Qu'm ditz e'm remembre'e-m retrae	tell me, to remind me, to return my mind to
Vostre gen cors cuende e gay, ... ²¹⁸	your noble body gracious and joyous.

The lover is enveloped in the realm of the beloved. Nothing else can pull the troubadour's eye away from the lady. He is consumed by her completely.

²¹⁷ I am you and you are me; *Il libro della beata Angela* 581.

²¹⁸ Pierre Bec, *Les Saluts d'amour du troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil*, (Toulouse: Privat) I, ll. 79-84.

For troubadour and mystic, the beloved, love, and loving are all that matter. The words of the lover do not serve a communicative function so much as they allow for the lover to exercise the limits of the self, and ultimately destroy difference, the most significant of obstacles separating lover and beloved. The common goal of troubadour and mystic is to arrive at a selfless state, and the use of words to reach this state of selflessness explains the common usage of uncommon wordings. A lover is one who relinquishes all preoccupation with the self in recognition that the existence alone of the beloved makes the world perfect. The lover is superfluous and even detracts or represents a movement away from perfection.

Many of the most interesting emotionally charged and semantically complex moments of mystical or (*fin' amors*) literature certain examples of language no longer following the laws of grammar, logic, or linguistics. Mystics and troubadours fall into a practice of *apophasis*: “rather than pointing to an object, apophatic language attempts to evoke in the reader an event that is—in its movement beyond structures of self and other, subject and object—structurally analogous to the event of mystical union”²¹⁹ and so beyond the laws of language, beyond grammar.

The common link between these two different types of lovers is the goal of love: a total eclipsing of the self and the role of the bodily, the emotive, the imaginative, and the linguistic in deconstructing the self is the common link between two different types of lovers. Love of words and language games are what allow mystics and troubadours to become perfect lovers.

Distinction and difference must be overcome; all the products of difference, all those things which make up the self, play a crucial role in the lover’s aim to deny difference and reach the beloved. This manipulation of the law of language, of the signifier-signified relationship, is the method of self destruction chosen by at least some troubadours and numerous mystics.

²¹⁹ Sells 10.

To become the ideal lover selfishness must be replaced with selflessness. The solid identity of the lover as unique, as distant in quality, space, and potentiality from the beloved must be overcome. Distinction and difference must be overcome; mental, emotional, and physical boundaries, the product of difference, must be abolished in order to transcend the self and reach the space of the Other.

PART II: THE TROUBADOURS

Throughout Part I we have shown the explicit references troubadours make to the tie between the body, emotions and will, and the intellect and selfhood. We have also seen their exploration of the possibility and even the need to weaken and undo the strength of the sense of self through disengagement with its elements. The following two chapters deepen the idea of self as permeable and fragmented as it is presented by select troubadours: Arnaut de Marueilh, Jaufré Rudel, Falquet Romans, and Bernart de Ventadorn. The extant corpus of troubadour, *trobairitz*, and *trouvère* lyric provides abundant material for study. The authors' oeuvres included here are robust enough to provide ample material for study and in their works best represent the themes and motifs that highlight the notion of the subject and the idea of the lover as selfless.

CHAPTER 3: COSSIR E REMIRE: SEEING, DREAMING, AND CONTEMPLATIVE ENVISIONING IN THE TROUBADOUR'S PROCESS OF LOSING THE SELF

The role of the visual in the experience of love has been depicted by innumerable creative accounts and images of paths between eyes and heart. The subject as the one who sends his gaze across the boundary of the self to rest on an object. This love object contemplated and imagined demonstrates the paradox of the love relationship: the subject seeks to arrive at the other and yet, to reach this other the self must be left behind. The abundant iconography of lover's eyes or gaze personified reaching the beloved suggests as much. Scholars have followed these scattered images to create studies that explain a great deal about how love, seeing, images, dreaming, and perception were understood from antiquity to the present. For the reader of medieval literature, it is a commonplace that love happens when the eye of the lover is pierced by an image of beauty that strikes him straight in the heart. However, much like the trajectory of the term and so the concept of "courtly love," the idea of a single schema for amorous optics might very well prove to be, not only more complex, but a notion on which troubadours had much to say. Modern scholarship has as yet failed to outline this tradition as the precursor to the literary creations that followed. Studies that discuss optics and Love in the Middle Ages inevitably concentrate on romances and other literary inheritors of the troubadour tradition. Any discussion of the troubadours in these accounts seems to come after the theories of later texts have been presented as the solid schema for all medieval authors. In this chapter I intend to demonstrate the role of the visual – seeing, dreaming and envisioning, and contemplating on an image—in the quest of the troubadour to reach the beloved.

Antique Sources and Contemporary Theories of Optics

Generally, scholars recognize the debt medieval literary models owe to the theories proposed in Aristotle's *De Anima* and Plato's *Timaeus* as to how seeing works and the images of how gazing breeds loving. Indeed most studies of the connection between eyes and heart like, "Love's Looks," and *The Arrow of Love*, point out the medieval trappings that adorn a classical model of seeing.²²⁰ So it seems that the chronological starting point of these studies is situated in antiquity, first with Plato's schema of seeing which proposed that the eye sends forth a fire as explained in his *Timaeus*. In Plato's description the eyes possess a light or fire that shines outward until it touches something else and transmits a sensation back to the soul of the onlooker.²²¹

Those authors writing after the introduction of Aristotle's *De Anima* in the twelfth century could make use of a completely different notion of seeing, one in which a thing "has within itself that which causes it to be visible."²²² Generally, studies begin with the idea that the

²²⁰ The most relevant studies on the subject of love and sight follow this same pattern, though Simon Gaunt does inject the formula with the added layer of a Lacanian transcription with emphasis on the significance of gender. The texts I have in mind are: Michael Camille, *The Medieval Art of Love: Objects and Subjects of Desire* (New York: Abrams, 1998); especially the first chapter entitled, "Love's Looks," R. H. Cline, "Heart and Eyes," *Romance Philology* 25 (1971-72); Dana E. Stewart, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender, and Subjectivity in Medieval Love Poetry* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell Univ. Press 2003); Simon Gaunt, "The Look of Love: The Gender of the Gaze in Troubadour Lyric," *Troubled Vision: Gender, Sexuality, and Sight in Medieval Text and Image*, ed. Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); and certain sections of James A. Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) in particular the sections on Parzival's Penis, The Aphrodisiac Body on Display, The Exogenesis of Courtly Love.

²²¹ Plato, *Timaeus*. *A Calcidio Translatio commentarioque Instructus*. Ed. J. H. Waszink. (London: Leiden, 1962) 45B-D, 41, 42.

influences on courtly texts of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries come primarily from Plato and Aristotle and a few other central texts. Cline's article "Heart and Eyes" provides a very helpful catalogue of the influences of optical theories providing the popular themes and their sources: "Summing up, one finds that the heritage of the twelfth century from Latin literature in respect to the five motifs at issue includes, (1) love at first sight, largely through Ovid, (2) the strife between the heart and eye through early Christian and Augustinian philosophy, and (3) through the same philosophy, the conception of the divine being as indweller in the heart and of the heart that might leave and return to the body. This leaves only one source for the motif of the eye as an active agent in the affairs of love and its attendant metaphor, the eye that sends a dart into the heart of another through the eye."²²³ Though Cline does introduce works from the medieval period, these are not scientific or even philosophical texts but theological ones written by monastic authors or erotic pieces by Arabic poets in al-Andalus and beyond.²²⁴ Medieval optical theories did exist, but perhaps they have been given less prominence in the scholarship because the texts holding these were not readily available to literary scholars. David Lindberg says as much in his introduction to his *Catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Optical Manuscripts*: "Although optics was one of the more highly developed branches of science during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, its literature has never been sufficiently organized to permit scholars to study its development in detail."²²⁵ Though medieval optical texts exist, and though antiquity

²²² Aristotle, *De Anima: On the Soul*. trans. Hugh Lawson-Tancred, (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England New York, U.S.A.: Penguin, 1986) 173.

²²³ Cline, "Heart and Eyes" 289.

²²⁴ She mentions references by Bernard of Clairvaux, Isidore of Seville, Hugh of Saint Victor, and Bernard of Cluny in "Heart and Eyes" 285-289.

represents the chronological beginnings of the optical theories evidenced by medieval literary texts under investigation by Stewart, Cline, and others, these scholars usually begin their studies with references to Andreas Capellanus or a romance. Perhaps this is so because, as with “courtly love,” it is Andreas and Chrétien de Troyes who synthesize and express in very concrete terms and clear narrative form the ideas of their predecessors from as far as Antiquity and as near as the troubadours.

One of the most explicit descriptions of the relationship between seeing and loving provided by a medieval author comes from Andreas Capellanus in the very start of his exposition on the art of love. He defines love in a way that emphasizes the sense of sight saying, “Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace.”²²⁶ It is with an epithet from this definition of love by Capellanus that Michael Camille begins his chapter “Love’s Looks” in his book-length study of the images and objects of medieval love.

Chretien’s romances present concepts with such crystalline precision that Cline is able to look at one passage of *Cligès* and create a list of the ideas about eyes and heart in the twelfth century:

In one long passage there appear a number of conceptions known to earlier literature, but new to the mid-twelfth century to Provence and Northern France...

²²⁵ David C. Lindberg, *A Catalogue of Medieval and Renaissance Optical Manuscripts*, *Subsidia Mediaevalia*, 4 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1975) 7.

²²⁶ Andreas Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, ed. John Jay Parry, *Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960) 28.

1. Love is sudden and powerful, usually occurring at first sight.
2. In forwarding love, eyes serve not only as perceivers of beauty but also as agents.
3. As agents the eyes strike through the eyes of the beloved into the heart.
4. A strife exists between the heart and the eye
5. The heart may escape from the body in order to be with the beloved.²²⁷

James Schultz will claim these general ideas as “common knowledge” in his own synthesis of medieval amorous optical theory: “As any reader of medieval romance can tell you, it begins when the lover sees the beloved, the image of the beloved enters through the eyes, lodges in the heart, and takes the lover captive.”²²⁸ Ultimately however, Schultz will decide that the important actor in the schema of both lyric and narrative is not the gaze, but the body: “Courtly bodies are more active: the image of the body enters through the eye and lodges in the heart and causes the beholder to fall in love.”²²⁹ The bodies are significant; he goes so far as to give them a name, “aphrodisiac bodies.” The gaze on the other hand is incidental for Schultz as he claims that the courtiers, “go about their business, welcoming guests, jousting at festivals, performing courtliness until they are taken by surprise, until some particular attribute of a particular individual impinges upon them, penetrates them to the core of their being and causes

²²⁷ Cline, “Heart and Eyes” 263.

²²⁸ Schultz, *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality* 71.

²²⁹ Schultz 18.

them to be captivated by love.”²³⁰ For Schultz then, the eyes, the subject’s seeing, gazing, or imagining, are not of particular significance in falling in love. It is the beloved’s body itself that makes courtly love happen.

In Dana E. Stewart’s *The Arrow of Love* the author begins with reference to the commonplace of the Arrow of Love and its source in antiquity and then explains that late medieval depictions will present the arrow as passing through the eyes. While she writes a study that “examines depictions of gazing in medieval love poetry,”²³¹ she recognizes the influence of troubadours on the authors she will study—Chrétien de Troyes, poets from the court of Frederick II of Sicily, Guido Cavalcanti, and Dante—she does not offer a chapter on the troubadours. This is not to say that she does not refer, and frequently so, to the troubadours in her study of these later authors. She does. However, she points back to them as though her readers are already familiar with the complexities of amorous optics in the troubadour tradition. She only provides a brief introduction to the troubadour ideas regarding vision in the introduction to her book. In these few pages she refers to only two songs which suggest that sight of the beloved inspires joy and love in the heart of the onlooker. In Stewart’s study, the troubadours stand as in so many others on any number of themes, as a point of reference for later literature. But what are we pointing back to? Stewart herself suggests that the works of the troubadours are not as clear on her topic of interest as are later authors. Even as she refers to the troubadours to discuss the romance *Cligès* she implies that what stands as a major foundational tradition for her author is not precisely expressed; it is hazy, “What remains vague in the troubadours is elucidated by Chretien who draws upon scientific as well as poetic discourses to amplify this figure. The

²³⁰ Schultz 75.

²³¹ Stewart, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender, and Subjectivity in Medieval Love Poetry* 13.

wounding by the arrow is portrayed in precise terms as perception, and the arrow is soon specifically identified as the image of Soredamors.”²³² For her, as for Huot and Camille, the troubadours need to be translated, explained, made explicit. Literary scholars of medieval romance seem convinced that the *Ars amandi* of Andreas and courtly romances offer us a guide to what the troubadours would have said had they expressed themselves more clearly.

This chapter demonstrates that seeing, dreaming, and contemplating the image of the beloved are fundamental to the being of *fin’ amors*. Furthermore I suggest here that each of these activities brings the troubadour closer to the beloved at the expense of his own subjectivity. The genesis and fostering of the *fin’ amors* sung by the troubadours both rely heavily on three types of visual experience: seeing (and being seen), dreaming, and contemplative imagining or envisioning. Interestingly, each of these experiences is also fundamental to the experience of selfhood.

The Subjectivity of Seeing and Being Seen

Opening the eyes and seeing one’s self situated in the world, in space, allows a person to see him or herself as a unified whole distinct from his or her surroundings. It is this idea that Lacan’s famous “mirror stage” proposes: “La seule fonction homogène de la conscience est dans la capture imaginaire du moi par son reflet spéculaire et dans la fonction de méconnaissance qui lui en reste attachée.”²³³ Likewise, being seen gives the subject a sense of being a unit that is an

²³² Stewart, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender, and Subjectivity in Medieval Love Poetry* 38.

²³³ Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, vol. II (1971) 196. A general introduction to this process and in particular the body image that results is presented in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

object for another; we exist or take up our position in the world when the other acknowledges our presence with their gaze. This is the natural corollary of Lacan's mirror stage which suggests the child sees himself in the mirror as an other but then recognizes that other as his place, his image as it is situated in the world and seen by others. The great interpreter of Lacan, Bruce Fink puts it this way, "According to Lacan, self-consciousness arises in the following manner: By internalizing the way the Other sees one, by assimilating the Other's approving and disapproving looks and comments, one learns to see oneself as the Other sees one, to know oneself as the Other knows one."²³⁴ Dreams offer the subject an opportunity to become that other with the objectifying gaze. They are also the moment when desires are fulfilled in ways that cannot be in reality. As such they fulfill the subject's deepest desires even as they stand to point out the sometimes-harsh truth of the waking subject's life. Daydreams, envisioning, or imagining provide the lover with an opportunity to focus on the Other in such a way that all of the psychic energy of subjectivity is lost in this endeavor. Imagining is the start of thinking, that which seems to be the stuff of selfhood. The anthropologist and theorist Vincent Crapanzano recognizes the importance of the *imago* or *imaginaire* in the creation of the self as proposed by Lacan's mirror stage, but stresses the reflection, contemplation, or consciousness that allows the image to become meaningful as image but also in creation of a self. He reminds us that "the imagination is always the first faculty to develop in the individual. From a phenomenological point of view, attention is closely related to consciousness, and may in fact represent an elementary form of it. Simultaneously, the focus of attention constitutes the very

²³⁴ Bruce Fink, *Lacan to the Letter: Reading Ecrits Closely* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004) 108.

phenomenological center of subjectivity.”²³⁵ The ability to imagine, to meditate upon an image real or carried in the mind (or heart the troubadours would say) is nothing less than concentrated or deliberate manipulation of consciousness.

The troubadour corpus demonstrates a great variety of ideas on vision. In fact, one need not look to two different authors to find more than one function of the visual. Indeed in a single piece, “No·m laissa ni·m vol retener” by Aimeric de Belenoi we are presented with a reference to each of the experiences of the visual we have defined. The poet begins his song with an analogy of the dream:

No · m laissa ni · m vol retener	It does not leave me, nor does it want to
Amors, ni non li puesc fugir;	keep me, Love, nor can I escape it.
Ans me fai enaissi languir,	But instead it makes me languish,
Cum selh que cuyda d'aut chazer	Like he who imagines he is falling
Quant en somnhans ve en son cor	When in dreaming he sees in his body
Sa mort, si chai, et a son for	His own death, falls, and in his state
No conoys que · lh valha raubirs;	Does not recognize that it is a dream.
Aissi · m fai Amors e sospirs	In this way Love makes me sigh and
Languir, quar nulhs joys no · m refranh	Languish, for no joy keeps me from
L'afan de · l ric joy que · m sofranh. ²³⁶	The anxious desire for the rich joy that they
	keep from me.

²³⁵ Vincent Crapanzano, *Imaginative Horizons: An Essay in Literary-Philosophical Anthropology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004) 1.

²³⁶ Maria Dumitrescu, *Poésies du Troubadour Aimeric de Belenoi* (Paris: Société des anciens textes français, 1935) ll. 1-10.

Aimeric describes perfectly the strange sensation of a dual existence implied in the state of dreaming. One watches one's self, one's body as though it were another. And yet, the body (and the mind that could "conoyser") seem to remember that this body that is being seen from outside is the same as the one that is seeing—the body of the dreamer starts, moves, and stirs as the self, the body being dreamed, experiences different phenomena in the dream.

It is for this reason that when Lacan goes in "search of the subject in so far as it takes itself into account" he ends up in the unconscious.²³⁷ He is after what many a philosopher has sought, the self unsheathed, free of the filter of the ego. While Lacan asks "When does the individual in his subjective function take himself into account-- if not in the unconscious?"²³⁸ Guillaumin narrows the parameters of the question saying, "nulle expérience mieux que le rêve...ne peut mieux faire percevoir cette substance vivante de l'identité."²³⁹ In dream, the self that was subject is made object; but if this is so, who watches this object-self? The self splits into the subject who views and the same self-now-object who is being observed. As Jean-Claude Schmitt asks, "je rêve de moi, mais est-ce bien moi ?"²⁴⁰ What of the world of dream is indeed real? In attacking the stability of the self, one inevitably will shake the foundations of a solid faith in reality. What is unique about this particular reference by a troubadour to this strange state of selfhood experienced in dreaming, is that he equates this sensation with that of being in

²³⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book II: The Ego in Freud's Theory and Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991) 57. This will be cited as *Seminar Book II* in future references.

²³⁸ Lacan, *Seminar Book II* Theory 56.

²³⁹ No experience more than the dream...can render perceptible that living substance which is the identity. Jean Guillaumin, *Le Rêve Et Le Moi* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979) 57.

²⁴⁰ I dream of myself, but is that really me? Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Le Corps Les Rites, Les Rêves, Le Temps: Essais D'anthropologie Médiévale* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2001) 295 n. 1.

the grips of love. While many dream sequences in troubadour songs give the poet-lover an opportunity to reach the beloved's bedchamber, and thus only tangentially approach the question of the fragile dreaming subject, Aimeric focuses on the very split and confused notion of self in dream only to liken it to loving. This stanza assures the reader that the significance for selfhood implied in those songs of dreaming lovers is not merely coincidental; it is rather the nature of the lover's experience.

Aimeric's "No ·m laissa" also includes the familiar *topos* of the sight of the beloved inspiring love and frequent gazing deepening it:

Dieus, qui o poc anc mais vezer ?	God, who could have ever seen this?
Qu'on plus m'en luenh, plus la dezir,	That the more I distance myself from her,
E plus l'am, on plus la remir:	the more I desire her. And I love her more,
Quar tan la · m fai Valors valer	the more I gaze upon her:
E Beutatz abelhir, qu'e · l cor	For so much does Valors make her
La tenc, e tot quant es defor;	valuable to me and Beauty make her
Qu'a leys creys vezers e auzirs	pleasing to me, that in my heart I hold her,
Grat de · ls pros, et a mi sospirs.	and all else is outside.
Per qu'ieu muer quan de leys m'estranh,	For seeing and hearing make grow the
E muer quant ab leys m'acompanh. ²⁴¹	recognition of her worth, and my sighs as
	well.
	For I die when I distance myself from her,
	and I die when I give myself company with

²⁴¹ ll. 21-30

her.

The question that opens this third stanza of Aimeric's song calls the reader/listener's attention to the relation between imagining and seeing as it asks who could have possibly seen, and so be capable of imagining what he is about to describe. He explains that the further away from her he is, the greater his desire for her. What is more, his love grows with seeing her or hearing about her. While in line twenty-seven he uses the verb "vezer" to suggest the straightforward action or sense of seeing, what he describes is more complex. Upon seeing or hearing about his beloved, her worth and really his "grat" or awareness, recognition of it grows. In this sense seeing would seem to be tied to consciousness. The verb *remir* prepared this emphasis on the relationship between seeing and contemplating or admiring through the inclusion of the prefix "re." The verb *mirar* alone can be translated as to see, to admire, to gaze upon, or to contemplate.²⁴² However, to truly contemplate an object or its outline, the onlooker must not only see but consider and reflect upon what is being seen; to contemplate is to look with consciousness.

Imagining and Dreaming the Other and Losing the Self

Indeed, the significance of the imagination in medieval literature has been clearly demonstrated by Douglas Kelly's *Medieval Imagination* in which he examines twelfth-century authors and their use and discussions of the imagination. Kelly reminds us that the link between imagination and cognition is not a modern invention of recent philosophy as one often finds

²⁴² Under the entry for *mirar* in his dictionary of troubadour language, Raynouard provides the following: *Mirar*, v., lat. *Mirari*, *mirer*, *contempler*, *admirer*, *voir*. M. Raynouard, *Lexique Roman; Ou, Dictionnaire de La Langue des Troubadours, Comparée Avec Les Autres Langues de L'europe Latine*, 6 vols. (Paris: Silvestre, 1844) 238.

suggested but says of his own period of interest, “the hierarchy of cognitive functions includes Imagination as the perception and retention in the mind of the forms in visible things. Twelfth-century writers in particular elaborated a new poetry by the projection of Images formed in the Imagination.”²⁴³ Mary Carruthers reiterates again and again the important role of the imagination for medieval thinkers like Hugh of Saint Victor; the imagination is where or how thinking begins and the way of meditation.²⁴⁴ “Meditation is sustained thought along planned lines: it prudently investigates the cause and the source, the manner and the utility of each thing,”²⁴⁵ says Hugh of Saint Victor as he explains what one was supposed to do while reading. Like the poet’s repetitive gazing, imagination requires a constant re-turning of focus back to the object in question. In his phenomenological examination of imagining Edward Casey notes the importance of a consistent repetition in order to sustain a directed consciousness:

An imagined object does not remain present to us in an abiding manner, as do many perceptual objects; to keep it before our mental gaze, we must constantly re-imagine it, and even then it is difficult to say whether we are continuing to imagine exactly the same object again and again.²⁴⁶

²⁴³ Douglas Kelly, *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and the Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978) 26.

²⁴⁴ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature. (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

²⁴⁵ Jerome Taylor, *Didascalicon; a Medieval Guide to the Arts*, Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies No. 64 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961) 92.

²⁴⁶ E.S. Casey, *Imagining: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) 7.

Love grows when the lover focuses his gaze upon the lady and constantly re-focuses his mind, and if possible his eye, on the perfect *domna*. The connection between contemplating the lady herself and the imagining or envisioning of the lady's image while apart from her physical presence reveals itself clearly in this stanza. Aimeric claims his love grows when he sees her "quar" through this or because of this perpetual re-seeing, *Valors* and *Beutatz* make him appreciate and desire her. They do this "tan," so much, that the lady becomes situated inside his heart and pushes out anything else that might have tried to reside there. This sentiment is reiterated in the fourth stanza of the song,

...Qu'anc, pueys qu'Amors	Since Love placed her
	in my heart
la · m mes e · l cor	
	No other thought do I have but her.
No la trays nuls pessars a · l or. ²⁴⁷	

Aimeric de Belenoi's song of Love's torment demonstrates to what extent the experience or art of loving is an art of visual contemplation. The image or "courtly body" as Schultz would call it, does indeed inspire the lover's affections, but in this song it is the lover's directed and conscientious gaze that cultivates the appreciation of the beloved's worth. All thought goes to the lady, consciousness centers on her alone. The end of such careful contemplation, the feeling of love, is akin to the split or fractured self experienced in dreaming.

Many troubadours have wandering spirits who in dream make the trek to the beloved's bedroom:

...l ser mos esperitz	... my spirit goes to her at night, in the
-----------------------	--

²⁴⁷ ll. 35, 36.

I vai, en luec de messatge,	guise of a messenger, to see her
Son estatge	bedchamber while I am asleep
Vezer, quan sui adormitz, ²⁴⁸	

Thus attests Gaucelm Faidit while Rigaut de Barbezieux too speaks of a traveling spirit, his with physical qualities which make the visit all the more enjoyable:

E la nueg, quant eu cug dormir,	And at night when I close my eyes to sleep
L'esperitz vai ab lei iazer:	My spirit goes to have pleasure (iazer) with her.
Entre mos bratz la cug tener	In my arms I think I hold her
E del ioi c'ai plan e sospir, ²⁴⁹	And from the joy that I have I shiver and sigh

As Aimeric noted, the dreamer becomes confused: what happens to the image of the body in the mind calls forth sensations in the dreamer's physical body.

If dreams are supposed to be fulfillment of the subject's wishes, what happens when the dream world takes over? A wish implies a wishing subject and yet, the troubadours have managed to create a paradox; living without consciousness in dream forever cannot but deflate subjectivity. Though the troubadour and the audience of the *canço* are offered by the dream sequence a brief respite from the perpetual frustration characteristic of the troubadour *canço*, the lover-poet manages to use this lyrical pause to introduce an image of a split self. It is a

²⁴⁸ "Pel joi del temps qu'es florita," ll. 24-27. Gaucelm Faidit, *Les Poèmes de Gaucelm Faidit, Troubadour du XIe Siècle* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1989).

²⁴⁹ "Be·m cuidava d'amor gardar," ll. 45-48. Rigaut de Berbezilh, "Rigaut de Berbezilh: Liriche," *Biblioteca de filologia romanza*, ed. Alberto Varvaro (Bari: Adriatica Editrice, 1960), vol.

characterization that in fact, can be found throughout troubadour lyric, not only in the dream sequences. As Aimeric de Belenoi's first stanza in "No ·m laissa" suggests, the feeling of love mimics the strange decentered sense of self experienced in dreaming. The dream thus allows the poet to see himself as other, and suggest that this is the state of the true lover, wake or dreaming.

A number of troubadour songs focus on the physical, for the soul, spirit, or mind is sometimes embodied in, or replaced by a body part. Raimon Jordan for example laments that though he turns his eyes often, *vir soven*, to the country where his lady resides, he only has "such distress!"²⁵⁰ "But," he says, "en aisso m'asegur/ per un messatgier qu'ieu n'ai,/ mon cor que soven la vai in."²⁵¹ When the troubadour looks in his lady's direction but finds his view blocked, his heart takes the journey his gaze cannot.

Oddly enough the figurative dismemberment that allows the poet to send his heart or other body parts to his lady occurs not only in dream; the motif is quite a common one and leads to the well-known *vida* turned *roman* turned novella of the *coeur mangé*. The *vida* of Guilhem de Cabestanh recounts the tale of a knightly troubadour's tragic fate. Guilhem shared a love with Sordemors, the lady of a jealous husband who discovered their love.

E qan venc un dia, Raimons de Castel	And so, one day Raimon de Castel
Rossillon trobet passan Guillem de	Roussillon found Guillem passing by
Cabestaing ses gran compaignia et aucis lo;	without much company, and he killed him.
e fetz li traire lo cor del cors e fetz li taillar	And he had the heart taken out of his body,

²⁵⁰ tal destressa(l)fai/ de liei vezer tors e mur, "Lo Clar temps vei brunezir,"

²⁵¹ that I am reassured/ by a messenger that I have:/ my heart which often goes there, ll. 37-41. Raimon Jordan, *Il Trovatore Raimon Jordan*, ed. Stefano Asperti (Modena: Mucchi Editore, 1990).

la testa, e-l cor fetz portar a son alberc e la	and had it taken to his house and the head
testa atressi; e fetz lo cor raustir e far a	too. And he had it roasted and seasoned,
pebrada, e fetz lo dar a manjar a la moiller.	and had it served to his wife to eat.
E qan la dompna l'ac manjar, Raimons de	And when the lady had eaten, Raimon de
Castel Rossillon li dis: "sabetz vos so que	Castel Rossillon said to her: "Do you know
vos avetz manjat?" Et ella dis: "Non, si non	what you just ate?" And she said: "No, but
que mout es estada bona vianda e	that it was a very good and tasty meat."
saborida." Et el li dis q'el era lo cors d'En	And he told her that it was the heart of En
Guillem de Cabestaing so que ella avia	Guillem de Cabestaing that she had eaten,
manjar; et a so q'ella crezes mieils, dompna	and that she had thought was so good. And
vic so et auzic, ella perdet lo vezer e	when she heard and saw that, she lost her
l'auzir. E qand ella revenc, si dis: "Seigner,	sense of sight and hearing. And when she
ben m'avetz dat si bon manjar que ja mais	came back to herself, she said, "Lord, you
non manjarai d'autre." E qand el auzic so,	have given me such good food, that I shall
el cors ab s'espaza e volc li dar sus en la	never eat another thing." And when he
testa ; et ella cors ad un balcon e laisset se	heard that, he ran with his sword intending
cazer jos, et enaisi moric. ²⁵²	to strike her on the head. And she ran to the
	balcony and allowed herself to fall down,
	and thus she died.

²⁵² We are using the version from ABN² as it is presented in Jean Boutière and Alexander Herman Schutz, *Biographies des Troubadours, Textes Provençaux des Xiii^e Et Xiv^e Siècles*, Les Classiques D'oc 1, 2nd ed. (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1964) 532.

Though the tale depicts a literal exchange—the dead lover has bequeathed his heart to his lady to tragic ends, as with so many *vidas*, the idea originates in the troubadour’s lyrics in which the heart is offered to the beloved metaphorically and not in dreaming at night alone but,

Can mi membra sos bels olhs e sos vis,	When I think on her beautiful eyes and her
A pauc non mor, can de leis me partis;	face, I almost die when she parts from me.
Partis no men eu ja ni me partria,	I do not and will not leave her, so is my
Anz es mos cors ab leis e noit e dia. ²⁵³	heart with her night and day.

Just as the mind and spirit became split in the dream allowing some element of selfhood to leave the poet to reside with the lady, in these occasions the lover surrenders the physical parts of his self to his lady.

While the *vida* offers a later author the opportunity to build upon the thematics of a troubadour’s musical repertoire by translating it into narrative prose, troubadours at times also sought to explore certain motifs in fuller depth than the confines of the *canso* would allow. The genre of the *salut* takes the form of a letter addressed to the lady directly and is much longer than the *canso*, allowing the poet to speak in very different terms to the lady and to us. Falquet de Romans writes such a piece, which is usually given the name “Comjat” but whose first line is, “Domna, eu pren comjat de vos.” In the *salut*, the troubadour addresses his *domna* directly with his declarations, his complaints, his desires, and his plans. Falquet takes leave of his lady which

²⁵³ ll. 29-32, “Mout m’alegra douza votz per boscatge,” Francis Huffer, *Guillem de Cabestanh; Sein Leben Und Seine Werke* (Berlin: L. Heimann, 1869).

aggrieves him and makes him, “angoissos”²⁵⁴ Falquet de Romans’ *salut* explains that the lady had stolen his heart:

Q’ab bel semblan,	For with beautiful,
franc e cortes,	courtly, and affable looks
aveç mon cor laçat e pres... ²⁵⁵	you have laced up and taken my heart.

Already in the first lines Falquet admits his heart is no longer his but has been taken by his beloved. The *salut* then offers a lengthy description of another way Falquet ends up in the domain of his *domna*. In this *salut*, Falquet openly describes his night-time flights to his lady.

Qe la nueit, qan sui endurmiz	For at night, while I am asleep,
S’en vai a vos mos esperiz	My spirit goes to you
-domna, ar agues eu tan de ben	-lady, would that I had such happiness-
qe, qan resveil e m’en soven,	so that, when I awake and I remember
per pauc no·m voil los oilz crebar	I can hardly keep from wanting to gouge my eyes
qar s’entremettent del veillar;	out
e vauc vos per lo leich cerchan	For they go off and take to being awake
e, qan no·s trot, reman ploran; q’eu	And I go looking around the bed for you
volria toç temps dormir	And when you are not found, I am left crying
q’en sonjan vos pogues tenir, ²⁵⁶	So I’d like to sleep all the time
	So that in dreaming I could hold you (have you).

²⁵⁴ ll. 2, Falquet de Romans, *L’oeuvre Poétique de Falquet de Romans Troubadour*, ed. Raymond Arveiller and Gérard Gouiran (Aix-en-Provence: Publication du C.U.E.R., 1987).

²⁵⁵ ll. 13, 14.

In the moment when the lover loses consciousness, his mind goes to his lady. His spirit or mind, he claims, enjoys the company of the lady so much so that he wishes his soul could be him. But who else is it if not him? His heart had already been relinquished to the lady and now his mind's. He doesn't even recognize this fundamental element of selfhood as his own, but rather envies the experience of this strange entity as though it were completely divorced from himself. When he awakes his eyes too seem not only not of his own ego, but an enemy to him. His eyes, against his will, are awake or impose the waking state on him. They "s'entremettent del veillar," that is, his eyes interrupt his experience of union with his beloved. His complaint stresses the split nature of his selfhood. He closes the account of his nights saying he wishes he could remain asleep forever so as to have his lady in his dreams. It is a wish many a troubadour makes. The poet-lover thus suggests that this state of selflessness or at least of ambiguous selfhood is both what he prefers and what brings him closer to the *domna*.

Arnaut de Marueilh would agree, for he says,

Soven m'aven, la nuoch can soi colgaz	Often times at night it happens that while I'm lying
Que soi ab vos per semblan en	down
dormen ; Adonc estau en tan ric	I am with you in semblance while sleeping
jausimen,	And thus I am in such intense enjoyment
Ja non volri' esser mais residaz,	That I don't want to ever again be woken up

²⁵⁶ ll. 21-30. We have mentioned this text in the first chapter of the dissertation as well.

²⁵⁷ "Aissi cum cel c'am' e non es amaz," ll. 29-35.

Sol que'm dures aquel plazens pensatz	Just that those pleasant thoughts remain
E can m'esveill, cuica murir desiran,	And when I awake, I think I'll die of desire
Per qu'eu volgra aissi dormir un an. ²⁵⁷	For that reason I would like to sleep like that a
	year. ²⁵⁸

Troubadour love lyric is filled with supplicating lovers who want to see, to touch, and embrace their lady. The songs themselves are often a plea to approach the *domna*, to be shown mercy, given a reward. And on and on these lovers lament and complain and rant that their pleas are not heeded by their lady. Rare indeed is the satisfied and contented troubadour. In the dream however, he has all he asks for and more. The dream or vision sequence in the troubadour *canço* allows the structure of reality, of the love relationship, proposed throughout the troubadour's corpus to be reversed.

Que tan l'am de bon coratge	For I love her so intensely
Qu'ades, s'eu entredormis	That always, if I fall asleep
Ab lui ai en guidonatge	I have with her as guide
Ioc e ioi e gaug e ris... ²⁵⁹	Fun and joy and pleasure and laughter

²⁵⁸ Soven m'aven, la nuoch can soi colgaz /Que soi ab vos per semblan en dormen ; Adonc estau en tan ric jausimen, Ja non volri' esser mais residaz, Sol que'm dures aquel plazens pensatz /E can m'esveill, cuica murir desiran, Per qu'eu volgra aissi dormir un an "Aissi cum cel c'am' e non es amaz," ll. 29-35.

²⁵⁹ Peire d'Alvernha, "Rossinhol, el seu repaire," ll. 81-84. Peire d'Alvernha, *Peire D'alvernha, Liriche*, ed. A. Del Monte *Collezione di Filologia Romanza*, (Turin: Loescher-Chiantore, 1955).

What the poet-lovers so desire, Peire d'Alvernha receives because of the strength of his love.

The power of love, the result or gift of love is the entry into the dreamstate where the solidity of the subject might be lost but union with the *domna* might be won.

Lover and beloved are joyously united, if only in dream. Not only is the lover's wish fulfilled in these dreams, but these lines fill out the image of the lovers for the listener. We see an interaction between the two we can only have in the irreal space of dream or fantasy.

Cossirar: Contemplating the Beloved and Losing the Self

However, the lover-poets often suggest that the experience of enjoying the lady's presence need not be confined to nocturnal dreams but can overwhelm the consciousness of the waking lover. Bernart de Ventadorn claims he loses all consciousness when contemplating his lady, so much that:

Que manhtas vetz en cossir tan:	many times for being in such
lairo m'en poirian portar,	contemplation, thieves could carry me off
que re no sabia que's fan. ²⁶⁰	and I would not know what they were
	doing at all.

The experience of intense reflection is an odd one that at once demands focused concentration, a directed consciousness, but pulls the consciousness away from the subject. Bernart in this passage suggests lovers spend much of their time in this odd state. The verb "cossir" then is as much the verb of the poet-lover as *amor*.²⁶¹

²⁶⁰ "Can l'erba fresch'e ·lh folha par," ll 10-13. Moshe Lazar, ed., *Bernart de Ventadorn, Chansons D'amour* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1966).

Gaucelm Faidit touts the power of his own contemplation of his lady saying

Maintas sazoz s'esdeve	Many times I am so deeply lost in thoughts
qu'en pens tant foro e cossire,	of her and I am so preoccupied by her that I
qe non auch qui parl'ab me,	don't hear what someone is saying to me, I
ni fatz mas tremblar e frire, ²⁶²	do nothing more than tremble and shiver.

Again the poet explains that his mind (or heart) is so overrun by thoughts, imaginings, worries that it is as though his own self has been abandoned. His consciousness is his lady's as much as his heart. These trance-like states induced by contemplation allow the poet to experience union as best he can.

The *érotique* of Arnaut de Mareulh depends heavily on the lover's constant contemplation of the *domna*. He offers himself completely to his lady and offers his heart as well as his thoughts:

²⁶¹ In Donald Sutherland's examination of the lover's meditation in courtly literature he draws attention to the emotive meanings that coexist with the notion of imagining or contemplating in the verb "cossir," "Already in early Old Provençal cossirar not only conveys thought coloured by emotion, but emotion itself, with little or no intellectual activity accompanying it; it means (to be anxious, grieved, worried, depressed', all of which states may be taken to have a slight element of reflection in them, as they all imply a reaction to or consideration of their cause, but they stress the emotional state produced; they mean 'to be sad, unhappy, plunged in gloom', with the emphasis entirely on the emotion involved." D. R. Sutherland, "The Love Meditation in Courtly Literature," *Studies in Medieval French Presented to Alfred Ewert* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961) 172-73. Raynouard provides the following entries for the semantic field of cossirar: cossirar, v. lat. Considerare, considérer, rêver, imaginer. Consir, cossire, s.m., chagrin, rêverie, pensée, souci. Consirier, cossirier, s.m., souci, pensée. Consiranza, s.f., inquiétude, souci.

²⁶² "Si tot m'ai tarzat mon chan," ll. 37-40. Faidit, *Les Poèmes de Gaucelm Faidit, Troubadour du XIIe Siècle*.

Domna valens ab avinens lauzors,	Noble lady, of gracious praise,
Ren de mon cor non ai mais la bailia ;	Not a bit of my heart do I control any
De vos lo tenh don tot lo mon tenria,	longer. I have it on loan from you, whom if
S'el era mieus. E car soven no-us vei,	I had I would own the whole world. And
Lai on vos es, contrasta·l mieus temers,	because I do not see you often there where
qu'inz ²⁶³ e mon cor vos mi fasson aital,	you are, my fear resists,
Com s'era lai als plus plazens vezers. ²⁶⁴	So that within, you and my heart make me
	feel as though I were there in the greatest

²⁶³ The last lines of our reading differ slightly from that proposed by Johnston, “Et parce que je ne vous vois pas souvent, là où vous êtes, ma crainte ne me permet pas de vous imaginer dans mon coeur comme si j’étais là-bas, jouissant de l’extrême plaisir de vous voir.” R. C. Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil* (Paris: E. Droz, 1935) 75-76. While Johnston understands the “qu” of “qu’inz” in the sense of “que” or “that,” which suggests the lover’s fear “temers” is opposed, “contrasta” to that which follows, “that in my heart ...”, the variant readings listed at the bottom of the page suggest that the meaning, *car* or “for” was understood by at least some scribes who chose to write, “q[u]ar” (NOQSUc) while D has “qant.” Not only is the possibility that “qu” means “so that,” or “for that reason,” in one of its known uses as cited by Jensen, but other variants from the same line likewise suggest the lady is certainly inside the heart or placed in the heart according to the alternate suggestions for “mi” found in FAD. UcQSNCD all offer stronger verbs suggesting certainty rather than only possibility as the subjunctive *fasson* implies in Johnston’s choice.

²⁶⁴ “L’ensenhamens e·l pretz e la valors” ll. 29-35. The last lines of our reading differ slightly from that proposed by Johnston, “Et parce que je ne vous vois pas souvent, là où vous êtes, ma crainte ne me permet pas de vous imaginer dans mon coeur comme si j’étais là-bas, jouissant de l’extrême plaisir de vous voir.” R. C. Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil* (Paris: E. Droz, 1935) 75-76. While Johnston understands “que” in the sense of “that,” which suggests the lover’s fear “temers” is opposed, “contrasta” to that which follows, “that in my heart ...”, the variant readings listed at the bottom of the page suggest that the meaning, *car* or “for” was understood by at least some scribes who chose to write, “q[u]ar” (NOQSUc) while D has “qant.” Not only is the possibility that “qu” means so that, for that reason, in one of its known uses as cited by Jensen, but other variants from the same line likewise suggest the lady is certainly (UcQSNCD all offer stronger verbs suggesting certainty rather than only possibility as the subjunctive *fasson* implies in Johnston’s choice) inside the heart or placed in the heart according to the alternate suggestions for mi found in FAD.

pleasure of seeing you.

Arnaut refers to the lady's beauty in keeping with the *topos* of the beautiful lady who inspires love as defined by Stewart in *Arrow of Love*, "In particular, the beloved lady is often established as powerful and dominating, and the lover as helpless and languishing, by means of the tremendous potency of her piercing gaze or of her intensely beautiful image.

Tot autre joi desconois et oblida	All other joy one forgets and ignores
Qui ve·l sieu cors coind'e cortes e gai,	He who sees her fine body so courtly and
Qu'enaissi sap d'avinen far e dir	delicate, For she knows well how to speak
Ab purs plazers tot so qu'ill ditz ni fai,	and act graciously with pure pleasure all
Qu'om no·n pot mal dire senes mentir ; ²⁶⁵	she does and says so much so that no man
	can say a bad word about her without lying.

In another song we find the idea that imagining is a type of seeing so that even seeing within the mind or the heart can lead to love. Arnaut de Mareulh says of his lady in "Si cum li peis an en l'aiga lor vida,":

Tant es valens que, quan ben m'o cossir,	She is so noble that, when I reflect well
M'en nais orguolls e·m cries humilitatz;	upon her Pride is born and Humility grows
Mais si ·ls ten joins Amors e Jois amdos,	in me, but Love and Joy maintain them
Que ren no·i pert Mesura ni Razos. ²⁶⁶	

²⁶⁵ ll. 9-13 Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil*.

both together so well that *Mezura* and
Razos lose nothing.

The real body of the *domna*, her physical presence however is not necessary for the poet-lover to contemplate her figure and so benefit from her many fine qualities. When she is beyond the lover's reach he carries her image inside his heart.

Ves lo país, pros domina issernida,	Towards the country, dear distinguished
Repaus mos huoills on vostre cors estai	lady,
E car plus pres de vos no·m puosc aizir,	Where you reside, I settle my eyes.
Tenc vos el cor ades e cossir sai	And since closer to you I cannot manage
Vostre gen cors cortés, qui·m fai languir,	I have you in my heart always and here-in I
267	contemplate
	Your gracious, courtly body that makes me
	languish.

Arnaut presents his situation clearly; since he cannot get any closer to his lady where she exists in the geography of reality, he turns to his image of her which he carries within his heart. Inward reflection brings this troubadour closer to union with his beloved. He, like Bernart and others, look inward only not to find the self, but to lose self-consciousness and find the Other.

²⁶⁶ ll. 5-8, Johnston ed., *Les Poésies Lyriques du Troubadour Arnaut de Mareuil*.

²⁶⁷ "Si cum li peis an en l'aiga lor vida," ll. 25-29.

Meditating on, or daydreaming of the beloved fulfills the subject's desires even as it denies the subject his self-consciousness.

The Visual Creation and Destruction of a Subject

The *vida*, or biography, of Jaufré Rudel is perhaps the best-known troubadour love story. It literalizes the notion that a look can kill. As the tale goes, Jaufré falls in love with the countess of Tripoli whom he's never seen and eventually becomes a crusader in order to see this *amor de loing* and falls ill as he crosses the Mediterranean. In the arms of his beloved, Jaufré opens his eyes, sees her, and dies. The beautiful *vida* of which there is more than one version, surely finds its root in the troubadour's songs about a lady he has never seen. Jaufré builds his identity around the lady rather than himself thus defining himself negatively; he is, as he says, the one about whom "Nuils hom no's meravill de mi/ S' ieu am so que ja no'm veira."²⁶⁸ He is different from most lovers, he is to be marveled at, set apart because of something that is not him, is not his, in fact a thing he has never seen. His entire identity is tied to this distant object. In "Lanquan li jorn son lonc en may" the poet's identity and his love in general are based on the distance that keeps his beloved from his sight. The poet of the *amor de loing* experiences the world *de loing*: the song he hears in the *lonc* days of May, come from "d'auzels de loing," distant birds. And yet, despite the fact that "our countries are too *loing*" (*trop son nostras terras loing*) making him the "drutz loindas," the long-distance lover, the lady's worth is such that her equal cannot be found *ni pres ni loing*. While the poet is defined by distance, the lady is defined by her reputation being both *pres* and *loing*. While many a troubadour longs to have physical

²⁶⁸ No one should marvel, even if I love that which I have never seen, "No sap chantar qui so no di," ll. 7,8. Jaufré Rudel, *The Songs of Jaufré Rudel*, ed. and trans. Rupert T. Pickens (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1978).

contact with his lady, when Jaufré says “never will I have pleasure in love if I don’t receive pleasure from this amor de loing,²⁶⁹” he consistently associates his joy with sight. Seeing her is his greatest desire. He speaks of being imprisoned by the Saracens so as to see her. Yet he also sighs “Ai! car mi fos lai peleris,/ Si qe mos fustz e mos tapis/Fos pelz sieus bels huoills remiratz !”²⁷⁰ But, he says, “non sai coras la-m veirai,” when will he, himself, see her there, or, when will he see himself there. In this tricky line the ambiguity leads to two possible meanings. Either he is emphasizing his own position, *m veirai*, When I will see, myself with my own two eyes etc., or the line implies a split self so that there is a poet who sees and a poet who is being seen there. For the moment, it is clear that seeing is the key to the desire of the lover, and to the questions of subject and object. While this chapter suggests that the significance of three types of visual experience are fundamental to the *erotique* described by a variety of troubadours, Simon Gaunt focuses his attention on the significance of the gaze of the lady upon her troubadour: “I suggested [in “Subjectivity and Desire”] that the gaze in troubadour lyric is often evoked as part of a fantasy of being *looked at*, a fantasy that is quite literally vital in that the poet's life seems to depend on his haughty lady's gaze.”²⁷¹ While I do agree with the general schema Gaunt provides, borrowing it as he does from the troubadours and Lacan to demonstrate that they are in fact one and the same, I do think more careful distinction between the preoccupations of the individual poets might have proved more helpful. He claims that, “for Bernart and Arnaut, the desire to be seen by the object of desire is often as strong as the desire to

²⁶⁹ ja mais d’amor no-m gauzirai/ si no-m gau d’est amor de loing, ll. 29-35.

²⁷⁰ oh if only I were a pilgrim there so that my staff and robe could be by her beautiful eyes reflected! “Lanquan li jorn son lonc en may,” ll. 12-14 (ms version AB)

²⁷¹ Gaunt, "The Look of Love," 80.

see her.”²⁷² While this might very well be true, the lady’s gaze seems to preoccupy Jaufré Rudel far more than it does Bernart de Ventadorn or Arnaut de Marueilh. Gaunt’s conclusion, however, is the very one I am suggesting all three types of visual experience have on our poet-lovers: “One effect of this is that subject/object distinctions are troubled.”²⁷³ The end result of seeing, dreaming, and envisioning as they are understood by the poet-lovers under examination is the destabilizing of the self and the abandonment of the subject’s position. It is only the Other who remains.

In Jaufré’s *erotique* the lady is so all-important that the divine himself is dependent upon her. Jaufré says he will only recognize God through the beloved as the identification of God becomes dependant on the sight of his beloved: “Ben tenc lo siegnor per verai/per q’ieu vierai l’amor de loing,²⁷⁴” (!) God is not God or the true God until He allows Jaufré to *see* this distant love he has yet to encounter. Thus, all identifications seem to depend on the beloved, and seeing: Jaufré defines himself as he who loves who he has not seen, the lady is the one whose goodness is seen far and wide, God is the one who will let Jaufré see his beloved. One has to admit the troubadours tend to speak in terms that would make them candidates for the definition of obsessive voyeurs to Laura Mulvey, “whose only sexual satisfaction,” she claims “can come from watching, in an active controlling sense, an objectified other.”²⁷⁵ However, whereas

²⁷² Gaunt, "The Look of Love" 85.

²⁷³ Gaunt, "The Look of Love" 85.

²⁷⁴ I hold that God as real through (or because of) whom I will see the *amor de loing* “Lanquan li jorn son lonc en may” ll. 29, 30.

²⁷⁵ Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *The Sexual Subject: A Screen Reader in Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1992) 25.

Mulvey's pin-up girls and strippers are the woman who "holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire" the *domna* is, in "Lanquan li jorn," certainly, the one who creates not only the desire, but the entire subject who is defined through her. Even God is defined through her. This is not a passive objectified image. The voyeur has no control and does not seek control even as he wishes to gaze at the *comtessa*. He wishes to be subsumed, made servant (as his wish to become pilgrim or hostage indicates). He wants to see her to fall even further under her power. This image, this sight, is the source of being for the poet-lover.²⁷⁶

Jaufré fantasizes about arriving in her land, "E, s' a lieys platz, alberguarai/ Pres de lieys, si be'm suy de lonh: /Adoncs parra'l parlamens fis/ Qand drutz loindas er tant vezis/ C'ab bels [digz] jauzira solatz."²⁷⁷ In this fantasy his identity is swapped, for the *drutz lonhdas* becomes *vezis*. Jean-Charles Huchet characterizes the description of another dream, that of Iseut in Bérout's *Tristan* saying, "il exhibe sa particularité en obligeant le récit à changer de perspective et le récitant à raviver l'attention de l'auditoire (oiez des endormiz) à l'orée d'une séquence dont l'importance se trouve ainsi soulignée."²⁷⁸ The role of the dream in lyric is no different. In the

²⁷⁶ Mulvey inscribes the image of woman into a structure which seems to differ from what we see here. She says "The scopophilic instinct (pleasure in looking at another person as an erotic object), and, in contradistinction ego libido (forming identification processes) act as formations, mechanisms, which this cinema has played on. The image of woman as (passive) raw material for the (active) gaze of man takes the argument a step further into the structure of representation, adding a further layer demanded by the ideology of the patriarchal order as it is worked out in its favourite cinematic form-- illusionistic narrative film.

²⁷⁷ And if it pleases her, I would stay near her though I be from far away: so fine will the speech seem to her when this long-distance lover is so close and by whom, with beautiful words, she will be entertained with pleasure. This is taken from ms AB, Pickens version I.

²⁷⁸ it demonstrates its particularity by forcing the story to shift its perspective and the declaimer to revive the listener's attention (oiez des endormiz) at the beginning of a sequence whose importance is thereby highlighted. Jean-Charles Huchet, *Littérature Médiévale Et Psychanalyse: Pour Une Clinique Littéraire* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990) 53.

moment of fantasy the reality of Jaufré's position—his distance—is only underscored by his daydream of union as Charlotte Gross puts it. The “unreal time” in Jaufré's lyrics actually “widen the distance” between poet and his love object.²⁷⁹ If “Lanquan li jorn” presents a definition of poet and lady, a characterization of the love itself as “amor de loing,” the dream sequences in Jaufré's songs reverse all that is presented in “Lanquan li jorn.”

These somnambulatory reversals equal fulfillment: the *amor de loing* is no longer *loing*. What the poet cannot do during the day, he cannot stop himself from doing at night: “Anc tan suau no m’adurmi,/ mos esperita tost no fos la,/ ni tan d’ira non ac de sa,/ mos corsa des no gos aqui.”²⁸⁰ In “Pro ai del chan essenhadors” he again speaks of his spirit or mind going to lie with his beloved while he sleeps: “Et en dormen sotz cobertors/ Es lai ab lieies mos esperitz!”²⁸¹ His own will abandons him to undertake this nocturnal pilgrimage. “Ma voluntatz s' en vai lo cors,/ La nueit et dia esclarzitz,/ Laintz per talant de socors!”²⁸² And his heart: “Lai es mos cors si totz c' alhors/ Non a ni sima ni raitz,”²⁸³ In the dream his wish is fulfilled: his mind, his desire or will, and even parts of his body are there with his beloved. In his waking moments his identity is bound up with distance, with boundaries “Assatz I a portz e camis”—plenty are there of gates

²⁷⁹ Charlotte Gross, “Studies in Lyric Time-Structures,” *Tenso: Bulletin of the Societe Guilhem IX* 2.1 (1986): 24.

²⁸⁰ I never went to sleep so peacefully (that) my spirit was not immediately there, and I never had so much sorrow here (that) my heart would not be there at once. “No Sap chantar qui so non di,” ll. 19-22

²⁸¹ And in sleeping under the covers/ it is there with her that is my spirit (or mind) ll. 35, 36.

²⁸² My will leaves my body/ at night and in lighted day/ there through desire for her body. ll. 41-43.

²⁸³ There (with the *domna*) is my heart, so entirely that it has neither top nor root, elsewhere. ll. 33, 34.

and paths—which are transcended by his heart, soul, and will in the dream state. The lady is not only envisioned; through fantasy she is reached. The poet can finally “see himself there” as he so wished in “Lanquan li jorn.”

While the dream offers the lover the opportunity to reach his beloved, it at the same time throws into doubt the stability of the self. The dreamer cannot be the one who is inside the dream and the one who can recount the dream. The body that sleeps holds the space of the self but the soul wanders. The dream-visions and the possibility of separating parts of the self in order to reach the beloved demonstrate that union is achieved.

Through these examples we see the way troubadours use one of the very processes used to construct the self in their attempt to abandon the self and destroy the solidity of the subject. While it is through being seen and seeing one’s self amidst the elements of the world that gives rise to the subjective stance, the troubadours examined here conceive of the visual as a way to leave the self behind—its parts: *cor*, *arma*, *esperitz*—to go and arrive selflessly at the beloved. In the chapter that follows we will see that the lover can take things even farther. Bernart de Ventadorn will demonstrate a profound interest in the gaze as does Jaufré but will also employ other means to destabilize his sense of self in order to demonstrate his humility before the beloved.

Through the study of the authors presented in this chapter we see the way troubadours use the very elements that construct the self to destroy the solidity of the subject. While it is through being seen, and seeing one’s self amidst the elements of the world that gives rise to the subjective stance, the troubadours examined here conceive of the visual as a way to leave the self behind

CHAPTER 4: BERNART DE VENTADORN SINGING THE FADING SELF

Defining the Lover as Selfless

Not very much can be said about the life of this popular troubadour, but the *vida* depicts the Bernart de Ventadorn as a remarkable character, the quintessence of the *fin' amant*. As with the *vidas* of many troubadours, the biographer hints at the themes that dominate the poet's lyrics.

Bernartz de Ventadorn si fo de	Bernart de Ventadorn was from the
Limozin, del castel de Ventadorn. Hom	Limousin, from the castle of Ventadorn.
fo de paubra generacion, fils d'un	He was a man of poor lineage, son of a
sirven qu'era forniers, qu'esquaudava	servant who was the baker and who heated
lo forn a coszer lo pan del castel. E	the oven to cook bread for the castle. He
venc bels hom et adreichs, e saup ben	became a beautiful man and adroit. He
chantar e trobar, e venc cortes et	knew how to sing well and how to <i>trobar</i>
enseingnatz. E lo vescons, lo seus	[compose troubadour lyric] well and he
seingner, de Ventadorn, s'abelli mout	became courtly and learned. And the
de lui e de son trobar e de son cantar e	viscount of Ventadorn, his lord, was
fez li gran honor.	greatly pleased by his manner of

E'l vescons de Ventadorn si avia	composing and singing and gave him great
moiller, joven e gentil e gaia. E si	honor. And the viscount of Ventadorn had
s'abelli d'En Bernart e de soas chansos	a wife, young, noble and joyful. And she
e s'enamora de lui et el de la dompna,	was charmed by Bernart and by his songs

si qu'el fetz sas chansos e sos vers
d'ella, de l'amor qu'el avia ad ella e de
la valor de leis. Lonc temps duret lor
amors anz que'l vescons ni l'autra gens
s'em aperceubes. E quant lo vescons
s'en aperceup, si s'estranjet de lui, e la
moillier fetz serar e gardar. E la
dompna si fetz dar comjat a N Bernart,
qu'el se partis e se loingnes d'aquella
encontrada.

Et el s'en parti e si s'en anet a la
duchesa de Normandia, qu'era joves e
de gran valor e s'entendia en pretz et en
honor et en bendig de lausor. E plasion
li fort las chansos e l vers d'En Bernart,
et ella lo receup e l'acuilli mout fort.
Lonc temps estet en sa cort, et enamoret
se d'ella et ella de lui, e fetz mantas
bonas chansos d'ella. Et estan ab ella,
lo reis Enrics d'Engleterre si la tolc per
moiller e si la trais de Normandia e si la
menet en Angleterra. En Bernart si

and she fell in love with him and he with
her, and so he made his songs and his *vers*
about her, about the love he had for her,
and the valor she had. A long time did their
love last without the viscount or anyone
else noticing. And when the viscount
found out, he sent him away from him, and
he had his wife imprisoned and guarded.
And the lady gave her leave to Bernart, and
told him to leave and go far from this
country.
And he left and this is how he went to the
duchesse of Normandy who was young and
of great worth and was knowledgable in
worthiness and in honor and in the good
words of praise. And the vers and cansos
of Bernart pleased her greatly and she
received him and welcomed him very
warmly. Long time was he in her court and
he fell in love with her, and she with him,
and he made many songs about her. And
while he was with her, the king Henry of

remas de sai tristz e dolentz, e venc	England took her for his wife and took her
s'en al bon comte Raimon de Tolosa, et	to England. Bernart was left far from her,
ab el estet tro que·l coms mori. Et En	sad and suffering, and he went in this way
Bernartz, per aquella dolor, si s'en	to the good count Raimon de Tolosa, and
rendet a l'ordre de Dalon, e lai el	he stayed with him throughout until the
definet.	count's death. And then Bernart, because
Et ieu, N'Ucs de Saint Circ, de lui	of that pain, took himself to the order of
so qu'ieu ai escrit si me contet lo	Dalon and there ended his days.
vescoms N'Ebles de Ventadorn, que fo	And I, Uc de Saint-Circ, I have written of
fils de la vescomtessa qu'En Bernartz	him what was said to me by the vicomte
amet. E fetz aquestas chansos que vos	Eble de Ventadorn who was the son of the
auziretz aissi de sotz escriptas. ²⁸⁴	viscountess that Bernart loved. [Bernart]
	made these songs that you will hear, and
	that are written here below.

The biographer no doubt uses what he finds in Bernart's songs as his source material. The biographer, Uc de Saint Circ, sees in the songs of Bernart a lover who lives and acts only for his beloved. Indeed love as described by Bernart de Ventadorn is an overwhelming power to which the lover must fully submit. The divesting of parts Arnaut de Marueilh, Falquet de Romans, and Jaufré Rudel describe as nocturnal visions or dreams and contemplative envisionings Bernart de Ventadorn takes to be the very essence of the lover. More than any

²⁸⁴ Boutière and Schutz, *Biographies des Troubadours, Textes Provençaux des XIIIe Et XIVe Siècles*, Les Classiques D'oc 1, 2nd ed. (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1964) 20-21.

other troubadour, Bernart de Ventadorn offers his self in its entirety to *Amors* and *domna*, “heart and body, knowledge and sense, force and power or will, have I placed in it [love].”²⁸⁵

Relinquishing all remnants of the self provides the means to bliss in love.

Bernart’s “Can vei la lauzeta mover,” perhaps the most widely disseminated troubadour song both in the Middle Ages and today, opens with the image of a lark’s falling, gliding in the sun’s rays, an image that inspires intense envy in the poet-lover:

Can vei la lauzeta mover	When I see the lark move
De joi sas alas contral rai,	With joy its wings against the rays; that it
Que s’oblid e’s laissa chazer	forgets itself and lets itself fall because of the
Per la doussor c’al cor li vai,	sweetness that comes into its heart, Ah, what
Ai tan grans enveja m’en ve	great jealousy comes into me, for that joy
De cui qu’eu veyau jauzion,	which I see, it’s a wonder that because of it
Meravilhas ai, car desse	my heart doesn’t melt from desire
Lo cor de dezirer no’m fon.	

²⁸⁶

Bernart witnesses two opposing movements in the flight of the bird. First the lark stirs, moves its wings against the sun’s rays as they fall from above towards the earth. The second movement is introduced by the conjunction *que*, which in Occitan unlike other Romance languages, so often serves to contrast what follows with what preceded it.²⁸⁷ “Then in contrast”

²⁸⁵ Cor e cors e saber e sen/ e fors’ e poder i ai mes I, ll. 5,6.

²⁸⁶ “Can vei la lauzeta mover,” Lazar, ed., *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D’amour*. All quotations from Bernart de Ventadorn will come from the edition by Moshé Lazar and all translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

begins the line, “he forgets himself and allows himself to fall.” This is what Bernart defines as “jauzion,” bliss: forgetting the self, stopping the movement, the movement of the body that comes from the stirring of the will. The lark moves away from the position of acting subject to become the linguistically distinct “s,” the self *qua* object that can be forgotten, the self as object that can be dropped. The small bird’s joyful flight is in fact the loss of self that comes from the heart’s being penetrated by sweet pleasure. The bird gives up its own will to move and allows itself to be moved by external force; it lets itself fall. This selfless bliss that comes from a movement in the heart is what Bernart envies, wishes to share, but in so doing only suffers for to envy is to exercise the will and actively move with desire. To desire, to act according to one’s will is the exact opposite of allowing one’s self to freefall—that will-less fall that Bernart says is the cause of “jauzion.” The distinction between the movement of desire and will and the selfless falling of the lark in this first stanza is highlighted by the music of the song. When the lark moves “with joy its wings” against the sun, the pitch moves up the scale with only a significant descending trill on “contr.” The cadence likewise ascends when Bernart speaks of his own acts: seeing in line I, envying in line IV, and marveling in line VII. The words *s’oblida*, *chaser* and *fon* are all characterized by either three descending notes or a triplet followed by falling cadence. The largest jump to the top of the upper register in the song, the highest place from which to fall, is in verse three with the beginning of *s’oblida*. The loss of self awareness and the passive falling of the lark are musically linked to the melting away of the poet-lover. The forgetting of self and abandonment is the proper and blissful end of the stirring in the heart. This song, like so

²⁸⁷ In his book, *La Syntaxe de l’ancien occitan*, Frede Jensen notes that “Que est une particule bien commode, qui sert à lier deux phrases, marquant des relations souvent difficiles à préciser” which leads to occasions when “la vraie nature de que, conjonction ou relatif, dans ces passages est difficile à déterminer.” Frede Jensen, *Syntaxe de L’ancien Occitan* (Tübingen: M. Niemeyer, 1994) 143.

many of Bernart's lyrics, explains that selflessness is the end of love, but what is the start of love?

Referring to *lo bel Narcisus*, Bernart explains how it is a lover can lose the self in one of the central stanzas of the song.²⁸⁸ Love and submission happen when the lover sees his lady. The song that begins, "*can vei*" suggests that the boundary of the self is easily penetrated through the eyes. In the first stanza seeing the lark fills the lover with intense jealousy; in the stanza mentioning the *bel Narcisus*, the lover loses his will by an act of seeing. Dana E. Stewart has provided a book-length study of the relationship between classically founded medieval optical theories and love literature of medieval *romanz*;. Her findings stress the influence of two competing theories: the Platonic idea of something reaching out from the eye in the act of seeing and the Aristotelian theory, that something penetrates the eye to reach the heart of the viewer where the "common sense" is affected by the intrusion²⁸⁹. Indeed the act of seeing profoundly alters the lover in this stanza:

Anc non agui de me poder	Nevermore have I had power over myself
Ni no fui meus de l'or en sai	Nor have I ever been my own from the hour
Que·m laisset en sos olhs vezer	when
En un miralh que mout me plai.	she let me see into her eyes
Miralhs, pus me mirei en te,	into a mirror which pleases me so much.

²⁸⁸ The stanza order varies though this stanza is almost always somewhere in the center of the ordering being placed in third position in mss QUCI and is the fourth stanza in mss OMRNaKV. Only manuscript D places this stanza last. Only W and X omit the stanza as they only salvage two stanzas of *Can vei la lauzeta*.

²⁸⁹ Dana E. Stewart, *The Arrow of Love: Optics, Gender, and Subjectivity in Medieval Love Poetry* (Lewisburg, PA; London, England: Bucknell UP; Associated UP, 2003). See chapter three for a lengthier account of medieval optical theories.

M'an mort li sospir de preon,	Mirror, upon looking at myself in you,
C'aissi-m perdei com perdet se	Deep sighs have killed me,
Lo bels Narcisus en la fon.	For thus I lost myself as he lost himself
	That beautiful Narcissus in the fountain.

Most studies of “Can vei la lauzeta mover” focus on the remarkable parallel Bernart makes between his own position of selfless lover and the *bels Narcisus* who lost him self in the fountain. There is no doubt that the act of seeing plays a crucial role in the beginning of love and the loss of self; As R. Howard Bloch says of this particular song, “...the despoliation of the self that is the equivalent of desire is in the *canso*, as in both its courtly and ascetic context, imagined to enter by the eye,...”²⁹⁰ Simon Gaunt has pointed out, however, that most modern studies have been founded on the edition produced by Appel despite the fact that his reading which makes of the lady’s eyes a mirror is based only on mss DIKO while other manuscripts propose other ideas in lieu of “Que·m laisset en sos olhs vezer/ En un miralh que mout me plai.”²⁹¹

AGLPSV: de mos holhs	That allowed me from [or with] my eyes to see In a mirror that pleases me greatly
C: a mos holhs	That allowed my eyes to see...
M: Qe li plac qem laisset vezer	That it so pleased her to allow me to see...
N: Ca sos bels oils mi fes vezer	For her beautiful eyes made me see ...

²⁹⁰ R. Howard Bloch, *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) 145, 46.

²⁹¹ Simon Gaunt, "Discourse Desired: Desire, Subjectivity, and Mouvançe in Can Vei La Lauzeta Mover," *Desiring Discourse: The Literature of Love, Ovid through Chaucer*, eds. James J. Paxson and Cynthia A. Gravlee (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna UP, 1998).

R: Pus elam mostret son voler	Then she showed me her will to me ...
QU: Qant me laisset sos oils veder	When she let me see her eyes in a mirror...

Because the key feature of Narcissus is dropped from the readings of CENRaMPSUQV Gaunt claims “these variants may well indicate that the reference to Narcissus was not as crucial to an understanding of the poem for medieval transmitters as it has been for modern critics.”²⁹²

Regardless of whether Narcissus is referenced or whether the lady serves as a mirror herself or not, it is certain that Bernart loses his self and his will at the moment when he sees his lady. It is clear that sight plays a crucial role in the loss of the lover’s self. To include the reference to Narcissus strengthens the idea that the lover’s life is lost when he allows himself to fall into the image of the beloved. What seems at first to be a falling into selfishness or the pursuit of pleasure for the self is in fact the way to destroy the self altogether. The poet-lover is completely subjugated to love and his lady at such an instant in a way that suggests it is the essence of the lady, the essence of love that demands the lover’s submission and enforces complete dominance. And yet, he remains there, the tool of his lady, his own desire is that of his lady, narcissism in the Lacanian sense without a means to go beyond. As Yolande de Pontfarcy notes, “he [Bernart de Ventadorn] had hoped to pass through the mirror of her eyes just as the lark approaches the luminous source and lets itself fall in rapture; but this has been denied him. The mirror has become a screen behind which the lady has retired, he sees only his own image.”²⁹³ There is the female’s ocular matter he cannot enter into except as a reflection that sits on the slippery tears

²⁹² Gaunt, "Discourse Desired" 96.

²⁹³ Yolande de Pontfarcy, “The Myth of Narcissus in Courtly Literature,” *Echoes of Narcissus*. ed. Lieve Spaas (Oxford: Bergham Books 2000) 26.

that shield her eye from the exterior. It is not a water into which he can dive. His image is suspended there, trapped on this thin sheet of viscous liquid that protects his beloved from the elements, and from his penetration.

In this song Bernart suggests the sight, Love, the lady, imply his love by their very existence: he has no choice, that is, he has no will independent of that of the Lady or Love: “car eu d’amar no·m posc tener.”²⁹⁴ And the result of this loving is the loss of everything to the lady.

Car eu d’amar no ·m posc tener	For I cannot stop myself from loving
Celeis don ja pro non aurai.	Her from whom I’ll never receive joy.
Tout m’a mo cor, e tout m’a me,	She has all of me, my heart, all of me
E se mezeis e tot lo mon ;	completely, herself and the whole world;
E can se·m tolç, no·m laissez re	And when she took herself from me, she
Mas dezirer e cor volon. ²⁹⁵	left me nothing but desire and a longing
	heart.

In the end of this stanza, his entire self has been handed over to the lady who has likewise taken into her possession everything in the world, the world itself. Bernart’s last lines saying what she has left him are doubly negated. It is negated first by the avowal of his being left no thing (no·m laisset re), followed by “mas” that is, “but” or “except” and yet despite the hope this caveat instills it is only to be defeated by the nature of what he keeps: desire and longing—that is, what he has is not a thing at all but only a lack. His self has nothing but the silhouette left by what he does not have. Like Jaufré Rudel, Bernart here can only define himself negatively. All elements

²⁹⁴ for I cannot stop myself from loving. l. 9.

²⁹⁵ ll. 11-16.

of selfhood addressed in the first chapters of the dissertation—language, bodily sensations and emotional heights, and the will are negated throughout the oeuvre of this quintessential poet-lover. His self is dead or eclipsed as the close of “Can vei la lauzeta mover” suggests with its eerie description of the poet as a dead man.

Aissi·m part de leis e·m recre!	And so I separate myself from her and
Mort m’a, e per mort li respon,	retreat! She killed me, and through death I
E vau m’en pus ilh no·m rete,	answer, and since she won’t keep me, I go,
Chaitius, en issilh, no sai on.	Defeated, in exile, I know not where.
Tristans, ges no·n aures de me,	Tristans, never will you hear from me,
Qu’eu m’en vau, chaitius, no sai on.	For I go, defeated, I know not where.
De chantar me gic e·m recre,	I abandon song and retreat
E de joi e d’amor m’escon. ²⁹⁶	And from joy and love I hide myself.

Bernart’s shell speaks only to explain that he is retreating, fading, and hiding himself, his self, from joy and love—those very things that he consistently defines as what give life to the subject. He is as dead, killed by his lady. As one without life, “per mort,” he wanders aimlessly without knowing where he goes. He has no intent, no goal, no destination. How could he? He can no longer act with the will and power of a complete and full subject, an “I” but is instead only an object his lady does not keep: “pus ilh no·m rete.” Throughout these closing lines Bernart, like the *lauzeta* at the moment of its forgetting of itself and falling, becomes object rather than subject with the use of the oblique pronoun “me” ten times in eight lines. The subject has been denied, replaced by an object that can retreat, fade away, and be hidden or lost. These last lines

²⁹⁶ ll. 53-60.

of one of the most widely distributed troubadour songs suggests the weakness of troubadour subjectivity, the possibility of the fading subject that Bernart de Ventadorn proposes throughout his oeuvre.

The Frailty of the Centered Body, Will, and Mind

*Cor e cors e saber e sen
e fors' e poder i ai mes*²⁹⁷

In contrast to the suggestions of so many who would like to claim a modern origin to subjectivity,²⁹⁸ Bernart de Ventadorn's work stands as testimony of a consciousness of self, identity, and subjectivity but also of the mechanisms of how all of these entities are constructed. The lyrics of this Limousin troubadour put the questioning, construction, crisis and deconstruction of the subject on display. This crisis of subjectivity is played out by a variety of characters—the elements that make the subject. As some enter onto the stage others fade into the wings. At times the lyrics place dueling elements of the self center-stage. As with each of the authors included in the dissertation, Bernart de Ventadorn explores the significance of the various elements of selfhood presented in the introduction: body, mind, emotions, and will. As

²⁹⁷ These lines from Bernart's "Non es meravelha" can be found translated into French in the lyric of the Chatelain de Coucy, "ains ai mis en li sevir / cuer et cors, forche et pooir" (V, ll. 21,22) and "Ke g'i emt tot, cuers et cors et desir, / sens et savoir,...(VII, ll. 21,22). Chastelain de Couci, *Chansons Attribuées Au Chatselain de Couci, Fin du XIIe - Début du XIIIe Siècle*, ed. Guy and Alain Lerner, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1964).

²⁹⁸ I direct the reader to Chapter One where I suggest the medievalist interested in studies of selfhood suffers the scrutiny of skeptical medievalists, psychoanalysts, and Early Modernists.

he strives to make a gift of himself to his beloved he constantly shifts the location of the self from one entity to another. He gives over all of himself to his lady.

In “Non es meravelha” the poet-lover offers up a complete inventory of self: “Cor e cors e saber e sen/ e fors’ e poder i ai mes.”²⁹⁹ The components of the lover are divided into three parts of two items each. The heart belongs with the body, knowledge and sense follow, and finally the lover offers his force and power or will, to love. The heart then would seem to belong to the physical rather than emotional aspect of the lover. And indeed the heart is a physical part of the body, yet since Antiquity, though more prominently since Christian thinking, the heart has been adopted as metaphor for a variety of meanings. Xavier-Leon Dufour found that the New Testament presents the heart as signifier for the affective life and inwardness.³⁰⁰ This is the very

²⁹⁹ Body and heart and sense and force and will have I put in it [love]. Lazar, ed., *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour* I, ll. 5,6. The song, *Estat ai en greu cossirier* by the Comtessa de Dia includes a stanza where she too offers her love the parts of her body and her selfhood: "eu l'autrei mon cor e m'amor,/mon sen, mos huoills e ma vida" [To him I grant my heart, my love, my mind, my eyes, my life.] What is remarkable in the stanza is the many functions of the lover's body:

Ben volria mon cavallier
Tener un ser en mos bratz nut,
Q'el s'en tengra per ereubut
Sol q'a lui fezes cosseillier;
Car plus m'en sui avellida
No fetz Floris de Blanchaflor;
Eu l'autrei mon cor e m'amor,
Mon sen, mos huoills e ma vida.

I'd like to hold my knight
In my arms one evening, naked,
For he'd be overjoyed
were I only serving as his pillow,
and he makes me more radiant
than Floris his Blanchaflor.
To him I grant my heart, my love,
my mind, my eyes, my life.

The trobairitz, the Comtessa de Dia explores the significance of the body for her beloved in a way a troubadour cannot for she speaks of the joy and comfort he would derive were she to take him in her arms and let him lie down upon her. Her body in love is active, embracing, but also the passive furniture that serves to comfort her beloved as pillow. And at the close of the stanza the Comtessa offers up to her beloved, in lines that recall those of Bernart, all the elements of self: heart, love, mind, eyes, and life itself. "Estat ai en greu cossirier," edition and translation from the previously cited *Songs of the Women Troubadours*, 10, 11.

use Bernart gives to the heart in his lyric. It is a part of the self, but ultimately seems to represent the most interior, that is, the most essential part of self where experience and feelings reside.

Cor e cors

Throughout his lyrics Bernart de Ventadorn focuses his attention inward on the heart, the “centre profond de l’être” and “sieg de l’affectivité” as Phillippe Ménard says³⁰¹ and then on the most readily visible part of the person: the face. In his claim that his song is better than that of anyone else, Bernart de Ventadorn reveals his anxiety about how one can ever truly know what is inside another’s heart. His lyrics often suggest congruence between inner feelings and outward expressions of love but these are only thrown into doubt as Bernart likewise laments that man and language allow for semblance, for falsehood and deception to exist.

Bernart de Ventadorn claims “chantars no pot gaire valer si d' ins dal cor no mou lo chans!”³⁰² The quality of song is dependent upon the composer’s heart. Phillippe Ménard devoted an article to the heart in the poetry of Bernart for he finds that “il n’est pas sans intérêt de préciser les valeurs et les résonances du coeur chez le plus grand des troubadours.”³⁰³ Ménard seeks to define as completely as possible the heart as employed in Bernart’s lyric. He finds that “le coeur n’est pas isolé au sein de l’être come une île dans une mer. Il entre, au contraire, dans un réseau de relations et d’oppositions” and these are what Ménard runs through in his article. The heart is “le côté le plus intime et le plus profond de l’âme” as says Friedrich Hegel in

³⁰⁰ Xavier Leon- Dufour. *Dictionnaire du Nouveau Testament*, (Paris: Seuil, 1996) 171.

³⁰¹ Phillippe Ménard, "Le Coeur dans les Poésies de Bernard de Ventadour," *Présence des troubadours, Annales de l'Institut d'études occitanes* II.5 (1970) 120, 121.

³⁰² The singing does not have any worth if the song does not move from within the heart. “Chantars no pot gaire valer” Lazar, ed., *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour* II. 1,2.

³⁰³ Phillippe Ménard, "Le Coeur dans les Poésies de Bernard de Ventadour" 119.

collection of works on poetry and lyric compiled and translated for French readers in 1855.³⁰⁴

Bernart would seem to present a lyrical œuvre anticipating a variety of Hegel's claims and certainly the idea that the self is most deeply, most truly, within the heart. And yet this troubadour is consistently returning to the question of outward expressions of intimate emotions, either writ on the face, or sung in the lover's sighs turned song. What is the relation between this intimate face of the subject and the subject's lyrical utterances? Why is the song's worth dependent on the heart? Oddly enough I think there might be a hint in the poet's references to the body.

Pierre Bec discusses the distinction between body and heart in Bernart, "Mais ce qui characterize essentiellement le corps par rapport au coeur, c'est sa pesanteur, sa materialité, son immobilité, alors que le coeur, lui, est léger, mobile, aérien, libre de se déplacer à son gré pour se rendre auprès de la dame et devenir son bien propre."³⁰⁵ The body is the material, the shell of the self; in Bernart the heart moves from being paired with the body to being paired with, and finally representing, the immaterial element of selfhood. In "Chantars no pot gaire valer" the *cor* has shifted its alliance: "qu'en joi d'amour et enten la boch' e-ls olhs e-l cor e-l sen."³⁰⁶ The heart here, as in "Can la freid' aura" cited above, stands beside *sen*, the mind, and in contrast to the eyes and mouth, the physical offerings of the lover. In "E mainh

³⁰⁴ This particular declaration falls within a discussion of lyrical poetry about which Hegel suggests it is the poet's soul that is the defining feature of unity. As regards the lyrical and the heart, Hegel says, "Ce qu'il y a de plus parfaitement lyrique, sous ce rapport, c'est un sentiment de cœur concentré dans une situation particulière, parce que le cœur est le côté le plus intime et le plus profond de l'âme." Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *La Poétique*, trans. Charles Bénard (Paris: Veuve Joubert, 1855) 281.

³⁰⁵ Pierre Bec, "Le Corps Et Ses Ambiguités Chez Bernard de Ventadour Et Quelques Autres Troubadours," *Le Corps Et Ses Enigmes*, ed. Bernard Ribemont. 10.

³⁰⁶ II, ll. 6,7.

genh se volv” the joyous frenzy that overtakes the lover affects his *talans*, *volers*, and *cors* and threatens to disperse all of these in the lover who says “no sai com me contenha!”

E mainh genh se volv e-s vira/	In many ways, my desire,
Mos talans, e ven e vai,	circles and turns itself
Lai on mos volers s’atrai.	and it comes and goes
Lo cors no-n pauza ni fina,	To there where my will is attracted.
Si ·m te conhd’ e gai/	My heart does not stop or rest
Fin’ amors, ab cui m’apai;	And so keeps me cheery and gay
No sai com me contenha ! ³⁰⁷	<i>Fin’ amors</i> , with/by whom I am pacified.
	I do not know how I contain myself!

He loses hold of his heart in “Tan tai mo cor ple de joya” where this time his heart leaves his body to be with love, his spirit flees in hopes of catching up to his heart, and his body is simply somewhere altogether different:

Mo cor a pres d’Amor,	Love holds my heart
Que l’esperitz lai cor,	For my spirit runs there
Mais lo cors es sai, alhor,	But the body is here, not there,
Lonh de leis, en Fransa. ³⁰⁸	Far from it in France.

The lover is all over the place. His parts— desire, spirit, heart— roam far and wide as they flee his body. In the many lyrics that present body parts parting ways, where is the self situated?

³⁰⁷ VIII, stanza I.

³⁰⁸ IV, ll. 33-36

Where is the “I” that speaks to tell us of this peculiar experience? In his truly revolutionary study of the imagining of the body, Paul Schilder claims that “Since both the body and the world have to be built up, and since the body in this respect is not different from the world, there must be a central function of the personality which is neither world nor body. There must be a more central sphere of the personality. The body is in this respect periphery compared with the central functions of the personality.”³⁰⁹ Neuroscience and cognitive philosophy still struggle with these facts of life. Bernart’s answer was to situate the most essential qualities of selfhood within the heart. The heart was the self of the lover. Yet he recognizes this central sphere for he still confuses *sai* and *lai*.

Early theology of Christ’s body suggests that the body part represents the whole. (Paul already equates the Church with Christ’s limbs) LeGoff reminds us that Gregory the Great gives to these early ideas a coherent idea of the body as metaphor or symbol. The idea spreads to the bodies of saints, though slowly, allowing for the reliquaries of the later Middle Ages to, as Carolyn Walker Bynum has found, urge the viewer to “equate bones with body and part with whole, and treat the body as the permanent locus of the person.”³¹⁰ Bernart equates the heart, even in its most abstract or metaphoric, with the identity of the person. As if speaking with martyrs in mind he tells his lady “...si-l gelos vos bat’ de for,/ gradatz qu’el no vos bat’ al cor.”³¹¹ Outside is only the shell that guards what is essential to the lady, her heart.

³⁰⁹ Schilder, Paul. *The Image and Appearance of the Human Body*. 124.

³¹⁰ Caroline Walker Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (Cambridge, Mass: Zone Books Distributed by the MIT Press, 1991) 296.

³¹¹ If the *gelos* (your jealous husband) beats you on the outside, be thankful that he does not beat your heart.

For Bernart the “I” is not there where the heart is not:

Empero tan me plai	Despite this, I am so pleased when I
Can de leis me sove,	remember her that no matter who cries or
Que qui·m crida ni·m brai,	yells for me I do not hear a thing.
Eu no·n au nula re.	So softly does the beautiful one
Tan dousamen me trai	draw my heart from my breast
La bela·l cor de se,	that many people
Que tals ditz qu’eu sui sai,	who do not see me
Et o cuid, et o cre,	with their eyes say,
Que de sos olhs no·m ve. ³¹²	and think, and believe that I am here.

Without the heart he is only there as deceptive vision. And yet, how can he sing “sai” without being “sai.” We reencounter the paradox pointed out by Michel-André Bossy in his discussion of the speaking body who hopes to win his debate with the soul by claiming the body cannot speak without a soul. The “I” again in Bernart’s song seems to get in the way, or present itself subtly yet firmly as it makes its claim for defining element of self. The story the songs tell however, indicate something else. Essence would seem to be determined by the heart; Bernart claims one can have a “cor d’amar”³¹³ and so be a good lover or not at all, as he claims of his lady who he complains has a “cor de peira dura.”³¹⁴ The heart fully represents the person.

³¹² ll. 19-27.

³¹³ “Estat ai com om perdutoz” line 38.

³¹⁴ “Can lo dous temps comensa” line 14.

Though the heart is metonymically called upon to represent the self, it is also the space in which Bernart situates the experience of the subject. The subject or self is known to exist because of its experience. That is to say, we know we exist because we experience being. We feel and sense it: its sense of being comes from feeling, tactile and emotional.³¹⁵ Not, *cogito ergo sum*, but rather, I feel or sense (myself) therefore I am. This fundamental act of being, feeling, Bernart claims happens in the heart. In “Lancan vei la folha” the sensation is described in wholly physical terms: “Lo cor sotz l’aissela / m’en vol de dol partir.”³¹⁶ Bernart maps out the heart within the body and describes the experience with the “dol” of bodily experience. In other instances the sensation of love in the heart is of another sort. In “Non es meravelha” Bernart speaks twice of the heart being filled with a “dousa sabor” first saying that “Ben es mortz qui d’amor no sen/ al cor cal que dousa sabor”³¹⁷ and then “Aquest’ amors me fer tan gen/ al cor d’una dousa sabor.”³¹⁸ One should be capable of feeling, “sen” having sensation within the heart. Sensory perception is what Schilder finds to be a most important factor in understanding the image of the self. Bernart places this function within the heart. The emotional feelings are also situated in the heart for Bernart. In “Can lo boschatgs es floritz” Bernart cries, “ira·m sen al cor trenchar.”³¹⁹ And yet, he also has *joi* in his heart “Ab l’autre joi, qu’eu ai en mo

³¹⁵ See the discussion of the feeling of being in Ch. 1. of the dissertation.

³¹⁶ ll. 19,20.

³¹⁷ He is quite dead who does not feel in his heart the sweet sensation of love, I., ll. 9,10.

³¹⁸ This love makes me feel so gently in my heart a sweet sensation, ll. 25, 26. Both of these instances are discussed again further ahead in the chapter.

³¹⁹ line 75.

coratge/ poya mos chan e nais e creis e brolha.”³²⁰ It is the emotion of his heart that forces his song into being. The heart is where the emotions of the lover occur. And yet, this completely personal space is vulnerable. The heart can be penetrated with emotions and sensations originating from somewhere outside the self to find themselves at the center of the poet-lover.

Because the subject is situated for Bernart within the heart, the body serves as a shell (is it protective? is it deceptive?). Outside forces penetrate the heart to inspire love, fill it with peace, usually through particular portals or slits³²¹ that open onto the body’s surface suggesting an opportunity to slip beneath the surface and reach, perchance, the heart. These openings are also the locus of three of the five senses: the mouth, the eyes, the ears. In this sense we see that the breaks in the surface of the body, the form of the perimeters of the self, are in fact not “breaks” in the boundary of the self, the skin that outlines and keeps bound within the self, but instead these slits or holes are the sites where some of the self-defining happens.³²²

The sound of birds and the sight of green leaves and flowers reaches Bernart’s heart to instill it with peace and revive the lover leading him to song:

Can par la flors josta.l vert folh

When the flower appears with green leaves,

E vei lo tems clar e sere

And I see the season clear and quiet, and

³²⁰ Later, with the other joy that I have in my heart grows my song and is born and grows and flourishes, “ Can vei la flor ” ll. 3,4.

³²¹ I think of the philosophical discussions about body by Luce Irigaray and Karmen Mackendrick. MacKendrick, Karmen. *Word made skin: figuring language at the surface of flesh*. 1st ed. (New York: Fordham University Press) 2004; Irigaray, Luce. *Speculum de l'autre femme*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1974 ; and *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*. Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1977.

³²² The discussion of the role the skin plays in the construction of the image of the self is found in Chapter 1.

E.l doutz chans dels auzels pel brolh	soft songs of the birds in the grove sweeten
M' adousa lo cor e.m reve,	my heart and refresh me, then the birds
Pos l' auzel chanton a lor for,	sing in the their way,
Eu, c' ai mais de joi en mo cor,	So I, who have more joy in my heart
Dei be chantar, pois tuih li mei jornal	Should sing will for all my days
Son joi e chan, qu' eu no pes de ren al. ³²³	Are joy and song, for I think of nothing else.

And in “La dousa votz ai auzida” it is again a bird’s song that penetrates his heart to give it to alter the sensations within that had been introduced by love:

La dousa votz ai auzida	The sweet voice I have heard
Del rosinholet sauvatge,	Of the wild nightingale,
Et es m' ins el cor salhida	And it has impressed into my heart
Si que tot lo cosirer	So much that all the ruminating
E-ls mals traihz qu' Amors me dona,	And all the bad treatment the Love gives
M'adousa e m' asazona.	me It has assuaged and softened for me.

The “cosirer” and “mals traihz” are relieved by the *dousa votz del rosinholet* in this song; the heart is reached, its emotions touched by way of the ears.

The lady reaches the lover through the eyes. In “En cossirer et en esmai” it is not his eyes which see his lady, but rather her eyes which penetrate into his heart,

³²³ ll. 1-8

Negus jois al meu no s' eschai,	No joy catches up to mine
Can ma domna ·m garda ni.m ve,	When my <i>domna</i> watches me or sees me
Que·l seus bels douz semblans me vai	For her beautiful, sweet eyes' image goes
Al cor, que m' adous' e·m reve! ³²⁴	To my heart, and so sweetens me and revives me!

While it is the domna's eyes which *garda* and *ve*, as her *bel douz semblans* faces him and strikes him to his core, it would seem that they make their way by passing through his own eyes so thrilled to match her gaze. Once the heart is reached by this image of beauty, the effect is the same as that of its having received the bird's song: the lover's heart is given peace and revitalized.

It is the lover's wish that his lady approach him and reach his heart in a yet more direct manner,

Domna, per cui chan e demor ,	Lady for whom I sing and remain,
Per la bocha·m feretz al cor	By your mouth wound me to the heart with
D' un doutz baizar de fin' amor coral,	a sweet kiss of fine true love
Que.m torn en joi e.m get d' ira mortal! ³²⁵	That will return joy to me and throw mortal sorrow from me.

The kiss placed on the mouth reaches the heart.

³²⁴ ll. 41-44.

³²⁵ "Can par la flors josta" Lazar, XXIV, ll. 29-32.

The love that inspires “cossirer” and unease and suffering does not so easily indicate its pathway into the heart. It is simply the way of love to have complete access to the heart of the lover in Bernart’s songs, to fill it with *envey* and *dezir*.

C’amors, qui·l cor enamora,	and may the love that stirs my heart
M’ en det, mais no·m n’escazegra	now give me (more I can not claim)
Non plazers, mas sabetz que	not pleasure, but know also that,
Envey’e dezir anse.	a steady craving and desire,
E s’a leis platz que·m retenha	and if she's pleased to keep me on,
Far pot de me so talen,	to do with me as she may wish,
Melhs no fa·l vens de la rama,	just as the wind does to the branch,
Qu’enaissi vau les seguen	and I will follow her the way
Com la folha sec lo ven. ³²⁶	the leaf of autumn does the wind.

The woeful lover reproaches himself for allowing desire to have entered into his heart even as he admits he is powerless to stop Love from its will:

Anceis me fari' a pendre	I must take on, therefore, love
Car anc n' aic cor ni voler!	and there’s no way I can abstain:
Mas eu non ai ges poder	in such a trance let me explain
Que·m posca d' Amor defendre.	I have no hope of joy from this
	(for I'd be ready to be hanged
Pero Amors sap dissendre	

³²⁶ “Amors, enquera·us preyera,” ll. 24-32.

³²⁷ “Amors, e que·us es vejaire,” ll. 17-28.

Lai on li ven a plazer,	if that was what I hungered for)
E sap gen guizado rendre	but I do not have power enough
Del maltraih e del doler. ³²⁷	to let me fight a war with Love.
	But love knows how to descend
	There where it gives her pleasure,
	And knows how to give reward to people
	For their mistreatment and their pain.

The heart is vulnerable to love and lady. Easily reached through the slits of the senses: the eyes, the ears, the mouth. This is what James A. Schultz means when he says, “Courtly love is exogenous. It is caused by something external to the body.”³²⁸ Bernart shows the means by which this external cause penetrates the body.

The absence of touching as effecting stirrings in the heart is curious until one realizes that the poet sings to implore this hitherto untouched lady to accept him as lover. In fact he does want to touch his lady. He sings of touch, of uniting their bodies. But these are usually in pleas, moments characterized by hope and hypotheses but not descriptions of fulfillment:

Midons prec, no.m lais per chastic	My lady, I pray, does not leave me for
Ni per gelos folatura,	punishment nor because of mad jealousy,
Que no.m sent’ entre sos bratz! ³²⁹	And so not let me feel myself in her arms!

³²⁸ James A. Schultz. *Courtly Love, the Love of Courtliness, and the History of Sexuality*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) 75.

³²⁹ “Lancan folhon bosc e jarric ” VI. Ll. 33-35.

Or again,

Domna pros e valenta,

Genser de la plus genta,

Faitz vostre cors salvatge

Tan privat qu' eu lo senta.³³⁰

Noble and worthy lady,

finest among the finest,

make it so that your distant

body is so close that I can feel it.

He cannot speak of the experience of this sort of touch (the second or third level of the *gradus amoris*); only of his desire to obtain it. The experience of which he can speak is only that of being denied this touch and so he continues:

Car s' eu mor, domna genta,

Que ja nuza no.us senta,

Mos cors n' aura damnatge

E m' arma n' er dolenta.³³¹

For if I die, noble lady,

Because I never felt you naked,

My body/heart will have the complaint

And my soul will be aching.

Here the sensation of unfulfillment is wrought on the body and the “arma” (a term not often employed by Bernart who usually opts for his heart, “cor,” to speak of his inward self). His body and soul will suffer the lady’s denial and his being will pass from existence into death.

³³⁰ “ Can lo dous temps comensa ” XXII. Ll. 41-44.

Moshé Lazar suggests translating this *tornada* as follows: “Car si je meurs, belle dame, parce que jamais je ne vous étreins nue, mon corps en aura le dommage et mon âme en sera dolente.” He then offers the following comment in a note: Plutôt que de penser qu’après la mort l’âme continuera à souffrir, il faut ne pas prendre mort littéralement, mais lire: “si je meurs puisque je ne puis l’éteindre nue, mon corps et mon âme en souffriront toujours.” note 10, 262. ³³¹

Ara cuit qu' e'n morrai	Now I think I will die of it,
Del dezirer que·m ve,	Of that desire that comes to me
Si.lh bela lai on jai	If the beauty where she rests
No m' aizis pres de se,	Does not take me close to her
Qu' eu la manei e bai	That I might touch and kiss her
Et estrenha vas me	And lay down with me
So cors blanc, gras e le. ³³²	Her white body, ample and sweet.

At its strongest desire—this force that invades the space physical or psychical as it comes into the lover “que·m ve”— leads to death, or feels like death to the lover. The only penetration presented in this scene of imagined or purely linguistically achieved fulfillment is in fact that of the desire that comes to Bernart.

In “Non es meravelh s’eu chan,” a series of oppositions highlight the subtlety involved in the game and language of love while doing so by building on those understandings of corporeality we’ve been finding in Bernart’s lyrics.

Non es meravelha s’eu chan	It is no wonder if I sing
Melhs de nul autre chantador,	Better than any other singer
Que plus me tra ·l cor vas amor	For my heart draws me more towards
E melhs sui fais a so coman.	love
Cor e cors e saber e sen	And I’m better made to its command.
E fors’ e poder i ai mes.	Heart and body and wisdom and sense

³³² “Pois preyatz me ” XVIII. Ll. 30-36.

Si·m tira vas amor lo fres que vas outra	And force and power have I put into it.
part no ·m aten. ³³³	So much do the reins pull me towards
	love that towards any other direction I
	cannot notice.

The song opens with the suggestion that one should not be at all surprised if Bernart sings better than any other for this is the direct effect of his relation to love. He follows love more, he is better made for love, and he has given over body and mind, will and strength to love. The troubadour makes no explanation of what this has to do with singing; it is implied: The better the lover and the love, the better the song, the singing, and the singer. After this introduction, which takes up the entire first stanza, the song follows with no further mention of song. However, the theme introduced in the first stanza is not abandoned or forgotten, rather the entirety of the song follows the two lines of question proposed in stanza I: 1) what is the relationship between inner experience and outward expression and 2) the flux between active and passive participation by the lover in his state. The lover is not to conceive of himself as active subject but vacillate between adoring subject and passive object until the importance of subjectivity can be shed entirely.

Already in the first stanza Bernart explains he sings better because “plus me tra·l cors vas amor.” His heart pulls him towards love more than what one finds in other poet-lovers. In this first self-portrait the troubadour paints himself as passively being pulled along by an inner force that has a power over him towards this great outer force of love. In the following line he makes a claim as to his essence and yet even this suggests a submissive position for he says he is “better

³³³ ll. 1-8

made” not for love as he has said of his beloved’s body elsewhere, but for the *commands* of love. And if there is any doubt as to his powerlessness he tells us that he relinquishes it all in the next lines: “Cor e cors e saber e sen/ e fors’ e poder i ai mes.” He gives up all parts of himself both physical and abstract. All has been given over to love. And yet, the verb tense and word choice suggest a choice of will. He has “mes,” placed, all elements of his selfhood in love. While here “i ai mes” implies a choice and strength on his part, the next time the verb is employed in the song the interpretation of the situation has changed. In stanza III the poet laments his state of suffering but ultimately asks “Eu que’n posc mais, s’ Amors me pren?/ e las charcer en que m’a mes, no pot claus obrir mas merces...”³³⁴ The verb “metre” has been paired with “prendre” or to place and to take. While in the first stanza he had placed his body and heart, *saber*, and mind within Love thus handing himself over, in the fifth he claims that it is Love that has placed him in the prison of love by taking him. At least six terms from the semantic fields of *mes* and *pres* appear within the song. In the second stanza Bernart combines *mes* and *pres* saying he would be “mespres” or mis-taken were he to be without love. He begs for God to kill him were that to happen. But, for the moment, at least in stanza VI he is indeed well taken or “entrepres” by Love: “Aissi sui d’ Amor empres!” he exclaims. *Aissi* or so much and in this way is he in Love’s snares, which, he suggests, can explain the troubadours self-portraiture presented in the first six lines of the stanza.

Cant eu la vei, be m' es parven

When I see her, well can it be seen

Als olhs, al vis, a la color,

In my eyes, on my face, in my color

³³⁴ And what else can I do if Love takes me? And in the prison cell in which it has placed me, no one can open but mercy. ll. 22-25.

³³⁵ ll. 41-46.

Car aissi tremble de paor	For so much do I tremble with fear
Com fa la folha contra.l ven.	Like the leaf in the wind.
Non ai de sen per un efan,	I have not the sense of a child,
Aissi sui d' amor empres! ³³⁵	So much am I taken by love.

The structure of the stanza follows that of the first. Outward presence is explained by the poet-lover's relationship to love. While in the first stanza the poet suggests that his submission to love leads to good song, he here proposes that his possession by love can lead to a physiological rather than musical expression of his love; his state can be made "parvenu," visibly obvious, to all by the look of his eyes, his face, his face color, his trembling, and his stunted sense. His face speaks his heart.

The preoccupation with placing of one's self in love or being taken has introduced an imagery of enclosure. The poet placed his heart and body and mind within love. He has been placed in prison, "las charcers." The image of enclosure found in troubadours like Arnaut de Marueilh and mystics like Angela da Foligno is envisioned not as the nestling of the lover and beloved one within the other, but as the lover as prisoner. Bernart's experience of this is one of anxiety rather than bliss in its constant movement, vacillation. Bernart's lyrics never reach stasis, they are forever leaving the lover right where he'd been before and fearing he'll return to his lonesome state and at the same time perpetually hopeful to return to any possible moment of pleasure.

The parallel between the message of stanza I and that implied by stanza VI creates a link in the thinking of this troubadour between song and *physiognomie*. For Bernart de Ventadorn for whom "Chantars non pot gaire valers si dins e-l cors no mou lo chan" song would seem to be an

extension of the physiological reactions of the lover. The body would seem to speak the truth.³³⁶

Bernart wishes to make use of the truthfulness one attributes to *physiognomie*. In “Can vei la flor, l’erba vert e la folha” he claims “l’aiga del cor, c’amdos los olhs me molha, /m’es be guirens qu’eu penet mo folatge.”³³⁷ Physiology is proof.

And yet Bernart’s lyrics hint at his preoccupation that the physical signs of inward feelings are not strong enough. In “Non es meravelha” he opposes the *fin’ amador* with the *faus* lamenting that “entrels” (between the two) you cannot really tell them apart so easily. He wishes that the *faus amador*, the *lauzengers*, and the *trichadors*, had horns on their foreheads so that they might more easily be sifted into categories, or “triats.” He does not say here that the *faus amador* can feign the tears and pallor of the true lover but he certainly feels that some sort of permanent, essential sign on the body would be helpful to those good lovers wishing to make progress in their pursuits which are so often hindered by wary ladies fearing insincerity.

As it is, what is inside the true lover appears on his face; his blushing or paling, his eyes, his quivering, can thus be read. The *canço* is for Bernart an extension of this truism. While other *chantadors* might produce lyric, it won’t have any value at all. The quality of a lover’s song would seem to reveal just as much as his face’s reaction to his beloved’s presence.

³³⁶ Jacqueline Cerquiglini finds the same faith in Guillaume de Machaut: “le poète (Guillaume de Machaut) n’entend qu’une seule voix disant le vrai, celle du corps. Ainsi Servius (In *Vergilii Carmina Commentarii*, Georg Thilo et Hermann Hagen eds. Vol II) interprétant l’opposition virgilienne des portes d’ivoire et de corne pensait que ‘la porta cornea symbolise les yeux, qui ne sauraient cacher la vérité; la porta eburnea connote la dent, instrument de la parole qui peut mentir.’” Jacqueline Cerquiglini-Toulet, *Un Engin Si Soutil* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1985) 186.

³³⁷ The water of the body with which my two eyes make me wet, is to me a good guarantee that I repent my madness.

Fors' e poder

“Cor e cors e saber e sen/ e fors’ e poder i ai mes,” had said Bernart. While the “cor e cors” are followed by “saber e sen” or knowledge and sense in the lyric, we will turn to those later after a discussion of “fors’ e poder” or force and will because when one thinks of poets who have lost their *saber* and *sen* Peire Vidal or Raimbaut d’Aurenga come to mind. When one thinks of love service, complete submission to the will of the *domna*, one thinks of Bernart of Ventadorn.

As Bernart de Ventadorn tells it, the lover cannot succumb before the *domna*. He has no choice in the matter for Love or the *Domna* conquers. They overtake the will of him who sees a lady: “depus anc la vi, m’a conques”³³⁸ and again in the lines which state: “Anc non agui de me poder / Ni no fui meus de l’or en sai / Que·m laisset en sos olhs vezer.”³³⁹ In a song in which the lover is overpowered by joie “Si m’apodera jois e·m vens,” the lover is further conquered by the features that comprise the perfect *domna*—beauty, fine figure, nice eyes and radiant face with good manners. In the song which begins “Ab joi mou lo vers e·l comemens” it is the lady’s beautiful eye or gaze which conquers:

Bela domna, ·l vostre cors gens

Beautiful lady, your noble body

E·lh vostre belh olh m’an conquis,

And your beautiful eyes have conquered

E·l doutz esgartz e lo clars vis,

me,

E·l vostre bels essenhamens,³⁴⁰

³³⁸ Since I saw her, she conquered me. “Anc no gardei sazo ni mes” line 22.

³³⁹ Nevermore have I had power over myself nor have I ever been my own from the hour when she let me see into her eyes. Cited from “Can vei la lauzeta mouver” discussed earlier in this chapter.

And the sweet gaze and the radiant face,
And your fine instructions.

The lady has the power to conquer just as much as *Amors*. Bernart often depicts the eyes as the focal point of the interaction or point of intersection between the lover and beloved. They are where he loses himself; they are what conquer him or what poison him, “ab sos bels olhs amoros, / de que·m poison’e ·m fachura.”³⁴¹ The lady’s gaze is enough to undo the power and the will of the lover. In the world of Bernart “The *domna* is almost synonymous with *Amors*.”³⁴² For Bernart, the *domna* is just as omnipotent as the personified *Amors*. Both the *domna* and *Amors* lay siege on the lover. Bernart must love whether it is thrust upon him by the *domna* or by *Amors*.

In “Per melhs cobrir lo mal pes e·l cossire” he describes himself as a victim conquered by Love,

e per Amor sui si apoderatz,	And by Love I am so overpowered,
tot m'a vengut a forsa, ses batalha.	He has completely conquered me, without a
...	fight.
c'Amors mi fai amar lai on li platz;	For Love makes me love where it pleases
e dic vos be que s'eu no sui amatz,	And I tell you well that if I am not loved

³⁴⁰ ll. 49-52

³⁴¹ With her beautiful living eyes with which I poison myself and madden myself. “A tantas bonas chansos,” ll. 20,21.

³⁴² L. T. Topsfield, *Troubadours and Love* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975) 113.

ges no reman en la mia nualha.³⁴³

It is not because I am being lazy.

In the *Amors* proposed by Bernart de Ventadorn love is not born in the loving subject; the subject has lost the element of self that is the emotion of love, the power to desire, the strength of will. Love is not an emotion, a part of desire or will, but a personified force that causes the poet-lover to love and does so through an attack on the poet-lover. The lover has no say in his own movement of will and desire, not in the stirring of the emotion nor in the target, for he is forced to love where Love wishes him to. Love attacks as though in combat and becomes lord of even the reluctant lover as in the song “Can vei la flor, l’erba vert e la folha” discussed above,

C’amors m’asalh, que·m

For love attacks me and overpowers me

sobresenhoreya;

And makes me love what it pleases and

e·m fai amar cal que·lh plass', e voler;

wants.

e s'eu am so que no·m deu eschazer,

And if I love that which should not come to

forsa d'amor m·i fai far vassalatge;

me, it is the force of love that makes me be
a vassal.

Mas en amor non a om senhoratge;

But in love one does not have the power of

e qui l'i quer, vilanamen domneya,³⁴⁴

a lord, and he who wishes to have it courts
poorly...

It is clearly *Amors* that has “senhoratge” in this song. It is won through battle, and when it enters into a scene man has no chance to ever gain or retain *senhoratge*. The rhyme words that link the

³⁴³ “Per melhs cobrir lo mal pes e·l cossire,” ll. 5,6, 10-12.

³⁴⁴ “Can vei la flor, la erba vert e la folha” line 11.

two stanzas make clear the act of the lover: what he can do and what he cannot, what he is and what he is not. The first stanza ends with the status of the lover, his act, what he can do, only “vassalatge.” The line stresses however that the lover does not even do this of his own will but is made to serve by the force of love. The following stanza opens with the explanation of this position of service: no man can ever be *senhor* in the realm of *Amors*. It is simply not possible. The attempt to refute this order of being, the desire to have power in the love relationship only makes the loving or courting ugly, villainous. To want *senhoratge* cannot but ruin the act of *domneya*, loving. Acceptance of the submissive state, abandonment, is crucial to *fin’ amors*.

In “Non es meravelha” Love strikes deep into Bernart’s heart, “Aquest’ amors me fer tan gen / al cor d’una dousa sabor.”³⁴⁵ The lover falls victim to the trap set by love, and the lover becomes completely entrapped, powerless just as a fish once caught on the hook:

Aissi co·l peis qui s'eslaiss' el cadorn	Just as the fish that quickly takes the bait
e no·n sap mot, tro que s'es pres en l'ama,	and knows nothing until he is caught in the net,
m'eslaissei eu vas trop amar un jorn,	I threw myself into love one day
c'anc no·m gardei, tro fui en mei la flama,	too careless till I was amidst the flame
que m'art plus fort, no·m feira focs de	that burned me more than oven-fires would do:
forn;	and yet despite that I cannot budge a finger,
e ges per so no·m posc partir un dorn,	her love so tightly holds and fetters me.
aissi·m te pres s'amors e m'aliama.	It does not surprise me that her love holds me
No·m meravilh si s'amors me te pres,	prisoner,

³⁴⁵ This love wounds me so nobly in the heart with a sweet sensation. ll. 25, 26.

Que genser cors no crei qu'el mon se
mire³⁴⁶

For a more beautiful body I don't believe the
world can see.

In these lines Bernart does admit he threw himself into love, “m'eslaissei” he says, but once within he cannot free himself; he has become completely consumed and yet so completely immobilized that he cannot even move a finger's width away. He does not marvel at being captured by love because that is the only possibility left to any who happen to see the *domna*'s beautiful body. The image of the lover trapped, imprisoned and unable to move recurs in “Bel m'es qu'eu chan en aquel mes” in which the lover asks *Amors*:

Amors, e cals onors vos es

Love, and what honor does it give you

Ni cals pros vo'n pot eschazer,

And what value can you reap

S'aucizetz celui c'avetz pres,

If you kill the one you have taken prisoner,

Qu'enves vos no s'auza mover?

Who against you has not dared move?

The complete inability, or even more, the unwillingness to exercise even the slightest movement, the slightest manifestation of personal will is the real experience of a good love and the practice of the good lover. While these images suggest *Amors* or the *domna* overpower the lover, the inability to fight is conflated with the unwillingness to fight. The lover submits; he has no choice in the face of true beauty or perfect love.

Of all the troubadours it is certainly Bernart de Ventadorn who most fully submits to the position of *home lige*. Perhaps for this reason Silvio Pellegrini was wont to consider the use of

³⁴⁶ “Be m'an perdut lai enves Ventadorn” ll. 8-15

feudal terminology in courtly love lyric as the legacy of Bernart in his 1944 article “Intorno al vassallaggio d’amore nei primi trovatori.”³⁴⁷ While I will suggest that there is good reason to consider Bernart the first true vassal of love, the adoption of terms of feudal service happens with the troubadour, Guilhem IX, often named the first troubadour whose compositions date roughly between 1090 and 1126. In the paper, “Formules féodales et style amoureux chez Guillaume IX d’Aquitaine,”³⁴⁸ Rita Lejeune goes through the œuvre of the duc d’Aquitaine with Wechssler’s *Frauendienst und Vassalität*³⁴⁹ in order to cull the five feudal formulas mentioned by Wechssler. Lejeune demonstrates that not only does Guilhem IX borrow the terminology from the social and political world of feudalism, but her examples allow us to see that in fact the relationship is structured like that of Meridional service:³⁵⁰ “la declaration amoureuse consiste en une offre de service, et ce service se définit selon l’esprit et avec le vocabulaire des contrats féodaux.”³⁵¹ While in reality Guilhem is the lord, in song, he becomes the vassal as illustrated by the following lines from “Mout jauzens m’en prenc en amar,”:

Si· m vol mi Dons s’amor donar,	If midons wants to give me her love,
Pres suy del penr’ e del grazir	I am ready to take it and to appreciate it

³⁴⁷ S. Pellegrini, "Intorno Al Vassallaggio D'amore Nei Primi Trovatori," *Cultura Neolatina* 4 (1944) 21-37.

³⁴⁸ Rita Lejeune, "Formules Féodales et Style Amoureux Chez Guillaume IX d’Aquitaine," *Atti Del Viii Congresso Internazionale Di Studi Romanzi (Firenze, 3-8 Aprile 1956)* (1962).

³⁴⁹ Eduard Wechssler, *Frauendienst Und Vassallität* (Berlin: W. Gronau, 1902).

³⁵⁰ For the difference between feudal service in the North of France and Meridional society see, Paul Ourliac, "Troubadours et Juristes," *Cahiers de Civilisation Medievale (Xe-XIe Siecles)* (1965) 8.

³⁵¹ The love declaration consists in an offer of service and that service is defined in the spirit and with the vocabulary of the feudal contract. Lejeune, "Formules Féodales," 236.

E del celar e del blandir	And to hide it and to serve it
E de sos plazers dir e far	And to speak and do her pleasure (what she
E de sos pretz tener en car	would wish or what would please her)
E de son laus enavantir. ³⁵²	And to esteem her worth
	And to spread her praises.

Lejeune notes well that this stanza is “un veritable *contrat*: énoncé de ce qui fait la base de l’accord, énumération des engagements d’une des parties.”³⁵³ For Guilhem IX, the language of service, of legal binding, ties him to his lady. At the moment in which Guilhem IX composes his lyric, his words are completely in line with the language of allegiance used in the formation of service in his own region at the time.³⁵⁴ The stanza thus suggests to his contemporary listeners the ties of feudal engagement. Bernart de Ventadorn begins composing only a few decades later around 1150. However that is already a period in which the *plevis* is falling out of practice. While for Guilhem’s listeners his appropriation of the formal *plevis* called to mind the pledge of the vassal to his lord, Bernart’s listeners would hear an archaic formula, and one they would already recognize as a dual declaration of submission: the previous generation’s pledge to a lord but they would also recognize the courtly singer’s language of a lover before his lady. In this sense, when Bernart de Ventadorn speaks of becoming the lady’s *hom lige*, or *sieu hom*, his

³⁵² Gerald A. Bond, *The Poetry of William VII, Count of Poitiers, IX Duke of Aquitaine* (New York: Garland Pub., 1982) .

³⁵³ Lejeune, "Formules Féodales," 236.

³⁵⁴ I refer the reader to the article by Lejeune, for closer inspection of the similarities in legal language between Guilhem IX and feudal formulas.

submission is one based on the nature of love service rather than simply feudal service. The frame of this service is no longer the laws of a feudal society, but those of love. For Brigitte Saouma the submission is of a spiritual nature: “l’humilité ainsi décrite par les troubadours est une pratique ascétique fort éloignée de l’humilité vassalique, souvent feinte. Les troubadours auraient donc choisi le contenu spirituel de l’humilité, plutôt que son contenu social.”³⁵⁵ The man-made laws which can be escaped or broken are replaced by the laws of love which function as natural laws that encompass all without reserve. Bernart de Ventadorn’s lyric already supposes a space where man-made laws are subordinate to those of Love.

While Guilhem IX had transposed the feudal structure with all its precepts into the realm of amorous entanglements, Bernart de Ventadorn draws from both feudal structure and Roman law to forge a structure of love service with a code of its own: In the period of the third generation of troubadours like Bernart de Ventadorn, Love has its own defining features, and the lover submits to the *domna* and *Amors*, not a lady in the guise of a lord.

While Bernart suggests that *Amors* and the *Domna* leave the reluctant lover unable to defend himself against their powers and he finds himself forced to love, the poet-lover nevertheless offers himself to the lady and does so with all the formality of the vassal before his lord:

Totz tems volrai sa onor e sos bes At all times do I wish her honor and good

³⁵⁵ Humility described in this way by the troubadours is an ascetic practice very distant from a vassal's submission, which is often feigned. The troubadours would then have chosen the spiritual submission over the social one. Brigitte Saouma, “L’humilité et l’orgueil chez saint Bernard et les troubadours” in *La France latine*, (129, 1999, 340-348) 345.

The desire hits him and regardless of the lady's wishes and, as one has seen, even his own wishes: he will love her. Though the desire comes to him from outside himself, he nonetheless professes his desire for her to be honored, to enjoy goodness, and his promise to be her vassal and friend who will always serve her. The image of the servant kneeling before the lord with hands joined while pronouncing his pledge of service appears more than once in Bernart de Ventadorn's lyrics.

Bernart is not ambiguous in his declarations of service. He is the lady's "ome lige" as he says in "Can vei la flor" and as he suggests with the promise to serve. He offers himself completely to the *domna* by presenting an image of himself as humble vassal submitting to his superior beloved in the song "Gent estera que chantes":

Domna, ·l genzer c'anc nasques	Lady, the most beautiful that ever was born
E la melher qu'eu anc vis,	And the finest I have ever seen,
mas jonchas estau aclis,	Hands joined I am bowed
A genolhos et en pes,	On my knees or standing,
El vostre franc senhoratge;	To your noble lordship;
E car ³⁵⁷ me detz per prezen	And because you gave me as a gift
Franchamen un cortes gatge	Openly your courtly pledge

³⁵⁶ "Be m'an perdut lai enves Ventadorn" ll. 22-27.

³⁵⁷ I reject here Lazar's choice to render this "encar" in his attempt to make sense of these lines which contradictory verb tenses confuse: *detz* as subjunctive or preterite with *fo* clearly in the preterite. See his note to these lines in his edition of Bernart de Ventadorn's lyrics, Lazar, ed., *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour* notes 4 and 5, 280-81.

³⁵⁸ ll. 37-49

-mas no·us aus ddire cal fo-
c'adoutz me vostra preizo.

Domna, vos am finamen,
Franchamen, de bo coratge,

E per vostr'om me razo,

Qui·m demanda de cui so. ³⁵⁸

-I won't be so bold as to say which-
which sweetens my imprisonment.

Lady, I love you nobly,

Truly, and with good heart,

And as your man I define myself

To whosoever asks to whom I belong.

And again in "Pel doutz chan":

Domna, vostre sui e serai,

Del vostre servizi garnitz.

Vostr'om sui juratz e plevitz,

E vostre m'era des abans.

E vos etz lo meus jois primers,

E si seretz vos lo derrers,

Tan com la vida m'er durans.

Lady, I am yours and will be

In your service occupied.

I am your vassal, sworn and pledged,

And I was yours before.

And you are my first joy,

And you will be my last,

As long as life lasts for me.

Bernart gives himself to his lady completely in mind, body, and heart. What he does will be done for her; in her service he will occupy himself and spend his time and efforts. His own joy and pleasure come only from her.

Bernart is aligning his desire and demands with that of the lady. He obliterates the difference between his own desire and that of his beloved. The lover must follow the will, the

command of the *domna*; his own will disappears into that of his beloved. The two wills should overlap, coincide.

En agradar et en voler	In pleasing and in will
Es l'amors de dos fis amans.	Is the love of two fine lovers.
Nula res no i pot pro tener,	Nothing of worth can be had
Si·lh voluntatz non es egaus. ³⁵⁹	If the wills are not equal.

While the lines “nula res no i pot pro tener, / si·lh voluntatz no es egaus” can be read in such a way as to suggest that both parties have the right to an equal estimation of the will of each, another reading is possible and more likely when placed alongside Bernart’s general discussion of will: the will of the two should be, not equal, but the same. Even as he admits his heart desires his lady, he claims still that he wants what will please her: “c’als no reclama mos cors mas leis solamen / e so c’a leis es plazens.”³⁶⁰ In another song he even suggests that his loving her is dependent upon her desire: “amara la, s’a leis plagues, / e servira·lh de mo poder.”³⁶¹ Given Bernart’s consistent submission to the will of his lady the second reading of *voluntatz egaus* fits more readily with the poet-lover’s understanding of the love dynamic.

For Bernart there should only be one will in the love relationship, and the will that remains intact as the unified will of the pair is that of the *domna*. The lover’s own will and

³⁵⁹ “Chantars no pot gaire valer,” ll. 29-32.

³⁶⁰ For nothing else does my heart was but her only and that which is pleasing to her. “Amors, enquera·us preyara,” ll. 20-22.

³⁶¹ I will love her, if it please her, and I will serve her with all my force. “Bel m’es qu’eu chan en aquel mes,” ll. 31,32.

desire is absorbed into her own. In so doing the lover loses the difference of will that is one of the defining features of the subject. Once he lacks a distinct personal desire he functions only as an object, a tool that will allow the lady to get what she wants: he wants nothing but to be the servant of her will.³⁶²

Bona domna, re no·us deman	Good <i>domna</i> , I ask nothing of you
Mas que·m prendatz per servidor,	But that you take me as your servant,
Qu'e·us servirai com bo senhor,	That I might serve you as a good lord,
Cossi que del gazardo m'an.	Whatever might be the prize to come to me.
Ve·us m'al vostre comandamen,	See you have me at your command,
Francs cors umils, gais e cortes!	Noble one, with gentle body, courtly and
Ors ni leos non etz vos ges,	joyful!
Que ·m aucizatz, s'a vos me ren.	Neither bear nor lion are you noble one,
	That you would kill me if I give myself to you.

These passages clearly suggest what Bernart's editor, Moshé Lazar, said a half a century ago, "La *fin' amors* possède une rare puissance et de grands pouvoirs sur la vie de l'amant. Celui-ci perd toute volonté, toute force, et toute contrôle sur lui-même. Il souffre pour elle le martyre."³⁶³ And yet despite this designation of the lover as "martyr," Simon Gaunt's article on

³⁶² This would be the object-instrument of the *volonté-de-jouir*, in Lacanian terms. For a discussion of "perversion" and the perverted subject as object-instrument see: "Kant avec Sade" in Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, vol. II (1971).

³⁶³ Moshe Lazar, *Amour Courtois Et "Fin Amors" Dans La Littérature du XIIe Siècle*, Bibliothèque Française et Romane. Série C: Études Littéraires, 8 (C. Klincksieck, 1964) 67.

Bernart entitled “A Martyr to Love: Sacrificial Desire in the Poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn” could not be more critical of and opposed to the theory of *fin’ amors* proposed by Lazar’s *Amour courtois et fin’ amors* or the comments Lazar includes in his edition of Bernart’s oeuvre. While Moshé Lazar finds the troubadour’s motives to be lustfully dictated, that is based on sexual desire, Gaunt situates Bernart’s actions within the schema of desire as defined by Lacan, and in particular and ultimately suggests that the courtly lover is directed toward *jouissance*, albeit a *jouissance* that will be “kept at bay.”³⁶⁴ Ultimately as such, both Lazar and Gaunt have focused on the end goal, that very piece of the love relationship which dismantles any of the similarities that the two do find between troubadours and religious works. They have tightened their focus onto that nodule of the love relationship that allows Etienne Gilson to discredit all attempts to bring troubadours and mystics into a common analysis. It is clear upon reading troubadours and mystics, when reading Bernart de Ventadorn without question, what gives these love paradigms their defining flavor, what sets them apart from other love experiences, is the idea that the lover should offer him or her self up to the beloved. The lover as dismantled subject is what makes this love relationship unique and is what allows a comparison between loves that have very different objects to have the same schema.

In the lyrics of troubadours who sing of *fin’ amors* the lover has completely given himself up to the lady; the state of the *fin’ amant* is complete abandonment. All of the lover’s movements follow the rhythm set by the *domna*. Bernart’s image of the branch bending

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³⁶⁴ Simon Gaunt, "A Martyr to Love: Sacrificial Desire in the Poetry of Bernart de Ventadorn," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31.3 (2001): 498.

according to the wind demonstrates the lack of self, the lack of will he envisions the true lover to have.

C'aissi com lo rams si pleya	For as the branch bends
Lai o·l vens lo vai menan,	There where the wind leads it,
Era vas lei que·m guerreya,	I was towards her who fought me,
Aclis per far so coman.	Bent to do her command. ³⁶⁵

The image of the lover as a branch bending in the wind captures perfectly what Bernart says of the lover throughout his oeuvre. He is an object manipulated by the *domna*—an object without a willing, desiring, acting self. Rarely is such an image granted the designation of a virtue but for Bernart it is so. Even if the lover's misfortune and pain is what the *domna* desires, the lover willingly obliges:

Far me podetz e ben e mau;	You can do good or ill to me;
En la vostra merce sia;	May I be in your mercy;
Qu'eu sui garnitz tota via	For I am always still prepared
Com fassa tot vostre plazer. ³⁶⁶	To do all your pleasure.

Not only does Bernart oblige his lady, but truly, as he stated, her pleasure is his, his will has been absorbed or overtaken by hers. If it pleases the *domna*, it pleases him even as he suffers in pain.

³⁶⁵ "Lo rossinhols s'esbaudeya," ll. 17-20.

³⁶⁶ "Ges de chantar no·m pren talans," ll. 45-48.

In this state of love the poet-lover suffers immensely and yet because it comes from loving the finest lady even the pain is pleasure.

Bernart de Ventadorn describes the pain and suffering brought by love with more persistence than most of the other troubadours of his own generation or any other.³⁶⁷ What is remarkable in the testimony of suffering is Bernart's conviction that the true *fin' amant* does not flee suffering or pain, but accepts it as a fulfillment of his disavowal of his own will in order to take the will of the Lady as his own.

Ara ·n fassa so que·s volha	And now may she do what she wills
Ma dommna, al seu chاوزit,	My lady, at her discretion,
Qu'eu no m'en planh, si tot me dol. ³⁶⁸	For I do not complain, if all hurts me.

The lover should promote the lady's will regardless of what his own stakes might be. Only the lady is allowed an active will based on her discretion; the lover can only follow what his lady prescribes, wills, and desires. In the song "Non es meravelha s'eu chan" from which I take the organizing schema for this discussion of Bernart, the troubadour suggests he is the greatest composer because he is the greatest lover.

Non es meravelha s'eu chan	It is no wonder if I sing
Melhs de nul autre chantador,	Better than any other singer

³⁶⁷ For a study of the semantic field of pain in the work of Bernart de Ventadorn see Pierre Bec, "La Douleur Et Son Univers Poétique Chez Bernard de Ventadour," *Cahiers de Civilization Medieval* 11 (1968). and its sequel Pierre Bec, "La Douleur Et Son Univers Poétique Chez Bernart de Ventadour: Suite Et Fin," *Cahiers de Civilization Medieval* 12 (1969)..

³⁶⁸ "Lonc tems a qu'eu no chantei mai," ll. 52-54.

³⁶⁹ ll. 1-8

Que plus me tra ·l cor vas amor	For my heart draws me more towards love
E melhs sui fais a so coman.	And I'm better made to its command.
Cor e cors e saber e sen	Heart and body and wisdom and sense
E fors' e poder i ai mes.	And force and power have I put into it.
Si·m tira vas amor lo fres que vas outra part	So much do the reins pull me towards love
no ·m aten. ³⁶⁹	that towards any other direction I cannot notice.

What makes him the greatest lover is at once something innate, “plus me tra·l cors vas amor / e melhs sui fihz a so coman” and the result of his efforts to submit completely to love, offering “cor e cors e saber e sen / e fors e poder” and giving nothing else any of his attention. And indeed, it is in loving alone that one really experiences life,

Ben es mortz qui d'amor no sen	He is quite dead who does not feel in his
Al cor cal que dousa sabor;	heart the sweet sensation of love
E que val viure ses amor...?	And what is living worth without love...?

While Bernart repeats the phrase “sweet sensation” from stanza II to describe the feeling that penetrates the heart in stanza IV, it has become in stanza IV a wound; the effect of love is at once sweet and painful in a twisted understanding of pleasure and pain Bernart, and other troubadours and *trouvères* after him, will describe repeatedly.

Aquest' amors me fer tan gen	This love so nobly pierces
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Al cor d'una dousa sabor:	my heart with a sweet sensation:
Cen vetz mor lo jorn de dolor	One hundred times a day I die of pain
E revio de joi autras cen.	And a hundred more I am revived by joy.
Ben es mos mals de bel semblan,	My pain so well seems beautiful
Que mais val mos mals qu'otra bes;	That my pain is worth more than my well-
E pois mos mals aitan bos m'es	being
Bos er lo bes apres l'afan. ³⁷⁰	And if so good seems my pain to me
	Good will be the pleasure after the pain.

The connection between joy and suffering, pleasure and pain, has been confused by love in Bernart's thinking. "e platz me qued eu m'en dolha, / ab sol qued amar me volha."³⁷¹ He recognizes the contradiction in taking pleasure for pain

Noih e jorn pes, cossir e velh,	Night and day I think, fret, and stay awake,
Planh e sospir; e pois m'apai.	Sigh and lament, and then give myself
On melhs m'estai, et eu peihz trai.	peace.
Mas us bos respeighz m'esvelha,	Better the place I am, the worse I suffer.
Don mos cossirers s'apaya.	But a good sense of relief comes over me
Fols! Per que dic que mal traya?	With which my fretting calms itself.
Car aitan rich' amor envei,	Fool! Why do I say I suffer?
Pro n'ai de sola l'enveya! ³⁷²	For I desire a love so rich

³⁷⁰ ll. 25-32

³⁷¹ "Bel m'es can eu vei la brolha," ll. 6,7.

³⁷² "Ara no vei luzir solelh," ll. 33-40.

That good do I get from only desiring it.

To consider pain and suffering as negative states makes the lover a “fol.” Instead the lover must focus on the powerful will of love; Bernart remains insistent that love is strong enough to conquer the apparent contradictions. The longing and loving itself are a pleasure, are the good that is the end of loving.

Saber e sen

It is this confusion, the flip-flopping of concepts and implied meanings or significance that seems to readers a sign of madness.

Car tan la sai bel'e bona	For so well do I know her to be good and
Que tuih li mal m'en son bo.	beautiful, That all my pain feels good to me.
Bo son tuih li mal que.m dona!	Good is all the pain she gives to me!
Mas per Deu li quer un do:	But by God's name I want a gift:
Que ma bocha, que jeona,	That my mouth that fasts
D'un douz baizar dejeo.	By a sweet kiss has the fast broken.
Mas trop quer gran guizado	But I demand a prize too big
Celei que tan guizardona!	From her who is such a prize!
E can eu l'en arazona,	And when I reason it out
Ilh me chamja ma razo.	It changes my reason.
Ma razo chamja e vira!	My reason changes and shifts!
Mas eu ges de lei no.m vir	But from her I would never veer

Mo fi cor, que la dezira
Aitan que tuih mei dezir
Son de lei per cui sospir.
E car ela no sospira,
Sai qu'en lei ma mortz se mira,
Can sa gran beutat remir.³⁷³

My fine heart that desires her
So much so that all my desiring
Belong to her for whom I sigh.
And since she does not sigh,
I know that my death is mirrored by her
When her great beauty reflects back.

In giving himself over to the lady completely, the lover loses his subjective stance. He arrives at the complete eclipse, death of the self. The last lines make this clear. Not only this but Bernart's lyrics suggest that offering up the will to the beloved eventually leads to a loss of language as concepts no longer imply what they once did; signifiers no longer function as they once had. What Bernart describes is the aporia of mystics at the intersection between selfless experience and linguistic utterance.

Tant ai mo cor ple de joya,
Tot me desnatura.
Flor blancha, vermelh'e groya
Me par la frejura,
C'ab lo ven et ab la ploya
Me creis l'aventura,
Per que mos chans mont'e poya
E mos pretz melhura.

So full of joy is my heart
That the nature of all has been changed.
As white, red, and yellow flowers
Seems to me the frost,
For with the wind that blows and the rain
My adventure grows
So that my song strengthens and spreads
And my worth increases.

³⁷³ "Bel m'es can eu vei la brolha" ll. 23-40.

Tan ai al cor d'amor,	I have in my heart so much love
De joi e de doussor,	Joy and sweetness,
Per que.l gels me sembla flor	That ice seems like flowers
E la neus verdura.	And the snow like grass and leaves.
Anar posc ses vestidura,	I can go without clothing,
Nutz en ma chamiza,	Naked in my chemise,
Car fin'amors m'asegura	Because <i>fin' amors</i> protects me
De la freja biza.	From the freezing wind.

When the lady's will dominates, commands, and subsumes the will of the lover the loss of the subject is inevitable and so the loss of reason and the loss of language too cannot persist. His reason shifts and changes; through loving Bernart's mind has lost its center, instead following the Lady and Love wherever they lead. It should be no wonder then that Bernart speaks of himself as out of his head, mad. Though Raimbaut d'Aurenga gave us the term "flors enversa" and the most complete rendering of the world turned upside down in his song, "Ar resplan la flors enversa,"³⁷⁴ it is clear Bernart de Ventadorn had already suggested that the *domna* or *Amors* and the feelings or state of love make one's experience different from those around him. The song by Raimbaut d'Aurenga begins:

Ar resplan la flors enversa	Now the flora shines, perverse,
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³⁷⁴ Walter Thomas Pattison, *The Life and Works of the Troubadour Raimbaut D'orange* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1952). song number XXXIX, pp. 199-200.

Pels trencans rancs e pels tertres	through the jagged cliffs and through the hills.
Quals flors? Neus, gels e conglapis	Which flora? Snow, ice and frost
Que cotz e destrenh e trenca;	which stings and hurts and cuts;
Don vey morz quilts, critz, brays, siscles	wherefore I can't hear anymore calls, cries,
En fuelhs, en rams e en giscles.	tweets and whistles
Mas mi ten vert e jauzen Joys	among leafage, branches and twigs.
Er quan vei secx los dolens croys.	But I am kept green and merry by Joy
Quar enaissi m'o enverse	now that I see wither the felons and the bad.
Que bel plan mi semblon tertre,	For now I so reverse [things]
E tenc per flor lo conglapi,	that fair plains look to me like a hill
E'l cautz m'es vis que'l freit trenque,	and I mistake flowers for frost
E'l tro mi son chant e siscle,	and, through cold, heat appears to me to cut
E paro·m fulhat li giscle.	and the thunder I believe to sing and whistle
Aissi·m sui ferm lassatz en joy	and leafage seem to me to cover the twig.
Que re non vey que·m sia croy.	I am so firmly bound in joy
	that, to me, nothing looks bad.

Bernart knows that there can be madness in love, in forgetting one of the primary features necessary to *fin' amors*: *mezura*.

Mas es fols qui.s desmezura,	But he is crazy he who loses <i>mezura</i> ,
E no.s te de guiza.	And does not stand upright.
Per qu'eu ai pres de me cura,	For this reason I have taken care of myself

Deis c'agui enquiza	Ever since I had sought out
La plus bela d'amor,	The most beautiful in love
Don aten tan d'onor, ³⁷⁵	From whom I wait for so much honor.

...

Mezura is the proper balance and thoughtfulness that one associates with reason. And yet what Bernart described in the lines 1-16 hardly seem manifestations of *mezura* or proof of one with reason. This song offers no remedy to the apparent contradiction, and yet, what would one have expected from a song that suggests that ice is flower and snow foliage?

Just as Bernart accepts pain and suffering as his pleasure he recognizes that the loss of reason or madness is the state of the lover, “c’anc pois qu’eu l’agui veguda / non agui sen ni mezura.”³⁷⁶ It is simply the law of the lover one might forget at times but will never change:

Amors, aissi·m faitz trassalhir:	Love, you have thus made me tremble:
Del joi qu'eu ai, no vei ni au	From the joy that I have I do not see nor
Ni no sai que·m dic ni que·m fau.	hear. Nor do I know what I say nor what I
Cen vetz trobi, can m'o cossir,	do. A hundred times I found myself, when
Qu'eu degr'aver sen e mezura	I think to myself that I should have sense
--Si m'ai adoncs, mas pauc me dura --	and <i>mezura</i> —and if then I have some, it
C'al reduire·m torna·l jois en error.	lasts but a short time—for ultimately joy
Pero be sai c'uzatges es d'amor	turns to pain. But I know well that it is the

³⁷⁵ ll. 17-22.

³⁷⁶ For from the moment I had seen her I have neither sense nor *mezura*. “A! tantas bonas chansos!” ll. 23, 24.

C'om c'ama be non a gaire de sen.³⁷⁷

law of love that a man who loves well
cannot have the slightest sense.

From the loss of will, the loss of faith in language, and the loss of sense and *mezura* that implies a loss of self it is but a small step to the loss of life. The obsession with death in his lyric sets Bernart de Ventadorn apart from the other troubadours. Ultimately Bernart de Ventadorn moves throughout his love and his lyrics towards a complete annihilation of the self as he divests himself of will, language, reason and *mezura*—“Cor e cors e saber e sen/ e fors’ e poder i ai mes.”³⁷⁸

Once conquered by love Bernart de Ventadorn finds himself in the throes of madness with the sense that death or complete annihilation alone awaits him. For Bernart the true *fin’ amant* divests himself of all the elements of selfhood to arrive at a nothingness, madness, and ultimately the sense that being itself is too much for him. He depicts the imagined ends of the love that led himself, Arnaut de Marueilh, Falquet de Romans, and Jaufré Rudel and so many other poets of *fin’ amors* to strive to overcome the barriers of subjectivity to arrive at the bedside of their beloved *domna*. The use of envisioning, contemplative imagining, overpowering the will and desire of the self give the lyrics of the troubadours a shape not found in other earthly love poetry. However, what distinguishes these songs from other poems of earthly love is exactly that which characterizes the language of our second type of lovers in this study: the mystics who seek union with their beloved, the divine.

³⁷⁷ “Be m· cuidei,” ll. 19-27.

³⁷⁸ heart and body, knowledge and sense, force and power or will, have I placed in it [love], “Non es meravelha s’eu chan,” ll 5,6.

PART III: THE MYSTICS

The troubadour features that characterize the presentation of the self in love as discussed in the previous chapters will find remarkable parallels in the works of mystical women. The elements of the self discussed in the first part of the dissertation are what gave shape not only to the sense of self and Other, but to the structure of love in the lyrics of the troubadours and the experiences and/or accounts of the mystics will show the structure of love is the same even if the end is not. The significance of contemplating the image of the *domna* finds its counterpart in the work of Angela da Foligno. The preoccupation with the body found in the troubadours haunts both Marguerite d'Oingt and Angela da Foligno as they attempt to lose themselves in order to join their beloved.

Unlike the troubadours, however, the mystics are given the opportunity to speak of union—the experience of joining the divine Other. While the troubadours gave themselves to an earthly creature whose will could only be like a mirror of their own, that is to say human as well, the mystics give themselves up to God. They are able to arrive at the notion that what is, is God's will. Troubadours, despite losing their own subjective stance, never lose sight of the fact that the *domna* is a constructed subject in her own right, and one for whom the lover is Other. The mystics conceive of their beloved as an entity that exists outside of time and space.

The fact that the subject's sense of self is constructed from the experience of the body, the imagination, and language explains why the works of mystics seeking to lose the self in favor of complete union with God will center on these particular fields of play just as they did with the troubadours studied in this dissertation. It seems simple enough to sort out which mystics preferred which means of destroying the self—the flagellants and the hagiography of martyrs

focus on the body, and Meister Eckhart, Marguerite Porete and so many practicans of negative mysticism trip themselves up with poetry. Both Marguerite d'Oingt and Angela da Foligno provide interesting ideas regarding envisioning much like what was discussed in chapter 3 and questions of speech and writing as well. Because the focus of this dissertation is the notion of the self in the intimate relationship between lover and beloved, earthly or divine, the significance of the images and words studied here will be related to that intimate exchange rather than the wider social exchanges that might have influenced Angela and Marguerite. As such only a brief sketch of the biographical will be provided for each. Instead the chapters of part III represent a close-reading of what we have been left by both mystics.

Angela da Foligno has no faith in language but loses herself in contemplation of images both real and imagined, a practice that leads her to a relation with the divine that confirms her distrust in linguistic signs as it introduces a new sign, the only true sign of Love directly planted into her heart by God. Marguerite d'Oingt, however, tangles these three threads of the mystical experience; she teaches the methods of mystical practice in an instruction that simultaneously targets contemplatives who are visual, bodily, or linguistic practicans. The *Speculum* interchanges the functions of image, text, and the bodily, suggesting the body is text, the text is image, and the image can be found within or on the body and read as text.

The Traditions of Mysticism

The desire to escape the weight of the self or consciousness of self can lead to many behaviors. When this desire is inscribed within a belief system that offers a supreme or perfect being that is to be reached through practices that tend to focus on the imagination, language, and the body, the desire to arrive at union with the divine and the methods used to arrive there are

mystical. Mysticism is the process of arriving at a state in which the self has been annihilated and the divine, the One, the act or being itself alone remains. The desire to achieve oneness with a greater force and the practices created to make this happen are not limited to any culture or faith. Christian mystical traditions were a natural evolution from their Greek and Jewish foundations. While the Greek tradition imbued Christian mysticism with the value of contemplating the Godhead as perfect and Judaism encouraged recurrent reading of the sacred texts, Christianity's theology of the trinity; the idea of man made in the image of God; Christ as divinity in human form all gave Christian mysticism its unique form.³⁷⁹

It would seem that the greater divides in discussions of mysticism lay not along borders of faith but along lines of explaining mystical experience and expression irrespective of religion. Within and without the Christian tradition exists a divide between a dualistic notion of "experience" in which the self is not entirely lost, but exists if only to know that it is doing nothing but attesting to, or feeling completely, the divine.³⁸⁰ A monistic understanding of union suggests the subject is completely erased, absorbed into God as Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer* attempts to describe or depict. Another aspect of difference that does not follow religious beliefs but linguistic beliefs reveals itself in that previous sentence. Is it the experience or the expression that is "mystical"? In the three authors studied here, the act of enunciation itself

³⁷⁹ See Bernard McGinn's section on the *Imago Trinitatis* in his *Foundations of Mysticism* and Robert Javelet's book, *Image et ressemblance au douzième siècle*. 2 vols. (Paris: Éditions Letouzey et Ané, 1967).

³⁸⁰ The nobel laureate, Albert Schweitzer's *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* provides such a dualistic definition saying: "We are always in presence of mysticism when we find a human being looking upon the division between earthly and super-earthly, temporal and eternal, as transcended, still feeling himself, while still externally amid the earthly and temporal, to belong to the supernatural and eternal." Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul*, (New York: MacMillan, 1960) 1.

affects the subject's experience of the world and the beyond. In this sense their words are part of a practice. Speaking the experience of mysticism or any special feeling is less important (in fact both Angela da Foligno and Marguerite Porete suggest it is nothing more than blasphemy) than getting words out as an experience in and of itself.

In Part III three mystics engage our attention yet only one of these, Marguerite d'Oingt, was a member of a formal religious order. Both Marguerite Porete and Angela da Foligno participate in a religious tradition because a "new mysticism" born of a "process of democratization and secularization" in the conceptualizing of a relationship with the divine that begins in the thirteenth century.³⁸¹

Body

Caroline Walker Bynum suggests that the "peculiarly bodily" focus of spirituality in the Middle Ages is due to the fact that "theology and natural philosophy saw persons as, in some real sense, body as well as soul."³⁸² Jerome Kroll and Bernard Bachrach have recently proposed an explanation for the widespread use of self-inflicted pain in the Medieval Western Christian tradition in their book *The Mystic Mind*. Kroll and Bachrach build their book upon the idea that mystics of the Western Christian Middle Ages, "employed harsh self-injurious practices as a method of inducing altered states of consciousness," and this because "Western Christianity during much of the Middle Ages did not have available, ... as strong a tradition of meditative

³⁸¹ See Bernard McGinn's description of the phenomenon in *The Flowering of Mysticism*, 12 ff.

³⁸² Bynum, Caroline Walker, *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone Books, 1991) 183.

practices as those found in Eastern religions.”³⁸³ If pain was used by so many of those seeking to destroy the self, it is because it was a method available to them. In contrast, Laurie Finke argues something very different when she suggests that, “the female mystic’s only means of escaping her body was to indulge in an obsessive display and denouncing of its most ‘grotesque’ features” and the reason these women do so is because “the female mystic has internalized the discursive norms of the dominant “high” culture.”³⁸⁴ Images of the grotesque are present in Marguerite d’Oingt’s *Life of Sainte Beatrix d’Ornacieux* where, for example eyes pop out of their sockets, but in the *Speculum*, bodies and body parts speak not through their vileness but because they are covered in writing or they are read as a text.³⁸⁵ As a result, the image of Christ’s body and his wounds serve as a visual base for contemplation and meditation, just as one meditates on the meaning(s) or words of a text in the practice of *lectio divina*.

Despite Kroll and Bachrach’s assessment that a culture of meditation was not fully developed in the West in the Middle Ages, meditation and contemplation are fundamental to the medieval Christian. Hugh of Saint Victor claims there are only two activities that bring man into the image of the divine: contemplation of the truth and the exercising of virtues.³⁸⁶ While the

³⁸³ Jerome Kroll and Bernard S. Bachrach, *The Mystic Mind: The Psychology of Medieval Mystics and Ascetics* (New York: Routledge, 2005) 2. Given the practice of *lectio divina* and meditation in monastic culture Kroll and Bachrach’s claim is difficult to accept.

³⁸⁴ Laurie A. Finke, "Mystical Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision.," *Maps of Flesh and Light*. Ed. Ulrike Wiethaus. (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1993) 38. I am not sure whether it is necessary to limit this assessment of “only means of escaping body” to women. Think of Suso- there is a grotesque display and yet he’s not female. Male flagellants do the same as the women Finke discusses. Now, are they doing so because of having internalized the norms of “high” culture?

³⁸⁵ This text is included in the edition by Durrafour from which we will take all citations. Antonin Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d’Oingt*, Publications de L’institut de Linguistique Romane de Lyon ; V. 21 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1965).

Didascalicon is concerned with the meditation that comes from reading, “Meditation takes its start from reading but is bound by none of reading’s rules or precepts,”³⁸⁷ the definition offered by Hugh is not that different from what medieval practicants would do with visual material, “Meditation is sustained thought along planned lines: it prudently investigates the cause and the source, the manner and the utility of each thing.”³⁸⁸ Indeed Jean Leclercq notes that,

in secular usage, *meditari* means, in a general way, to think, to reflect, as does *cogitare* or *considerare*; but, more than these, it often implies an affinity with the practical or even moral order. It implies thinking of a thing with the intent to do it; in other words, to prepare oneself for it, to prefigure it in the mind, to desire it, in a way, to do it in advance—briefly, to practice it.³⁸⁹

William of St. Thierry suggests the inevitable tie that meditation has with what the Christian does in prayer when he speaks of “meditative prayer.”³⁹⁰

³⁸⁶ *Didascalicon*. trans. Taylor 54.

³⁸⁷ *Didascalicon*. trans. Taylor 92.

³⁸⁸ *Didascalicon*. trans. Taylor 92.

³⁸⁹ Jean Leclercq, *The love of learning and the desire for God; a study of monastic culture* 16.

³⁹⁰ See the discussion in chapter two for more on meditative prayer.

Envisioning

In great part the medieval Christian was introduced to the passion, the liturgy, and other narratives associated with the beliefs of the Church through images. As early as the second century, "we also find increasing emphasis on the contemplative vision of God (*theôria theou*) as the ultimate goal of the devout Christian" as McGinn has noted.³⁹¹ And while the beginnings of Christianity borrowed from Platonic notions of image and visions Jaroslav Pelikan says in his chapter on the thirteenth century, "[t]he culmination of the history of the church was the vision of God. It was not, strictly speaking, a doctrine, but it was the consummation of all doctrine."³⁹² Not only did Abbots like Suger of Saint-Denis ensure that the eye of the visitor would be attracted but sermons, texts, and confessors promoted the contemplation of images, envisioning of scenes from Christ's life or imagining the details of his wounds. In fact, Bonaventure suggested that beginning with the Alongside the texts that attest to a meditative culture, the images and objects which served as props in contemplation remain today housed in museums and Church properties. As Mary Carruthers reminds those looking to the currency of these "cognitive images" in the medieval West, "The first question one should ask of such an image is not 'What does it mean?' but 'What is it good for?'"³⁹³ In so questioning the images of the Benedictine abbey of St. Walburg, Jeffrey Hamburger shows that the drawings held in the abbey

³⁹¹ Bernard McGinn, *The Essential Writings of Christian Mysticism*, (New York: The Modern Library, 2006) 309.

³⁹² Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Growth of Medieval Theology (600-1300)*, (Chicago: University of Chicag Press, 1978) 303.

³⁹³ Mary Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature 34, (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 118.

act as prompts for meditative practice: “Like a rosary itself, the representation of the rose serves as both emblem of prayer and object of devotion. The rose... presents the viewer with Christ as her exemplar, contemplating his own passion, ...even as it reminds her to meditate on the same subject.”³⁹⁴ Similarly, Angela’s work provides an account of how images, those of the passion which she calls the *Liber vitae*,³⁹⁵ can prompt the transformation of the soul along the *via mystica*. Marguerite’s *Speculum* functions in exactly this way despite its being a text rather than an image. Laurie Finke says of one of Julian of Norwich’s accounts of a vision, “although Julian calls it a ‘bodily vision,’ suggesting a vision appearing to her eyes, reading the passage one is put in mind of an intense meditation upon a visual image—a picture in a book of hours, a station of the cross, or some other church painting Julian might have seen.”³⁹⁶ The close link between inner visions and external images plays a major role in the mystical practice described by Angela da Foligno in her *Memoriale*.

While visions are often considered the manifestation of fulfillment in the mystic quest for transcendence, Angela suggests her conscious envisioning as well as visions that appear to her while waking or sleeping function as objects for contemplation or meditation in much the same way paintings or sculptures might. Indeed, Marguerite creates images in her *Speculum* and speaks of the visionary’s imaginings in order to teach her readers that envisioning and the images envisioned are a means of reaching the divine much as “the drawings from St. Walburg themselves serve as ladders, helping the viewer mount, step by step, toward union with Christ”

³⁹⁴ Jeffrey F. Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) 14.

³⁹⁵ See Instruction III: “The Great ‘Book of Life,’ Namely, the Sufferings of Christ, Prayer, and Poverty.”

³⁹⁶ Finke, “Mystical Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision,” 43.

as Hamburger remarked and as he further notes, “beatific vision, sight itself becomes not only the end, but also the means of achieving union with God.”³⁹⁷ Prayer, devotion, can rest upon the aid of image, rather than language. The mystical process described by Angela da Foligno centers on the visual: the meditation upon paintings and other external figures, the summoning of visions in the mind which I call envisioning, and the way to contemplate and arrive at understanding using these visual tools. Marguerite d’Oingt will recognize the great attraction such dependence on the visual holds as she brings together the textual and the imagistic in her own instructions on contemplation and enlightenment.

Language

The role of language within mysticism is so significant that it is at the heart of one of the divides of theological distinction. Affirmative theology suggests language, specific words even can signify God while negative theology claims the divine cannot be spoken of in any way that reaches the truth of his being. William Franke places Thomas Aquinas on one end of this particular theological spectrum with Dionysius on the other.³⁹⁸ McGinn's understanding of the origins of "new mysticism" place at the center gender, what he calls the "second major shift in late medieval mysticism...it is only after 1200 that women begin to take a prominent place in the

³⁹⁷ Hamburger, *Nuns as Artists: The Visual Culture of a Medieval Convent* 102.

³⁹⁸ "Thus for Thomas, certain divine names—those for intellectual perfections, like 'one,' 'good,' 'true,' and of course, 'being'—can and do name the being itself of God." *On What Cannot Be Said: Apophatic Discourses in Philosophy, Religion, Literature, and the Arts*. Vol. 1 Classic Formulations, (Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame P, 2007) 17.

mystical tradition."³⁹⁹ This role, I believe, is linked to one of the other moves McGinn cites as a change that brings forth the "new mysticism" and that gives meaning to the focus on language rather than experience in his work and in a comparative study of mysticism and other literary traditions. McGinn makes the focus on language in his own work very clear and likewise fundamentally tied to the nature of how mysticism works as demonstrated in its evolution by saying:

I have insisted that the immediate object of study is not mystical experience as such but the mystical text, both written and (increasingly in the late Middle Ages) visual. This conviction about the textual and linguistic foundation of mysticism is even more central to the present volume, because after 1200 the forms of mystical language become far more diverse with the move into the vernacular languages, a transition that allowed the modes of representation of mystical experience to take on remarkable new configurations.⁴⁰⁰

It is this focus on the text rather than the experience that allows Etienne Gilson's qualms to be allayed; the object of love may very well be different in the traditions of the troubadours and the mystics, but the text is what is being studied here. There is something to be gleaned from a comparison that limits itself to the study of the textual reality without seeking to make claims regarding experience beyond the word. This dissertation can study mystical writing in romance in part because of this movement that enables people outside the cloister to take on the mantle of the religious without leaving the world and the language of that world to do so. Women who

³⁹⁹ McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism* 15.

⁴⁰⁰ McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism* 18, 19.

were not schooled in Latin were permitted access to religious traditions that inspired verbal practices of mystical exploration. Indeed it is necessary to clarify that even though some texts were penned in Latin the nature of their structure and the quality of their language carry spoken qualities that should be associated with the vernacular. McGinn speaks of a "'vernacular' way of using language" that characterizes the textual remains of Francis of Assisi and Angela da Foligno.⁴⁰¹ While both the consciousness of a possible mystical trajectory or practice and the discussion within it, the words to help the practicant move through this experience of religious inquiry as well as the accounts of the experiences were unavailable before the development of the "new mysticism" or perhaps the idea of a new mystical geography beyond the cloister in the medieval West. The religious authors studied here wish to speak but find they cannot make language coincide with the supreme being as they have come to understand it. Speaking their experience, the world, and the Godhead becomes less a means of expression and more a practice in the process of mysticism. In this way their speech is an active un-saying, apophasis. If apophasis is usually opposed to kataphasis the fact that apophasis is a speech act that undoes or as Michael Sells puts it, "un-says," highlights the fact that kataphasis or the naming of the divine remains within the laws of language. Language functions because words direct the listener or the reader to something. The word, the sound or its shape on the page, should fade as the thing itself enters the mind. Kataphatic discourse might present an opulent signified, but it doesn't subvert the laws of language. Apophasis cannot but preoccupy itself with that sound and shape and the distance between the word and the thing it is supposed to signify. Each of the authors studied here draw attention to the ineffability of love and the beloved and the crack in linguistic function that this implies. While Marguerite d'Oingt and Angela da Foligno make use of analogy and

⁴⁰¹ McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism* 22.

other strategies that seem to weaken the power of language to signify without calling attention to its problematic nature, it isn't until the final chapter and Marguerite Porete that we arrive at an author who rejects linguistic constraints and logical laws to embrace *aporia*, or the presentation of words that don't even seem to try to signify what they point to as much as they seem to call attention to the fact that they cannot really represent what they are meant to.

CHAPTER 5: THE IMAGE AND ENVISIONING IN THE MYSTICISM OF ANGELA DA FOLIGNO

Female Franciscans

While the shape of theology and the tenets of religions themselves can be understood by a web of texts and beliefs that create a whole—an order's rule, a religion's doctrine(s)—mysticism seems accessible or understandable by recourse to key figures. Francis is one of the quintessential mystics who thus gives shape to modern understandings of what mysticism is. Bernard McGinn calls him, "the mystic par excellence."⁴⁰² The life of Francis is more than a story, more than simple biography; it is *vita apostolica* itself. The apostolic life and the practice and the beliefs that undergird those practices align with the biography of Francis. Francis withdrew from his family and community in early adulthood and returned to later to community by preaching and accepting brothers in his company. It is this movement that informs Franciscanism in its formal and informal manifestations through Italy.⁴⁰³

While the call to poverty reverberates through the decades after his death it is not this feature of Franciscan piety that informs the practice of Angela da Foligno the most. It is the

⁴⁰² *The Flowering of Mysticism* 42.

⁴⁰³ Even if this Franciscan context is certainly what provides Angela da Foligno's formation its intricacies are beyond the scope of this dissertation. For more on Franciscanism see John Moorma, *A History of the Franciscan Order from its Origins to the Year 1517*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). For a discussion of Franciscanism and female piety see Herbert Grundmann, *Religious Movements in the Middle Ages: the Historical Links between Heresy, the Mendicant Orders, and the Women's Religious Movement in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries*. 2nd rev.ed. Trans. Stephen Rowan. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995).

hagiographical Francis that influences those mystics like Angela da Foligno who follow him. Bernard McGinn notes that the texts left by Francis of Assisi do not describe visions or ecstatic experiences but "the hagiographical picture of Francis found in the early lives and stories places emphasis on his ecstatic visionary experiences."⁴⁰⁴ The theological *amplificatio* of Franciscan beliefs is undertaken by Bonaventure in the latter half of the thirteenth century. For Jaroslav Pelikan Bonaventure's interpretation of Francis as espoused in *Itinerarium in mentis Deum*, is the most remarkable manifestation of the, "identification of personal religious experience as an epistemological principle in theology."⁴⁰⁵ Bonaventure, following Francis and perhaps even more than the historical Francis, the hagiographical, places enormous emphasis on the imagination and the power of envisioning in the process of seeing God. Angela da Foligno's mysticism is characterized by the theology that, like Francis' own life, mysticism, and hagiography, and Bonaventure's Franciscan theology places far more interest in envisioning and imaging than textual practices of prayer or modes and means of ascent to God.

Angela da Foligno

The life story of Angela da Foligno comes primarily from her own account as dictated to her relative and confessor who has been given the name Fra Arnaldo.⁴⁰⁶ She was born within

⁴⁰⁴ *The Flowering of Mysticism* 75.

⁴⁰⁵ *The Growth of Medieval Theology* (600-1300), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 305.

⁴⁰⁶ The manuscripts usually offer only Fra A. to stand for the confessor who took Angela's dictation though two in Perugia "Adamo" is given while a fifteenth-century Avignon manuscript suggests "Arnaldo." For further discussion of Fra A. see the introductions of Thier and Calufatti to the Italian edition as well as that of Paul Lachance to the English edition of Angela's works.

only a few decades of the deaths of Umiltà of Faenza and Francis of Assisi and only a short distance from Assisi. The region was permeated by Franciscan spirituality though Angela claims in her first Instruction, her own interest in piety was based on the desire to create or construct an identity and so was self-interested:

De quia ostendeba me esse filiam orationis,	While I pretended to be a daughter of
et ego eram filia irae et superbiae et	prayer, I was a daughter of pride, and I had
diaboli ; et ostendebam me habere Deum in	the devil in my soul and in secret; ⁴⁰⁸ And I
anima et consolationes divinas in cella, et	pretended to have God and divine
ego habebam diabolum in anima et in cella.	consolation in my soul and in my self, and
Et sciatis quod toto tempore vitae meae	I actually had the devil in my soul and in
studui quomodo possem adorari et honorari	my cell. Know that, during all my life, I
et quomodo possem habere famam	studied how I could be admired and
sanctitatis.... ⁴⁰⁷	honored and enjoy a reputation for sanctity.

Instead, if the vivid image she provides of the sinner's delights is any indication,⁴⁰⁹ Angela was interested in indulging her pride and flesh. Angela was born into a financially comfortable

Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela da Foligno: Edizione Critica*, Lachance, *Angela of Foligno: Complete Works*.

⁴⁰⁷ All quotations from the works of Angela da Foligno come from the edition by Thier and Calufatti. Quotations are usually taken from the Italian, though in this case the Latin offers a more interesting, nuanced version and for this reason is being cited here. Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 407.

⁴⁰⁸ Though the word could indeed refer to her cell, the Italian suggests it might very well have been of her inner space, of secretness or hidden space that she speaks.

⁴⁰⁹ The fifth instruction in particular suggests Angela was familiar with many examples of indulging in self-love.

situation. She married and had children. While still a wife and mother she experienced an epiphany involving Francis in 1285. It is after this that Angela begins her conversion to pious living in earnest and here too begins the *Memoriale*, the account detailing her transformation which she begins dictating after the mystical rapture she experiences in 1291. After her conversion experience of 1285 Angela loses her husband and then her children. She begins living a secular penitent's life and joins the Franciscan tertiaries in 1291. Angela undertakes a pilgrimage to Assisi where, stopping in a church upon her return, she becomes overwhelmed by the sensation of God's presence. Angela's confessor and scribe explains why he took down her story:

<p>Ma la caxione over raxione che io lo comenzai a scrivere, da la parte mia fo questa. Inperzioché la perdita fedel de Cristo una fiata era venuta a la zità d'Asixii a San Franzesco, ove io era conventuale, e sedendo ne l'usio de la chiezia, aveva criado molto. De la qual cossa io, che ièra suo confesore e parente e conselgiere spiziale, molto me ne vergognai, ...volendo io saper la caxone del dito cridare, io la comenzai a constrengere per ogni modo ch'io poteva, che essa me dizesse perché tanto aveva stridito e</p>	<p>The true reason why I wrote is as follows. One day the aforementioned person, Christ's faithful one, came to the church of St. Francis in Assisi, where I was residing in a friary. She screamed greatly while she was sitting at the entrance to the portals of the church. Because of this I, who was her confessor, her blood-relative, and even her principal and special counselor, was greatly ashamed...[After some time, back in Foligno, the tale continues] Wanting to know the cause of her shouts, I began to press her in every way that I could to tell</p>
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cridato.⁴¹⁰

me why she had screamed and shouted so
much in Assisi.

Fra Arnaldo explains that he compelled her to speak and he transcribed (and simultaneously translated it would seem) her words because he was “e avèndollo sospeto, dubitando non prozedèse da malegno spirito.”⁴¹¹ Angela was not herself so eager to write her own story. She told the tale to her confessor reluctantly and it was in fact he who wished to put it on paper for others, “some wise and spiritual man” to help with this seemingly crazed or possessed woman. Though Angela did not seek out a scribe, she does eventually take an interest just as her relative and confessor begins to recognize the worth of her account. He admits she spoke too quickly and in a way that was not easy for him to understand. He says of the act of transcribing her words the following:

De li quail, in veritade coss’i poco poteva
prendere al describere, ch’oi me pensai e
intixi che io ero come lo crivolo over lo
burato, lo qual la prezioxa sotille farina non
retinne, ma la grosa.⁴¹²

In truth, I wrote them, but I had so little
grasp of their meaning that I thought of
myself as a sieve or sifter which does not
retain the precious and refined flour but
only the most coarse.

⁴¹⁰ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 169, 71.

⁴¹¹ Suspicious that it might come from some evil spirit. Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 171.

⁴¹² Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 171.

He explains that he wrote so hastily that he had not the time to convert her first-person voice into the third person and indeed the text we read today switches between third and first persons. The text also retains a good deal of her Umbrian speech that Fra Arnaldo simply could not translate quickly enough or as effectively as he would have liked. He stresses the dissonance between the words of his penitent and what he gives her reader by offering an account of Angela's reactions to his efforts, "And this will give an idea," he says,

E qui può in alguno modo apparere, ch'io	Oh how very unrefined was my
de le parole divine non poteva prendere se	understanding of the divine words I was
no le plui grose. Ché alcuna volta, mentre	hearing from her: One day after I had
como da la soa boca prendere poteva cusi	written as best I could what I had been able
lo scriveva dretamente, e mentre rilegendo	to grasp of her discourse, I read to her what
quelo ch'io aveva ben scripto, che altro a	I had written in order to have her dictate
scrivere me dizèse, mi diceva	more to me, and she told me with
meraveiàndose che quele cosse non	amazement that she did not recognize it.
recognoseva. ⁴¹³	

He offers further examples of her amazement at hearing the words that call to mind her own words and in some way her experience while not at all capturing what her "soul felt," as she put it. The fact that she does not write her own story and finds fault with the words for she complains they provide only a weakened or "bland" image of her experience corroborates her

⁴¹³ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 173.

constant decrying of the ability to speak of the divine, union with the divine, or even experiences on the path to transcendence. While this claim is one common to the traditions which attempt to speak the divine, what is interesting is that while others write that they cannot say anything, Angela does not. Her experience is conveyed through words that we are told are hers but written by someone else. We have not one but two “writers” expressing anguish of two different kinds at the prospect of writing a personal experience of the divine. Neither has faith is the expression of the experience. Putting together a story, a story of transformation, would seem less about expressing a lived, past experience, than part of a process of transformation in and of itself. The experience of anyone from the past is wholly lost. Language is a means to try and point back to something, but it cannot endow a reader with the experience of another. As Bernard McGinn notes,

Those who define mysticism in terms of a certain type of experience of God often seem to forget that there can be no direct access to experience for the historian. Experience as such is not a part of the historical record. The only thing directly available to the historian or historical theologian is the evidence, largely in the form of written records, left to us by Christians of former ages.⁴¹⁴

The textual evidence might not offer us a chance to live the experiences of others. We must not forget that despite all that we cannot know about the experience that leaves us a text might however, allow us to witness the intersection of self and text by showing us what people

⁴¹⁴ Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*. Presence of God. Vol. I. (New York: Crossroad, 1995) xiv.

thought should be preserved in writing and all the judgments regarding the quality of the written words that are left after the experiences have gone.

Along with the story of her steps to experience of the divine that is the *Memoriale*, we also have a collection of texts, letters and other material known as *The Instructiones*, in which she offers counsel to those wishing to grow closer to God. Together these texts form the text known as the *Liber de vera fidelium experientia* known in English as *The Book of the Blessed Angela da Foligno*.⁴¹⁵ In the instructions words are not given great importance, neither writing nor reading is significant. Though she does mention prayer, but stresses that by this she does not refer to words coming from the mouth but explains that:

E chiamo 'orazione' non solamente de la boca, ma de la mente e del cuore e de tute la potenzie de l'anima e de li sentimenti del corpo. La qual orazione fa l'anima la quale vuolle e dexidera questo divino lume trovare, studiando e pensando e legiando continuamente ne lo libro e sopra lo libro de la vita; lo quale libro de vita è tuta la vita de Cristo, mentre vise in questa vita mortale. ⁴¹⁶	By prayer I mean not merely prayer from the mouth, but of the mind and heart, of all the powers of the soul and senses of the body. This is the prayer prayed by the soul who wills and desires to find this divine light, studying, meditating, and reading without cease in the Book and the more- than-book of Life. This Book of Life is the entire life of Christ while he lived as a mortal on earth.
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⁴¹⁵ A complete history of the manuscript tradition and modern editions can be found in the introductions of Thier and Calufatti, Paul Lachance, and in the thesis by Robin Anne O'Sullivan.

⁴¹⁶ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 689.

Her exhortation to pray and pray in this manner despite coming from one outside of the monastic tradition is oddly reminiscent of the monastic “craft” described by Mary Carruthers: “The craft of making prayer continuously, which is the craft of monasticism, came to be called *sacra pagina* in Latin, the constant meditation based on reading and recollecting sacred texts.”⁴¹⁷ It is clear in her instructions to others as from the story of her own experiences, that images, visual meditation, and visions are what not only lead the penitent toward Christ, but also are the means of manifesting or the way of experiencing union with the divine. For Angela, the sensory experience of mystical ecstasy is only explained as a “vision” and the way to reach the divine is through envisioning. The *Memoriale* and *The Instructiones* offer a model and a doctrinal treatise of envisioning as a means of losing the self to arrive at the ecstasy of mystical union.

From the beginning of the *Memoriale* it is clear that Angela da Foligno sees her experience of ecstatic vision and the possibility of union with the divine as the result of a series of steps which transformed her little by little into a being capable of reaching God—ironically, we will see that it is in fact only an entity devoid of a sense of being, of a sense of selfhood that can arrive at such union. The first chapter of the *Memoriale* explains that Angela had found there to be thirty steps in transformation:

Disse l’anzolla de Cristo, che, parlando con	A certain servant of Christ related that in
la sua compagna, aveva asegnati trenta pasi	conversations about God with her
overo mutazione le qual fa l’anima ne la	companion, she had designated (drawing

⁴¹⁷ Mary Carruthers. *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200* 2.

via de la penetenza, li quail in se
trovono.⁴¹⁸

from her own experience) thirty steps or
transformations which the soul makes as it
advances on the way of penance.

From the beginning of the first chapter then it is clear that the author of the text, be it Angela or her confessor, understands transformation as a series of steps. The goal itself is outlined throughout her dictated work and the Instructions in a variety of ways that indicate she wishes the elements of the self to be shucked and a complete possession of and by God to be so seamless that there is only a single entity, a complete union:

Ancora poi, la divina bontad mi feze questa
grazia, che de due me feze uno, ch'io non
posso volere alcuna cossa se non quello
che esso vuole—grande mixericordia è
questa di Questo che feze tal
conzonzimento! -, e fèzeme ne l'anima mia
uno stato d'uno modo, e rezeveva poca
mutazione; et àzo de Dio in tanta
plenitudine che non sono ora in quello
ch'io soleva, ma sono menata in una paze
ne la qualle era collui, e sono contenta

Likewise, the divine goodness granted me,
afterward, the grace that from the two there
was made one, because I could not will
anything except as he himself willed. How
great is the mercy of the one who realized
this union!—it almost completely
stabilized my soul. I possessed God so
fully that I was no longer in my previous
customary state but was led to find a peace
in which I was united with God and was
content with everything.

⁴¹⁸ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 133.

d'ogni cossa.⁴¹⁹

This describes the mystic's goal: to be with God and be content, fulfilled, lacking or desiring nothing. The way to achieve this, Angela suggests, is to follow practices (for either herself or her scribe these are considered steps) that will lead the elements of self to be abandoned.

In the second instruction, Angela explains the three types of transformations that exist, that each build on the one before it:

In tre maniere la trasformazione de	There are three kinds of transformations:
l'anema: inperzioché alguna fiata l'anima	sometimes the soul is transformed into
se transforma ne la voluntade de Dio,	God's will; sometimes it is transformed
alguna fiata con Dio, alguna fiata dentro da	with God; and sometimes it is transformed
Dio e Dio è dentro da l'anima. ⁴²⁰	within God and God within the soul.

The ways of being with God are varied. The metaphysics of union has three forms for Angela. In each the boundaries between self and Other are penetrated in some way. God is accessible through the space of the will, the space of divine being itself, or through space reserved for the divine in the self and vice-versa. Angela goes on to describe the process for her listener(s)/readers in her second instruction. The language and the process are remarkably clear:

⁴¹⁹ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 297.

⁴²⁰ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 413.

La prima trasformazione é quando l'anima	The first transformation occurs when the
se sforza de seguitare le opere de questo	soul strives to imitate the works of the
Dio et omo passionato, inperzoché in esse se	suffering God-man because God's will has
manifesta la volontà de Dio. La seconda	been and is being manifested in them. The
trasformazione é quando l'anima se	second transformation occurs when the
transforma e conzone con Dio et áve grandi	soul is united with God, feels deeply the
sentimenti e grande delectatione de Dio, ma	consolations of God's presence, and can
inpertanto <i>un</i> poco se <i>puo</i> esprimere <i>con</i>	express these with words and thoughts. The
parole e pensare. La terza trasformazione	third occurs when the soul, by a most
e quando l'anima in perfetissima unione e	perfect union, is transformed within God,
transformamata entro da Dio e Dio entro da	and God within the soul; then it feels and
l'anima e sente de Dio altissime cose et	tastes God's presence in such a sublime
asaza, in tanto che per nessuno modo se	way that it is beyond words and
puo esprimere <i>con</i> parole né pensare. ⁴²¹	conception.

Angela's acts before the crucifix depict how one can move from the first through to the last transformation. Her book in its entirety demonstrates the need to divest the soul of its sense of self—will, feelings or sensations, are all one in God and so when one is united with God.

The moments that precede so many of Angela's raptures happen when she has been meditating on an image before her or one she has brought to her mind. It was while looking upon a crucifix in 1291 that she felt the urge to strip during her mystical rapture. On another

⁴²¹ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 413, 15.

occasion while gazing at the cross, her reaction is one of the greatest joy and certainty that we can be made one with the divine:

E sguardando lo cruzifiso con li ochi del corpo, incontiente fo <i>accesa</i> l'anima de uno amore che tute le member del corpo ne sentivano grande letizia. E vedeva e sentiva che Cristo dentro in me abrazava l'anima con quello brazio lo qual fo cruzifiso. E questo fo allora over poco poi. E alegravame con lui in tanta letizia e securidade, piu che mai fosse uxata.	And while I was thus gazing at the cross with the eyes of the body, suddenly my soul was set ablaze with love; and every member of my body felt it with the greatest joy. I saw and felt that Christ was within me, embracing my soul with the very arm with which he was crucified. This took place right at the moment when I was gazing at the cross or shortly afterward. The joy that I experienced to be with him in this way and the sense of security that it gave me were far greater than I had ever been accustomed to.
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Gazing on the outward image of the cross brings Christ into her body, and yet allows herself to be at the same time enveloped by his body, his arm. Indeed Angela's reactions to the image of the passion were so intense that it was necessary for her companion, Masazuola, to cover up or hide all of the images that Angela might happen upon as she explains saying:

E quando vedeva la Pasion de Cristo	Also, whenever I saw the passion of Christ
depenta, apena mi poteva sostenere, ma	depicted, I could hardly bear it, and I would
pilgiàvame la febre e diventava inferman,	come down with a fever and fall sick. My
onde per questo la mia compagna	companion, as a result, hid paintings of the
nascondeva e studiava de ascondere le	passion or did her best to keep them out of
depenture de la Pasion de Cristo da me. ⁴²²	my sight.

In fact, Angela's receptivity to images is just as much a fundamental feature of her mystical process as it is to the experience of love as an attack on self as described by Bernart de Ventadorn, Arnaut de Marueilh, and other troubadours. It is through the eye that the self is penetrated; the eye is the crack in the surface of the self that allows for the sense of self to eventually be shattered. The crucifix, paintings, and eventually inner images that come unasked or when envisioned play a major role in moving the soul from each step to the next. Angela explains that this was done before she had undergone her great transformation during her pilgrimage to Assisi. Kathleen Kamerick has claimed that, "[m]editation on Christ's corporeality and physical suffering framed and inspired her spiritual struggles, and was aided—at least in the early part of her spiritual journey—by religious art."⁴²³ It seems that the images of Christ including those of his suffering inspired ecstasy rather than struggle, but generally it cannot be missed that the significance of images in the mysticism of Angela da Foligno is crucial. The point has been well proven by Kamerick but also by Molly Morrison whose article, "A Mystic's

⁴²² Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 153.

⁴²³ Kathleen Kamerick, "Art and Moral Vision in Angela of Foligno and Margery Kempe," *Mystics Quarterly* 21.4 (1995): 150.

Drama: The Paschal Mystery in the Visions of Angela da Foligno”⁴²⁴ extends the study of outer influences to the Paschal Mystery suggesting the possibility that Angela viewed a dramatization of the passion prior to her own ecstatic experiences. What is important to note is that despite Angela’s claim that her early reactions to images of the passion came unbidden, it is her careful contemplation of the image of Christ that truly leads her or any pilgrim closer to the divine. In her text she offers careful descriptions of her own experiences with images both external and envisioned. These often include lessons in how to use these images to arrive at selflessness. The lessons do not always come from the discourse of Angela herself, but are presented as embedded in the visions she recounts.

In the tenth step Christ “appears” before her. The appearances call her to reflect on the vast difference between his greatness and her vileness, a practice she learns from Christ’s promptings during these visions:

M’aparava crusifiso ne la croze. E dizeva a	...he appeared to me many times, both
me, ch’io sgaurdàse ne le sue piaghe , et in	while I was asleep and awake, crucified on
meravelgioxo modo mi mostrava como tuto	the cross. He told me that I should look at
mi aveva sostenuto; e questo fo folto fiate.	his wounds. In a wonderful manner, he
E quando singularmente m’aveva mostrato	showed me how he had endured all these
tuto quello che aveva sustenuto per me,	wounds for me; and he did this many times.
dizeva: que adonque puoi per me pare che	As he was showing me the sufferings

⁴²⁴ Molly Morrison, "A Mystic's Drama: The Paschal Mystery in the Visions of Angela da Foligno," *Italica* 78.1 (2001).

ti basta?⁴²⁵

which he had endured for me from each of
these wounds, one after the other, he told
me: ‘What then can you do that would
seem to you to be enough?’

Not only does Christ appear to her, but he explains what she is to do with her visions of him: she is to focus on the significance of each element before her, each wound in this passage. shortly after this exchange she says,

...mostrandome li peli de la barba a lui trati	He even showed me how his beard,
e de le zeie e del capo, numerando et	eyebrows, and hair had been plucked out
asegnando et assegnando tuti li flageli. E	and enumerated each and every one of the
me dizeva: Tuto questo i’ò sostemnuto per	blows of the whip that he had received.
te. ⁴²⁶	And he said: ‘I have endured all these
	things for you.’

Just as in the experience of the vision, Christ instructs Angela how to use the vision she witnesses, Angela’s recounting teaches her listener(s) and her readers what one is to do with the images of the passion, the images of Christ’s wounds. In the fourteenth step the instructions call her to touch the wound, to take it inside herself:

⁴²⁵ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 139, 41.

⁴²⁶ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 141.

...mentre che stava in orazione, cristo me	...He then called me to place my mouth to
se mostrò ne la croxe ciu chiaro. E disse	the wound in his side. It seemed to me that
ch'io ponèse la mia boca ne la sua piaga	I saw and drank the blood, which was
del costato, e parevami ch'io vedèse e	freshly flowing from his side. His intention
bevèse sangue che nuovamente transcoreva	was to make me understand that by this
dal suo lato, e dàvamese at intendere che in	blood he would cleanse me. And at this I
questo me mondava. E qui comenzai ad	began to experience a great joy, although
aver gran letzia, avegachè considerando la	when I thought about the passion I was still
pasione avèse tristizia. ⁴²⁷	filled with sadness.

Christ's wounds were at first to be considered and meditated upon. In the second vision she is urged to drink from the bloody wounds, thus literalizing the metaphoric implications of nourishing her soul with meditation upon Christ's wounds as was suggested in the first vision. This move from the symbolic to a literalized ingestion calls to mind the shift from the lyric of Guilhem de Cabestanh which suggests the lover gives the beloved his heart, meaning his love, which is then made literal by Guilhem's biographer creating a motif of the *coeur mangé* which spread throughout Europe.

Angela grows to focus on the joy of Christ's suffering instead of the sadness it had once inspired in her. After she has completed her steps towards union with God, the marks of suffering now inspire joy:

⁴²⁷ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 141, 43.

E dilèctome di vedere quele mane, li quale	My delight at present is to see that hand
mostraràme con quei segni de li chiodi,	which he shows me with the marks of the
quando dirà: Ecco quello ch'io sostini per ti	nails on it, and to hear him say: 'Behold
e per li altri. E latizia, la quale qui pilgia	what I have suffered for you and others.'
l'anima, non se puo narare. E per nessuno	The joy which seizes my soul in this
modo posso mo' avere tristizia nessuna de	moment can in no way be spoken of. And
la passione, ma dilectome di vedere e de	in no way whatever can I be sad concerning
prevenire a quell omo. E tua la letizia è ora	the passion: on the contrary, my joy is in
in questo Dio omo pasionato. ⁴²⁸	seeing this man, and to come to him. All
	my joy now is in this suffering God-man.

Angela has managed to arrive at a point where the suffering of Christ is a source of joy rather than pain and guilt—she no longer thinks of herself, what this act of sacrifice means for her, but is concerned with what it means in the scheme of the divine order. The contemplation of God's image, in particular with the passion, allows Angela to progress along the mystical journey towards self-annihilation.

The steps towards mystical union are in this way the shedding of layers of selfhood as Angela saw when she experienced an illumination that came to her while she looked upon the crucifix:

Ma in questo cognoscimento de la croze	Nonetheless, this perception of the
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⁴²⁸ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 277, 79.

m'era dacto tanto fuoco che, stando apresso	meaning of the cross set me so afire that,
de la croxe, me spolgiai tute le vestimente e	standing near the cross, I stripped myself of
tuta me ofresi a lui. Et avegnaché con	all my clothing and offered my whole self
tremore, ma alori promisi a lui de osservare	to him. Although very fearful, I promised
castitade perpetua, e de non ofender a lui	him then to maintain perpetual chastity and
con algun di mie menbri, e accusando li	not to offend him again with any of my
peccati de tuti i membri. ⁴²⁹	bodily members, accusing each of these
	one by one.

Angela da Foligno strips herself of all that had been draped on her; once stripped she offers herself completely to God. Her bodily members she doffs one by one by giving them a name, an identity apart from her own. She explains that she was:

iluminata e fòme insingnata la via de la	... instructed, illumined, and shown the
croxe in questo modo, zioè ch'io mi	way of the cross in the following manner: I
spolgiàse e fosse piui liziera, e nuda a la	was inspired with the thought that if I
croxe andàse, ...zioè ch'io perdonàse quei	wanted to go to the cross, I would need to
che me avevano ofexo e spolgiàseme de	strip myself in order to be lighter and go
tute le cose terene e de tuti li omeni e	naked to it. This would entail forgiving all
femene, amizi e parenti e da tuti li altri e da	who had offended me, stripping myself of
la mia posesion e de mi medexima... ⁴³⁰	everything worldly, of all attachments to

⁴²⁹ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 137.

men and women, of my friends and
relatives, and everyone else, and, likewise,
of my possessions and even of my very
self...

She strips herself of her shell, her clothing, literally and then describes the need to do so figuratively, ridding herself of her social garb: the friends and family that along with her possessions wrap up her self. She claims that to arrive at the foot of the cross she needs also to get rid of “even [her] very self.” The process modeled here is one in which meditation upon a real, physical image leads to reflection on one’s own situation. As Lachance notes in the introduction to the text, in the early stages of her experience, “visions of the Crucified increasingly quickened Angela’s journey.”⁴³¹ “This perception made me aware of all my sins, and this was extremely painful” says Angela, a realization which then sparks a passionate response or desire, but a desire that cannot be denied or tamed, to go to Christ. All things not Christ are found wanting, distracting, and so the one who wishes to join him cannot but want to lose all of the worldly objects that stand in the way between subject and beloved Christ.

Even the self must be examined and relinquished. The first step Angela claims is the awareness of one’s sinfulness, and again in the fifth step the focus is once again on knowledge of the nature of the self:

El quinto passo è cognoscimento si se

The fifth step is the knowledge of self.

⁴³⁰ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 139.

⁴³¹ Introduction, Lachance, *Angela of Foligno: Complete Works* 58.

inperzioché za un poco aluminata, non	Partially enlightened, the soul sees nothing
vede in se se no difeti. Et alora condapna se	but defects in itself, and condemns itself
medexima a Dio, inperziò ch'è degna se	before God as most certainly worthy of
l'inferno; e qui rezeve ancora pianto	hell. This is a source of much bitter
amaro. ⁴³²	weeping.

Angela da Foligno explains that one day she heard God say:

Io te voglio mostrare la mia potenza. ⁴³³	I want to show you something of my power;
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and this is her account of what occurred:

Et incontenenti furono aperti li ochi de	And immediately the eyes of my soul were
l'anima e vedeva una plenitudine de Dio,	opened, and in a vision I beheld the
ne la quale comprendeva tuto lo mondo,	fullness of God in which I beheld and
zioè oltra mare e di qua da mare e l'abisso,	comprehended the whole of creation, that is
lo mare e tute le cose. Et in tute queste cose	what is on this side and what is beyond the
no se dizernèa se no la divina potenza, et	sea, the abyss, the sea itself, and everything
inpertanto in modo al tuto inenarabile. ⁴³⁴	else. And in everything that I saw, I could

⁴³² Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 135.

⁴³³ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 261, 63.

⁴³⁴ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 263.

perceive nothing except the presence of the
power of God and in a manner totally
indescribable.

Angela da Foligno uses the imaginary as a method of reducing her own worth to the smallest grain within the small thing that is the whole of creation :

E comprendea tuto lo mondo quaxi una picola cosa. ⁴³⁵	Wherefore I understood how small is the whole of creation.
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She has lost herself in the immensity and grandeur of the imaginary. Angela loses her self by creating and focusing on images of the divine. Steven Fanning suggests this preoccupation with being a small thing and being full of defects as the lines cited above note betray the influence of Franciscanism: "In typical Franciscan style, Angela emphasized a life of penance and recognition of one's own sinfulness and nothingness..."⁴³⁶ Her instructions urge the reader to penance because of a conviction that the practicante will move closer to God by embracing a consciousness of one's sinful and pathetic nature when compared with the divine.

The unworthiness of the mystic is fundamental to transformation and must ultimately be surpassed. When Angela was focused on her sinfulness she was saved by grace:

⁴³⁵ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 263.

⁴³⁶ Steven Fanning, *Mystics of the Christian Tradition*. (London: Routledge, 2001) 88.

E mentre era in amaritudine per li peccati e ancora non sentiva divina dolceza, mutata fu de questo stato in questo modo. Nel Sestodezimo passo una fiata io era andata a la chiesia et aveva oregato Dio che alguna grazia me fazasèse. ⁴³⁷	Up to this point, I was still feeling bitter sorrow for my sins and did not yet feel divine sweetness. I was transformed from this state in the following manner. In the sixteenth step, one time I had gone to church and prayed God to grant me a grace of some kind.
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The grace Angela da Foligno receives is a freedom from the focus on her own sinfulness and her own sorrow and distress with her sinful state. It is while praying that God gives her a grace.

E mentre orava, puse el Pater-nostro noe cuor mio, con tanto chiaro intendimento de la bontà divina e de la mia indegnitade che tute le parole sel cuor me se poneva. E diceva el paternostro con la boca in tanta demoranza e cognisimento di me, che da l'una parte, avegna ch'io pianzèse amaramente per li mie peccati e la mia indegnitade la quale cognoseva, e pertanto li àbi gran consolazione e comenzai a	While I was praying the "Our Father," I received deep in my heart a very clear awareness of the divine goodness and my own unworthiness. ...I recited the Our Father so slowly and consciously that even though, on the one hand, I wept bitterly because I was so aware of my sins and my unworthiness, still on the other hand, I felt a great consolation and I began to taste something of the divine sweetness...
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⁴³⁷ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 147.

asazare alcuna cosa de la dolzeza

divina...⁴³⁸

The transformation from a focus on her own sinfulness to an understanding of the “Our Father” as a prayer that offers consolation can only come from God. The change in understanding is possible only through an act of Grace. The mystic can be told and even attempt to follow steps towards transcendence but ultimately it is grace from God that will transform the penitent.

The progress made by the religious is slow according to Angela da Foligno. She warns her students of the slow process that is losing one’s sinfulness and then selfhood:

Et intendi che in tuti questi paso è	You need to be aware also that each of
demoranza e tenpo ; onde	these steps takes time. It is indeed very
grandecuordologio e pietade è de l’anima,	pitiful and truly heartbreaking that the soul
che si gravemente e con dolore e peso in	is so sluggish and moves so painfully and
verso de Dio fa tropo pizolo paso. ⁴³⁹	ponderously toward God. It takes such tiny
	steps at a time.

At another moment in her dictation to Fra Arnaldo, Angela once again explains that she was slow to move through her early steps of transformation. The soul is simply overwhelmed with the worldly and to lose everything takes time:

⁴³⁸ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 147.

⁴³⁹ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 135.

Et in zacuna de la perdite demorai per	At each of the previous steps [1-16], I
molto tempo inanzi ch'io mi potese	lingered for a good while before I was able
mouvere ad otro passo ; et in alcuno paso	to move on to the next step. In some of the
sono dimorato più et in alcuno meno. Onde	steps I lingered longer, and for a shorter
essa fedelle di Cristo ameravelgiàndose	time in others. At which point, Christ's
dizeva: O con quanto graveza l'anima va	faithful one also expressed her amazement:
avanzi, e qui non se ne screvire niente. Cusi	"oh! Nothing is written here about how
èbe forte lazi e ligami ne li piedi e si male	sluggish the soul's progress is! How bound
adiutorio ebe dal mondo e dal demonio. ⁴⁴⁰	it is, how shackled are its feet, and how ill
	served it is by the world and the devil."

Not only does the penitent need to meditate and draw one's focus to following the path, but the world is not made to assist him or her in the endeavor to transcend. Again, it is only through grace, because of God that the soul can be changed. Angela explains,

Et allora la virtù de l'amore transforma	Then the power of love transforms the
l'amante ne l'amato e l'amato ne	lover into the Beloved and the Beloved into
l'amante. ⁴⁴¹	the lover;

⁴⁴⁰ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 149.

⁴⁴¹ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 687.

If transcendence, union with the divine, depends ultimately upon the power of God then what Angela da Foligno provides in her works is a model and a description of how one can prepare for absorption or the embrace of the divine. The practices she describes focus the believer's attention on the fragility and faulty nature of the self so that its power, its presence has been diminished. The most important tool to move through the steps of self-effacement in the mysticism of Angela da Foligno is meditation, what is unique in the description provided by Angela of her experience is the great role given to artistic representations, actual physical images of the life of Christ to foster meditation and the subsequent weaning from these physical images in favor of inward envisioning. Angela's language does not seek to imitate that of *fin' amors* as Marguerite Porete does, and indeed is distinguished from the Beguines Hadwijch, Mechthild, and Marguerite Porete as McGinn notes, by "having no connection with the courtly motifs employed by the three northern *mulieres religiosae*."⁴⁴² However, like Arnaut de Marueilh and other troubadours who focus on the image of the beloved, Angela suggests that it is through contemplation of God's image, Christ's suffering that the penitent can arrive at a selfless state and union with the divine. Rather than the word, it is the image of Christ that guides Angela along the path toward self-negation.

Indeed even before her ecstatic *unio mystica* Angela had learned to call up images in her mind first through prayer and so as a gift of grace from God:

<p>Nel terzodezimo passo entrai per dolore de la passione de la quale èbe la madre de Cristo e San Zuane. E pregàili che</p>	<p>In the thirteenth step, I entered into the sorrow over the passion suffered by the mother of Christ and St. John. I prayed</p>
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⁴⁴² McGinn, *Flowering*, 199.

m'acatasero segno zerto per lo qual potesse	they would obtain for me a sure sign by
aver memoria de la passione de Cristo	which I might always keep the passion of
continuamente et infro queste cose	Christ continually in my memory.
adevenne che in sonio me fo mostrato lo	Thereupon, the heart of Christ was shown
cuore de cristo... ⁴⁴³	to me during my sleep...

This is one of the many consolations she says she began to receive in dreams. As Angela discusses her seventeenth step, she explains that she began to have many dreams and was able to experience the joy of God's presence waking and sleeping:

E qui cominizai aver consolazione per sonii	Then I began to receive consolation
; et avera sonii belli et in essi m'era dato	through dreams, which were numerous and
consolazione. E si comenziò mese aa dare	gave me great comfort. My soul also began
dolzeza da Dio dentro ne l'anim, vegliando	to experience the sweetness of God
e dormendo continuamente... ⁴⁴⁴	continually, both while I was awake and
	asleep;

Angela can call images to mind to bring her this great comfort when she feels distress as when she considers her lowliness in comparison with the magnificence of the divine:

⁴⁴³ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 143.

⁴⁴⁴ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 145.

Et imperziochè in Paternostro me fo	But since reciting the Our Father made me
manifesta la indegnitade mia e I mei pecati,	so aware of my own unworthiness and my
e comenzai ad esser vergognoxxa in tanto	sins, I was overcome by great shame and I
che apena voleva <i>levare gli occhi nè era</i>	hardly dared to raise my eyes. I pictured in
<i>osata ; ma presentai alla beata Vergine</i> che	my mind the Blessed Virgin so that she
me atrovàse perdonanza de li mie pecati. ⁴⁴⁵	would beg forgiveness of my sins for me.

She thus could simultaneously experience worthlessness and grace with two different meditative practices (alternating?) at once— that of envisioning the Madonna even while she meditates on the words of the “Our Father” as divine enlightenment allowed:

E mentre orava, puse el Pater-nostro noe	While I was praying the Our Father I
cuor mio, con tanto chiaro intendimento de	received deep in my heart a very clear
la bontà divina e de la mia indegnitade che	awareness of the divine goodness and my
tute le parole sel cuor me se poneva. ⁴⁴⁶	own unworthiness. I understood the
	meaning of each of the words I was saying
	deep in my heart.

It is clear that these moments of enlightenment are examples of grace given by God but offered only when Angela has entered into prayer or turned her eye, inward or bodily, toward the divine. It is a pattern that was established at the beginning of her journey and the *Memoriale* when

⁴⁴⁵ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 149.

⁴⁴⁶ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 147.

Angela finally asks Saint Francis for his help and he quips that all she had needed to do was to turn to him, “Sister, if you had asked me sooner, I would have complied with your request sooner.”⁴⁴⁷ Likewise it is through God’s grace that the penitent is able to behold images within, to see with an inner eye at all:

E pregava Dio che li dovèse dar di se	She prayed to God that he give her
inperziò chera cusì seca d’ogno bene. E	something of himself for she felt very dry
aloro fono aperti i ochi de l’anima e	and deprived of every good. And then the
vedeva l’amore che veniva pianamente	eyes of her soul were opened and she had a
verso se, ... Et incontenente che pervenne a	vision of love gently advancing toward
lei, parve a lei apertamente che vedèse con	her... And suddenly she saw it coming
i ochi de l’anima più che non se può	toward her with the eyes of her soul, more
vedere con i ochi del corpo... ⁴⁴⁸	clearly than can be seen with the eyes of
	the body, ...;

The power to see clearly, to understand, to see love coming toward her comes from the divine grace that allows her inner eyes to see.⁴⁴⁹ It is clear that the meaning of the images she

⁴⁴⁷ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 133.

⁴⁴⁸ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 299.

⁴⁴⁹ The inner eye or the eye of the mind that allows for imagination in medieval thinking is at play here. For more see: Douglas Kelly, "Imagination," *Medieval Imagination: Rhetoric and Poetry of Courtly Love* (Madison: U of Madison P, 1978). Dallas G. Denery, *Seeing and Being Seen in the Later Medieval World: Optics, Theology, and Religious Life*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Life and Thought; 4th Ser. (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Jeffrey F. Hamburger and Anne-Marie Bouché, *The Mind's Eye: Art and Theological*

contemplates is not reached by her reasoning but from god-given illumination. While the images appear only when she has readied herself to receive them, though the Christ in her vision points to his wounds, his beard, and each element he wants her to consider and instructs her in what she is to think of these, she describes the peace and well-being, joy and ecstasy as feelings that invade her being rather than coming from her ability to think and arrive at the meanings being given. She is given understanding with a spark, through sudden and unexpected illumination. As she describes it her soul, her self is disassociated from the body in the experience:

Et essa anima , mentre era in essa tenebra,	At a certain moment, immersed in these
e voleva tornare a reitro a se <i>non poteva</i> et	thoughts, my soul was drawn out of itself
non poteva ire inanti, nè ritornare a rietro a	to perceive that the mystery of what I was
rietro a sse. Et dapo' queste cosse l'anima	asking had neither beginning nor end. And
subitamente fo levata et iluminata e	the soul when it was in that state of
vendeva la possanzade Dio inenarabile e la	darkness wanted to return to its normal
divina voluntade. Ne le quale intendeva	state but could not; it could not move
plenisimamente e zertisimamente tute le	forward or go back to itself. After that my
cosse, le quale <i>io</i> avèva adimandate. E fo	soul was suddenly lifted up and illumined
l'anima incontinenti trata de tta quela	to see the indescribable power of God, as
tenebra de prima. Onde e inprima in quela	well as his will. From these visions I
tenebra <i>io</i> iazea in terra, ma in questa	received a most complete and certain
grande inluminazione stiti in piedi, in su le	understanding of everything I had asked

Argument in the Middle Ages (Princeton, N.J.: Department of Art and Archaeology Princeton University in association with Princeton University Press, 2006).

ponte de le dite grosse de li piedi. Et era in
tanta letzia e alegreza del corpo e
rinovazione, che mai tanta non aveva
avuta.⁴⁵⁰

about. And so, when I was in that darkness,
I lay flat on the ground, but when I was in
the state of greatest illumination, I stood
straight up on my feet, on the very tips of
my big toes. I was so joy-filled, and my
body felt so agile, healthy, invigorated, that
I had never experienced anything like it.

The understanding and the sensation are one. Illumination provides instantaneous understanding and the ecstasy that this implies. The understanding is the end and ultimately true understanding cannot be expressed through signs or symbols of any kind, not linguistic or imagistic. As she recounts what she has seen, she, paradoxically, consistently claims the impossibility of speaking her visions by adding preambles or postscripts to the descriptions of her visions :

Ancora me disse a me, frate scriptore, essa
fedele de Cristo, exponiéndome tute queste
cose scrite, che tanta passione vide l'anima
sua, che quantonque santa Maria ne vedèse
più che nulo santo in molti modi como essa

At this point, Christ's faithful one, in an
explanation of the above, told me, brother
scribe, that her soul had seen so much of
the passion that it understood that even
though the Blessed Virgin had seen more
of it and mentioned more of its details than

⁴⁵⁰ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 283.

assegnava, inpertanto essa intendeva che per	any other saint, still she herself could not—
nessuno modo Ella la potesse dire, né santo	neither could any other saint—find words
alcuno. ⁴⁵¹	to express it;

This lament that words cannot speak the experience or understanding that comes through the mystical process is common. McGinn attributes it to all Christian mystics saying, “one thing that all Christian mystics have agreed on is that the experience in itself defies conceptualization and verbalization, in part or in whole.”⁴⁵² The passion is shown to her in such a way that the power of the image goes beyond the power of the tongue,

Questo dolore acuto, fo sì grande che	This acute pain, so intense that the tongue
lingua no zi basta a dire nì cuore a	cannot express it nor is the heart great
pensare... ⁴⁵³	enough to imagine it;

Language ceases to have any power: Love beyond telling:

E vego et intendo che quelle operazione	I am convinced that there is no saint, angel,
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⁴⁵¹ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 293.

⁴⁵² McGinn, *Foundations* xvii.

⁴⁵³ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 295,97.

divine e quello profondissimo abisso, nullo	or creature which has anywhere near the
anzolo e nula criatura è sì larga e capace	capacity to understand these divine
che la possa comprenderé; e tuta queste	workings and that extremely deep abyss.
cosse cue ora dico si può sì male dire e	And everything I am saying now is so
meno dire, che sono biastemare quelle. ⁴⁵⁴	badly and weakly said that it is a
	blasphemy against these things;

Angela da Foligno might make the effort to dictate her visions to Brother Arnaldo but her ecstasy does not come from playing with language as she strives to explain her experience to him. Angela's joy comes in the moments of her rapture, the moments when she "sees" the glory of God, the suffering of Christ not from her linguistic recreations of these moments or these visions. Angela seems much more interested in the imaginary than in the rhetorical. Angela cannot express strongly enough that,

...e ziò ch'io dico me pare dire niente, over	Everything I say now about it seems to say
dire malle. E poi disseme: parme de	nothing or to be badly said. It seems that
biastemare. ⁴⁵⁵	whatever I say about it is blasphemy;

As she speaks to her confessor and amanuensis Angela's frustration at her inability to express her experience, the various features of her new understanding, and God himself erupts regularly

⁴⁵⁴ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 381.

⁴⁵⁵ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 361.

throughout the text of the *Memoriale*. She ultimately decides there is no way to talk about God or union with the divine:

E perciò non si può dire nulla	Therefore, there is absolutely nothing that
assolutamente, e perché non si può trovare	can be said about this experience, for no
nessuna parola che esprima queste cose	words can be found or invented to express
divine e nessun pensiero e nessuna	or explain it; no expansion of thought or
intelligenza può estenderi ad esse, tanto	mind can possibly reach to those things,
soperchiano ogni cosa, como Dio per	they are so far beyond everything—for
chivele non si può comendare, inperzioché	there is nothing which can explain God. I
Dio al postuto non si può comendare. E	repeat there is absolutely nothing which
dizea la predita fedele de Cristo con	can explain God. Christ's faithful one
grandísima certeza e dava at intendere che	affirmed with utmost certitude and wanted
Dio non si può per nessuno modo	it understood that there is absolutely
comendare. ⁴⁵⁶	nothing which can explain God;

The divine is not to be explained through language, but praised. Understanding, if it is to come, will be bestowed by God through illumination when the recipient is ready. When Angela da Foligno asked God to give her a sign, she had not yet understood that the divine does not need signs. God responds to Angela's wish for a sign saying,

⁴⁵⁶ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 385, 87.

Questo che tu adimandi è uno segno che te	This sign which you are asking for is one
daria senpre letizia quando lo vedèsi e	which would always give you joy
tocàsi, ma non te traria de dubio e in <i>cotale</i>	whenever you see it or touch it, but it
segno poresti esser inganata. ⁴⁵⁷	would not take away your doubt.
	Furthermore, in <i>such</i> a sign you could be
	deceived;

What is “cotale segno” but an image or an event that points to something else. In the space between the sign and the thing itself the room for interpretation allows for mis-interpretation and misreading. While these signs, symbols, imagistic and linguistic are useful at some stages of the mystical process, ultimately the mystic should arrive at a stage where signs and symbols no longer point to something beyond themselves, but are the thing itself.

Instead of “such” a sign, God proposes he place inside her heart a sign of his kind:

E questo è lo segno lo quale laso entro ne	Here then is the sign which I deposit in the
l’anima tua, lo quale è melgio che quello lo	depths of your soul, one better than the one
qualle adimandasti: Làsote uno amore di	you asked for: I deposit in you a love of me
me, per lo quale l’anima tua continuamente	so great that your soul will be continually
serà calda di me. ⁴⁵⁸	burning for me.

⁴⁵⁷ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 205.

⁴⁵⁸ Thier and Calufetti, *Il Libro della Beata Angela* 207.

Love is what he places in her heart—the thing itself, the “authentic sign” – his presence itself is more than sign, it is the thing, and yet, he says, a sign of it. The sign that speaks, that signifies, points to something not there—something that might have been there, but is no longer. The sign is fleeting, dependent on those moments when she “sees” or “touches” it, that is, uses the tools of the imagination or the body. Just as for Arnaut de Marueilh all signifieds point back to his beloved, all signs are inscribed here within a sameness that is the divine. In this scene God describes the “meaning event” as defined by Sells: “Meaning event indicates that moment when the meaning has become identical with existence, but such identity is not only asserted, it is performed.”⁴⁵⁹ The type of sign God speaks of no longer points to the signified, but is truly the thing itself.

⁴⁵⁹ Michael Anthony Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsayings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) 9.

CHAPTER 6: FROM IMAGE TO TEXT IN THE MYSTICISM OF MARGUERITE D'OINGT

The Women Carthusians

Marguerite d'Oingt differs from both Marguerite Porete and Angela da Foligno in that she was a member of a formal religious order and even held the position of Prioress in the convent of Poletains. The Carthusian women religious were founded in what is now southern France as early as the first half of the twelfth century. A number of houses were being developed for men when Marguerite de Bâgé wished to open a monastery for women. Her family had contributed to the growth of the male Carthusians and it is therefore perhaps natural that she chose to become a Carthusian herself and ordered constructed a house in the years around 1225 or 1226 though the scribes of the annals for the Carthusians only say, "vers 1230."⁴⁶⁰

What is remarkable and relevant to this study of Marguerite d'Oingt is the liberty the women religious had as regards their learning. Carthusian women were deaconesses who could read scripture to their sisterhood.⁴⁶¹ It is the synthesis of a mysticism of image and word that characterizes Marguerite d'Oingt and distinguishes her from Angela da Foligno and Marguerite Porete and indeed makes her a unique voice in medieval feminine mysticism in general.

⁴⁶⁰ For a brief sketch of this history see the introduction to Marguerite's *Speculum* by Antoine Duraffour, Pierre Gardette, and Paulette Durdilly, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt*, (Paris: Société d'édition "Belles Lettres," 1965) 13 ff.

⁴⁶¹ For a general introduction to the Carthusians see Bernard McGinn, *The Growth of Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1994) 353-362. For a discussion of women in Carthusian houses see, Yves Gourdal, "Chartreux," *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique doctrine et histoire*. Ed. Marcel Viller et. al. 16 vols. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1937-1934) vol. 2 705-76.

Marguerite d'Oingt

The “ancilla Christi” offers her name as Marguerite at the start of her *Pagina Meditationum*; to this Christian name the scribe who wrote the *incipits* and *explicitis* informs us that she was the prioress of Pelotens, present-day Poletains. The corpus of this 13th-century religious includes an account of a vision which we have in Latin which is the *Pagina Meditationum* written around 1286; “una partia de la honesta et saincta et discreta conversation que citi espousa de Jhesu Crit” which is known as *The Life of Beatrice of Ornacieux*, and the *Speculum* (written before 1294), the last two written in Franco-Provençal. Letters remain and indicate that she was well respected during her time as Prioress. Her death date is recorded as the eleventh of February of 1310.

The prioress writes for herself according to her own declarations. In a letter she says of her writing, and of the *Speculum* in particular,

Mon tre chier pere, je n'ay pas escrit ceste	My dear father, I did not write these things
chose por co que jo les balliasso a vos ne	so that they might be given to you or
autra persona, ne por ce que il me	anyone else, nor so that they remain after
remansissent après la mort, quar jo ne suis	my death, for I have not been intended to
pas persona que doie escrire chosa durabla,	write things that will last nor that should be
ne que doyent ester misse avant. Je n'ay	taken as important, I did not write these
escrit ces choses manque por ce que quant	things except that so, when my heart was
mes cuers seroyt expanduz parmi le monde	wandering the world, that I think about

que je pensaso en cetes choses, por ce que these things, so that I could return my heart
 puisso retorner mon cuer a mon creatour et to my creator and pull it from the world.⁴⁶³
 retrayre du mundo.⁴⁶²

Speaking in the third person she claims that she who has had visions wrote them all in her heart
 until it was so full she was unable to eat or sleep and so,

elle se pensa que s'ela metoyt en escrit ces She thought that if she wrote those things
 choses que sos cuers en seroyt plus down that her heart would be lightened of
 alegiez.⁴⁶⁴ the burden.

In this letter the prioress offers a variety of reasons one might choose to write down such a
 vision: to be contemplated by a reader, for the reader's benefit; for posterity; as mental prod to
 the memory of the writer herself; as a blinder that upon reading leads the author's heart to God
 and away from the world; and finally, as a mental purge necessary to the writer herself.

Marguerite recognizes the variety of functions the text gives the one who writes and the one who
 reads.⁴⁶⁵ By penning the *Speculum* she modifies her own mindset [mental state] even as the text

⁴⁶² Antonin Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt*, Publications de L'institut de
 Linguistique Romane de Lyon ; V. 21 (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1965) 142.

⁴⁶³ English translations my own.

⁴⁶⁴ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 142.

⁴⁶⁵ Finke suggests that for medieval women, mysticism was a public discourse, Finke, "Mystical
 Bodies and the Dialogics of Vision," 35.

produced offers the reader instruction in how to do the same.⁴⁶⁶ As Catherine Muller has said, “Elle sert de modèle et de miroir au lecteur comme le Christ lui avait servi d’esemplaire...”⁴⁶⁷ This is effected by the very model of writing and her description of it in the *Speculum*, by the model of contemplation the text describes, and by the act of reading itself, which the message of the text proposes, is already a means to an altered state of being and relationship with God.

The *Speculum*’s *exordium* claims that Marguerite writes for her correspondent because the recipient claims to feel better upon hearing stories which tell of God’s graces. The grace recounted in the *Speculum* is one of the merging of grace and writing itself:

Citi creatura, per la graci de Nostre	By the grace of Our Lord, this creature had
Seignor, aveit escrit en son cor la seinti via	inscribed on her heart the holy life that
que Deus Jhesu Criz menet en terra et sos	God, Jesus Christ led on earth, his good
bons exemplos et sa bona doctrina. E	example and good teaching. So firmly had
aveyt illi ⁴⁶⁸ meis lo douz Jhesu Crit en son	she placed sweet Jesus Christ in her heart
cor que oy li eret semblanz alcuna veis que	that it sometimes seemed to her that he was
il li fut presenz e que il tenit un livro clos	present and that in his hand he held a
en sa mayn per liey ensennier. ⁴⁶⁹	closed book for teaching.

⁴⁶⁷ Catherine M. Muller, *Marguerite Porete et Marguerite d’Oingt de L’autre Côté du Miroir*, Currents in Comparative Romance Languages and Literatures, Vol. 72 (New York: P. Lang, 1999) 56.

⁴⁶⁸ ms pr.: e avia tant mes

⁴⁶⁹ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d’Oingt* 90.

Marguerite paints an image of a heart inscribed with the three *materiae* any good religious must study: the story of Christ's life, the lessons of his life, and his doctrine. Inside this heart with tattoos the girl nestles the sweet Jesus. The intensity of his presence becomes the sensation that he is presenting himself to her with a book in his hand to teach her. Bringing the sweet Jesus into your heart invites not only his presence but his teaching and this in the form of a book.

The image which opens Marguerite's *Speculum* emphasizes the link between text and an embodied experience of the divine. Throughout the *Speculum*, text, the flesh, and imagining or contemplation switch roles or functions. Marguerite emphasizes the power that imagining, envisioning, or seeing the divine will have suggesting it will necessarily lead the onlooker into love, just as any troubadour would say of his *domna*. However, Marguerite d'Oingt turns this imaginative contemplation into a type of reading. As Elizabeth Petroff has pointed out when considering Marguerite in the context of other female visionary writers Marguerite "brings ... the idea that the visionary is not a vessel but a text, a body in whom or on whom a text is inscribed."⁴⁷⁰ The body described in this opening with its embossed heart, functions as the page, the book, but not quite the text. That is to say, it carries the letters but Marguerite does not read off the heart. Their meaning is never revealed nor their message conveyed. Instead the engraved casing opens to reveal another image and another collection of letters on a book held by Christ.

The next paragraph describes the book, and the letters it carries,

⁴⁷⁰ Elizabeth Petroff, "Women's Bodies and the Experience of Writing," *Vox Benedictina* 8.1 (1991): 109.

Ciz livros eret toz escritz per defor de letres	This book was written all over on the
blanches, neyres, et vermeylles; li fe[r]mel	outside with white letters, black ones, and
del livro errant escrit de letres d'or. ⁴⁷¹	red, the clasps of the book were written
	[on] with gold letters.

She does not reveal what the letters say. Instead Marguerite describes the book and even the letters as though they were not a meaningful text at all but a piece of art, a painting an image; just as Julian of Norwich seemed to speak with the language used for describing a painting to describe her dream vision, Marguerite here speaks of this book and the letters that adorn its cover as though she sees them as an image in a painting. Marguerite designates the meaning of the letters by referring to their color rather than their configuration into meaningful words or phrases:

En les letres blanches eret escrita li sancta	In the white letters was written the holy life
conversations al beneit fil Deu, li quaus fut	of the blessed son of God which was all
tota blanchi per sa tres grant innocenti et	white because of his great innocence and
per ses saintes ovres. ⁴⁷²	his holy deeds.

The sign's power to signify is altered in such a way that the congruence between signifier and signified no longer functions in accord with a sign's producing a meaning that matches, however imperfectly, or points to its signified. Instead Marguerite gives not a word of the "text" written in white. The letters' color matches their signified: Christ's saintly life of innocence and holy

⁴⁷¹ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 90.

⁴⁷² Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 90.

deeds. We expect painting to work this way, not text. She continues her description indicating that,

[e]n les neyres errant escrit li col et les	In the black letters were written the blows
temples et les ordures que li Jue li gitavont	that the Jews threw in his holy face and on
en sa sainti faci et per son noble cors, tant	his noble body so much that he looked like
que il semblevet ester meseuz. En les	a leper. In the red were written the wounds
vermelles errant escrite les plaes et li	and the precious blood that was poured out
pretious sans qui fut espanchies per nos. ⁴⁷³	for us.

Though she does not tell us what the letters spell out for the white, black or red letters, she does tell us what is written on the clasps of the book in gold:

En l'un aveyt escrit: 'Deus erite omnia in	On the one was written: God is all in
omnibus'. En l'autre aveit escrit: 'Mirabilis	everything. On the other was written:
Deus in sanctis suis'. ⁴⁷⁴	'Mirabilis Deus in sanctis suis.'

The two truths that hold the book closed are succinct enough to be spelled out for the reader of Marguerite's text. For the others she says she can only tell,

⁴⁷³ Durauffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 90.

⁴⁷⁴ Durauffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 92.

briament coment ci creatura se estudievet en cet livro. ⁴⁷⁵	Briefly how this creature applied herself to the study of this book.
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Marguerite depicts for us the image of the girl beginning her study of the book and yet there is no mention of reading or of a book at all,

Quant veneit lo matin, illi comencavet a pensar coment li beneyz fiuz Deu volit desendre en la miseri de ce mont... ⁴⁷⁶	When morning came she began to think how the blessed son of God wished to descend to the misery of this world.
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As the description continues, Marguerite employs the verb *pensar* repeatedly:

Après illi pensave la grant humilita que fut en luy. Et pui pensave coment il vocit ester persegus toz jors. Après pensave en sa grant poureta... ⁴⁷⁷	Afterwards she thought in the great humility that was in him. And then thought of how he wanted to be persecuted. Afterwards she thought about his great poverty.
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⁴⁷⁵ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 92.

⁴⁷⁶ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 92.

⁴⁷⁷ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 92.

To follow the model of this girl who carries in her heart a Jesus who holds a book, one need not have a book to read, but instead simply contemplate the nature, desires, and doings of Christ the word.

As Marguerite d'Oingt moves into the next step, the image of the book returns and the prioress speaks of reading:

Quant illi aveyt ben regarda cet livro, illi	When she had taken a good look at <i>cet</i>
comencavet a liere el livro de sa	<i>livro</i> that book, she began to read in the
concienci... ⁴⁷⁸	book of her conscience.

The antecedent for “*cet*” *livro* is then the being and doings of Christ. His life on earth is a book and one to be looked at, contemplated. Our own human conscience takes the form of Christ’s image so that Marguerite calls it a book. While many theologians and mystics have spoken of man being made in the image of God by borrowing metaphors based on images, Marguerite has chosen the metaphor of a book. Just as Meister Eckhart speaks of man as a grimy mirror image of God, Marguerite too notes that the image she speaks of is not perfect—the book of the visionary’s conscience does not match the one she had been studying.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 92.

⁴⁷⁹

Quant illi regardavet la humilita Jhesu Crit, illi se trovavet tota pleyna d'eguel. Quant illi pensavet qu'il volit ester mesprisies et persegus, illi trovavet en se tot lo contrayrio. Duraffour, <i>Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt</i> 92.	When she looked at the humility of Christ, she found herself full of pride. When she thought how he had wished to be despised and persecuted, she found that she was tot lo contrayrio/ the complete opposite
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The elements of character, the desires Christ has, find their opposites in Marguerite's book. Other qualities of the Divine she lacks altogether, "Quant illi regardavet sa pacienci, illi no trovavet point en sei," and others she has in lesser degrees "Quant illi pensavet coment il fut obediens tan que a la mort, illi ne trovavet pas si bien obediens coment mestiers li fut."⁴⁸⁰ Marguerite clarifies for her reader at this point that all these qualities that she has described: "Co erunt les letres blanches, en que eret escrit li conversations al beneit fil Deu."⁴⁸¹ Once Marguerite has compared her own letters to those of Christ's qualities, she "se perforsavet de l'emendar tan come illi puet a l'esemployre de la via Jhesu Christ."⁴⁸² Chapter one closes with the reader's gaze focused on this scene of contemplative reading of a book and a life.

Marguerite's account thus far has not touched on the contents of the interior of the book in Christ's hand. She has only described the heart of the religious, inscribed with letters, holding inside Christ who holds a book, and the external features of that book and how the visionary studies the outer binding and clasps of the book. The religious "estudiavet grant teins" and then "Quant illi ne s'en prit garda oy li fut senblanz que li livros se uvrit"⁴⁸³ Marguerite tells us "Cit

⁴⁸⁰ When she looked at his patience, she found none in herself...when she thought of how obedient he was, unto death even, she found herself not as obedient as was necessary. Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 92.

⁴⁸¹ These were the white letters in which was written the life of the blessed son of God. Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 92.

⁴⁸² She put herself to emend them as best she could a l'esemployre, according to the image/example of the life of Jesus Christ, Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 92.

⁴⁸³ When she did not notice, it seemed as though the book opened itself. Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 94.

livros fut dedinz come uns beauz mirrors, et no hy aveit fors que due pages”⁴⁸⁴ Her description can only go so far, for she claims,

De co que illi vit dedenz lo livro, jo ne vo	Of that which she saw inside the book I do
conteray pas mout, quar jo no hay cor qui	not want to tell too much, for I do not have
lo puit pensar, ne bochi qui lo sout devisar.	a heart capable of thinking of it nor a
Tot ades jo vos direy alcon petit si Deus me	mouth that can describe it. Nonetheless I
donet la graci.” ⁴⁸⁵	will tell you a little bit of it if God gives me
	this grace.

We now see why it was that when discussing the letters on the book’s cover, text, word, and a linguistic means of signifying generally, had been left aside in favor of a notion of letters as image, and a means of reaching understanding and a closeness to the divine based on the verb “*pensar*” rather than “*liere*.” The visionary was to imagine, envision the scenes from Christ’s life rather than confide in language. To fall prey to the meaning of linguistic constructs without recognizing the degrees of separation inevitable between the words that speak God and God himself, is to risk misplacing one’s faith in the worldly, in language. Marguerite d’Oingt’s *Speculum* problematizes language even while valorizing the book and writing, producing text for her own well-being and for that of her reader. When speaking of the cover she focuses on the plasticity of language, language qua colored shapes. The book’s interior abandons all trace of

⁴⁸⁴ The book was inside as a beautiful mirror and there were no more than two pages. Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d’Oingt* 94.

⁴⁸⁵ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d’Oingt* 94.

linguistic means of signifying or pointing the reader towards the divine. The book's interior displays nothing but image or likeness "semblanz" a mirror, an image. Marguerite instructs her reader to "*pensar*"

Or pensas que en luy ha d'autres biens	Now think that all other good is
avoy cetuy. Et co est li escriptura qui eret	contained in him. He is all that one may
escripta el premier fermel del livro ou	think and desire in all the saints. And this
aveit escrit "deus erit omnia in omnibus.	is the inscription that was on the first
486	clasp of the book where it was written,
	"God shall be all in all."

Marguerite d'Oingt creates in the *Speculum* a variety of means to perform such reflection; she provides a text to read and consider, images to contemplate, and a notion of the body as a place on which to explore the experience of Christ. Not only does her text provide all of these methods for the practicante to employ, the story of the visionary and her practices model for the reader a complete meditative regime to follow.

The third chapter breaks this chain of scenes and images to speak of another visionary experience altogether. Christ appears in all his glory and from his glorious wounds comes light.

The face will be gazed upon by any who happen to be so lucky as to see it:

Sa faci eret si tres graciouse que li angel	His face, was so graceful that the angels
qui l'aveiant contempla de que il furont	who contemplated it since their creation
crea non se puyant solar de luy regarder,	could not pull themselves from looking at

⁴⁸⁶ Durauffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite D'Oingt* 96.

mais lo desirravont a regarder.⁴⁸⁷

him, but desired to look upon it.

While Angela da Foligno consistently stresses the fact that she was in prayer or had turned to God in some way and only then been given a vision of the divine, Marguerite d'Oingt follows the idea so often found in troubadour lyric that the beloved's beauty is a force that one cannot help but turn toward. Like troubadours who suggest that proximity with the *domna*, or contemplation of her image near or far can bring *cortezia*, Marguerite suggests that looking at Christ's body brings love,

Certes qui penseroyt et regarderoyt sa beuta	Certainly, he who imagines and sees his
et la bonta que est en lui, on l'amerit tant	beauty and the goodness that is in him, will
que totes atres choses li sariont amares.	love him so much that all else will seem
Quar el est si bons et si douz et si corteis	bitter. For he is so good and sweet and
que tot quanque il a de bein il ha dona et	courtly that he has shared all that is good in
parti a ses amis. ⁴⁸⁸	him with his friends.

Marguerite's suggestion parallels entirely the suggestions by troubadours who also claim that beholding the body of the noble beloved *domna* can reveal that all goodness is in her and all others and indeed everything else compared with her seems tarnished.

The *Speculum* closes by summing up the lesson of Marguerite d'Oingt's text:

⁴⁸⁷ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 98.

⁴⁸⁸ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 98.

Certes jo ne croy que el mont ait cor si	Certainly I do not think that there can be a
freyt, se il saveyt bien penser et cogneitre	heart so cold in the world that did he know
la tre grant beuta de Nostrum Segnour, que	how to think well and recognize the very
il no fu toz embrasas d'amour. ⁴⁸⁹	great beauty of Our Lord, that it would not
	be overcome by love.

Like Bernart de Ventadorn and the other troubadours who sing of awe-inspiring ladies, the nature of the beloved is such that love is simply inevitable.

Through contemplating the pieces of the image she has depicted, the image that is the reality of God and his creation, one arrives naturally at the words that speak the truth. God is all, the only words Marguerite reads off the book held by Christ in the contemplative's heart.

⁴⁸⁹ Duraffour, *Les Oeuvres de Marguerite d'Oingt* 102.

CHAPTER 7: THE LOVER *RAFFINNÉE* OF COURTLY LITERATURE BECOMES THE SOUL *ANIENTIE* OF THE BEGUINES AND MARGUERITE PORETE

Concluding the Dissertation Uniting Mystical and Fin' Amors Writing

The final chapter of this dissertation studies a single mystic, Marguerite Porete, and yet can be viewed as a type of closing of the circle or conclusion to the processes of self-negation and the relationship between mysticism and *fin' amors*.

In previous chapters I have simply outlined the particularities of writing and thematics in the works of troubadours and mystics suggesting that it is their relation to the goal of negating the self that provides an explanation to the similarities between the two literary traditions. While direct allusions to the tradition of the troubadours were not a part of constructing grounds for comparison in these previous chapters, explicit allusions to *fin' amors* and courtly stories of love are fundamental part of Marguerite Porete's project. While modern scholars might struggle to pinpoint the exact why and wherefore that will allow them to explain the somehow the link between the courtly and mystical traditions in the period of the twelfth to the fourteenth or even fifteenth centuries, such preoccupations with justifying the link, providing a grounds for comparison, did not preoccupy Marguerite. She wants to speak of a soul that reduces itself to nothing and without worrying about why it might be the case, she turns to the language of *fin' amors*, pulling language, images, and more from the varied literatures of *fin' amors* and courtly love.⁴⁹⁰

⁴⁹⁰ Given recent scholarship highlighting the ambiguities regarding the term and concept of courtly love, I prefer to speak of *fin' amors* when referring to the refined love of the troubadours of the classic period. The term courtly love I reserve for the very broad category of love as it is

The Beguines and the Heresy of the Free Spirit

The "new mysticism" outlined by McGinn took a particular form in the region of the Low Countries, the Rhineland, and northern France after Cistercian and Premonstratensian inspiration left women seeking a life of piety and community.⁴⁹¹ A distinct type of religious society forms outside the cloister even as these "religious" attempt to live according to apostolic dictates: performing acts of charity, living in poverty, fasting, and piety. Small households of less than a half dozen allowed women thus inclined to pursue a pious life while working collectively for themselves and for charity. Even so the beguine life is not strictly defined for a great variety of possible lifestyles and living arrangements were congruent with a pious lifestyle exercised in the world. Ellen Babinsky calls this a "between status" that was a, "sort of middle way between ecclesiastical orders and lay status, living the religious life in chastity and in communities organized by house rules to which members vowed obedience."⁴⁹² These "in between" women and the beguine movement as a whole had the respect of some religious figures from various orders and through the different levels of the religious hierarchy. They likewise garnered the criticism from an equally varied public. While Jacques de Vitry, biographer of Marie d'Oignies,

found in literature produced for the courts from the lyrics to the romances and allegories or treatises.

⁴⁹¹ A theological focus on the three most well-known Beguines, Hadewijch of Antwerp Mechthild of Magdeburg, and Marguerite Porete can be found in Chapter five of Bernard McGinn's *The Flowering of Mysticism*. Indeed because the beguines were not a formal order discussion of beguinage tends to be focalized through one or more important figures who left testimony in the form of their own writing or the writings of their biographers (as in the case of Marie d'Oignes and Jacques de Vity) or confessors. Most lengthy studies on Marguerite Porete and editions of her *Mirouer* include introductions to the beguines.

⁴⁹² Ellen Babinsky, *Marguerite Porete, The Mirror of Simple Souls* 8.

stood as a defender of the beguines, they faced a serious threat in the personage of Guillaume de Saint-Amour, author of polemical texts including *De periculis novissimorum temporum*.⁴⁹³ This trajectory of freedom and creativity ultimately stamped out by an anxiety with new, unbridled orders and unchecked profusion of thoughts on the godhead and religious experience is the very trajectory of Marguerite Porete and her work.

The Tradition of Fin' Amors in Mysticism before Marguerite Porete

Marguerite's adoption of the courtly model of love to understand and describe the love of the divine is not a completely unique invention. As many scholars have recently been urging, we must remember that the realms of the sacred and the secular were not so starkly separated in the minds of medieval thinkers;⁴⁹⁴ furthermore, those who preoccupied themselves with one more than the other nonetheless moved between courtly and religious circles dispersing some views and picking up those of others. In the mid- twelfth century Richard of Saint-Victor opens the door for the willful appropriation of courtly models of love when he uses the same language, the same steps, "gradus" to speak of earthly love of humans for each other and love of God. In Richard of Saint-Victor's *Tractatus de quatuor gradibus violentae charitatis*, this student of Hugh of Saint-Victor begins outlining four stages of love in such a way that anyone familiar with the love of contemporary courtly lyric and romance could recognize the features of this courtly love in his description. The treatise begins with the familiar outcry of the lover: "vulnerata

⁴⁹³ The *De Periculis* has been recently edited: G. Geltner, *William of Saint-Amour, De periculis novissimorum temporum*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2008).

⁴⁹⁴ Michelle Bolduc's work, *The Medieval Poetics of Contraries*, makes a case for realigning our perspective on the separation between sacred and profane in the Middle Ages. Michelle Bolduc. *The Medieval Poetics of Contraries*. (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida) 2006.

charitate ego sum.”⁴⁹⁵ To be wounded by love is the first degree of love in Richard’s account just as it is in so many of the songs of *fin’ amors* sung by troubadours. The following degrees are also applicable to contemporary secular accounts of the love experience: the second degree is binding love, the third is a paralyzing or languishing love, and the fourth degree of love is that of annihilation—the self is completely burned. What is of particular interest to me is that once Richard has outlined the four degrees of love, he takes the time to compare the significance of each degree of love as it pertains to love between man and woman and the love of the soul for God. It is not that the nature of love is different in the two; nor is it that the stages are different, rather Richard explains that the purpose of the degrees, the feeling of the experience of the degrees is what is different in earthly love.

Hi quatuor amoris gradus aliter se habent in	These four degrees of love are not grouped
affectibus divinis, atque aliter in affectibus	in divine love as they are in human love,
humanis, atque omnino aliter se habent in	and the degrees of spiritual desires are
desideriis spiritualibus, et in desideriiis	altogether different from those of the
carnalibus. ⁴⁹⁶	desires of the flesh. ⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁵ I am wounded by love. All selections from Richard of Saint-Victor are from the *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 196, J. P. Migne and Theodor Hopfner, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus; Omnium Ss Patrum, Doctorum Scriptorumque Ecclesiasticorum* (Paris: 1857) (col. 1207 C). This text will be referred to as Richard, *Quatuor Gradibus* in the future.

⁴⁹⁶ *Quatuor Gradibus* (col. 1214B).

⁴⁹⁷ Translation taken from, *Richard of Saint-Victor, Selected Writings on Contemplation*. Trans. Clare Kirchberger. (London: Farber and Farber, 1957).

Richard of Saint-Victor explains the way we should understand the stages of love, their meaning and feeling, and how it is the stages might be the same for both earthly and divine love and yet mean two very different things for each.

Scimus quia in humanis affectibus	We know that among human affections
conjugalis amor primum locum tenere	conjugal love must take the first place
debet, et idcirco in nuptiali toro ille amoris	therefore in wedded life, that degree of love
gradus bonus esse valet qui omnibus aliis	which generally dominates all other
affectibus dominari solet... Primus ergo	affections seems to be good... Therefore,
gradus in humanis, ut dictum est, affectibus	the first degree in human affections is good
bonus esse potest, nam secundus absque	but the second is certainly bad. ...But the
dubio malus est... Tertius autem ille	third degree of love which excludes every
[Col.1214C] amoris gradus qui omnem	other affection is not only bad, but begins
aliud affectum excludit, non solum est	to be bitter, when it is impossible to enjoy
malus, imo etiam incipit esse amarus; cum	one's desire according to one's desire and
voto suo semper pro voto frui impossibile	one cannot be consoled by any other thing.
sit, et ex alia aliqua re consolationem	And the fourth degree is worst of all, as we
recipere non possit. Quartus autem gradus,	have said. What can be worse than that
ut diximus, omnium est pessimus. Quid illo	which makes a soul not only bad but
pejus inveniri possit quod animam non	miserable also? And what is more
solum malum, sed et miseram reddit? Quid	miserable than always to be plagued by
miserabilius quam ejus rei desiderio	desire for a thing, the fruit of which can
semper fatigari cujus fructu nunquam	never satisfy? ... So this last degree of

possis satiari? [Col. 1214C] ... Hic itaque love belonging to human desires is worst of
 ultimus amoris gradus in humanis all but in spiritual affections it is highest of
 desideriiis omnium pessimus est, in divinis all.⁴⁹⁹
 autem affectibus, ut dictum est, omnium est
 praecipuus.⁴⁹⁸

While Richard's description of love and its stages could have been pulled from the songs of languishing poet-lovers, and he does make an explicit comparison between earthly and divine love, Richard does not refer to *fin' amors* or courtliness or courtly literature. Despite this, from such a comparison it is but a small step to arrive at a more focused effort to bring together the language of the type of love defined in the courtly culture of the period with the love of God. Indeed it is the reversals of desire that Richard stresses but already in the Beguine literature that comes in only one score after the great bliss of a fulfilled desire is put off until after a period in which the mystic does feel the very suffering, the "douche souffranché" of the courtly lover. McGinn suggests that the *amor de lonh* was in fact one of the most important of the characteristics borrowed by Beguine mystics, "The mystics did not need the troubadours to inform them about the role of longing for the absent Beloved as integral to the experience of love...for some thirteenth-century women longing seems to become more important than possession."⁵⁰⁰ And yet it would seem that these mystics did take many lessons in love from the songbook of the troubadours and *trouvères*. In the borrowing of courtly motifs Marguerite Porete is not first for a hybrid text produced in the mid-thirteenth century brings together pieces

⁴⁹⁸ *Quatuor Gradibus* (col. 1214C).

from secular lyric, the Bible, and exegetical works to explain both the way to flee earthly love and the way to instill divine desiring. The Cistercian Gérard de Liège, author of five texts including his perhaps more familiar *De doctrina cordis*, interjects these texts produced in Latin with French words and entire phrases of multiple lines because he recognizes that the lines that describe *fin' amors* apply perfectly (perhaps more perfectly he would insist) to the love of the divine. His borrowings from the *trouvères* slip perfectly into his discussion of God because the courtly language of love fits the theological: “scilicet amorem diuinum, *de quoi toute ioie uient et totius solas*—unde dicit quod amor est causa totius iocunditatis...”⁵⁰¹ To explain that one can foster the love of God Gérard de Liège uses the language of courtly love, and not figuratively, not simply adopting the themes and motifs, but by literally code-switching from Latin to French, and French lines taken from courtly love songs.⁵⁰²

Gérard seems as free of anxiety in his translation or transposition of the courtly into the mystical as will Marguerite Porete fifty years or so later. Not only can he pull lines from love songs to explain the experience of divine love, but he can transpose the physicality of earthly love in much the same way lovers of *l'amor de lonh* had to do with their distant beloveds:

⁴⁹⁹ Richard of Saint-Victor, trans. Kirchberger.

⁵⁰⁰ Bernard McGinn, *The Flowering of Mysticism* 169.

⁵⁰¹ Of course, divine love, from which all love comes and all pleasure, for which it is said that love is the cause of all joy. Gérard de Liège, "Les Traités de Gérard de Liège Sur L'amour Illicite Et Sur L'amour de Dieu," *Analecta Reginensia: Extraits des Manuscrits Latins de La Reine Christine Conservés Au Vatican*, ed. André Wilmart, Studi E Testi 59 (Rome: Vatican, 1933).

⁵⁰² For a more detailed account of this practice see the article Carlson, David. "Religion and Romance: The Languages of Love in the Treatises of Gerard de Liege and the Case of Andreas Capellanus." *Poetics of Love*. Ed. Moshe and Norris J. Lacy Lazar. (Fairfax: George Mason U P, 1989) 81-91.

Verum est quod anima membra non habet sicut corpus. Sed tamen
effectus multiplices habet ad modum membrorum. Amplexatur enim
anima deum et tenet per obedientiam et per patientiam quasi duobus
brachiis, ...⁵⁰³

While Gérard transposes the arms and limbs of the physical caress into the embrace of obedience and submission, the troubadours could be said to have done no less as they strove to demonstrate and even enjoy their love through full submission and service to the *domna*. It is building on this practice that Peter Dronke is able to suggest that the language of mystics is a simple “transference” of the language of earthly love:

It is easy to see at once to how great an extent such language [that of mystics and even theologians] is simply a transference of that used by human lovers. How could it be otherwise? How else could a transcendent love be in any way communicated? What other area of human experience would be more accessible or more relevant to it? Implicitly then, through the very need of communication, human and divine love are here in a sense reconciled.⁵⁰⁴

In such a declaration the power of language, the role of the word in the creation of experience, has been denied. What Dronke asks, how else an experience could be “communicated,” implies already that the only reason for a linguistic borrowing is one of communication, the expression

⁵⁰³ Wilmart, "Traité de Gérard de Liège," 244.

⁵⁰⁴ Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon P., 1968) 58.

of an experience already complete and understood. It is communication, the attempt to share with another human an experience, that explains, even demands the overlap of language in the texts of mystics and *fin' amants*. For Dronke the motive of communicating an experience suffices to explain his second point in his discussion of mystical/courtly linguistic coincidence. The “point” for Dronke is not a question of wherefore but simply happening for he says, “the second point is this: that a wealth not merely of love-language, but of precisely that kind of love-language which is most consonant with *amour courtois*, had accumulated over the centuries in the mystical and theological tradition itself.” Dronke does not explain *why* this might be the case, that is what the metaphysical reality or psychological reality or contemporary understandings might be that would allow for this fact. Instead, he goes on to say that, “This is to me the most striking thing that emerges from Gérard’s juxtapositions: the more deeply religious the language, the closer it is to the language of *courtoisie*.”⁵⁰⁵ The *why* is not striking to Dronke; It is the possibility, the fact that there is a realm where the reasoning, the *why*, is not striking, revolutionary, or odd. It has been my intention in this dissertation to turn the focus onto that “why,” to discover the reasoning, the theology, metaphysics, or linguistic theories that do allow for the overlap in language to exist between mystical and courtly literatures and to exist without revolution or anxiety. It is only because the goal of self-annihilation is so clear to both types of lovers, and the role of language so crucial to this goal according to both traditions, that the two discourses leave us with the same textual traces. The two discourses are as one linguistic phenomenon. For this reason ca. 1250 Gérard de Liège was able to insert lines in French lifted from secular love lyric alongside quotations from the Bible. It is for this reason that fifty years later the anonymous author of the *Rigle des fins amans* felt the language—and again both *langue*

⁵⁰⁵ Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric* 62.

and *langage*—of the *trouvères* appropriate for the compilation of rules for Beguines written “en l’onneur del roi de la roine des angles.”⁵⁰⁶ The *rigles* and ordinaries of the Beguines does not equivocate about the object of the *fin’ amans’* affections, “fin amant sunt apelé cil et celes qui dieu ainment finement”⁵⁰⁷ begins the text under the rubric “Qu’est fine amors.” While for Richard of Saint Victor the difference between divine and human love was merely one of the experience or significance of the degrees—the end of love being more pleasurable when the love object is divine while the first stage is more enjoyable in human love—and for Gérard de Liège the love of ladies produced a language perfectly apt to speak of the love of God, the anonymous thirteenth century author of the *Rigle* suggests that the degrees of love or refinement are greater in those who love God, “Beguinaiges est li orders des fin amans.” And also:

Cist .xii. signe sont tous jours en vraie	These twelve signs of love are always in
amor et en fins amans. Les beguines les ont	the true love of fine lovers. The Beguines
plus vraiment que les autres gens. Car eles	have them more truly than other people.
les ont esperitueument. ⁵⁰⁸	This because they have them spiritually.

He then expands on this saying:

Quele merveille, se eles ainment plus	What surprise is there if they love more
vertueument et plus fermement et miex	virtuously and more firmly and know better

⁵⁰⁶ Karl Christ, "La Règle des Fins Amans: Eine Beginenregel Aus Dem Ende des XIII. Jahrhunderts," *Philologische Studien Aus Dem Romanisch-Germanishcen Kulturkreise: Festschrift Karl Voretzsch*, ed. B. Schädel and W. Mulertt (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1927) 192.

⁵⁰⁷ *Fin amant* are called all those (male or female) who love God with refinement. Christ, "La Règle des Fins Amans," 192.

⁵⁰⁸ Christ, "La Règle des Fins Amans," 194.

seven amer que nule autre, qu'eles sont de	how to love than anyone else, for they are
l'ordre as amans, si comme fu la	of the order of lovers, just as was
Madelainne qui Jhesucrist ama si	Madeleine whom Jesus Christ loved so
ardamment! ⁵⁰⁹	ardently!

The choice of the question, "Quele merveille, se eles ainment plus vertueument...?" with its answer following a causal "que" is structurally and conceptually reminiscent of one of the most widely-known troubadour songs. Bernart de Ventadorn begins one of his songs saying:

Non es meravelha s'eu chan	It is no wonder if I sing
melhs de nul autre chantador,	Better than any other singer,
que plus me tra-l cors vas amor	For love pulls my heart towards love
el melhs sui faihz a so coman. ⁵¹⁰	And I am better made to follow its
	command.

The coincidence between the author's words and those of Bernart de Ventadorn is remarkable and not in the least because though the second part of the equation, the cause for each being the best lovers is not quite the same, in neither case is it defined by the love object. While Etienne Gilson had claimed that the difference between mystic and troubadour lay in the insurmountable gulf that divides the human domain and God, that is not what appears in this diptych of perfect loving. While for the beguines their ability to love comes from an alignment with other lovers, that is, it has nothing to do with the beloved, for Bernart it is his susceptibility to Love itself that

⁵⁰⁹ Christ, "La Règle des Fins Amans," 194.

⁵¹⁰ Lazar, *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour*.

allows him to be the best lover (and so best troubadour). In fact this is not the only occasion Bernart seems to have been adopted by the religious author; it is hard not to remember Bernart de Ventadorn's claim that he could be carried off by thieves fully unawares if he is contemplating his beloved when the author of the *Rigles* describes the soul looking upon and contemplating Christ's glory in human form:

En pensant et mirant icele humanité vestue	While thinking and looking upon that
de gloire, ...: quant ame est fichié ensi en	humanity robed in glory...: when that soul
tele meditacion, nus des sens corpereus n'i	is thus focused in such meditation, none of
œuvre de son office, et ce apele on	his or her corporal senses are doing their
ravissement. ⁵¹¹	duty, and this is called rapture.

He has given name to Bernart's experience even if a name that is only truly appropriate in the case that the love object is divine. After providing examples from Biblical stories, the author of the treatise describes this state more fully saying, "Ele ne pooit soustenir les merveilles qu'ele veoit, si se pasma. Quant ame est en tel estat, lors est ele en contemplacion. Celle est la quarte espese d'orison."⁵¹²

Along with these elements indebted to the courtly tradition the text closes with an allegory reminiscent of the *Roman de la rose* followed by a closing lyric about the enflamed heart that longs for a distant paradise where her pleasure and beloved reign.⁵¹³ Barbara Newman

⁵¹¹ Christ, "La Règle des Fins Amans," 201.

⁵¹² She could not bear the marvels that she saw and so she fainted. When a soul is in such a state, then she is in contemplation. This is the fourth type of prayer. Christ, "La Règle des Fins Amans: Eine Beginenregel Aus Dem Ende des XIII. Jahrhunderts," 201.

claims that the *Rigles des fins amans*, “can be read as a typical or representative statement of a beguine ethos that by 1300 was widely shared.”⁵¹⁴ The courtly language of love has at this point been completely absorbed within the mystical tradition of the beguines creating what Barbara Newman calls a “*mystique courtoise*.”

Marguerite Porete

The details regarding Marguerite Porete's life can only be broached by the material left by her incredible trials and death.⁵¹⁵ At around the turn of the century, Marguerite Porete produced a text entitled, *Mirouer des simples ames anienties*. The text might have circulated in written form but was certainly also disseminated by Marguerite with public oral presentations. The bishop of Cambrai, Guy de Colmieu learns of Marguerite's preaching's and condemns the text, demanding it be burned in front of Marguerite in Valenciennes. He also declared that any

⁵¹³ For a discussion of the connection between this text, the *Roman de la rose* and Marguerite Porete see Barbara Newman, "The Mirror and the Rose: Marguerite Porete's Encounter with the Dieu D'amours," *The Vernacular Spirit: Essays on Medieval Religious Literature*, eds. Renate Blumenfeld-Kosinski, Duncan (ed. and introd.) Robertson and Nancy Bradley Warren, New Middle Ages (New York, NY: Palgrave, 2002).

⁵¹⁴ Barbara Newman, *From Virile Woman to Woman Christ: Studies in Medieval Religion and Literature*, Middle Ages Series (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995) 139.

⁵¹⁵ For an introduction to the trial materials see the brief account provided by *Le Mirouer's* English translator Ellen L. Babinsky, *Marguerite Porete The Mirror of Simple Souls*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1993) 20-26. Bernard McGinn also includes a brief presentation of Marguerite's trial and those concepts of her book that gave rise to it, *The Flowering of Mysticism* 244 ff. The trial documents themselves are in the Archives Nationales, J.428, *varia*. For the sentencing document see Archives Nationales J.428, # 15. The consultation of canon lawyers on May 30th of 1310 as well as the sentencing of Marguerite were published in the nineteenth century: Henry Charles Lea, *A History of the Inquisition in the Middle Ages*, 3 vols. (New York: n.p. 1887) 2: 575-78. For a compilation of trial documents and commentary see Paul Verdeyen, "Le Procès d'inquisition contre Marguerite Porete et Guiard de Cressonessart (1309-1310)" *Revue d'Histoire Ecclésiastique* 81 (1986) 47-94.

holding or disseminating the text could be excommunicated. Despite the unorthodoxy implied as well as the danger for herself, Marguerite continued spreading her word. Her choice to do so did not go unnoticed; she was persecuted by Guy de Colmieu's successor, Phillippe de Marigny, as well as inquisitors from various parts of France. The inquisitor of Paris, Guillaume Humbert, also known as Guillaume de Paris, calls for her arrest in 1308. She rejected all opportunities to repent or recant her pronouncements. In the spring of 1310, almost a year and a half later, Guillaume de Paris sends a list of articles extracted from her *Mirouer* to twenty-one regents of the University of Paris for examination. Guillaume then calls together five canon lawyers who declare her a relapsed heretic. When before the inquisitor she refuses to plead her case at all, not even taking the oath or testifying. In May Guillaume de Paris orders Marguerite Porete condemned to death and she is burned for having refused to desist from sending her work to theologians and beggars.

As noted above in the beginning of this chapter, when Marguerite Porete writes her *Mirouer*, other female religious have already been exposed not only to courtly songs and romances of earthly love, but to the transposition of the court's love into mystical or theological discussions of love. She begins the *Mirouer* with an exemplum that is nothing more than a romance told in summary just as *Li Rigles de fins amans* had ended.

Marguerite Porete highlights her debt to the love of courtly literature throughout her text. Marguerite's extremely complex text the full title of which reads: *Le Mirouer des simples ames anienties et qui seulement demourent en vouloir et desir d'amour*, already in the prologue makes a very direct reference to the tales of courtly love. The audience or reader is urged to listen to a tale of love just as courtiers might be called to draw their attention to a recital in court: "Or entendez par humilité ung petit exemple de l'amour du monde," but then the call to listen is

followed by another dictate, “et l’entendez aussi pareillement de la divine amour.”⁵¹⁶ The story is the stuff of courtly romance, and yet, Marguerite’s project of mystical experience and theological dissemination not only incorporates the piece, but places it at the beginning and suggests reading or listening to the story of worldly love offers lessons in how to read the *Mirouer* as a whole. She suggests this “petit exemple de l’amour du monde” speaks just as much of divine love as earthly.

The story tells of a damsel of great worth, heart, and nobility who hears tell of a courtly and noble King Alexander and her will immediately succumbs to the love of him. He is “si loing” however, that she could not see or hold him and suffered this “amour loingtaine” or *amor de lonh* that was nevertheless “prochaine ou dedans d’elle” so close because he was actually residing inside her. She decides that “par ymaginacion” she might lessen her pain and so has an image painted to represent the likeness of Alexander. The story concludes that “par le moyen de ceste ymage avec ses autres usages songa le roy mesmes.”⁵¹⁷ The elements of courtly love are undeniable: a *damoiselle* of nobility and a King of great worth geographically distant and yet brought into her heart by her love, imagination, and other means which allow her to experience union with him. The brief narrative incorporates the contradiction of the beloved’s distance while being carried within as it is expressed in the *fin’ amors* of Jaufré Rudel and Arnaut de Marueilh. It also introduces the idea that imagining transforms the lover in such a way that union is experienced, an idea also present in the lyrics of the troubadours and key to the

⁵¹⁶ Now listen to a little exempla of worldly love, and listen to it also as the same as divine love. We are using the facing page Latin and French editions produced in *Margaretæ Porete Speculum Simplicium Animarum*, trans. Romana Guarnieri and Paul Verdeyen, Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis; 69 (Turnholti: Brepols, 1986) 10.

⁵¹⁷ through this image and her other practices she dreamed (or imagined) herself with the king himself. Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 12.

mysticism of Angela da Foligno. Once the story is outlined in the *Mirouer*, the reader or listener is told that the soul which has become annihilated and reached union with the divine has followed the same trajectory as that of the exemplum “semblablement vrayement.”⁵¹⁸ The poem that opens the text urges her readers to listen carefully and warns that even theologians and scholars cannot grasp this writing. Marguerite consistently pits the knowledge of the learned against the wisdom that comes from Love’s instruction,

Humiliez don’t voz sciences	Humble then your wisdom
Qui sont de Raison fondees,	which is based on Reason,
Et mettez toutes vos fiances	and place all your trust
En celles qui sont donnees	in those things which are given
D’Amour, par Foy enluminees,	by Love, illuminated through Faith.
Et ainsy comprendrez ce livre	And thus you will understand this book
Qui d’Amour fait l’Ame vivre. ⁵¹⁹	which makes the Soul live by love.

If the listener proceeds with caution and love she will reach God. The book, we are told, will tell us how to follow this trajectory proposed as structurally identical to that of courtly love to reach a perfect, the annihilated state of being described by the book’s title:

Ils sont sept estres de noble estre,	There are seven states[ways of being] of
desquieulx creature reçoit ester, se elle se	noble being, of which the creature receives
dispouse a tous estres, ains qu’elle viengne	being, if she disposes herself to all ways of

⁵¹⁸ truly in the same way. Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 12.

⁵¹⁹ Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 8.

a parfait ester; et vous dirons comment, being, so that she comes to perfect being,
ains que ce livre fine.⁵²⁰ and we will tell you how by the time this
book ends.

Just as the courtly romance models for the listener or reader the route or process to courtliness, and so in theory, allows its audience to undergo a transformation by romance's end, so too will Marguerite's book lead the listener through the seven stages through the various chapters.

Marguerite Porete's doctrine follows a number of the laws of *fin' amors* as found in the lyrics of the troubadours and discussed in the second half of this dissertation. Like so many troubadours, Marguerite's text suggests that Love leads naturally to the urge to speak or even sing of it. The title alone attests to the importance of the image and the capacity to envision in the weakening of the self just as it was with Arnaut, Falquet, Marguerite d'Oingt, and Angela da Foligno. The love is the focus and the very means by which one is altered, *mué*, is clear throughout the text's many discussion of Love and Fine Love, but also because the dominant voice of wisdom is the allegorical figure named Amour. Just as Bernart de Ventadorn's main act of love and means of demonstrating love is his submission, his humility to the *domna*, so too, here is the most important step towards annihilating the soul and so reaching the divine, embracing humility. Humility at its most extreme manifests itself with a complete loss of personal will. The subservience of the troubadours is paralleled here and yet pushed even further to a point where reason is lost altogether as the central axis of the self; the will, has been abandoned. The end of the process leaves the Soul beyond the realm of the expressive. If will is truly lost, and so self, language no longer "works" as it normally does.

⁵²⁰ Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 14.

Indeed Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer*, just as does troubadour lyric before it, suggests that *Fine amour* naturally produces language, even a specialized language like lyric. In Chapter Six the Soul is described as having been transformed into loving by God and so does not need the Virtues (as odd as this sounds, the Soul does not need external instruction or counsel urging the bending of the will. The change is effected, much like what troubadours proclaim, because Love has introduced *courtoisie* into the Soul. When the Soul bids farewell to the Virtues she does so in song.

L'Ame: Je le vous confesse, dit ceste Ame,	The Soul: I confess to you, says this Soul,
dame Amour; ung temps fut que je y estoie,	Lady Love, at one time I was there, [in
mais ores en est il ung aultre; voustre	their service] but now it is another time;
courtoisie m'a mise hors de leur servage. Et	your courtliness has placed me outside
pource leur puis je maintenant bien dire et	their service. And for this reason I can
chanter :	now well say to them, and sing:
Vertuz, je prens congé de vous a tousjours	Virtues, I take my leave of you forever
Je en auray le cueur plus franc et plus	And so I will have a nobler and more joyful
gay ; ⁵²¹	heart.

The framework of the love relationship comes directly from the courtly model: Love brings courtliness to the lover and causes a transformation of being that includes rendering the lover's heart noble and bringing the lover the *fin' amant's joi*. The Soul sings a song intended to speak the truth of her experience. It is Love that frees her of Reason and the Virtues :

⁵²¹ Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 24.

Si beste estoie,	So beastly was I,
Ou temps que les servioie,	In the time when I was serving them,
Que ne le vous pourroie	That I could not express it
De mon cueur exprimer.	To you with my heart.
Et tandis que les servioie	And though I served them
Et que mieulx les amoye,	And that I loved them more,
Amour me fist par joie	Love made me through joie
D'elle oïr parler.	Here talk about Her.
Et non pour tant, si simple comme j'estoie,	And nonetheless, as simple as I was,
Combien que point ne le consideroie,	So much that I did not consider it,
Me print adonc couloir d'Amour amer. ⁵²²	It came upon me the desire to love Love.

When Love accepts this disciple the transformation takes place and the virtues are abandoned. While she brushes over the process of transformation itself, the state of the changed Soul is presented in terms (and in form as The Soul returns to the lyrical form) that remind the listener of the words of lovesick troubadours.

Penser plus ne m'y vault,	Thinking no longer holds worth for me,
Ne œuvre, ne loquence.	Nor works, nor speech.
Amour me trait si hault,	Love draws me so high,
(Penser plus ne m'y vault)	(Thinking no longer holds worth for me)

⁵²² Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 340.

⁵²³ Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 342.

De ses divins regars,
Que je n'ay nulle entente.
Penser plus ne m'y vault,
Ne œuvre ne loquence.⁵²³

With her divine gaze
That I have no intent.
Thinking no longer holds worth for me,
Nor works, nor words.

The song speaks of Love's power to draw the lover higher, to a more noble state, through the gaze just as we hear troubadours sing in songs written so many years before. Just as the selfish intentions and desires of the courtly lover are abandoned as he submits to his *Domna*, here the Soul loses all will, all interest in works as Love pulls her near and upward. Just as Bernart de Ventadorn speaks of losing his ability to speak, but finds that before the beloved and because of intense love he cannot but babble nonsense, even losing sense altogether, so too does the Soul described by Marguerite Porete lose the language that can be understood by Reason—a topic that recurs in Marguerite's text again and again. It is Love and the "noblesce" of Love that causes any words to be uttered, these words in verse not unlike Bernart de Ventadorn's own songs which he says, "mas Domna, Amors m'enliama, que-m fai dir soven e gen de vos manh vers avinen."⁵²⁴

The same sentiment is rendered in Marguerite Porete's *Mirouer* as follows:

Amour m'a fait par noblesce
Ces vers de chançon trouver.
C'est la Deité pure,

Love has made me through noblesse
These verses of a song compose.
It is the pure Deity

⁵²⁴ What's more, *Domna*, Love binds me and makes me speak so often and so sweetly of you many becoming verses. "Amors, enquera-us preyara" ll. 42-44, Lazar, *Bernart de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour*.

⁵²⁵ Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 342.

Dont Raison ne scet parler,
Et d'ung amy,
Que j'ay sans mere,
Qui est yssu
De Dieu le Pere
Et de Dieu le Filz aussi.
Son nom est le Saint Esperit,
Dont j'ay au cueur telle joincture,
Qu'il me fait joie mener.⁵²⁵

Of which Reason does not know how to
speak,
And of a lover,
That I have who is without mother,
Who issues from God the Father
And of God the Son as well.
His name is the Holy Spirit,
From which I have in my heart such a
union that it makes me follow joie.

Intertwined into this courtly language of an *amy* and *joie* we find the doctrine of the trinity, of Christ issued of the Father and who is the Holy Spirit. Despite knowing that nothing can be said that would make sense to Reason Marguerite cannot be quiet.

As discussed in Chapter two of the dissertation, Marguerite claims that the feeling of love somehow pushes the one who loves to words, however weak their power of expression proves:

Mais j'en vueil parler et n'en sçay que	But I want to speak about it and I don't
dire. Non pourtant, dame Amour, dist elle,	know what to say about it. Nevertheless,
mon amour est de tel arbiter, quie j'aime	Lady Love, she says, my love is so certain
mieulx a oïr chose mesdire de vous, que	that I would prefer to hear something
que on ne die aucune chose de vous. Et	slandorous about you than that one should
sans faille ce fais je: j'en mesdis, car tout	say nothing about you. And without fail I
ce que j'en dis n'est fors que mesdire de la	do this: I slander because everything I say

bonté de vous.⁵²⁶

is nothing but slander about your goodness.

Indeed the song of the Soul continues and continues because it is the great nature of the beloved that demands it, just as Gaucelm Faidit explains in a song that begins:

Ja non crezatz qu'ieu de chanter me lays	Do not think that I will leave off singing
Eras, quan vey que n'es locs e sazos,	now when I see that there is a time and
Ans gimáis dey pus soven far chansos	place for it, and in fact I should make songs
Quar silo don chan es tan belh' e tan guaya,	more often for she about whom I sing is so
Qu'ades m'eschai que per lieys sia guays;	beautiful and so joyful that it befits me well
E, per la belh'on joys creys et enansa,	to always be joyful because of her; and
Non puesc mudar qu'en chantan non	through this beauty my joy grows and
retraya	proceeds, I cannot help but to sketch in
Sa gran beutat e l sieu ric pretz valen,	song her great beauty and her worthy,
Que l ben qu'ieu fatz ven de lieys e	noble value,
dissen. ⁵²⁷	For the good that I do comes and descends
	from her.

In language so similar to that of troubadours, and indeed even referring to the very qualities referred to by troubadours in their explanation of the lady's worth that deserves song, The Soul exclaims:

⁵²⁶ Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 46.

⁵²⁷ Mouzat, *Les Poèmes de Gaucelm Faidit, Troubadour du XIIe Siècle* ll. 1-9.

Amis de gentil nature,
 Vous estes moult a louer:
 Large, courtoys sans mesure
 Somme de toute bonté,
 Vous ne voulez plus rien faire,
 Amy, sans ma volenté.
 Et aussi ne doy je taire
 Vostre beaulté et bonté.
 Puissant pour moy estes et sage,
 Cecy ne puis je celer.
 Hahay, a qui le diray je ?
 Seraphin n'en scet parler.⁵²⁸

Lover of gentle nature
 You have much to be praised:
 Generous, courteous, without measure,
 Sum of all goodness,
 You no longer wish to do anything
 Lover, without my will.
 And for this reason I should not be silent
 About your beauty and your goodness.
 Powerful you are for me, and wise,
 This I cannot hide.
 Ay, but to whom will I say so ?
 Seraphim do not know how to speak of it.

The urge to sing arises, the demand for song lies in the beloved's great worth, and yet, there is no "knowing" words that might speak of this great worth. The bankruptcy of language is known to troubadour and mystic alike, as we hear Bernart de Ventadorn explain,

Greu en sabrai mo melhs chاوزir,
 Si sas belas faissos mentau,
 Que res mas lauzars no-m abau
 E sas grans beutatz essernir.⁵²⁹

Hardly do I know the best words to choose
 If her beautiful features I wish to evoke,
 And nothing more than praising her and her
 great beauty describe becomes is what I
 should do.

⁵²⁸ Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 342.

While Bernart's song continues suggesting that it is the *lauzengiers* that worry him were he even able to sing as perfectly as he likes,

Res mais no m'en dezasegura!

Pois tant es douss' e fin' e pura,

Gran paor ai qu'azesme sa valor;

E lauzenger volon mo dan d'amor

E diran l'en be leu adiramen.⁵³⁰

Nothing makes me more insecure!

For so much is she sweet, and fine, and

pure, I have a great fear that she

underestimates her own worth;

And tattlers wanting to damage my love

and will easily talk her into mistrust.

As the Soul nears the end of her song it becomes clear that Marguerite worries about the inability of her words to stave off her own critics, and in fact recognizes that her preaching might indeed incite their anger:

Amis, que diront Beguines,

Et gens de religion,

Quant ilz orront l'excellence

De vostre divine chançon?

Beguines dient que je erre,

Prestres, clers, et prescheurs,

Augustins, et carmes,

Lover, what will the beguines say

And the men and women of religion

When they hear the excellence of

Your divine song?

Beguines say I err,

Priests, clerics, and preachers,

Augustinians, Carmelites,

⁵²⁹ "Be·m cuidei de chanter sofrir," ll. 28-31, Lazar, *Bernard de Ventadour, Chansons D'amour*.

⁵³⁰ ll. 32-36.

⁵³¹ Guarnieri, *Mirouer* 344, 46.

Et les freres mineurs,	And the Friars Minor,
Pource que j'escris de l'estre	Because I write of the being
De l'affinee Amour.	Of the refined Love.
Non fais saue leur Raison,	I do not save their Reason
Qui leur fait a moy ce dire.	Who makes them tell me this.
Desir, Vouloir, et Crainte,	Desire, Will, and Fear,
Certes leur toult la cognoissance,	Certainly lifts from them understanding,
Et l'affluence, et l'union	And the fluidity, and the union
De la haultiesme lumiere	With the highest light
D'ardour	Of the burning
De divine amour. ⁵³¹	Of the divine love.

Just as Bernart de Ventadorn and Raimbaut d'Aurenga attested that love makes the world upside down, makes frost seem a flower, reason seem folly, Marguerite suggests refined love is opposed to "their [man or the Church's] Reason." It is a declaration that harkens back to Paul's claim that what is reason on earth is unreason in the realm of the divine.

Those very elements of selfhood that Bernart entrusted to his beloved and that Angela stripped off before the crucifix are exactly what Marguerite Porete claims keep her critics from understanding *l'affinee Amour*, a term contiguous if not an exact translation of the troubadours' *fin' amor*. Not only the term but the concept and its elements of the penetration of the lover by the image of the beloved that inspires humility, loss of will, loss of reason, loss of language and apophasis or babble are all present in the mystical process and outlined in similar when not identical terms by Beguines and Marguerite Porete. If Marguerite Porete believed the language

of *fin' amors* was helpful in the mystical process, the result of which she calls annihilation, then we can follow her example and legitimize the comparison of troubadour love lyric and mystical writing.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As we have seen through the examinations undertaken here, each of the authors presented in this dissertation suggests that the love relationship is strong enough to change the nature of the loving subject. Moreover the ideal of love for all of these authors is to arrive at a state of nothingness before the all-powerful and awesome beloved. Though each author reaches a different point on the path to complete annihilation, the works of each suggest a variety of means of reaching the goal of self-negation. However, this work demonstrates that there are indeed structural or foundational similarities in the nature of love and self between lyrics of *fin' amors* and religious texts.

Of the many ways there are to conceive of selfhood, troubadours and mystics both find the self to be a malleable, fragile, and fragmented entity that can be shattered, undone, annihilated, or deconstructed. For both types of lovers the self is made up of the bodily, the mental, and the emotive. Each of these three elements come into play in the undoing of the self for these two groups.

One might expect the troubadours to share techniques in self-destruction and that these might differ from what we can find in the practice of religious figures. Instead we find that Arnaut de Mareulh's consistent return to the image of his beloved falls more closely in line with the contemplation of images in certain religious practices than with the *érotique* presented by Bernart de Ventadorn. In this the structure of the love relationship according to Arnaut resembles that of Angela da Foligno more than any other author in this dissertation.

This dissertation asks modern thinkers to reconsider the ideas that the subject is a modern invention and that it was Freud who first thought the mind, a person's psychology could be

altered through a variety of practices. In fact, it would seem that a consciousness or at least curiosity about the nature of the subject as a piecing together of incongruous parts would seem to be intrinsic to human experience. Discovering a way to work on the subject, to change the whole, would seem to be more natural than we might imagine. The means of altering the subject are not so different from one land to another one period to the next. The practices would follow the contours of the construction of self. It isn't because one master discovered a particular technique that others adopt it. In comparing mystics and troubadours we find that influence is not necessarily at the root of similar practices in self-negation. Indeed the means discussed here are to be found in a variety of traditions throughout various periods and in many lands. This dissertation stands as testimony that a comparison between literatures of the religious and secular sectors can prove useful. In particular the examination of troubadours and mystics can be fruitful.

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