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**The poetics of authorship in the later Middle Ages: The
emergence of the modern literary persona**

Kimmelman, Burt Joseph, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1991

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A

THE POETICS OF AUTHORSHIP IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES:

THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN LITERARY PERSONA

by

BURT KIMMELMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
English in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
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1991

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Abstract

THE POETICS OF AUTHORSHIP IN THE LATER MIDDLE AGES:
THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN LITERARY PERSONA

by

Burt Kimmelman

Adviser: Professor Allen Mandelbaum

Literary individualism manifested itself in the twelfth century both trivially and profoundly. Word puzzles and overt self-naming within a literary work, and discussions of the nature of poetry and the role of the poet in the world, increasingly considered the purpose and efficacy of writing and ultimately of language per se. Poets asserted themselves in their works not so much for the sake of self-promotion, in a modern sense, but to address and modulate contemporary intellectual and spiritual issues. Speculative grammar, nominalism and realism, often provided the material for poets such as Guillem IX, Marcabru, Dante, Chaucer and Langland. As literacy and Aristotelian logic became widespread, these poets contributed to a distinction being made between history and fiction; they employed contemporary ideas about language and its relationship to experience as both metaphor and theme. They elaborated a Western sensibility that had been articulated at least as early as Plato, Paul, and especially Augustine who

essentially viewed the world as a text. This basic metaphor ultimately formed the later medieval outlook; text, and language and/or discourse maintained fluid interrelationships. Moreover, Anselm had set aside Augustine's criterion of intentionality as the most important factor when determining falsehoods. Anselm recognized the separateness of language; statements could have a natural integrity despite their lack of objective reference. This autonomy of language formed the ground for individual poetic identity. In the face of a hierarchical authority inherited from the past, poets insisted upon their presence as individuals by aligning themselves with their texts. Marcabru writes about his difficulties in forging an eloquent text that will always be at a remove from him. Dante undertakes this theme through a fictional persona, who resembles himself and discourses with Virgil about the possibility of enunciating truth. Langland, finally, aligns author and persona with poetic theme in the name Will. In measuring dream and allegory against actual experience, Langland discusses the individual writer's will and his hope for salvation.

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"O de li altri poeti onore e lume,
vagliami 'l lungo studio e 'l grande amore
che m'ha fatto cercar lo tuo volume"

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for Diane, and Jane

"Tot iorn meillur et esmeri"

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"We may creaunce whil we have a name"

- The Shipman's Tale

The Poetics of Authorship in the Later Middle Ages:
The Emergence of the Modern Literary Persona

INTRODUCTION: The Poetics of Otherness

I

In the later Middle Ages contemporary beliefs about the nature of language, and its relationship to truth, unavoidably affected attempts to write both history and fiction. It is at this time that modern disciplines of thought first became distinct possibilities--or rather, it is at this time that an older, unified field of perception began to disintegrate, as it was subverted from within. In order to appreciate the magnitude of this transformation, a comparison might be made with struggles in the later twentieth century to define specific literary genres as well as broader categories. Recent poststructuralist thinking, for instance, questions the basic human impulse to retrieve from a past its vitality and whatever messages it might hold for scholar and citizen of the present. Poststructuralism makes possible a reassessment of the entire historiographical enterprise. Through the natural inclination to group and categorize, in the attempt to comprehend discrete events of a past time, the desire to historicize undoes its own best efforts

to arrive at truth.¹ In ideal terms, it can be said that truth is unique, univocal. Thus, history does not necessarily repeat itself--contrary to the adage that in effect stipulates basic historicist procedure. This perspective was first challenged by archetypalism and structuralism; the making of history inevitably came to be viewed as the shaping of the past, according to the desires and assumptions of the present. That is, the past may be beyond the ability of the historian to reach; employing the tools of the literatus, to describe his or her subject, the historian may not, in any absolute way, manage the past's rescue by endowing it with the writer's subjective presence. This debunking of the historical project becomes more pronounced with poststructuralism, which specifically demonstrates that our view of ourselves, of our "modern" world, need not depend on what is still widely held to be a fundamental and monumental change in the way people of the Western world lived and thought, a change that ostensibly occurred between 1300 and 1600.

Yet if in some sense history can repeat itself--if we can somehow learn from the events of our past through their flawed contemplation, as if in an

1. For a comprehensive summary of this problem, and its proposed viable solution, see Gabrielle M. Spiegel's "History, Historicism, and the Social Logic of the Text in the Middle Ages" in Speculum 65.1 (January 1990): 59-86.

imperfectly polished mirror--then it must be healthy periodically to review and to test the assumptions upon which our sense of history rests. What might we not "know" and what "mistakes" might we have made because of our admittedly limited self-conceptions? As Lee Paterson has eloquently stated, the conception of the modern Western world has depended on a "grand récit that organizes Western cultural history, the gigantic master narrative by which modernity identifies itself with the Renaissance"; moreover, this récit or formula "rejects the Middle Ages as by definition premodern." From the time of the Renaissance, "medieval pre-modernity has with few exceptions been experienced by modernity as 'Gothic'-- obscure, difficult, strange, alien" ("On the Margin" 92). Différance--deferral and difference--as Derrida would say, has on the other hand made for new historiographical approaches that take the recognition of alterity as their starting point in attempting descriptions of the perhaps chimerical past. We can presume the disappearance of the need for the overarching, definitive "master narrative" into which, by definition, the historian strives to fit all that there "is" within the "historical" purview.

The new approaches raise two issues that are central to my study. These issues are related, one leading inevitably to the other. Patterson strongly questions,

as I do, the widely held belief that, in Burckhardt's words, medieval "man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family or corporation--only through some general category" (The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy 81; in Paterson 95). Within the presently determined narrative, the self-vision to which we held fast, prestructuralist history-making allowed us the choice to ascribe to the Renaissance and deny to the Middle Ages "both a historical consciousness and a sense of individual selfhood"--as if such a sense, and with it the capacity for original thinking, were by definition the very gift of the Renaissance to the future (Patterson 93).

It is possible, however, to dispense with this cripplingly simplistic view, and in its place to present a notion of what for the moment might be called medieval individualism, as apparently self-contradictory as such a term may, for some, still be. Certainly, since the millenium, the Middle Ages knew of the individual and had a sense of history, as is well documented in theological and other, literary, documents of the time. Great strides in the philosophy of language occurred this period. The troubadours and other poets made the most extravagant claims for their individual abilities to compose better verse than that of their predecessors or contemporaries. Comprehensive

histories and encyclopedias were written in a unique attempt to gather, in a single embrace, the sum total of knowledge. There was no linguistic invention on the order of what in the Renaissance was meant by the term poetry, and for the medieval historian there could never be "a sense of the otherness and lostness of the past" (Patterson 93) that to a great extent accounts for the Renaissance and modern historical as well as literary sensibility. Yet the Middle Ages produced unique poetry that concerned itself with the individual poet's travail, his or her attempt to provide a fitting description of experience, and overall with the art of making literature. Witness Dante and his Virgil. And in its consideration of time, the Middle Ages provided, too, a scheme in which it could explain itself vis-à-vis the past; for this period "saw temporality as an unbroken continuity from past to present, which is why it consistently presented the elements of antique culture anachronistically" (Patterson 93).

This recognition brings me to the second, related issue, which is that, ironically, it has taken the urgency and vocabulary of a poststructuralist critique to reveal the very seeds of its epistemological approach in the theology cum philosophy of the Middle Ages. Early developments in epistemology in turn have made the vitality and indeed the modernity of this

latter period clearly evident. This symbiosis is most apparent in literary studies.

Since the 1960's, the influence of postmodernist theories has caused a radical reevaluation of medieval literature (as can be seen in the work of J. B. Allen, Colish, Finke, Hanning, Jordan, Leicester, Patterson, Vance, Zumthor, and many others). In textual studies the principle of alterity, for example, has taught that variants of a text can be valid in their own right. As Eugene Vance has recently shown, furthermore, a

necessity for medievalists to define relationships between variants of a given text extends to that of defining relationships between a single text and the network of other texts that constitutes its cultural horizon. (From Topic xxvii)

In this light, Judson Allen's comparison of medieval and modern esthetics is instructive:

The moral centre of most modern art is the value of the particular as such, taken either in the personalist sense exemplified by Wordsworth's Prelude, or in the verbal and lapidary sense most perfectly illustrated by "Twas brillig, and the slithy toves . . ." The two come together in Finnegans Wake, as the world of literature achieves perfect verbal solipsism. All these works, of course, make truth claims of various sorts, but they all have in common the axiomatic divisions of post-Renaissance times: life from art, mind from matter, science from religion, fact from value, word from thing. Whether these are accepted or opposed makes no difference; they are there. The medieval claim [for poetry, however,] presumes an axiomatic that these divisions do not exist--before Descartes, obviously, there was a profound sense in which they had not yet been thought of. (32)

An intuitive grasp of the human mind set prior to the advent of empiricism plays a crucial role in the work of a modern poet such as Ezra Pound, and in much of twentieth century thought. What is unique about the later twentieth century's reception of the Middle Ages is the response to what is quintessential in the earlier poetry. Consider Julia Kristeva: "Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations [and is] the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity" (66). At the climax of the Middle Ages poems begin overtly to present a consciousness of themselves; in this they look ahead to the "art for art's sake" credo of Modernism, which fully emerges out of the Renaissance. As we shall see, what Allen has called a "verbal solipsism," which he rightly claims is a sign if not a product of the modern world, may very well owe its existence to Anselm's recognition that statements, in and of themselves, enjoy an integrity or rather an internal logic of their own, quite apart from any objective reality. Perhaps it is not going too far to suggest that the way for Joyce's "solipsism" is prepared by Dante, who especially anticipates Kant's Einbildungskraft in the Paradiso's "ephemeral balance [l'equilibrio fuggente] between idea and symbol" (Mandelbaum Visione 35; my trans.). (Of course, for

many, Dante resides at the threshold of the modern world.)

There is a striking similarity between, particularly, the fourteenth and twentieth centuries. Both are eras of great change and uncertainty (cf. Le Goff 20-23). The one still had no precise, authentic notion of literary fiction, and the other has now arrived at an equivalence of fiction and fact in the crisis of genre that conflates poetry and prose and demystifies the fictive moment; to the deconstructionist the fictional text is no better or worse than a news article or a philosophical argument. Indeed, I would contend that a medieval linguistic breach is mirrored in the modern loss of faith in the ability of language or text to supply stable meanings, and it is here that we can locate the primary symptom of these centuries' many complementary upheavals. Dante has Adam say

Or, figliuol mio, non il gustar del legno
 fu per sé la cagion di tanto essilio,
 ma solamente il trapassar del segno
 (Par. XXVI 115-17, my italics)

[My son,] the cause of my long exile did not lie
 within the act of tasting of the tree,
 but solely in my trespass of the boundary
 [i.e., the sign].¹

1. This and all subsequent translations of Dante, unless otherwise specified, are by Allen Mandelbaum, taken from The Divine Comedy of Dante Alighieri, Trans. and Intr. Allen Mandelbaum, University of California Press, 1984.

in order to invoke an ancient epistemological meditation that for him has its origin in, after Paul, the "semiological consciousness" (Vance Mervelous 34) of Augustine (i.e., "What the Apostle says pertains to this problem: 'For the letter killeth, but the spirit quickeneth'" [De doctrina christiana II.vi.8; in Vance 29]). The Summa Theologica, philosophically at the heart of the Commedia, augments Augustine in phenomenological terms; the Summa is echoed in Purgatorio XVII's paen to imaginative power--

O imaginativa che ne rube
 tavola si di fuor [. . .]
 chi move te, se 'l senso non ti porge? (13-16)

O fantasy, you that at times would snatch
 us so from outward things [. . .]
 who moves you when the senses do not spur you?

--then it is specifically paraphrased in what essentially derives from the Pauline and Augustinian meditation (ST I.60.5) on natural knowledge and its necessary adjunct, mental knowledge, by which the sign of an object is apprehended (the sign, according to Augustine, being what he calls "verbum mentis"):

Lo naturale è sempre sanza errore,
 ma l'altro puote errar per malo obietto
 o per troppo o per poco di vigore. (94-96)

The natural is always without error,
 but mental love may choose an evil object
 or err through too much or too little vigor.

Poststructuralist systems take up like issues (not

surprisingly, based as these issues are in Anselm, Abelard, Aquinas, Ockham, et al.). There is an inherent discrepancy in the Christian idea of a singular word or sign that might represent a paradoxically plural Holy Trinity (Auerbach Dante 18-19); similarly, nineteenth century positivism is undermined by relativity, quantum theory, and the Heisenberg principle of uncertainty. Hence, the twentieth century mind cannot entertain a faith in mimetic language, just as the medieval mind could not apprehend signs heuristically but rather instrumentally--since knowledge came only with God's assistance (Colish Mirror ix, 172).

The issue of a shifting semantic ground speaks directly to the question of self-citation that is an Ur form of the modern autobiographical impulse. Take, for example, the common misconstrual of Augustine's Confessions. Confession, for him, was a profession of faith, in which,

far more than the admission of sins committed [. . .] it meant also the speech act of praising, as when Christ says to God, "I confess to you [Confiteor tibi], Father, Lord of heaven and earth, since you have hidden these things from the wise."
(Vance Mervelous 5)

For Augustine, self-knowledge was an unworthy enterprise; he also tended to reject the notion of esthetic pleasure that the art of rendering such

knowledge might otherwise afford. Such an outlook could not have persisted after Descartes. This perspective explains how narratology, by definition, cannot comprehend the last four books of the Confessions (which deal not with the events of Augustine's life but with the epistemology of memory in the human soul, the first chapters of Genesis, and so forth). Augustine's "autobiography" praises, professes faith and sacrifice, so to bear out one or another sense of the word confession (5). The Confessions does not present an objectified, historical "I," but in fact declares its intention (in Book X) to reveal "what I now am and what I still am" (in Vance 2). Here we are confronted with a "dialectic between the time of history and that of Salvation," a dialectic that became acutely operative with the emergence in the twelfth century of the exemplum as a literary form (Le Goff 80). While Augustine's conception of communitas is determined by divine love, by the time of Aquinas--particularly Dante's version of him--the events of one's life had become truly integral to the sense of the Christian community. This ethical sense served as the metaphor for poetics in Dante's polis; and it is this same sense of the personal life within a community, a self-conception driven by the realization of alterity, which drives poets like Marcabru, Chaucer and Langland. While Chaucer's recurring figure

"Geffrey" is perhaps the most brilliantly drawn of all medieval personae, those of Marcabru, Dante and Langland are truly pivotal in the evolution of a modern literary voice. My primary focus is the precision with which these poets accomplish their task of incorporating and evolving the refinements of each other, in the spirit of medieval auctoritas, which insisted upon adherence to tradition.

My study benefits from this initial comparison with modern thought and poetics, in whose roots we recognize intellectual and specifically literary movements that were born in the Middle Ages--a time ostensibly devoid of that profoundly human trait, the ability to see oneself (the ability to see). Appropriately, we must begin with a discussion of poetic authority and authorship in the Middle Ages. And we need to begin by challenging long held views such as that of Julius Schwietering (Die Demutsformel mittelhochdeutscher Dichter, 1921), who sees the medieval writer as self-effacing in following the precepts of Salvian, Sulpicius Severus, and others who caution authors not to commit the sin of vanitas terrestris. Anonymity is prescribed, and if the author has finally chosen to give his name, he does so "to gain forgiveness of his sins through the intercession of his hearers and readers" (in Curtius 515). I believe this view to be

entirely too one sided. It precludes a focus on the literary maker. Yet it is in the very craft of authorship that we can discover the medieval author's opportunity for self-advancement, for recognition as an individual by others in the sense that his or her literary skills have created a text different from all others.

To comprehend the later medieval poets' self-assertions in their poems, as poets, we must examine the contemporary intellectual developments from which these poets appropriated their fundamental verbal gesture. Rather than the typical medieval manuscript's perennial coda--the scribe's "Adamo me fecit"--these poets found numerous and increasingly ingenious ways of inscribing, of weaving into the very fabric of their poetry, the very "modern" claim, ego auctor.

Dante explicitly establishes the basis for self-referentiality in the Convivio. As John Freccero notes, Augustine's Confessions is cited there as an instance of an author's speaking of himself, altruistically; Augustine wanted to set an example for all humanity. His description in the Convivio, Freccero feels, seems "almost to herald Dante's own 'testament'," the Commedia (2). One reason to speak of oneself, Dante writes, is to offer the .lm 1.3"

greatest advantage [. . .] for others by way of instruction; and this reason moved Augustine to speak

of himself in his confessions, so that in the progress of his life, which was from bad to good, and from good to better, and from better to best, he furnished example and teaching which could not have been obtained from any other equally truthful testimony.

(I.2; trans. Freccero 2-3)

Freccero's understanding of the Commedia's structure is illuminating; the poem's architecture adumbrates an ultimate merging of Dante the pilgrim with the author of the poem. Moreover, given a critical heritage that was defined by critics like Schietering, it is easy to see what motivates the younger commentator to strike a balance between total self-effacement and total self-assertion. "By naming himself at the moment of his confession [Purg. XXXII.1003]," Freccero writes, "[Dante] gives to the abstract exemplum the full weight of vero testimonio, exactly as had St. Augustine before him" (3).

The evidence that can be brought to bear for this claim is compelling, but more can be said, for Dante and the other poets of his time are sometimes utterly self-promoting in their references to themselves. These are not Renaissance poets, but in their identifications with the very language and with the poetics they employ, they manage to single themselves out from their surrounding literary tradition--a tradition that to a modern mind could be seen as all-engulfing. Yet for these poets this is a tradition

that not only nourishes but holds out a language whose very structure invites self-reference. So, in Dante, it is true that "the distance between protagonist and author is at its maximum at the beginning of the [Commedia] and [that this distance] is gradually closed by the dialectic of the poetic process until the pilgrim and poet coincide at the ending of the poem" (25). This process will involve meditations on the nature of language and interpretation; in the working out of these problems the full depth of the Dante figure is realized. In the final "transformation of the pilgrim into the author, whose story we have just finished reading," there is a recapitulation that parallels the spiral paths the pilgrim has taken, which in turn are "spatial analogues of the temporal paradox of terza rima forward motion which recapitulates the beginning in the end." This structure also mimics the pattern of discourse, the kind of autobiography to be found in the Confessions. The movement of the Dante poem serves to represent

the paradoxical logic of all such narratives [in which] the beginning and end must logically coincide, in order for the author and his persona to be the same. This exigency, analogous to what Kenneth Burke in another context refers to as "the Divine tautology," takes the form, "I am I, but I was not always so." (264)

In Dante's attempt to recreate, as Le Goff puts it, the dialectic of history and of salvation (see above), he

must construct an autobiography that need not obey the strictures of time and a progression of self-development--as if a personality could be posited that is at last made known and is a constant.

The whole of temporal sequence in such a narrative, then, is generated by some form of negation introduced into the principle of identity and then refined away. Logically, autobiography is a sequential narrative that moves toward its own origin. If that statement seems paradoxical, it is no more so than the premise of all autobiography--that one can judge one's own life as though life were concluded. The ending of such a story implies its beginning, for the persona's experience must be concluded before the author's voice (and hence the story) can come into existence. (Freccero 264)

We can find another explanation of Dante's strategy, though, one which Freccero is on the brink of discovering when he observes that the "paradox of continuity/discontinuity in the formal representation of terza rima is matched by the paradox of continuity/discontinuity involved in the logic of autobiographical narrative: I am I, but I was not always so" (264). As a poet, Dante will always locate himself in time, but the manifestation of this temporality will be word and number-- for Dante, the poetic process itself. Virgil the poet is his guide, and if wisdom is to be attained, it will have to come through the pilgrim-poet's ability to ascend beyond his guide's provenance; this the pilgrim does, with the aid of Grace, and in the poem so does the author, through

poetic ingenuity that forms the poet's overall signature, in which he will surpass the ability of his poetic master Virgil. We see this virtuosity in Dante's use of the trope "io sol uno":

[. . .] e io sol uno
 m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
 sì del cammino e sì de la pietate,
 che ritrarrà la mente che non erra.
 (Inf. II.3-6)

[. . .] and I myself
 alone prepared to undergo the battle
 both of the journeying and of the pity,
 which memory, mistaking not, shall show.

This poetic maneuver is the emblem of Dante's poetic performance in large. In its triple insistence on the acolyte's powers and future journey to Paradise, where Virgil cannot go, it places the pilgrim within and associates him with the very matrix of his thought, actions, aspirations, beliefs and fears--for it is in the number three that we find the links Dante has forged among himself, his poetry of terza rima and of three canticles, and the Holy Trinity.

II

Hence, if poststructuralism can offer readers anything beyond, simply, the injunction to indulge ourselves in the pleasures of our texts (to echo Roland Barthes), it is the lesson first to be learned in the later Middle Ages when poets begin to practice the art of singling

themselves out from their larger literary world, as individuals who are both a part of and distinct from an immensely influential tradition. They are made a part of the "auctorial" literary canon in their choice to employ a literary language and usually a subject matter inherited from the past. They seek to be a part of their tradition. Indeed, they locate themselves within that tradition by partaking of the "matter" of their literary heritage, and by refashioning this literary matter according to the demands of their own temperament and sense of what constitutes eloquence. A prime example of this intent is the large number of Troy stories, some considered to be literary, others historical, which were composed since the twelfth century. These stories range widely from the twelfth century's Erec et Enede by Chrétien de Troyes and the Roman de Troie by Benoît de St. Maure, to the Historia Destructionis Troiae (a quasi translation of Benoît) by Guido delle Collone, to Troilus and Cryseide by Chaucer. Considering the profound differences in these literary works, it might be argued that each of them is so distinct as to have to be considered original, in the sense that we take the notion of originality to mean that which has instigated and ordered works written by the time of Romanticism and perhaps as early as the Renaissance (i.e., certainly in the sense that Stephen Greenblatt intends in his book

Renaissance Self-Fashioning). But these medieval poets were not interested in originality. Rather, the poets of the later Middle Ages were concerned with reworking the language--the matter and, ultimately, the textual nature--of an inherited tradition. And in fact this was a tradition that might be thought of by them to have been primarily textual.

These poets were not interested in going outside that tradition. They were part of a self-involving system in which their enunciatory activity could give rise to nothing that might exist beyond the system's comprehension. The nature of the system was doctrinally Christian, and, inasmuch as Jesus Christ was the Word incarnate, it followed that the cast of the entire Christian "system" was substantially textual (or, perhaps, the better term to describe the "system" is literal, yet the Christian word was not at all limited to a fixed or written form, and indeed it also implied both explicit discourse and implicit, silent thought). As we shall examine at length, all that existed could be seen and understood in textual terms. Textuality was the field on which medieval poets endeavored to both fit into the world in its Christian sense and to transcend what was a fundamentally Christian hierarchy of value and authority. James Hans stipulates how the very activity of the poet allows the

employment of "the furrows of [a] predictable range [of experience] to get outside of those furrows of predictability and, in going outside of them, [to enlarge] the field of some of the furrows" (90). Thus the Christian system, which inevitably came to embrace purely literary esthetics, paradoxically made possible the promotion of individual literati who could turn the hierarchy of (now, a literary) authority and value in on itself, and in so doing elevate themselves as the new authorities or at least the new spokespersons of the prevailing truth. And these poets did indeed desire to assert themselves as poets--that is, as auctores--but their enterprise took the form of an evolved sense of eloquence that in part derived from, and could be tested by, a reader's (or listener's) commitment to the literary past.

These poets wished to express the thing understood as the literary tradition better than it had ever been done before and better than it ever would be. To say it best--or to sing it best, as in the case of the troubadours, who were the primary formulators of this poetic--was to say it truthfully. In this light we can understand the troubadours' preoccupation with judging both peers and forebears, with their praise or scorn; a variety of characterizations in poems allowed authors to set themselves up, dramatically, in either implied or outright contention with their others.

Virgil and Dante in the Commedia, of course, constitute the example par excellence of this dynamic. Virgil is both lauded and subtly undermined in favor of the Dante persona in whom the tradition is not only alive but flourishing as never before, through the role of the witness. The witness "merely" reports a depth and grandeur that even Virgil, we are finally left to ponder, could not achieve. In fact it is through the praise of Virgil that we first come to appreciate both the enormity and grace of the Dantean project, which is most profoundly spoken in its inter- and especially intratextual undertones. Virgil is Dante's "author," first identified as such in Inferno I (85) by the approbations maestro and autore: "Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore." The bounteous acknowledgement on the part of the Dante figure is still to be augmented; it is not long before Virgil, twice praised, will be referred to as Dante's guide, governor, master--"Or va, ch'un sol volere è d'ambedue: / tu duca, tu signore e tu maestro" (Inf. II.139-40). Here, notably, the machinery for praise and acknowledgement is to be found in the very fabric of the praiser's language, in his recurring cadence that in its reprise serves to increase the depth and volume of that praise, and therefore the language further ennobles its subject as well as itself.

The key to this ploy lies in what are otherwise the least significant parts of Dante's speech--the pronouns containing in themselves, by definition, no semantic power. Yet used here in the larger discourse of praise, they serve to convey the primal meaning of that praise in the rhythm of their speaker. In fact, they form Dante's voice in these cantos. In their repetitions they suggest the measured, utterly sober realization on the part of their speaker that the source of his very meaning lies in his "father poet," Virgil--who is his other. Analogically, Dante is the pronoun to the noun, Virgil--first in the twice proclaiming pronoun mio, and then a canto later in the thrice uttered tu (cf. above). The language theory of the time focuses on such semantic, and by extension ontological, distinctions. Dante's subtle augmentation serves to point up the effusive quality inherent in any act of praise, which is quite possibly what drives the perception of praise when it is considered to be beautiful.

In this manner Dante establishes his debt to the one being praised. Dante's tactics are not so far removed from, for instance, the French marguerite genre or the later Chaucer's overly abundant lauding of Alceste in the "Prologue" to the Legend of Good Women. She is the goddess of love, who is the "flour of al floures." Chaucer's epithet is but one manifestation of what

Peter Dronke has identified as the flos florum trope (Medieval Latin 181-82) that was common in both Dante's and Chaucer's time. Dante, however, had another purpose in his baldly and progressively grand enunciations of his debt to his "other" and great poet.

The problem for Dante is how to name himself as the poet and still acknowledge the literary past that has made his own poetry a possibility. Hence he must valorize Virgil while carefully laying the groundwork for the demonstration of his own poetic provenance. He initiates this strategy by praising Virgil, twice (Inf. I.85). Then a triadic configuration recalls the thematic structure of that praise (Inf. II.140), to say nothing of its meter and cadence. As mentioned, of all numbers the number three orders the Commedia, structurally and doctrinally: the three line stanzas of thirty-three syllables, thirty-three cantos in each canticle (Canto I of the Inferno serving as an introduction to the poem as a whole), the thirty-three years of Jesus Christ's life on earth, and so forth (see Freccero 258-71). In effect, the viator's praise of Virgil helps to create a resonance that will continue throughout the Commedia as an important subtext serving a number of poetic functions, not the least of which is to create the context for Dante's self-naming, which through the virtuosity of his poetic

demonstration will prove the truth of his claim for poetic mastery.

Again, it is what Dante sets between the two tropes of acknowledgement that fully marks him as the greater poet. As Allen Mandelbaum makes clear, a uniquely Dantesque maneuver originates in another (obviously related) trope of the time, that of autocitation--to be precise, Dante's use of it, a tour de force, in Inferno II's "io sol uno" (3), which encapsulates the singularity of the pilgrim's circumstance and his destined envisioning of a celestial truth that must elude the grasp of language:

Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aere bruno
 toglieva li animai che sono in terra
 da le fatiche loro; e io sol uno
 m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
 sì del cammino e sì de la pietate, [. . . .] (1-6)

The day was now departing; the dark air
 released the living beings of the earth
 from work and weariness; and I myself
 alone prepared to undergo the battle
 both of the journeying and of the pity [. . .].

Dante's use of the triad "io sol uno" is unparalleled. At least one of its sources, however, is Arnaut Daniel's song "En cest sonet coind'e leri" where he writes, "Ieu sui Arnautz q'amas l'aura" (43). Arnaut's line quite possibly "[condenses] not only Romance origins but Vergil's Polydorus ego (Aen. 3.45 "I am Polydorus")" (Mandelbaum "Taken" 233). It should come as no surprise that Dante employs the trope to praise Arnaut.

Dante is a most adroit user, especially in the Purgatorio, of the styleme of "I am" followed by the proper name. Its chief incarnation is the Provençal ieu sui Arnaut, citation- steal from Arnaut Daniel (Purg. 26.142), and its first incarnations are the negative of Inf. 11.32, io non Enea, io non Paolo sono, and then the affirmative, I' son Beatrice (Inf. 27.70).

In this regard, Mandelbaum goes on to make a crucial observation, one that goes to the heart of Dante's poetic:

The proper name is one part of natural language that mimes--and engenders--poetic language. It is the emblem of poetry as nominalization [. . .] for the proper name collapses class and membership in the class into one. Even the reading aloud of a catalogue list, with that most elementary of structures, the alphabet, to be found in a telephone book, or an unalphabetic random sampling of registered voters, gives us some poetic lift. (And the pairing of the un-pairable proper name with the common noun in a rhyme pair yields even more poetic surplus.) But in io son, it is the coupling of that already-poetic proper name with the pronominal, indefinite, hovering shifter of "I am" that condenses the chiaroscuro of shadowed presence emerging into the light of particularity [. . .].

Yet Dante can evoke Virgilian mystery by precisely not naming; this "namelessness" is evinced

in the long wait between Dante's io sol uno and Beatrice's utterance of his name, "Dante," and, more hauntingly, in Matilda's nameless appearance in the Earthly Paradise, where the donna soletta, the "solitary woman" (Purg. 28.40) waits for some six cantos to be named. (232-33)

Here we see the strategy for self-naming in the Commedia. This strategy, however, is set against the

background of the naming of the other (poet) at the beginning of the poem (i.e., Virgil's introduction into the story of the poem as the pilgrim's guide), an activity that includes the namer's self-assertion in finely managed, subversive maneuvers such as we have noted in the use of the pronouns mio and tu. If Dante had wanted a literate reader to contemplate the philosophical implications of such language, specifically the play of its constituent parts, he could have done no better than to have placed the unique citation "io sol uno" midway between his first and second measured approbations of Virgil, who in effect becomes the source of Dante's poetry, his linguistic play; thus by implication Virgil becomes the origin of this pilgrim-poet's ego ("io"). Within the framework of what Auerbach calls the sermo humilis, Dante manages to elevate himself through a triad of self-reference while, ironically, he remains anonymous precisely by foregoing the use of a proper noun. The power of his trope comes from understatement through "humble" (humilis) pronouns, terms of number, and the like, which serve to elevate the poet above all others. This configuration exists within a tradition but is unprecedented in its virtuosity; in its agility and plenitude of self-signification it establishes its poet's preeminence. As Mandelbaum has observed,

Dante the maker knew when to dismiss Vergil, but Vergil of all poets is the poet who knows when to disappear, and that knowledge is shared by Dante's Vergil and the author of the Aeneid. Yet as moving as Vergil's final disappearance in the Purgatorio is [see XXX.49-54], the most Vergilian moment of his absence is to be found in the opening of canto 2 of the Inferno. There, with the three Virgilian night scenes behind him, Dante forgets the presence of Vergil and concentrates on Dante's own shadowed aloneness--in that aloneness remembering Vergil most [. . . .] (234)

Here is a presence that can be profoundly invoked through its opposite, absence. This understanding of complementaries pervades Dante's language, even to the use he makes of parts of speech such as the pronoun, in order to point up both the paradoxicality of presence within absence and to show what such a dynamic can suggest about all language in its attempt to comprehend experience.

For Dante it is finally the very music of his poem which establishes the proof of his superiority, particularly as he defines music in De Vulgari as the ordering of rhetoric (II.4). He arrays the evidence of his rhetorical mastery before his audience, from which it can judge claim. The claim is never baldly asserted; to do would be to deny the very tradition that makes such a claim possible in the first place. Virgil is the great one, but in establishing the conditions for this greatness, Dante reveals the greater magnitude of his own poetry.

III

It should also be noted that Dante has included within his strategy not only Virgil, his literary antecedent, but for the younger poet strictly historical antecedents in Aeneas and Paul ("io non Enea, io non Paolo sono," above). In itself this inclusion is a mark of the deep, ultimately inseparable connections between literature, theology and philosophy, and history, all of which are understood in Dante's time under the aegis of what we can call textuality. In a general sense, the latter poet of the later Middle Ages, in this case Dante, was busy establishing himself through the articulation of a relationship with a predecessor poet or alternately with a received text, a text inherited from the older poet yet one whose conditions were determined by forces beyond the narrow field of the purely literary.

It is in such terms that an attempt should be made to understand the later medieval poets as authors writing both within and against the literary auctoritas whose hierarchy and very subject matter were beholden to a past that was understood through the supporting structure of Christianity. The poets strove to mark off an area of purely literary authority. This authority, however, would never be won at the expense of the tradition. All the same, the poets

distinguished themselves from the received, "authorized" text, in a fundamentally subliminal manner, which necessarily included and in fact was determined by an author's understanding of what text meant. Contained within their poetry, their basic question was: "how can there be a meaningful statement about the nature of truth when my text departs from the text that is as close to the truth as any language will allow?" This question embraces a poet's self-conception in which he or she is in some sense to be self-described as a "textual being," or perhaps as a being who inhabits the language understood to be "textuality" per se.

The elucidation of such a rich and complex idea requires an examination of textuality as a force in the medieval Christian community. It cannot be otherwise, for as will become evident, the origins of the concepts of text and author are one and the same; they are both aspects of a particular cultural discourse, and what Christianity first nurtures and then undermines can be seen in terms of language philosophy, which describes in part the integral relationship between what is said and the person or persons who say it. Christian history very much parallels that of the concept of textuality in its time. How could it not, since the text was first and foremost a Christian text, and furthermore a text founded upon all of the assumptions

of a world that derived from the Word made flesh?

As rationalism slowly emerges, the emphasis on grammar, as a force by which to order perception, wanes. In the eleventh century, the text and its author grow both distinct and distant from each other. Yet holding each to the other, despite the phenomenon of a new and ever increasing distance, is Christian and hence, eventually, literary auctoritas. Each author delineates and explores connections to a text that is the ground of that author's own definition, and which makes possible, ironically perhaps, a growing distinction from the very text of which the author is a part. In his examination of the origins of the sonnet form, Paul Oppenheimer has argued convincingly that the sonnet derives from a tradition other than that of the troubadours. In the earliest sonnets, such as those written by Giacomo da Lentino,

one is struck from the first by the absence of two elements essential to successful performed poetry and ubiquitous in troubadour poetry: the absence of any even implied address to a listening audience, and the absence of multiple or dual personae [such as] the persona who actually suffers the pains of unrequited love, and the "poet-persona," who makes the song. (Birth 182-83)

Indeed, especially in a poem like "Molti amadori la lor malatia"--whose brevity of form and meditative tone, it is suggested, alter poetry's rhetoric--the poetic discourse is addressed instead to the "poet himself"

and may in fact address "the very form in which it is written" (183). The sonnet's brief and assymetrical octave-sestet structure, which derives from a developing literate rather than the older oral tradition, goes far in engendering the form's meditative quality. We can discover its metapoetical stance, however, in the work of someone like Marcabru. All the same, the sonnet can be set apart "from those treatments of love to be found in the songs of the troubadours" because of "its dialectical structure" (183). Here again, though, we find a similarity with the troubadours whose very posture towards either implied or explicit interlocutors depends on an understanding of dialectics that had been broadened and deepened with the spread of a revived Aristotelianism. While it may be true that as a form the sonnet does not stem directly from the troubadour impulse, we can say that it nevertheless partakes of a widespread and fundamental approach to any attempt at understanding the Western, Christian world of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

St. Augustine extensively develops a basic textual metaphor that describes the crux of language and the reality that language seeks to portray--language and perception, language and experience, and so on. Indeed, the whole issue of auctoritas implicitly

posits the fundamental issue of language's relationship to experience, a relationship that is explored and intensified in Augustine's thought, and, moreover, one which is compounded with an overt meditation on textuality as the means of articulating that relationship. Within the framework of Augustine's thinking the notion of textuality is arranged in relation to the individual of the society, as a part of a hierarchical, neoplatonic and unified structure. In the later Middle Ages, as the balance between orality and literacy became altered by technological and other forces--and because of the wider dissemination of Aristotle's writings, in part as the result of increased literacy--the unity of the Augustinian world was vitiated. What remained, however, was the Augustinian textual metaphor. In Augustine's writings this metaphor had described the split between language and reality, the verbum mentis. With a renewed, more vigorous Aristotelianism, the metaphor came to describe the widening gap between the author and his language, and, too, between the author and experience or reality. More importantly, a self-referentiality had inhered in the Augustinian epistemological system, and this was later applied to a metapoetics in which poets increasingly tended to refer to and carry on discussions about themselves as poets, and about the possibility of making poetry that might reflect the

true state of things in the world. Three related perceptions were the result of this transformation, of what Etienne Gilson called "the demise of Christianity." The poem took the form of the author. The poem was a text, while perhaps the intertextuality of its discourse increased, especially through the treatment of its own and other authors. Lastly, as a consequence, the author fully became his text. We see this final development in William Langland's Piers Plowman, whose persona is named Will. He is a poet, whose preoccupation is centrally concerned with the individual capacity for voluntas. In the testing of his will to be able to write the truth of what he sees and believes, we witness the dramatization of his effort to become his very poem, and so he becomes the mark of his larger textual tradition.

Chapter One

Augustine, Anselm, Abelard:

Text and Word, History and Fiction

I

The act of naming, as that broadest, basic impulse to describe experience, centrally defines the sensibility of poets in the later Middle Ages. The significance of naming, in its intent to comprehend the world, becomes immediately apparent when considering intellectual developments during the high Middle Ages, especially its division between theology and philosophy. The relationship of word to thing is already an issue in the Creation story of Genesis, and the epistemological significance of naming is treated in a number of classical texts, including, most notably, Plato's Cratylus. To name a thing, in some fundamental manner, is to attempt to bring order to perception. Or perhaps it can be said that naming is the very substance of perception, and naming may even be--to push this notion to its logical extreme--perception per se. Through naming articulation becomes possible; and it can be argued that it is only through articulation that being itself, as it were, can be. Nomination is critical to any discursive if not conceptual human impulse.

The name, the medieval nomen, will define the thing named in the sense that the name can act in relation to

the thing as a classifier: a name sets a thing named off from other things as being distinct (or, at least, the name must implicitly make such a claim). Distinction can vary widely within the range of the name. We can distinguish, for example, if a thing or entity performs an action (e.g., grammatically, the thing as it exists in its nominative case), or if it is acted upon either directly or obliquely by another agent (genitive, accusative, dative, ablative cases, and so on). Such distinctions, furthermore, may include the recognition that a thing is not an agency of an action, as is embodied in language's verbal mode.

In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas exploits a basic ontological distinction between noun and verb. He wishes to establish a ground for recognizing the difference between the essence of a thing and that thing's actual existence. William of Ockham later undermines this difference by dint of what Aquinas would have viewed to be an overly determined logic--or rather a logic whose presumed purview comprehended areas previously reserved to metaphysics. For his part, Aquinas could justify his analysis of reality by positing existence as a verbal mode (esse); thus he could claim that existence was, as F. C. Copleston has paraphrased it,

an act, the created act of a created essence, the two [i.e., existence and essence] being

distinguishable but not separable. At the same time in the phrase "essence and existence" esse functions as a verbal noun, and the two words tend to suggest two entities. That is to say, there is a temptation to regard "essence" and "existence" as names which stand for distinct entities. (Medieval Philosophy 335-36 [vide De ente et essentia 5; De potentia 7.2. Reply 9; Summa contra Gentiles II.54; Summa Theologica I.75.1; in Copleston 185-87])

Ockham the nominalist will reject Aquinas' metaphysics. Importantly, however, he does so by adhering to his predecessor's epistemological procedure. Ockham saw no distinction between essence and existence, in that they signified the same thing (Copleston 249), the one as a noun (nominaliter) and the other as a verb (verbaliter). In maintaining this linguistic analogy Ockham had to admit that, because the two words functioned differently in speech, they could not be viewed as being interchangeable. The principle underlying this recognition was what Ockham called propriety or (in speaking of this he uses the term "convenienter" [Summa totius logicae III.2.27; in Copleston 249, 336]). Ockham's struggle to place language in the larger perspective of his overall theology is an example of medieval logic's generally increasing reliance on such tools as

terms and propositions and the relations between them. That is to say, it became clear to the medieval logicians that they were dealing not with extramental substances, nor even with concepts as psychical realities, but with terms and propositions. (Copleston 268)

The rejection of Aquinas could only have occurred in the aftermath of the twelfth century renaissance. A new emphasis on Aristotle, occasioned in part by the discovery of ancient texts in both Greek and translation, especially Aristotle's Categories, profoundly altered the contemporary intellectual climate. At this point in the evolution of the Middle Ages a pivotal feature of overall Christian cosmology is developed. As reflected in the Categories, names may distinguish species from genus or one species from another. Concepts of this order are the domain of simple nouns, of course, rather than proper nouns. And the proper noun, by the very condition of its terms, the condition that brings it into being, must seek to make unique distinctions; one may wish to name the man Socrates as he who is neither Plato nor any other human being, which is to say that proper nomination, as Mandelbaum has observed ("Taken" 232; cf. "Introduction" above) "collapses class and membership in the class into one."

This semantico-philosophical, or otherwise theological issue of class also necessarily involved questions of grammar. As is carefully documented by Marcia Colish, even before the renaissance the emergence of Aristotelianism created especially disturbing problems for later medieval intellectuals:

The issue centered in the fact that the Categories forcibly and inescapably introduced eleventh-century grammarians to the concepts of substance and accident, genera and species. The idea that a given thing might be looked at in a variety of ways called into question the classical definition of the part of speech used to denote a thing, a noun [. . . .] In [Boethius'] translation of the Categories it appears plainly that nouns do not all signify in the same way. If they signify with respect to accidents they cannot properly signify with respect to substance, and vice versa. [Boethius] further elaborates in his translation of De interpretatione that a noun must signify one or the other, but not both.

(The Mirror of Language 99)

In the face of these revelations, grammarians nonetheless remained within the ideological boundaries of their received sense of the world. With a remarkable tenacity, they held to the traditional views of Donatus, Priscian, Remigius of Auxerre and Alcuin, who determined that nouns defined things in terms of substance and accident, in all cases, both general and specific. The traditional grammarians, as it were, had consolidated these two kinds of designation without furnishing any insight into possible changes nominal signification might undergo when moving from one to another act (100). This tendency to cling to the past remained alive and well beyond Scholasticism. In the eleventh century, although "the [contrary] testimony of Boethius" was embraced, simultaneously it was set beside the already-known; and so thinkers continued to accept the "massive authority of grammar" (101).

As for the poets of the twelfth to fourteenth

centuries, they too adhered to a received past. Their poetics were grounded in the contemporary, increasing separation of theology and philosophy. Their poetic sensibility had its roots, moreover, in the splitting off from Latin of the vernacular languages, as well as in, concomitantly, a widening gap between oral and written textual traditions. In the twelfth century these conditions gave rise to a poetry of "autocitation" (to reiterate Mandelbaum's apt term--cf. "Introduction" above); poets begin to speak of themselves in their poems. These "selves" were left to be ambiguously interpreted, as being neither wholly the poets' real selves nor their apparently fictional versions that nevertheless were to be referred to by the names of the actual poets. The troubadour Marcabru, for instance, scorns other rival poets who are to him merely joglars incapable of either true love or poetry containing truth; these joglars bear the names of actual personages. In the Commedia Virgil acts as Dante's guide but he is also Dante's mentor, and his rival. By the fifteenth century, for the first time among medieval poets, Thomas Hoccleve writes verse that can qualify as being truly literary and autobiographical in the modern sense of that term, as opposed to a form of self-citation that falls within the purview of simple rhetorical coloration. Hoccleve employs what can conveniently be termed a poetics of

self-referentiality. A dynamic that had already been operative for several hundred years before Hoccleve developed and came to be used in increasingly subtle forms. David Greetham links it to the issue of a poet's reliance on the past in order to establish his own poetic authority:

The "discipleship" topos (with its inevitable acceptance of humilitas before the master) is very common, and is supported by such ancillary topoi as the "Golden Age" and the "dwarves on the shoulders of giants" [see, e.g., Curtius 83-85, 252-55, 407-13]. But the evidence of such perennial debates as the moderni versus antiqui demonstrates that the topos can in fact be used as an ironic stick with which to beat one's predecessors (Bloom's tessera perhaps). The pose is all, for it provides the poet's invention with a respectable heredity, gives scurrility, obscenity, libel, or aesthetic deficiency a decent cover, and yet allows the work great freedom and independence through the apparent artlessness and objectivity of the narrator. ("Self-Referential Artifacts" 244)

Greetham's description of "artlessness" brings Chaucer's narrator immediately to mind (who was clearly a model for Hoccleve in La Male Regle, the Regement of Princes and other works). Contemporary with Chaucer's poignantly comical "Geffrey" is Langland's persona "Will" the dreamer, whose name includes a pun on the human capacity for volition--a concept that was intimately involved in the fourteenth century's heated controversy over the respective roles of human will and intellect, a dispute that inevitably drew to itself current ideas about language. Langland's Will is not

unlike the earlier Chrétien de Troyes' self-pun on the idea of what constitutes Christian truth; the prologue to Erec et Enide actually contains the boast, reminiscent of the troubadours, that its author's poetry will please readers until the end of time--"tant que durera chrétiente" (in Zumthor "Autobiography in the Middle Ages" 31).

This kind of naming, which signifies either one's real or fictional self, is a poetic act that plays a role in a growing practice among poets of the later Middle Ages of asserting their individual poetic authority through names. More powerfully, though, we can say that they iterate themselves through their manipulations of inherited notions of language as it relates to that reality of which naming is an integral part. And it is within these very notions that we can discover the fundamental rhetorical gesture of these poets, who make nascent claims in their poetry for originality and individuality. The manner in which these poets have appropriated the philosophies of their times entails some discussion at length, for theirs is a complex procedure.

II

The underlying world view that supports the manner in which medieval poets depict both their personae and

themselves, as well as their writing per se is, of course, fundamentally Christian. But therein lies a central paradox. In defining themselves as individuals, the poets remained within the Christian community. Poetic auctoritas had been a rigidly determinative force, one which commanded the poet's awe. Christian auctoritas defined poetry as well as other intellectual disciplines, yet out of its hierarchical system poets could devise a new dynamic in their poems, which illustrated poetry's unique value in relation to its inheritance. The context for this assertion was the inherent play in language that the Christian establishment had long ago relegated to itself as being that which could most powerfully and authentically demonstrate Christian tenets; this appropriation of language's potential was particularly articulated by Augustine, whose metaphors for Christian truth, moreover, preeminently invoked issues of textuality. Yet medieval poets' self-naming, as well as the naming of other poets who were at times either or both revered ancestors and competitors, was the symptom of a new poetic that had its sources in the currently transforming epistemology of scholars in both monasteries and universities; as well, poetic naming was one of the poets' several strategies that gestured towards true self-definition within the courts of the aristocracy. The individual poet most profoundly

discovered himself by defining his poem in terms that often deliberately reflected the theological and philosophical movements of his time.

Dating from Anselm in the eleventh century, intellectual emphasis, which at the time of Augustine had been on rhetoric, was now slowly, fundamentally shifting from grammar to logic. The passage paralleled a transition from a collective society to one that contained individuals at its center; this transition came about largely as a consequence of a societal shift from orality to literacy. Taken together, such a massive transformation demanded a change in the literature of the society--more precisely, in literary narrative structure (cf. Godzich "Foreword" xiv). Older forms of narrative, employed by an orally based culture, had primarily served a commemorative function, and existed as a counterpart to a theology grounded in the Augustinian epistemology of memory.

Christianity, especially Augustinian neoplatonism, is founded on a theology of memory and on commemorative rituals of the purest sort. Its Eucharist is centered upon the gestures of a Son recalling men to his Father on the eve of his crucifixion by breaking his bread and exhorting his apostles thus: "This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me" (in meam commemorationem; Luke 22:19). In the story of Christ's return to men after his resurrection, his disciples will be unable to know Christ until they remember him as he breaks bread and eats fishes among them (Luke 24). (Vance Mervelous 52)

In De magistro (x, xiv) Augustine writes that "teachers

cannot teach true things, but can only remind their pupils of what they already know." Augustine's De trinitate (XV.xxii.42) holds that "man can truly know intelligible things [i.e., timeless spiritual things] in his own mind through divine illumination, which transpires in the memory, in concert with the actions of intellect and will." All that occurs, therefore, will be colored by a sense of the past. Hence it is not coincidental that the "performance or the telling of stories in oral societies is essentially commemorative" (Godzich xiv), and that, concomitant with the spread of both Aristotelianism and Averroism in the early twelfth century, and with the emergence of new secular forms of literature, a new literary impulse is defined by the esthetics and cognitive demands of a now written textuality. This new impulse embraced the distinction between an emerging sense of literary fiction and that of historiography.

With the spread of literacy, however, and the emergence of what Brian Stock has fittingly called "textual communities," persons of the older commemorative communities came to be defined within their societies ontologically rather than discursively. In the orally based group of memoria, individuals could not "choose their roles but [had] them thrust upon them"; they experienced these roles as "fate." As Wlad

Godzich has asserted, these persons were in fact "the loci in which discourses intersect[ed] and produce[d] subject positions," for "memoria" was the "treasure trove of discourses" that comprised the community's hystoria (xvi).

Gradually, Western society becomes dependent on written texts-- the older culture having relied on the collective consciousness, the newer increasingly influenced by individuals, and as an intellectual community dependent on cognitive paradigms that ultimately came to be logical instead of grammatical. Yet as we have noted briefly in connection with Aquinas and Ockham, descriptions and proofs of the real as well as the metaphysical increasingly turned to linguistic models both in order to derive a viable descriptive vocabulary and to establish a ground for measuring truth. Abbo of Fleury, in the tenth century, is an extreme case of someone who used received assumptions about language and its relationship to reality to constitute a rationale for a perceived truth. He attempted to reconcile one of a number of what had become conundrums surrounding the holy trinity. His problem arose from the acknowledgement that, even as he might choose to think of Christ as the begotten son of an unbegotten Father, he could not posit the Holy Spirit in either of these ways. Abbo approached this dilemma through grammar and the question of negation,

noting that some forms of negation are relative. The grammatical principle, then, supported the conclusion "that the Holy Spirit, although absolutely unbegotten, is also begotten in a relative sense, since He proceeds eternally from the Father and the Son" (Colish Mirror 97). A more radical analogy with the structure of Grammar--one which, notably, reveals the tyranny of Scriptural tradition in all areas of contemporary intellectual endeavor--occurs in the eleventh century. This thinking by analogy went to the heart of Christian doctrine when Berengarius felt compelled to argue against the actuality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. His querying of the formula, "Hoc est enim corpus meum," led him to construct a dichotomy; on the one hand there was a spiritual truth, and on the other a physical one. Yet interestingly, Berengarius cites the crucial difference here between noun and pronoun in order to arrive at his "objective" position, for

"hoc" in this sentence [Hoc est enim corpus meum] is a pronoun, and its grammatical function is to signify the Eucharistic bread on the altar. "Corpus," signifying Christ's body, is, to be sure, a noun. However, it functions as predicate nominative in the sentence, and, as such, is controlled by "hoc," the subject of the sentence, with which it must agree. Since the pronoun "hoc" has limited significative possibilities, good grammar dictates that these limitations must also extend to "corpus" in the context of the sentence. If [. . .] the substance of the bread were actually changed into Christ's body during the consecration, the subject of the sentence would be annulled and destroyed by its own predicative nominative, a manifest grammatical impossibility.

(Colish Mirror 105)

Both Abbo and Berengarius have elevated pronoun and noun to the status of arbiter of perception. Their intellectual procedures pave the way for the speculative grammarians, who even more radically assert the primacy of grammar as the measurement of truth. In discussing the background of Roger Bacon's thinking, Thomas Maloney observes that more than any other ancient text, Aristotle's Sophistici elenchi, discovered in the early twelfth century, "forced logicians to draw help from the grammarians and develop semantic theories capable of the resolution of the linguistic problems rooted in the [Aristotelian] fallacies [of division and composition in statements]" (187). Speculative grammarians, in recognizing the importance of grammar vis-à-vis logic, applied the tools of logic as well as categorical thinking to the seeming differences between Latin and all other languages, and concluded that there was a basic linguistic--that is, grammatical--structure common to any and all languages. In fact, grammar was thought to be able to fit the Aristotelian concept of a science, and the speculative grammarians--Peter of Elia, a University of Paris professor of grammar, Siger of Courtrai, and, prominent among them, Thomas of Erfurt--set out to prove that it was.

The characteristic feature of speculative grammar was its attempt to deduce the parts of speech from

the forms of thought, from basic concepts, that is to say, which were themselves expressions of the ontological studies of reality. For example, the noun was thought to express the concept of that which is stable, of substance, while the verb expressed the concept of becoming and, in the infinitive at least, the concept of "matter." A word becomes a definitive part of speech through its "mode of signifying" (modus significandi), these modes being concepts of the understanding which bind the word, as it were, to some mode of being. (Copleston 269-70)

These grammarians, then, emphasized the machinery of signification, and so privileged grammar over metaphysics and logic.

It is not too difficult to appreciate what a poet like Dante could do in the context of such thinking. His use of the pronouns mio and tu (cf. the "Introduction" above), in counterpoint with substantives (e.g., "Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore" Inf. I.85) and with the proper names of himself and others, all indicate intellectual struggles of his contemporaries and forebears. Likely enough, Dante helped to increase the importance of pronouns in the minds of thinkers who came after him, whether or not they actually knew of or even read his work. After Dante, the nominalist-realist controversy reached its height. Yet it begins with Abbo, Berengarius and others, not least of whom is Anselm and his search for the proper name of the deity. Under the influence of Aristotle's Categories with its concepts of substance and accident, genera and species, Anselm and

others--who were not clearly either practitioners of logic or grammar, since there were as yet no such explicitly defined disciplines--could now grasp the "idea that a given thing might be looked at in a variety of ways [which] called into question the classical definition of the part of speech used to denote a thing, the noun" (Colish 99). This recognition, in turn, instigates a great enterprise of redefinition, and the postulating by Anselm of a "rectitude" [propaliter] or fittingness that any true noun, or more specifically any true name, might enjoy in its attempt at signification. In distinguishing between God and all other possibilities in the universe, Anselm observes that the language used to denote anything else in the world will not suffice in the struggle to evoke the Supreme Being; normal attributes are not of the same kind as that which a divine attribute should be. Moreover, the name for the thing, Divine or otherwise, must be proper, must possess rectitude. For Anselm, "the beauty of the name lies in the fact that it is a self-evident definition; it virtually proves itself" (147).

Anselm observed that the proper name of a thing has its virtue in its self-evidence. It is also fair to characterize contemporary epistemological systems as being inevitably self-involved in the ways in which

they reverted to their own self- descriptions--their own languages--so to arrive at self- validation. Poetry, too, directly addressed the issue of poetry; and beyond the question of the poem--being asked from within the poem--the poetry of this period engaged in philosophical speculation about the nature of reality and the efficacy of comprehending that reality within a net of language. Poetry began quite consciously to manipulate the language of the new intellectual ideas. Sensitivity to contemporary intellectual milieux produced the language that poets had at their disposal. To put it more broadly, the poems of this period derived from a society that was profoundly aware of its linguistic underpinnings. The concept of signs, which were held to be of divine origin, informed the consciousness of the late medieval intellectual. And in fact the Augustinian understanding of signs was compounded by a new, specifically intellectual apprehension of them, as a consequence of the movement away from orality and towards literacy. Inasmuch as the spread of written communication distanced authors from both their texts and audiences and, too, implicitly demanded that there take place a visual activity of reading--which meant mental reflection instigated by a visual engagement of a document, and, moreover, engagement by a someone--relatively widespread literacy gave rise to abstract thought

processes, and replaced the orally based listener's awareness of "true" internal signs, founded in the epistemology of memory, with external signs of monumentality and a new social and political order.

Janet Coleman shrewdly parallels the transformation in Europe with what had occurred in sixth century Greece, when literacy became widespread. The change was profound. When once it became generally possible to read laws and history, the Greek language underwent a transformation in order that it could express "for the first time metaphysical and political ideas, and abstract ideas. . . ." So, too, in the high Middle Ages there occurred a

shift from what is called the mythical to the logico-empirical mode of thought. . . . [For writing] appears to establish a different kind of relationship between the word and its referent which is a more general and abstract one, less closely connected with a particular person, place or time, than obtains in oral communication. This [happens because] certain mental potentials are activated by communication when it is frozen in the written text, and memory becomes akin to a vestigial organ. (Literacy in England 158)

Literacy, furthermore, meant seeing the past in terms of objectivity, and therefore meant separating myth out from history. And as in ancient Greece,

when a widespread alphabetic culture was becoming a reality, the very idea of logic as an unchanging and impersonal mode of discourse could and did develop. Such a new methodology for the learning and analysis of language led to fourteenth-century universities basing their curricula on logic as an

abstract methodology that could investigate questions of how the mind perceived, learned and responded to the natural and the supernatural (159).

Reading generally fostered a new critical attitude that had its impact on all walks of life and otherwise engendered in readers a psychological detachment from the larger community, which contributed to a nascent sense that a person could be a unique individual. This was a fatal point of view for feudal society, since literacy "encouraged the mobility of men and their ability to conceive of themselves as having a function apart from the land." In England, for instance, people "came to distinguish themselves either as 'lewed' or 'lered' far more frequently than as free or unfree" (160).

III

Perhaps more than at any other time, a semiotically based world view now affected all human endeavor, whether as narrowly linguistic provisions or within a more broadly conceived linguistics as can be found in the contemporary architecture, art, music--in short, in all walks of life. At the heart of all these "semiotic systems," however, was the general system of grammar, one that Scholastics eventually argued for as being, vis-à-vis Aristotelian standards, a true science. Aristotle's thinking had instigated new struggles,

owing to its skepticism regarding the possibilities for linguistic meaning. Originating with the mistaken belief, derived from Boethius' translation of the Perihermenias, that Aristotle had defined names as the direct or indirect signs of the things they named, medieval semantics evolved along "a long and tortuous" path (Maloney 187 and n. 1). Yet semantics, as we have observed, really begins in the early twelfth century with the discovery of the logica nova, particularly with the Sophistici elenchi. It was then that logicians felt compelled to turn to contemporary theories of grammar for a paradigm that would foster a resolution of the problem of language versus logic (cf. above and Maloney 187 ff.).

It is in England, ironically, where Latin had never been the native tongue, that grammar becomes for intellectuals the paradigm par excellence, the model of truth. All assertions of the real were then measured, analogically, against grammar's inherent wisdom. In the eighth century Western textual repositories and centers of learning had to be shifted from the south of Europe to the north, and mostly to England, in the face of Muslim threats. This shift needs to be considered in the context of the vernacular literature's emergence in the ninth century (Dronke Poetic 2). By then we find

evidence of an ultra-realism which was the expression of the unwarranted assumption that there must be some real entity corresponding to every noun. For example, Fredegisius of Tours (d. 834), a pupil of Alcuin, wrote a Letter on Nothing and Darkness, in which he maintained, among other things, that there must be something corresponding to the word "nothing," and as every noun must refer to a corresponding reality, God must have created the world out of a pre-existing undifferentiated material or stuff. (Copleston 69)

Although the Latin tradition had to be continued, it became necessary to simplify Latin for the less sophisticated northern Europeans. This artificially emphasized grammar came to enjoy a privilege beyond its intrinsic merit, until by the time of Anselm it was being used to define both sensible and divine truths. This was a grammar, however, that was slowly coming to be infused with Aristotelian reason.

IV

It was inevitable that grammar should have come to occupy such a central position in the perceptual framework of the mid to late Middle Ages. An expression of a cognito-linguistic inheritance from earliest times, it was most abundantly elaborated in the writings of Augustine. The Confessions, for example, presupposes an essential alignment between language and experience--indeed, a more intimate relationship between the two than is to be found in either the Presocratics or in Plato's conception of the

logos. And the Confessions draws this relationship in more copious fashion than previously. Augustine's sense of the eternal is articulated as the "sky of skies," with the created world "[s]tretched out beneath [it as a] scroll of the firmament, a layer of 'skin' where the primal dictation of creation is dispensed as a written text, as Scripture" (XIII.xv.16; in Vance "Augustine's Confessions" 8). Mortals must read the word of God, Augustine continues, unlike the angels, who as more refined beings read the eternal will without the aid of the syllables of time (cf. Gellrich 29 ff.). Experience, whether metaphysically Christian (or, for that matter, the formally Real of Plato) or that of the sensible, the material, must ultimately take the form of an expression that will have to be embodied in linguistic terms. All forms, whether Platonically Ideal or fallen in the Christian sense, obtain to metaphoric or catachretic expression that employs the terms of language per se. The very idea of the Christian Word incarnate must by definition embrace such a parameter. Perhaps this observation merely states the obvious, that the "dilemma" of an ineluctable language is an eventuality, or, rather, that language is a given. The attempt had been made, of course, to separate oral from written language, and thereby to account for the "distancing effect" that the naming of the thing has on that thing's very

comprehension. In the Phaedrus, according to Socrates, "King Thamus repudiates Thoth's invention of writing because it is merely a 'semblance' of truth that would impede the capacity to know and recall"; writing will cause a rupture in memory (Gellrich 33; cf. Derrida De la grammatologie 27, trans. 15). Augustine and later medieval thinkers, nevertheless, go to great lengths to distinguish between a word and the idea that may or may not be the cause of the word's inception. On the one hand the alignment of word and idea includes discourse, and on the other, experience or rather reality. Augustine's view of the efficacy of language was a consequence

of his conversion from pagan rhetoric to Christian eloquence [. . . .] On the level of rhetoric, the immediate application that Augustine perceives in the Word made flesh is the redemption of human speech. Since he is a rhetorician after his conversion as well as before it, he therefore interprets the theologian's role as a participation in the Incarnational task of expressing the Word to the world. (Colish Mirror 345)

For Augustine, discourse comprehends both the oral and the written, the sacred and the secular, the historical and the exegetical. Indeed, discourse transcends language, even though it is grounded in the linguistic expression of the truth as it is contained within any particular language. Such thinking about the possibilities of any finite expression is much in keeping with Jerome, whose ideas regarding translation

stem from the understanding that there is a sensum or perhaps a "spirit" of any given thought, one which needs to be "extorted" [exprimere] from the actualized thought by translators when making linguistic transpositions (cf. the "Introduction" above). Yet it is Augustine who for the Middle Ages establishes the authority under which notions of text and reality are to be ontologically, inextricably woven together, so that textuality and experience each come to define the other. As Eugene Vance observes, the written

scroll of the firmament [. . .] is impelled and sustained by force of the creative--and recreative--oral performance. Enunciation, then, is the mode of moral and prophetic truth, of auctoritas; the "writing" of the Scriptures is only ulterior mediation, merely a supplement. The skin of the scroll [as adumbrated in the Confessions] once covered man, who was as a hieroglyph of authority. When Adam and Eve sinned, however, they covered the true text of their skin with the garments of an alien world. Martyrs, by contrast, are men who refuse to cover themselves with the skins of this world and with the fig-leaves of false eloquence, and who continue to articulate God's authority to sinners in the "infirmity" below. (8-9; cf. Confessions XIII.xv.16, and Enarratio in Psalmo CIII.I.8)

Vance clearly evinces the debt Augustine owes to the language per se that is employed in the very elaboration of his cosmology. And in this enterprise Augustine establishes a long lived tradition, one which the later Middle Ages struggles to supersede although the struggle must be lost. As Jesse Gellrich writes,

While medieval instructors surely appreciated the distinction between "reality" and "semblance"--between Augustine's eternal text and temporal writing--they nonetheless tried rigorously to locate divine wisdom within the letters of the sacra pagina. Instead of a stumbling block to truth, the "semblance" was its "revelation" in the Bible, the "veil" (integumentum) or "mirror" (speculum) in which divine wisdom was present, if only readers had "eyes to see." (33)

Augustine's cosmology, indeed his etymology, still hold sway as late as the Renaissance, and in the twelfth century can be perceived, for instance, in the use made of a ceremonial Gospel book that was kept in the wardrobe of Edward I of England: "a book which [was] called textus, upon which the magnates were accustomed to swear" (Chaplais Docs 50, n2; in Clanchy 205). In the eleventh century's association of textus with the Bible, we can trace the evolution of the English noun text from the Latin verb texo meaning "to weave, plait or interlace." First rightly pointing out the additional meaning of texo, "to compose," Brian Stock initially establishes a relationship between, alternately, text or weaving, and discourse, for text implies composition, which could include rhetoric:

The notion of a series verborum survives as late as the Oxford Dictionary, which gives as the first meaning of text, "the wording of anything written or printed; the structure formed by the words in their order," a notion whose medieval roots were neatly summed up by the lexicographer Calepino when he wrote that textus equals complicatio, and that textum can be defined as "quicquid contexitur aut componitur" [Dictionarii Octolinguis (Lyon, 1663) 703]. ("Medieval Literacy" 21)

Gradually, text increasingly signified written instead of oral composition, and "[f]rom the eleventh century, textus began to refer more and more exclusively to the Bible" (21). In the later Middle Ages the Bible could be seen as the central text of the world, that first and ultimate description of experience. The mystical idea of a text as being the world itself was never far from this revelation, and, as Derrida has said, this text indicated the world through its significative capacity to totalize, to portray meaning as ever present and homogenous (30- 31; in Gellrich 31). Such mysticism influences both metaphysics and an emerging physics. Language's relationship to reality, particularly language's tendency to rely on imagery of itself in order to describe the manner in which it might signify the real, originates at least as early as Plato.

Always on intimate terms with the possible world it purports to signify and otherwise describe, language nevertheless has at times been viewed as insisting upon a separate existence from the world it appears to gesture towards, while at other times it has been actually identified with its world, as in the status of the Bible during the Middle Ages. The roots of this perception can be found in ancient stoicism. The Stoics, who indirectly but profoundly influenced many

medieval thinkers, as Colish has shown, proposed such a unified world:

Plato's main concern in the Cratylus is not so much to forge a compromise between the natural and conventional theories of verbal signification as it is to delineate the limitations of language itself, as a transient, sensory form, in communicating a knowledge of abstract and transcendent objects of knowledge. The Stoics, [however,] while they were vigorous supporters of the theory of natural signification, rooted it in a decidedly non-Platonic metaphysics. ("Stoic Theory" 20)

Just as "[h]uman speech, whether spoken or written, is the verbal logos, the expressive side of the rational logos in man," the "human logos" according to Stoic theory, "is consubstantial with God, the logos of nature." Colish concludes that

Stoic physics sees the world in monistic terms; God is identified with the natural world and with the human mind. Words, thus, are intrinsically real, in a physical sense. Speech is a natural phenomenon. Both the denotations of words, their etymological derivations, and the grammatical structure of language are hence natural. (19-20)

The Stoics' alignment of semantics, and particularly grammar, with what is held to be natural and thus intrinsic to the universe, presents a rough parallel to the elevation of grammar in the tenth century as an unsurpassed epistemological tool--even as the discipline of logic was coming into its own. Logic was recognized as a distinct entity as it was being enormously developed and applied to theological and/or epistemological problems. For their part, the Stoics

extended their belief in the intrinsic correspondence between words and things from linguistics and the science of grammatical declination to a pedagogical emphasis on grammar as the basis of the liberal arts and to a didactic and rationalistic theory of poetics and rhetorical style. (21)

As for perhaps the more sophisticated notion of a text as being the metonymic, metaphoric or in some manner consubstantial representation of a perceived world, as regards a text's function of composing or weaving, we can find a significant use of text, one which fits such a definition, as early as the Gorgias. While set in a contrast to dialectic, the notion of weaving here is associated with rhetoric (i.e., rhetoric conceived of as spoken, though it affects the listener's judgments):

Socrates: [. . .] as you [Gorgias] profess to be a rhetorician, and a maker of rhetoricians, let me ask you, with what is rhetoric concerned: I might ask with what is weaving concerned [. . .]. (Loeb edition p. 507)

Out of the Latin term texo English, German and the Romance languages eventually derive their respective words for text that, as we have seen, came to be identified with Scripture. Yet text was too semantically rich to remain within the province of a narrowly defined, religious discourse. While the conception of a text had held out to Augustine and others the opportunity to fully realize religious truths,

[. . .] the more sophisticated notion of tissue, texture, or style of composition, which may have originated with Quintilian, also survived throughout the Middle Ages, and, to add to the many layers in the idea of a text, never lost touch with its original, tangible associations. Cicero, for instance, in a phrase known to medieval authors, speaks of "tegumenta [. . .] corporum vel texta vel suta" [De Natura Deorum 2.150] ("the coverings of bodies or weavings or sowings"), and a glossary of late Latin, preserving usages between the second and the sixth century, refers to texta as connections or chains [Souter s.v. texta].

(Stock "Medieval Literacy" 21)

By the time of the high Middle Ages derivations from texo had more to do with cloth than parchment. All the same, Augustine's felicitous conceptualization of martyrdom in the Confessions (cf. above), to say nothing of his version of Adam and Eve both within and without the Garden of Eden, influences the eventual emphasis of Scripture as the text while bridging the related notions of skin, parchment and cloth as integral within the religious sensibility that informed the idea of a decidedly Christian biblical text. And in fact, by the twelfth century, integumentum (like textus and texo, rooted in the Latin verb tegere) had come to signify "the 'allegorical covering' of a secular fable or myth" (Stock Myth and Science 52).

V

The concepts text and reality, then, are virtually inseparable in Augustine's thought. In the high

Middle Ages they evolve into components of a central dialectical construct. Inherent in the idea of textuality is the presumption of interpretive strategies that must result in two meanings, inner and outer, the familiar husk and seed metaphor (outer skin and inner truth), and so forth, such as we find in an allegory like Bernard Silvester's Cosmographia. In this sense, allegory may be understood to be an overly determined text, an assumption that might have derived from any number of ancient writers. For example, Cicero associates the terms integumentum (skin or covering) and involucrum (wrap or covering). They are used virtually interchangeably, a use which foreshadows a later medieval understanding of the close relationships among myth, truth and allegory. In De Oratione Cicero has Cotta say,

modo in oratione Crassi divitias atque ornamenta eius ingenii perquaedam involucra et integumenta perspexi. (I.35.161; cf. Jeauneau, AHDLMA 24 [1958], 38 n. 3)

I sensed just now during Crassus' speech the riches and embellishments of his inventive power as through some wrappings and coverings. (trans. Stock Myth 49-50)

Both terms mean physical covering. But Cicero's juxtaposition of them creates a platonic metaphor suggesting that Crassus' wrapping of his meaning in the sheer veils of rhetoric "[parallels] the concealment of formal reality from the senses of man by the phenomenal appearance of things" (Stock 49-50).

As Coleman asserts, in the later Middle Ages allegory finds its proper context in a world of readers, not listeners. Ever more "fixed modes of discourse and a fixed logic to analyse discourse," the conditions of literacy, in turn instigated

the development of the use of allegory and figural interpretation as an attempt to "read" and reinterpret aspects of the fixed, cultural tradition, not least the Bible. This had already been developed by the literate minority in monasteries and cathedral schools of the earlier Middle Ages. Allegorization, in general, seems to develop only in literate ages, when the complex traditions of a society, which are previously expressed in myths and disseminated orally, are now fixed in a text for all to read. Any evolution of the myth previously effected by a minstrel or singer's oral adaptation to the needs of his audience, is replaced by allegorical interpretation of the traditional story, explaining away the inconsistencies that an oral tradition, not based on fixed texts, would have been able to subsume. (159)

Within this literate community, moreover, allegory came to function as a means of equating one body of knowledge with another. For Bernard Silvester, allegorical poetry was the only adequate means of scientific description (Stock Myth 230). In his poem Cosmographia, allegory allows Bernard to synthesize an "empirically definable world" and the "inherited authority of ideal moral law" by setting the one standard, empiricism, beside Platonic-Christian auctoritas (280-81). In part, the inherent contradiction of the two world views is dissipated in

their subsumption within the Cosmographia's encyclopedic "comprehensiveness" that allows each view its own ground within the larger structure of the poem's vision, and provides a co- equal justification of both views in the poem's "playful ambiguity" (128-30)--an ambiguity, we might add, which primarily rested on double entendres of a complexity only possible for the literate reader who has the leisure to entertain simultaneous and multiple significations and associations within a single utterance. A typical example of Bernard's subtle poetic play occurs early in the Cosmographia, as Stock explains:

In Bernard's [. . .] description of the universe, myth, history, and geography are thrown together yet arranged in a delicate architectural model, continuing the [poem's] initial image of a visual structure unfolding before the creator.

The poem equally arrays the Christian and the pagan. Christ and the Pope, for instance, are "ranged among the heroes of antiquity" (132):

Exemplar specimenque Dei virguncula Christum
parturit et verum secula numen habent.
Munificens deitas Eugenum commodat orbi,
donat et in solo munere cuncta semel.
(Cos. I.3.53-56; in Stock 132)

A young maid gives birth to Christ, the exemplar and specimen of god, and history has its true guide. Beneficent deity provides Eugenius [III] for the world, giving everything at once in a single gift. (trans. Stock 133)

Here Bernard is punning on virgo ("virguncula"; i.e.,

the virgin birth and the astrological sign anticipating it), and he "employs the overtly pagan [term] numen to describe Christ's role in history" (133). It is the depth and richness of the ambiguity here that most suggest the literate quality of this text, which would not have been possible, in fact, in a world devoid of the new forces of both writing and rationalism.

Puns, symbols, and so on, will inevitably raise more questions than such language originally hoped (let us presume) to put to rest. Stock writes that Bernard's "individuality," in comparison with other twelfth-century Platonists, "is best understood within a framework for cosmogenesis utilized in particular by Thierry and William of Conches [. . .]" (124). However, Bernard stands apart from these men and all other contemporary Platonists.

While all adhered to the twelfth-century ideal of uniting rhetoric and philosophy, and while all, in theory, may have possessed a poetic vision of the cosmos, none translated it into poetic practice. [Bernard imposed] a new symbolic view of the cosmos.

Indeed, unlike all the others, Bernard constructed "a new myth of creation" (274). Peter Dronke, therefore, includes the Cosmographia in his claim for the individuality of the medieval poet, in the use made of such linguistic strategies that produce both rich perception and deep mystery. Dronke believes in the

poet's conscious intentions, which result in the presentation of "something deliberately enigmatic." It is as if the rich, albeit equivocal, texture of the poet's text--the product of the poet's "inner vision"--is to be the mark of that poet's unique self-assertion. Finally, we must regard the inexplicable--Titurel's Sigune, who sends her beloved Schionatulander on the quest for the hound's leash, or Piers the Plowman's tearing up of the Pardon--as an author's insistence upon an audience's embrace of what is "intrinsically" intransigent:

The problems of inner vision, finally, can touch every kind of attempt at embodying in images some aspect of the intelligible, immaterial world. Thus in the twelfth century alone the inquiry could extend to visions of very different kinds: in Hildegard's own mystical prose writings, we should have to ask, how and why do the visions she relates nearly always suggest so much more than her own allegoresis of them can express? So, too, with the prophetic visions of Joachim of Flora: in what ways are his images--such as those in the Liber Figurarum--able to reach beyond abstract concepts? And with the allegorical visions of the twelfth-century Platonists: what can be expressed by allegory can also in principle be expressed conceptually, yet do these visions at moments reach the limits of allegorical statement? Where Bernard Silvestris, for instance, requires three goddesses, each with her own equipment, for the fabrication of man [Cos. II.11-12], or Alan of Lille conjures up four spheres, each showing the relation between matter and form in a different light [Sermo de sphaera intelligibili], is this merely the allegorist's playfulness, multiplying entities beyond necessity, or are these, too, attempts at saying what could not be said any other way, at using allegorical constructs as if they were myths, to extend the range of conceptual statement? (Poetic Individuality 200-1)

Indeed, allegory is but one instance of medieval bifurcated conceptualization and expression, for the dyadic structure existed socially, politically and philosophically. These systems of thought and expression informed and nurtured one another. Abelard's "division of lanque and parole," as Stock puts it ("History, Literature" 10; cf. Implications 528), which was achieved through a more fully rationalized intellectual system that was capable of articulating a relationship between language and experience, anticipates a subtle parodying of allegory, in the fourteenth century in Langland's Piers Plowman. In line with an emerging rationalism, Abelard was able to construct a more elaborate model of what we might think of as abstract mental processes, and in doing so he distanced himself from the logical procedures of his time which were predicated on the grammatical example established by Priscian. Abelard saw no reason why, for instance, Plato and Socrates should share an identity merely because two sentences--"Socrates is a man" and "Plato is a man"-- share an identical predicate.

Yet there was for Abelard a belief in universals, if not a somewhat qualified belief. In the Ingredientibus Abelard proposed the notion of an "intellectus universalium." When considering the question of nouns,

however, he could eventually distinguish between "two directions of designation" (Fumagalli 62): "circa ad inferiora" and "ad speciem." "Taken as a noun of species" ("ad speciem"), the noun "refers to a 'fictio' obtained by 'abstractionem'" (Fumagalli 62). For Abelard, "things" would always be individuals, yet "a universal did name things which really existed [. . .]" (Gilby 6). Such naming was not a "flatus vocis"--that is, "a sound made from letters and syllables"--but a meaningful expression, a "vox significativa" which he called a 'nomen' and, in a revised edition of his logic, a 'sermo,' which indicated a "common likeness" though one that did not require the ascription to it of universality (Gilby 6). Abelard would conclude that universals are not things but they do denominate things; moreover, such common conceptions reside in consciousness (6). All the same, a "universal term such as 'man' is not of course a proper name like 'Socrates'," while it does name the individual even if it is a universal that, inasmuch as it is predicable of all men, does after all, in some measure, signify the individual Socrates. This universality was ascribed by Abelard "to common nouns in virtue of their function of naming [. . .] indeterminately" (Copleston 82).

Finally, Abelard is to be seen as struggling to be free of--and only somewhat succeeding in this endeavor--the linguistic paradigm that provoked his

grappling with the concept of universals and his striving to derive a purely logical model out of that struggle. Ultimately he turned away "from the notion of logic as treating of entities, including mental entities, to the idea of it as treating of terms and propositions" (Copleston 83). If Abelard's position appears equivocal, it may nonetheless be fairly viewed in the larger tension between grammatically and logically based world views. Hence Abelard could distinguish between an inner linguistic model, based on Latin's explicit grammar that was common, at least in theory, to many members of a group, and an outer speaking-capacity, chiefly associated with the vernaculars, which demanded undivided performance and flexible social allegiances (Stock Implications 528).

The tensions and rebalancing of grammar and logic, orality and literacy, the feudal society of memoria and that in which there are individuals who are no longer primarily bound to a single place--the common condition under feudalism--provide the background for a poem such as Piers Plowman. Langland raises the question of an inherent dichotomy in human experience between speech and action. That conflict, "raised at the banquet by Will's challenge to the Doctor to practice his precepts," according to Anne Middleton, is reconciled when "Clergy offers more than a bizarre analogy to

explain what the Three Lives [i.e., Dowel, Dobet, Dobest] mean" ("Two Infinities" 170):

`Now thow, Clergie,' quod Conscience,
 `carpe us what is Dowel.'
 `I have sevene sones,' he seide, serven in a castel
 Ther the lord of lif wonyeth,
 to leren hem what is Dowel.
 Til I se tho sevene and myself acorde
 I am unhardy,' quod he, `to any wight to preven it.
 For oon Piers the Plowman hath impugned us alle,
 And set alle sciences at a sop save love one;
 And no text ne taketh to mayntene his cause
 But Dilige Deum and Domine quis habitabit;
 And seith that Dowel and Dobet arn two infinites,
 Whiche infinites with a feith fynden out Dobest,
 Which shall save mannes soule--
 thus seith Piers the Plowman.'

(B XIII.118-29)

The argument he will advance here, however, is essentially one of grammar. In doing so, we may observe how Langland has departed from standard allegorical procedure by personifying "coined terms using several parts of speech." Their meaning lies in their strictly formal properties (171). In Langland's hands, allegory can function as a result of the "syntactic impossibility" of these terms (Mills 195; cf. Middleton 170 n.). This understanding of the possibilities for allegory is reminiscent of the argument advanced by Abbo, Berengarius, and later the speculative grammarians, who held that reality is literally defined (perhaps it can be said to be invoked) by the language used to describe it. For Langland, the ultimate attempt at expressing the truth must come enigmatically, in a coded form, in language

not merely imitating life but rather creating it. In the banquet scene Langland's "grammatical argument"--whether we consider it the text of his narrative, his narrative text, the text of his intent, or the narrative's subtext--

is crucial to the entire poem in showing how these terms have significance. Clergy shows that their meaning lies in the forms of the words themselves, and his account illustrates the way allegorical language works throughout the poem to order the search for perfection. (Middleton 170)

As will be discussed at length, Langland purposely obscures his allegorical framework as a way of commenting on both the nature of allegory and what he believes is its sustaining structure-- that of grammar. In this manner, moreover, he has taken a step beyond the Augustinian allegorical expectation, where there is the surety of a one to one correspondence between outer and inner meaning (that is, if the reader can only apply the proper interpretive method). Langland, rather, "repeatedly calls attention to the heuristic shortcomings of [allegorical] personifications by exploding their narrative and dramatic consistency in mid-scene." Likewise, he questions "the very notion of linear narrative as adequate to the task of explanation" (185). The question we must ask at this juncture-- one which was intensely pursued during Langland's day and for some time before that--is

whether truly linear narrative, the discourse of the historian, is a poet's viable alternative.

VI

Piers Plowman is one of many examples of inter- and intratextual strategies that evolved in the later Middle Ages. Always residing at the center of the Christian imaginative experience, particularly after Jerome and Augustine, throughout the exegetical tradition textuality gives rise to the kinds of strategies within the church; eventually, in the eleventh century, textuality provides the basis for a peculiar, new form of itself in secular literature. Although interpretation was always a component of Augustinian cosmology, the later spread of literacy created a second order interpretive activity. The written text's temporal and spatial remove from its author meant that its audience could, at leisure, engage in reflective reading. Leisure, and reflection, "[promote] the ability to conceive more complicated structures" (Coleman 157) than is possible in the reception afforded oral discourse; in turn reflection allows for a reader's greater discernment of the issues a given text sets forth. Moreover, increased abstract and critical thinking help to form an individual consciousness, a self-consciousness distinct from that

of the group. As Godzich puts it, members of an oral community are defined "discursively" within that community, for these are persons who are individuals merely "in the etymological sense of the term, that is, [they are] material purports of roles which they do not write but accept, in the form of fate, from the power that resides in memoria." Within the community of readers, however, the individual will come to be defined as inherently and fundamentally human in the sense that such an individual can play a role in forging his or her destiny; in other words, such an individual will come to be defined "ontologically" (xv-xvi). One social outgrowth of this transformation from oral to written discourse is that, in the latter circumstance, the individual as a reader will come to be defined as separate from the overall societal discourse that would have otherwise sought to subsume him. Writing, and particularly reading, give rise to abstractive logic, which in turn engenders and sustains reflection on the part of the individual and defines a new kind of discourse that will ultimately change all social and political structures. And it is logic, unique among all possible discourses, which comes to dominate all other epistemological systems. As a discourse,

logic differs from all other discourses by the fact that it does not intersect with any other discourses and, as a result, it comprehends them

all. It makes them all answerable to itself. The advantages are immediately obvious. Instead of a belief in the ultimate coherence of the universe of discourses, logic provides a verifiable methodology for the determination of such a coherence. Since it appeals to universals of reason, it is inherently more egalitarian as long as one is willing to consider all human beings as rational beings. (xvii)

Literacy and logic, then, establish a new importance for a society that could now be defined by its attachment to that aspect of the world which existed for the individual between his or her birth and death. Logical discourse undermined the premise of Christian eternity that served as a cement to bind individuals to a common and dominant societal discourse. This was a community that gradually was perceived as being an entity apart from such an individual. Furthermore, the separation occurred in both secular and clerical worlds. In short, the new rationalism pervaded all aspects of late medieval society; in this society persons played astonishingly new roles as both members and autonomous individuals, for logic "opens the door to the emergence of the individual as someone endowed with rights" (xvii).

Likewise, the question of poetic auctoritas is paralleled by exegetical activity that in the high Middle Ages began to be concerned with the human aspect of Scripture. Later commentators were brought "considerably closer to their auctores" as the newly

popular Aristotelian system of the four causes that "governed all activity and change in the universe" (efficient, material, formal, final) came to be "applied in literary analysis." The revered "auctor," as demonstrated by A. J. Minnis,

remained an authority, someone to be believed and imitated, but his human qualities began to receive more attention. This crucial development is writ large in the prologues to commentaries on the Bible. In twelfth-century exegesis, the primacy of allegorical interpretation had hindered the emergence of viable literary theory: God was believed to have inspired the human writers of Scripture in a way which defied literary description. Twelfth-century exegetes were interested in the auctor mainly as a source of authority. But in the thirteenth century, a new type of exegesis emerged, in which the focus had shifted from the divine auctor to the human auctor of Scripture. It became fashionable to emphasize the literal sense of the Bible, and the intention of the human auctor was believed to be expressed by the literal sense. As a result, the exegetes' interest in their texts became more literary. (5)

Minnis' particular focus on this one aspect of a changing intellectual climate discloses a development that reached into virtually all walks of life. The individual, standing apart from the community, is a member of the larger Christian fold; yet within this Christian society there is an ever growing appreciation of each member's mortal, sensible life. The new emphasis on the individual, moreover, altered society's literary sense and brought about the construction of definitions for fiction, and history.

From our modern standpoint, we must view the

distinction between history and fiction as remaining blurred in the twelfth century, yet it is from then that we can trace the start of a separation into two unique entities. At this time, simultaneously, there arose an increasing interest in literature that can conveniently be called historically conscious. The very fact that John of Salisbury in the Metalogicon (III.4) cites Bernard of Chartres' remark, that twelfth century thinkers are but "dwarfs perched on the shoulders of [the classical] giants" ("nos esse quasi nanos gigantium humeris insidentes"), suggests the spirited debate that took place during John's life over the significance of what was deemed a renaissance and its debt to the rich, newly rediscovered antique past (Miller 9 ff.). It is important to note that Bernard's observation was double edged. In his own time Bernard saw "a continuation of the classical world" in later, faithful reproductions of antiquity's concepts, styles, and cultural ideals"; yet, too, he "was prepared to grant that in other respects" the renaissance he was a witness of, and a part of, had perhaps surpassed even the ancients' reach (Stock Myth 6; cf. Miller 10).

Such doubleness of perception permitted the licensing of individual interpretation vis-à-vis what was held to be the revered, awe inspiring past. The individual of the twelfth century saw himself as part

of a continuum from ancient times. However, he also represented a distinct turn in that literary-historical flow of events. This looking backwards in time from a new vantage point, and with a decidedly altered attitude towards both the past and, secondarily, what constituted knowledge, inevitably raised questions about the nature of historiography itself. Such a development particularly obtained to the twelfth century's view of Virgil, who himself in the Aeneid--a crucial text in the medieval litero-historical imagination--had to synthesize past and present, myth and fact, under the auspices of the ethics, politics and esthetics of his own time. Virgil's amalgam of myth and history, then, could readily serve as a model for medieval counterparts like Chrétien de Troyes.

Indeed, the extent to which Virgil exercised literary license was to be theoretically justified in the twelfth century. Averroes, for example, allows that at times there occurs the need to depart from a literary standard. Of course, he finds sanction in the authority of Aristotle; his commentary on the Poetics asserts that "variation from proper and standard speech" is one aspect that defines poetry (ch. XXII; trans. in Hardison 378; cf. in Miller 26). Quintillian, Cicero and other antiqui--the "shoulders" of their counterparts of the renaissance, the

moderni--were also often invoked, by Donatus, Isidore and others. Eventually, John of Salisbury develops the notion of poetic license to such a degree he can declare that

License to use figures is reserved for authors and for those like them, namely the very learned. Such have understood why [and how] to use certain expressions and not use others. According to Cicero, "by their great and divine good writings they have merited this privilege," which they still enjoy. The authority of such persons is by no means slight, and if they have said or done something, this suffices to win praise for it, or [at least] to absolve it from stigma.

(Metalogicon I.18; in Miller 27)

Here John speaks of the use of less than transparent, figurative language, but what needs to be noticed is his great investiture in certain persons, "authors and for those like them," those his contemporaries who might choose such language as an option in their own work.

VII

John's rather quixotic definition of poetic license amounts to a rationalization (the word is used here advisedly) of an otherwise rigidly determined hierarchy of specifically literary authority. He and others created sets of double standards, each standard held in tension by the other, which were instigated by the emergence of a more fully articulated logic and the

consequent need to resolve the very dichotomies established by such dialectical discourse that logic engenders. The question of history, as posed by these dual standards, each related to the other of the set, presents a clear picture of the struggles intellectuals underwent in their various attempts to reconcile, within a wide array of circumstances, faith and empiricism. What is particularly remarkable in this regard is that the attempts at resolving dichotomies never fully succeeded, and that out of these "failures" an abundantly rich, unique culture was established.

In the later Middle ages there was to be nothing like the clarity, for instance, of Erasmus' "accusation made against St. Jerome [. . .]: 'Ciceronianus es, non es Christianus'." Erasmus felt, according to K. Lloyd-Jones, that because Jerome had appropriated pagan linguistic forms such as style and, more precisely, "the very syntax and vocabulary of those to whom, no matter how great their value and merit, God has in His infinite wisdom denied the revelation of His truth," the wisdom proffered by him was tainted; in fact, it could not be wisdom. Language and thought were simply not separable; to use the language of the pagan was "unavoidably to think and speak as one" (351). In contrast, as Jeanette Beer writes, the Middle Ages held the "'auctoritas' of Scripture [to be] absolute, its source obviously being beyond all reproach." However,

"the status of other literary works in the inherited corpus was variable and varying" (4). Authors like Isidore of Seville and Boethius enjoyed near canonical status, of course. An author such as Virgil was revered and copied, not only in an attempt to resuscitate his wisdom but to maintain a vital continuity with a traditional past, so to invoke the authority of that tradition. And, as has already been suggested, it is particularly in the case of Virgil that the intimate connection between the medieval historical sense and the tension between faith and empiricism (i.e., logic) can be understood. This tension, moreover, finds its clearest focus in the issue of medieval translation practices. The medieval translator, as a rule, "abrogated" to himself "the right to act magisterially" with his auctors.

Explicit intervention through commentary was one possible technique in the [medieval translation] process, but the translator's magisterial role often extended far beyond such superficialities. If his responsibility was to his public, not to his source, the authority of that text qua text was correspondingly minimized. No period (pace Ezra Pound!) has been less servile to the literalities of a text, because the authority of that text was not recognized as absolute. (Beer 4)

In part, what John of Salisbury and others were doing in their theorization of and therefore their attempt to legitimize an individual author's poetic license was to sanction the translator's, indeed the poet's,

interpretive activity in relation to texts poet and translator regarded as an inheritance from the past. For considering the Christian textual tradition, especially after Augustine, the very idea of a text as well as the actual texts that were the manifestations of that idea were revered; hence it is possible to see these texts as possessing something approaching the power of a talisman, and there could have arisen the need to undo their absolute authority through various formulated theories of translation (such as Jerome's, perhaps) and poetic license (such as John's), which offered potent alternative forms of authority. And, in great part, the instigation to sanction contemporaries came from the very sense of "pastness" in the texts that were to be altered.

Rather than Scripture or even the writings of the Church fathers, it was in Virgil's work that there occurred the greatest tension between what in later times could be clearly designated as historical factuality, and the myth(s) of the past that was also pressed into the service of esthetic and political concerns in order to perpetuate the institutions of Virgil's day. Yet if in some broad sense Virgil's work was seen to be in itself a translation, such a definition of it, in the Middle Ages, could not help but establish its greater jurisdiction. Could it have

been viewed as a conflation of the mythical and the empirical, and thus a work of interpretation--considering the role of translation as the primary form of an interpretive act? Lee Patterson examines

[t]he problematic that governs the [medieval] reception of the Aeneid, [which] conditions as well [. . .] the nature of the central documents of the legendary historiography by which the Middle Ages imagined its origins. It is a problematic that is at the heart of historical consciousness per se [. . .].

Ironically, perhaps, the Aeneid, established as the central text of the medieval writer's sense of the past and/or historicity, and couched in the language and cognitive structures of both myth and faith, prepares the way for an empirically grounded historicism.

It was, after all, by means of the Virgilian model, transmitted through the topoi of Trojan foundation and translatio imperii, that the notion of a secular, purposive, linear historicity was made available to the Middle Ages. To be sure, Virgilianism was never able to achieve an unambiguous authority within medieval thought because it was subject to pressure from a variety of sources, including the Augustinian and Boethian dismissals of historicity per se, the tenacious dream of a prophetic Geschichteestheologie, and the dubious historiographical status of many of its crucial legitimizing texts (Geoffrey of Monmouth, the Arthurian romances, and the Trojan legendary). But it also contained, as an inheritance from Virgil himself, an inherent instability that rendered its project uncertain. Put simply, the tension that at once animates and inhibits the Aeneid is a struggle between, on the one hand, a linear purposiveness that sees the past as a moment of failure to be redeemed by a magnificent future and, on the other, a commemorative idealism that sees it as instead a heroic origin to be emulated,

a period of gigantic achievement that a belated future can never hope to replicate. (160)

Patterson concludes that "the past is endowed with a double, contradictory value." The potency of this past, pagan though it was, ultimately could not be denied; it forms the basis for the medieval elaboration of an heroic vision. It is thus "reinvoked and reenacted." And so, most notably in Erec et Enide, it is the "site of both emulation and exorcism, of slavish imitation coupled with decisive rejection" (160). What should not be overlooked in connection with this new historiography is that in the period between Virgil and Chrétien societal structures had come to be based on discourses that were primarily oral; as we have seen, all social and political--indeed, often enough, religious--functions of European society, during this hiatus between literate antiquity and the literate Middle Ages, were structured by orality. The subsequent rebalancing of the oral and the literal in the high Middle Ages contributed to "the recuperation of historicity itself," as Chenu writes, "a prise de conscience that, for all its qualifications, stands as a decisive moment in the development of the West" (in "Theology" 162; paraphrased in Patterson 157).

Consider the Chanson de Roland, temporally, philosophically and esthetically a pivotal poem, whose poetic displays the shifting balance between orality

and literacy; its first half is indebted to the idiom of oral epic, while the second half is deeply affected by a new societal emphasis on writing and reading. The "tragedy" of Roland, Vance writes,

is inseparable from the disclosure that not only words, but even things and events to which words refer, are equivocal. The Roland inaugurated in the most hallowed legends of vernacular culture a new but troubled consciousness of the radical difference between the knower and the known, between unquestioning memory and exercised judgment, between the claims of blind loyalty and of assumed responsibility, and between past or present actions and their future historical consequences. The Roland made its culture glimpse a terrifying centrifugality, not only in the institutions of political power, but also in the very discourse by whose conventional formulas that power had been celebrated. The tragedy was all the more brutal because of the poem's failure to invent and utter new, compensatory values upon which to base the hero's quest for unequivocal honor in this world--and for salvation in the next.

(From Topic xxi)

There is a cause and effect relationship between the emergence of literacy as the dominant mode of the contemporary society's discourse and the transformation of that society's institutions of political power--a power, we might add, that began to see itself in new historical terms:

If the Roland does indeed testify to a crisis in the discourse of power, surely this crisis stemmed in part from the impact of writing as it brought new constraints to vernacular language which disrupted the economy and latent epistémè of traditional discourse. Indeed, a shift from epic mouvance toward a culture of grammatica and monumentality is already indicated in the body of the Roland itself, for Charlemagne plans to

perpetuate the memories of Roland and the twelve peers not by the invention of songs (cantilènes), but by the construction of white marble tombs that will presumably bear written inscriptions. To suggest that literacy was crucial to the disruption of the semantic processes of Old French epic is also to point to a broader relationship between writing and political power that was transforming the modalities of twelfth-century culture as a whole. (xxi-xxii)

What Patterson has to say provides an important addendum to Vance's discussion. Patterson points to the struggle for dominance of various mythical, quasi-historical and historically grounded discourses, which took place within the initiating framework of a more fundamental contest between orally based and literally based societal dynamics. One possible esthetic response to this struggle was the construction of historiographically framed narrative. Such narrative represented

the fundamental definition of present legitimacy in terms of descent from an omnipotent past. Verum guia vetus is a medieval proverb that expresses a ubiquitous theology of origins in force across the whole range of medieval culture, and nowhere more visibly than in the political world. The disruptions of medieval political history were typically healed with the soothing continuities of a founding legend, and insecure rulers bolstered their regimes by invoking honorific if legendary precedents. The degree to which these political imperatives determined the kind of literature that was produced in the Middle Ages is not sufficiently appreciated; nor is the even more important fact that this literature continued throughout its medieval life to concern itself with essentially historiographical issues, issues such as the relation of individual action to historical process, or the use and abuse of historical precedent itself. (Patterson 198-99)

The emergence of the secularized individual, who stood apart from the community, was necessary to the development of secular governmental and other political institutions that could rival Feudal and Church authority. As the individual emerged, writers of the period were capable of using the past "to delineate an instructive chronology of secular empire, more commonly to apprehend the plan of providential dispensation [. . .]." It is precisely the wide variety of specifically literary discourses which impels Patterson to assent to what Chenu eloquently termed the historical "prise de conscience" of the later Middle Ages. For this era did not

lack a historical sense. Rather, we would do better to see the medieval historical consciousness as always at issue, at times emerging toward an authentic apprehension of temporality and periodization, at other times retreating under the pressure of various ideologies toward reification and idolization. (198-99)

Patterson resolves this mytho-historical dichotomy in his analysis of Romance, although what he has to say pertains to the entire range of twelfth century literary enterprise. Yet it is particularly in Romance that he discovers a "self-reflexiveness," that is, "fictions largely unconcerned with historical reality," which in their writing "meditate both upon the paradox of their own production--as historical fabrications designed to legitimize political power--and upon the

problematic enterprise of reconstituting, from within history, a prehistorical origin" (198-99; my emphasis).

As the result of technological invention, which produced widespread literacy, and the concomitant renewed interest in Aristotle, Romance contended with Scripture for the twelfth century reading audience; as such this literature was a function of the new world of the literatus---specifically, in Stock's textual community, the "interpres" ("History, Literature" 12; Implications 105, 167)---that member of the community who could render explication and interpretation of its central texts. The emergence of the interpres created a social structure that revolved around this literate interpreter. This structure indicates the depth of transformation from the older orality. The orally based community could not afford an individuality that ran counter to the group need to sustain an ethical memory and hence a social cohesion. The shift to an emphasis on literacy entailed a restructuring that meant the creation of a new hierarchy, according to Godzich:

The most curious, and ultimately the weakest, feature of the economy of memoria is the strange coexistence of the acknowledgement of a discursive multiplicity and even heterogeneity with the belief in their ultimate, and unverifiable, coherence. One could readily view this admixture of experiential fact and belief as an ideological strategy for the suspension of societal antagonisms in view of real differences between groups and

individuals. These antagonisms can be held in check as long as no one identifies with a given subject position, that is as long as there prevails a realm of persons in which no one seeks to erase the difference between a subject position and the material purport that assumes it. For as soon as this difference, and the arbitrariness that presides over its assignment, are effaced, roles are taken to be entitlements and specific discourses are felt to be somehow natural to those who wield them, and they may not easily shed them in order to assume others. Furthermore, the entire universe of discourses is no longer conceivable as a general flux whose sense resides in its specific, yet unfathomable, economy, but must be hierarchized, that is, must be brought under the control of a discourse that can account for the operations, and especially the localization, of other discourses. (xvi-xvii)

The ruling discourse in the new, literate society, will be that of logic. Logic will in turn impart its peculiar form of order to an emerging historiography that seeks a ground in empiricism and thus rivals the older literature of geste and memoria in its privileging of the particular and the individual. The evolving logic, in other words, which offered a new framework for literature--even as that literature was driven by the cognitive demands that grammar continued to put upon it for quite some time--ultimately came to define modern consciousness.

VIII

Patterson equates the grounding of Romance in a modern, historical consciousness; for him the most salient feature of this literature is a historiographical

self-reflexivity within its narrative mode of discourse. Yet historicity is not the most profound manifestation of its literature's self-meditation. We have noted how in the secularized literary texts authors were quite literally engaged in self-acknowledgement and self-interpretation, in discussing the very question of interpretation of their own and others' texts. Langland's satire includes grammar as its subject; even in the choosing of grammar as a subject for poetry, we can see this literary work's self-meditative dynamic in play. Grammar still exercised a broad authority in Langland's time, and traditionally it included "not merely the knowledge of the Latin language but also the techniques of the gloss, the concordance, and the allegorical method"--all of which comprised "the necessary introduction to the science of Holy Scripture" (*Colish Mirror* 95). In the sense that we may speak of a text as a woven pattern, that by extension connotes the process by which discourse itself is generated (perhaps even the scene where discourse takes place), word and concept can thus be understood as linked to an auctor. If language can be said to be the matrix out of which ideas emerge, it follows that words sharing similar or common etymologies may in turn be the result of efforts to articulate a common experience or perception, a common idea. And therefore just as discourse can be

understood in various, similar aspects like rhetoric, dialectic, and so on, interpretation can be considered to play an integral role in any ongoing discourse or dialogue. By nature, any text will of course contain a measure of ambiguity, yet the duplicity of any posited, intended, meaning of a text is also a function of reading that in itself can perhaps be viewed as a paradoxical attempt to clarify what is held to have been ambiguous. Reading, for example, lies at the heart of the decision in the Roland to construct monuments to the dead heroes who will be understood by individuals in various, albeit related, ways. Patterson details how reading, although purportedly a "[d]isambiguating" strategy, nevertheless involves

a process of deciding not what a text means but what we want it to mean. We do this, basically, by locating the text in an interpretive context, such as an authorial intention or a genre (e.g., Christian instruction, courtly lyric), that organizes meanings into primary and secondary. Put simply, by privileging one context at the expense of others we decide how the text's ironies should be read, whence they derive their authority, and against whom they are directed.

In the Middle Ages reading is of course, first and foremost, a process understood in terms of Augustine's overall epistemology that foregrounds the interpretive act.

One of the great achievements of Augustinian hermeneutics is to make the preemptive nature of interpretation explicit. The Christian reader comes to the text (Scripture) already possessed of its message (the double law of charity), and his

task is to understand not its meaning but its way
of signifying that meaning
[cf. esp. De doctrina christiana 1.36].

Of course, Augustinian hermeneutics serves a decidedly
utilitarian end.

One purpose of this preemptive hermeneutic is to
inoculate the reader against the sweetness of the
letter by endowing him with the strength of moral
interpretation--with, in effect, the spirit.

However, to read in this manner is to raise the issue
of textualization as a possible (and possibly
dangerous) purpose unto itself. "Reading with the
oculus amoris," Patterson continues, the otherwise
Christian reader

may entertain the solicitations of the text without
anxiety. Possessing the authority of the signifié,
he is able to enjoy the delectation of the
signifiant, "le plaisir du texte" as Roland Barthes
calls it, "la valeur passée au rang somptueux de
signifiant." (Renegotiating 150-51)

Even before Augustine, reading necessarily included
what might be called a reader's selective attitude,
which established a connection between author's and
reader's intentions. And with Augustine--especially in
the worth he finds in figurative language--reading
could begin to enjoy a greater vigor and variety of
activity.

By the time of the high Middle Ages, reading is
allowed its greatest breadth. An intellectual
revolution that first emerges in the tenth century

led naturally to a consideration of language, texts, and reality at a more abstract level, as well, indirectly, to the polarization of attitudes towards textual methodologies in such writers as Abelard and Bernard. (Stock Implications 528)

Representing a self-meditation that was promoted by literary texts of the later Middle Ages, reading, as an act of interpretation ultimately of itself--that is, as its own text-- can undeniably be linked to the newly developed historical impulse. It can be argued, though, that this impulse evolved out of a textual consciousness of the time, a fascination with and a deep awareness of textuality per se. Textuality was rooted in the beginnings of Western culture and particularly in Augustine, but it took new forms in the later Middle Ages; as it became more and more distinct from a reality thought to lie beyond it, it profoundly altered the growing dynamic of text and experience. We can see this in the new emphasis on reading. Reading occurred in an environment that was changing according to how the individual was perceived within larger societal and even cosmological structures.

Everywhere, the presence of texts forced the elements of culture embedded in oral discourse to redefine their boundaries with respect to a different type of human exchange. This invariably resulted in contrasts between the "popular" and the "learned" which were themselves the byproducts of literate sensibilities. Other opposites also became polarized: custom versus law, things versus linguistic ideas, synchrony versus diachrony, and sense versus interpreted experience. (529)

In his discussion of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which mandated individual confession at least once a year, Jacques Le Goff observes that such a proclamation meant the employment of a language and context unique to confessors who were acting as individuals in their acts of confession and who engaged other individuals, those who heard these confessions. In fact, individual confession was but one of many by-products of the contemporary society's heightened sensitivity to texts of all kinds, both spoken and written. Individual confession is a manifestation of a changing intellectual climate, which was based on what Le Goff terms "introspective self-examination" within "a whole culture of the memory that developed in the thirteenth century." Indeed, "confessors' manuals taught priests how to develop and shape that memory" by inculcating a

spiritual and moral conscience, which was associated with a new idea of sin linked to the intentions of the sinner as well as with the new practice of auricular confession, based on introspective self-examination. (Medieval 79, 80)

At first seemingly unrelated to these developments is the new use made of exempla, which was a vital principle in the emerging, ever more codified ars praedicandi. A new species of literary exemplum, used especially but not exclusively in preaching, owed its

existence to the Greeks and Romans who saw it as an apt vehicle for "historical anecdote[s] employed in the rhetoric of persuasion" (78). Now this classical exemplum had been transformed. In such fashion the encouragement of individual introspection was coupled with an implied emphasis on textuality in the acutely literary nature of the new sermonizing. In its new incarnation in sermons, moreover, the exemplum served as an effective link between oral and written cultures. Thus it is a telling symbol of the radical shift from the one to the other, which brought together the palpability of written and other transcendent truth.

In and of itself the exemplum did much, too, both to expand the possibilities of and to atomize conceptualized time:

The conception of time implicit in exempla can be inferred from a study of sermons, in which three kinds of proof were used in argument: auctoritates, rationes, and exempla. The diachronic, narrative time of the exemplum, in a sense that of secular history, was combined with the retrospective and eschatological time of the auctoritates and with the atemporality of the rationes. Exemplum time must therefore be understood within the context of the sermon in which the exemplum occurs. The auctoritates, for the most part biblical citations, exhibit the temporal multiplicity of the Bible itself: the words are old but remain valid in the present and for the future, until the end of time and for eternal salvation. The homiletic commentary of the authorities is in the present, the timeless present of eternal truths. The rationes, on the other hand, are in the didactic present. Between the eschatological time of the Bible, brought up to date and oriented by commentary, and the eternal time of rational truths, the exemplum insinuated a segment of narrative time--historical, linear, and divisible.

(78-79)

All tenses, all forms of time including ~~linear~~ time, and auctoritas, are conjoined under the aegis of Augustine's view of understanding as recollection. Yet in the new use made of exempla, ironically, Augustine's conception of time, which was a function of memory, yields to narrative's diachrony and hence to the time of historiography whose very principles of composition embrace rationalism and empiricism and therefore undermine the Augustinian project of reading; for Augustine held that, read "correctly," a text must yield its moral, its divine truth, no matter what its surface texture, its litera denoted. Stock's "textual communities" were groups whose attitudes and behavior became determined by an "agreed meaning of gospel passages" or other revered texts, an agreement "which we may call the text, as opposed to the translation, transcription, or verbalization" of the prior text. Such communities establish their own, as it were informed, "meaningful pattern[s] involving an already established inner code through which outer behavior can be interpreted." Thus these communities duplicate the Augustinian exegetical procedure of divining the inner meanings of scripture, as well as the later allegorical tradition of correspondence through separate signification. Nevertheless, at the very moment that this essentially Augustinian epistemology of reading is

becoming rooted in the newly forming textual society, when its members "participated in the original textual experience," their "discourse acquired its historical dimension: for men and women not only presumed to understand" the actions of the interpretes, who provided a conceptualized link between textuality and rationality, "but without consciously thinking about it modeled their own behavior on his" ("History, Literature" 12, 15, 16). There is an attendant human individuality that emerges out of such communities, which requires the living out of a dual role. The individual is

both [. . .] audience (a silent reader) and [. . .] individual auctor; for in the older culture, intellectually dominated by Augustine, oral literature exists to keep alive the memoria of its people. (Godzich xv-xvi)

Textuality, however, in the sense we have been speaking of it, meant that

the use and reuse of such familiar polarities as time and eternity, image and reality, and figura and veritas, whatever their particular sources, were justified by the belief that within the ontology of the written word lay an intimate reflection of reality [. . .].
(Stock Implications 530).

This reality could be revealed through "the study of grammar, syntax, and hermeneutics" (530). The rational procedures of the interpretes, then, whose interpretive strategies could be brought to bear upon

newer literary forms such as sermons and especially the exempla they contained, adapted the singular temporality of the Augustinian cosmos, in which the eternal finally subsumed all other time frames, to the time frame of the individual mortal's span of life, and as well to the larger frame of narrative that too easily lent itself to historical time; in turn, historical time gradually undermined the intellectual notion of the eternal.

This transformation of conceptualized time is vividly demonstrated in the dynamic of two pivotal and related terms, textus and auctoritas. Etymologically, textus shares primal associations with the concept of auctoritas whose oldest Indo-European root indicates force, increase, supply, augmentation, and so on; the Latin augēre, besides these meanings, expresses the idea of fertilization, the causing to thrive, strengthening, making more numerous, and making richer (Gonda 744-75). We might also remind ourselves that the idea of glossing a text, which was of course a central tenet of the exegetical tradition, has its roots in the Greek word for tongue (Hanning "I Shal Finde It" 28).

Just as in a later evolutionary stage of the verb the classical Latin texo could mean to connect or to link (cf. above)--which might share to a degree the

earlier Greek concept of rhetoric as a process of weaving (as defined in Plato's Gorgias [cf. above])--the medieval term auctor strikingly reveals an intimate association with the whole idea of discourse. It is no great surprise that in the "literary context" of the later Middle Ages,

the term auctor denoted someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed. According to medieval grammarians, the term derived its meaning from four main sources: auctor was supposed to be related to the Latin verbs agere "to act or perform," augere "to grow" and auire "to tie," and to the Greek noun authentim "authority." An auctor "performed" the act of writing. He brought something into being, caused it to "grow." In the more specialised sense related to auire, poets like Virgil and Lucan were auctores in that they had "tied" together their verses with feet and metres. To the ideas of achievement and growth was easily assimilated the idea of authenticity or "authoritativeness." (Minnis Medieval Theory 10)

To tie verses together with meters is perhaps in small to tie together ideas--as in rhetoric, to weave them, indeed to weave them into a tapestry (i.e., into a text or textus, into a textile or textilis). In a more extended sense, either or both the auctor and interpres of a textual community, who speaks out or perhaps, intentionally or otherwise, "glosses" his auctor's previously established text, "ties" together the members of the textual community. In fact the act of tying is that of forming the group into a cohesive whole. Furthermore, a secular author, like his or her religious counterpart, could act as the interpres of

such a community or could even provide the text for interpretation. Such an author played a role, in other words, in the institutionalization of literacy.

IX

Unquestionably, the role of the author and interpreter in the textual community of the later Middle Ages is a consequence of the new balance in later medieval society between oral and written discourse. Yet the basis for this change in the medieval societal infrastructure can also be traced and is perhaps most dramatically revealed in various attacks on medieval language theory by contemporary logicians. New cognitive procedures, which comprise the intellectual matrix for the new roles of author and reader (or alternately author and interpreter) also arose, if indirectly, out of a renewed and intensified resultant bifurcation of the Word, which was accomplished by logicalist investigations of both grammar and the constituent that made up that grammar, the individual word.

What was the nature of that word? How might it have represented reality? The word is first of all seen to be both oral and written. Secondly, it can be viewed as being a reality in and of itself; or, as in the case of someone like William of Ockham, it can be viewed as

being merely a signifier. It can enjoy as well an intermediary status, as in Aquinas' thought; Aquinas implies this status in his formulation of the concept of essence (cf., e.g., De ente et essentia II), and in his distinction between the Aristotelian terms of intellection, species impressa and species expressa (cf. De malo 16, 8, ad 3; In librum Boethii de Trinitate, 6, 2, ad 5; Summa theologiae Ia, 16, 2; in F. C. Copleston Aquinas 90-91, 177-78). Questions surrounding the possibility of universals, and the specific issue of realism versus nominalism, could find a focus in the ever more acute perception on the part of theologians and philosophers of the later Middle Ages that the word was a written, physical form on the page. Under the influence of Boethianized Aristotelian logic, Anselm, for example, must employ an "increasingly rationalized" grammar in order to continue to sustain the inherited Augustine's "ineluctably verbal" conception of knowledge. This "quasi-logical grammar," in fact,

is Anselm's basic theological tool; its peculiar, and, as events were to prove, highly transitory methods and presuppositions dictate the operative conditions of his thought as a whole. Like Augustine [. . .] Anselm's major epistemological concern is the theological problem of speaking about God. But, where Augustine sees the task of theology as the eloquent expression of the Word, Anselm sees it as the conscientious and faithful definition of the Word. (Colish *Mirror* 84-85)

Thus in Anselm's view the Word has been set at a

distance from the one who partakes of it, first of all by the very attempt at formulating its definition. In effect the Word has been objectified, which is precisely what happens when words are set as spatial figures on a page and hence can be taken in, read or processed by a reader, rather than a listener, over an extended period of time. Such words, furthermore, have usually lost their proximity to their auctor, of which we are reminded in Chaucer's famous adieu, "goe litel boke." Not only has an integral connection between speaker and audience been severed, but so too have the speaker's--now the writer's--words been set apart from the knower, as independent of their author and ontologically grounded in the conception of their own essential aspects qua words. This objectivity inevitably raises questions of definition, since the word may be contemplated at a leisure afforded by both the new temporal and spatial distances, and therefore it enlists the services of a burgeoning new discourse of logic. In querying the nature of the Word, Anselm must seek a word with which to adequately signify the divine; yet he is only one of a series of philosophers, epistemologists--Augustine among them--who need to speak about reality, thought and language, and the connections among them, less in terms of the spoken word and more often in the terms allowed by ever increasingly abstractive procedures.

Anselm's view is only a step away from that of the ancient Stoics, a view he derives, however, through his reading of Augustine's De dialectica and De doctrina christiana, where Augustine further evolves and, in fully appropriating it, makes the Stoic theory of verbal signification uniquely his own as a theory that is now distinct and Christian. "Since the Cratylus," Colish observes,

thinkers had used the terms "natural" and "conventional" to mean the ways in which words acquire their denotations. However, Augustine applies these terms to signs in the light of their intentional or unintentional character. His natural signs are unintentional. A fire signifies its presence unintentionally through the smoke it produces; a man signifies his feelings unintentionally through his facial expression. These signs do indeed signify physical and psychological realities, but they do so involuntarily. Augustine's conventional signs also correspond truly with the things they signify. But they are signs used deliberately by animate or intelligent beings to express their ideas, intentions, and feelings to other beings [De doctrina 2.3.4-5]. ("Stoic Theory" 26-29).

Augustine presents a middle stage, indeed, between the notion of a universe of signs that are of equal stature, whether verbal or otherwise, and later medieval philosophers' positions specifically in relation to verbal signs, positions adopted under the aegis of the growing spread of literacy when the word acts not only as a verbal sign per se but more often than not as a written representation of that verbal

sign, and in fact a representation that is gradually gathering to it its own ontological authority. Augustine's "natural" sign, on the other hand, can be non-verbal. Nevertheless, Augustine's peculiar interest is in the verbal, particularly in De doctrina, where he concerns himself with exegesis and preaching; words in these contexts are understood as being conventional and verbal (Colish 29).

The doctrine of intentionality, and the use made by the sign in this context, is an expansion of the Stoic theory of lekta. The Stoics believed in language as being inherently ambiguous. Chrysippus, for one, cited language's capacity to signify intentionality, even if an intended meaning was not identical with the language's objective reference. Furthermore, one's inner intentions did not need to enjoy a connection to reality (see Aulus Gellius Noctes atticae 11.12.1; in Colish "Stoic" 23):

For the Stoics, lekta, or intellectual intentions, are one member of a quartet of entities called incorporeals, along with space, time, and the void. The incorporeals are immaterial; thus, for the Stoics, they are not fully real. They do not exist but merely subsist. Time, space and the void have their assigned roles to play in physics. For their part, lekta are the foundation of logic. Lekta are the "stuff," if you will, out of which logical propositions are made. Logical propositions include predications, arguments, syllogisms, and fallacies. Such formulae have meaning; but, since they are not corporeal, they do not have full being. Unlike words, lekta and their logical by-products are not natural signs of natural objects. The relations between logical

statements are governed by their own laws, which can and should be studied as a distinct and formal branch of philosophy. But logical statements and their relations, since they are composed of lekta, do not mirror the real, corporeal world. Lekta and logic have a purely intramental existence and validity [cf. Stoicorum veterum fragmenta II.93-95, 132, 166, 170, 181, 183, 331, 335, 488, 501-2, 511, 514]. (23-24)

On this basis, logic is elevated to the status of "an independent discipline," self-justifying according to "its own internal rules and criteria." Simultaneously, the Stoics would have avidly subscribed to "the later scholastic dictum, a nosse ad esse non valet consequentia" (24). In the first century a.d., Aulus Gellius writes Attic Nights, in which he associates, after the Stoics, the question of intentionality with that of words existing as natural signs. Attic Nights was popular in the fourth century. And it is Augustine who adopts Gellius' ideas and situates them in a broader context (Colish 24).

More than a millenium separates the Stoics and the medieval grammarians of Anselm's time. Yet much of what is believed later--such as is indicated by the oftentimes blind obedience to a language paradigm as a method for determining reality (as we have seen in the tenth century controversy over the eucharist; cf. above), which provided the basis for the speculative grammar movement--has its roots in ancient and hellenistic Greece. In this historical light,

moreover, we might better understand the nominalism of someone like Ockham as being a reaction to a deeply entrenched realism. And, in this context we can locate the earlier Anselm's tireless search for the transcendental signifier that might represent the divine. All of these intellectual movements--whose tensions are elaborated in contemporary imaginative literature as early as the songs of such troubadours as Guillem IX and Marcabru, for example, and later in a poem such as Langland's Piers Plowman--owe much to the Greeks and particularly to the Stoic conception of language as being first and foremost language that was understood to have been naturally engendered. According to the Stoic reasoning, words--"as natural signs," as "sounds" and hence "material" and "corporeal"--enjoyed an "automatic correlation with the material and corporeal realities" for which they stood, which was in keeping with the Stoic belief in the substantiality of "all real beings." But the Stoic sense of a body included "agents, such as God and the human soul." The criterion that defined language was "the articulate human voice" rather than the "inarticulate sounds made by animals [SVF I.74, II.140-41]." And both spoken and written human speech could but only include the perception that the "human logos [was] consubstantial with God, the logos of nature." In other words,

Stoic physics sees the world in monistic terms; God is identified with the natural world and with the human mind [SVF I.85, 87, 102, 153-54, 159-62, 493, 495; II.299-328, 526]. Words, thus, are intrinsically real, in a physical sense. Speech is a natural phenomenon. Both the denotations of words, their etymological derivations, and the grammatical structure of language are hence natural. (Colish 19-20).

To put it another way, we might want to entertain the notion that the Stoics had laid the foundation for the undermining of the natural signification of language in their unavoidable positing of a relationship between language and logic (i.e., lekta). In this they anticipated the gradual dismantling of later Augustinian language theory in the later Middle Ages. De doctrina christiana invoked "the doctrine of lekta or intentionality in relation to logic" in the explanation of the use an exegete should make of the classical liberal arts.

In his discussion of the discipline of dialectic [Augustine] seconds the Stoic idea that logical predications are lekta which operate according to their own internal rules and which have no necessary correlation with extramental realities. What makes a logical proposition true in its own terms, he notes, is its internal cogency or logical possibility, even though the premises on which it is based may be objectively false or physically impossible [2.35.53]. One still ought to "spoil the Egyptians" and study dialectic, he counsels, for it sharpens the mind and it can be applied just as easily to true propositions as to false ones. (Colish "Stoic" 29-30)

Augustine departs from the Stoic line of thinking in his distinction between internally cogent logical

statements and real being (2.37.53). Yet he sees rhetoric--"a neutral art, even though it may provide arguments for falsehood as well as truth and even though it may be a vehicle for lying"--as a device for finely tuning one's critical abilities "to detect and to reject these inappropriate uses of speech as one learns to apply the art of eloquence to the service of truth [4.2.3]" (Colish 29-30).

What we are seeing in Augustine's thinking is the gradual disintegration of the unified world comprised of language and reality that is essentially posited by him. The word may be the "verbum mentis," but read properly, and in the light of divine grace, it will lead its reader (its auditor, or seer) to the truth. Yet in proposing the question of lying (as opposed to falsehoods) as being contingent on intentionality--a contingency Augustine finds in the relationship of a logistic lekta, and the actuality of speech and language as understood first by the Stoics--he makes possible a further division between language and reality, beyond what is implied in his formulation of a "verbum mentis" in which language cannot directly lead the user to the truth. In reestablishing an ontology of language predicated on its proper internal rules and therefore self-governance, he also anticipates the further analysis of language by later medieval

logicians who are--whether they are fully conscious of the implications of their work--busy at wresting themselves from the sure grip of grammar. However, in doing so they face a new tyranny, that of logic.

X

The thinking of Abelard, the preeminent logician of his time, presents us with a crossroads in the history of semantics. In him we also perceive the later Middle Ages' positioning as regards the authority of antiquity in relationship to the development of logic as it transformed the ways of looking at language per se. Logic's growing claim to be able to systematize reality implicitly presented its bid for coequal status with traditional metaphysics. Reality was linguistically grounded, moreover, insofar as the logic of the time was thought to be a science of language, called sermocinalism after Abelard's distinction between mere utterance (vox) and word (sermo). Around this distinction Abelard organized his theory of universals; as words--utterances and even inscriptions--are themselves things, so too in the strict sense of being the combination of vox plus significatio words are "products of human arrangements rather than being the products of natural effects" (Kretzman 369).

Reality, in other words, was seen to be more socio-centered than it had been in the past, more contingent upon ethical language. This emphasis on usage found its theoretical focus in speculations about the properties of terms and, significantly, in the syncategorematic aspect of language. In itself the syncategorematic classification, and the larger question it addressed regarding predication,

marked a break with Aristotelian-Boethian tradition in that it was precise where the tradition had been vague. The notion of predication was unquestionably an essential part of the subject matter of logic, but Aristotle and Boethius had treated it in ways that often suggested that predicates might be extralinguistic and even extramental entities. (370)

Here the way was being paved for the elevation of logic to the status of a science. "This crucial vagueness," on the part of Aristotle and Boethius, became to a degree "the source of the medievals' concern with universals," which "left open the possibility that logic might be essentially a science of reality, resembling or subsumed under metaphysics" (370). One of Abelard's contributions to this "science" was to replace the overly simple concept of utterance, which had held sway since Boethius and after him in the Dialectica of Garland the Computist of the late eleventh century, who held that predication can occur only in an utterance and therefore only utterances are predicable. That is, predication obtained to

utterances that were the elements of logic. However, "recognizing that utterances are physical events which are, as such, of no interest to logicians," Abelard

replaced the overly simple utterance with what he called the sermo, defined as the utterance taken together with its signification. (370)

Thus logic became a product of mental utterance (sermo), and was divorced from the spoken word; that is, Abelard found it necessary to include in the notion of utterance its significative aspect. All the same, he refused to admit that mental entities were elemental within a system of logic. "He argued that a proposition true gratia terminorum could not be verified by an appeal to the status of mental entities." He emphasized the connection between a term and the definition of that term, for the term itself, categorically, had to be included in "the string of terms making up the definition of the term [. . .]." Abelard's sermocinalism was "directed not only against the notion of logic as a science of reality (scientia realis) but evidently also against the notion of it as the science of reason (scientia rationalis)" (371).

It is this distinction that provided Avicenna and others who followed after him, such as Albert the Great, with a locus of attack upon which a philosophy of logic could be erected--a philosophy, however,

furthered in the later Middle Ages more by thinkers who involved themselves with metaphysics than with logic. As Norman Kretzman writes, in Avicenna's view, logic was the science of reason, for

"the relation of this doctrine [logic] to internal thought, which is called internal speech, is just like the relation of grammar to outward signification, which is called speech" (Logica Prima f 3rA). Thus grammar, not logic, was the sermocinal science, according to Avicennianism, and the rise of speculative grammar that was to follow may in part be attributed to this point of view.
(371)

Taken together, the contributions of Abelard and Avicenna to the development of Western philosophy tell us of the tenacity with which grammar as an epistemological system held on, receded and then prevailed again, in the subsequent speculative grammar movement of the modistae, as a way of virtually explaining experience. How did this occur? In these two attempts (i.e., Avicenna's and Abelard's) to create a science of language we witness in their respective definitions of language the splitting off of abstractive mental processes from the spoken utterance and as well the semantic and syntactic linguistic functions. What becomes evident in the writings of both thinkers is the growing importance of mental abstraction as difference, which in turn is grounded in a dialectical split caused by the elevation of reason to a new, more privileged position.

XI

Later medieval poets, as well, are engaged in a two-fold struggle, first of all to envision a world beyond that which was sanctioned by Augustine, and secondly to develop a linguistic stance towards reality that transcended the contradictory nature of the grammatical and logical paradigms. Central in this struggle was an ontological assertion on the part of these poets, which manifested itself in two, contradictory forms. On the one hand they staked their claim as poets who were unique and preeminent within a literary tradition. On the other hand they virtually defined themselves within the fabric of that tradition and the all embracing structure of which the literature was a part--that of Christian auctoritas. The classical forebears could variously fall within one or the other category, either under the Scriptural-Augustinian dispensation that in a sense revised the pagan texts, putting them into Christian terms, or else within the category of literature that in any case remained subsumed in a larger theologico-philosophical world. Pilgrimage literature (the Divina Commedia, the Canterbury Tales, Piers Plowman), as Julia Holloway has shown, exhibited "the mirroring of God's writing in man's writing [as] the essence of pilgrimage imitatio Christi" through "two authorial, intertextual paradigms [. . .] the

first of Luke at Emmaus, the second, God himself, the subject of Luke's Gospel [. . .]" (209). Through topoi of modesty and/or ineffability, on the other hand, these poets like Dante, Chaucer and Langland propose a linguistic system that is totally divorced from the reality it purports to describe, and in doing so they create a gulf between themselves and the past of Scripture and antiquity that essentially posited a unified world. These poets' linguistic system, an outgrowth of the new textuality and logic, called attention to itself as being the only reality it could in fact ultimately describe. This philosophy of language, never clearly articulated except through the opacity of poetry, provided the subtext of self-naming that these poets adopt as a way of contemplating the question of language per se, a language that had its own being apart from the world and which, through contemplation of its self-referentiality, makes possible the self-realization and self-actualization of the poet who has named himself. For this autocitation exists in order to speak of the world of names, a world that is separate from experience yet a world that for the poet is the only possible vehicle with which he may coexist and commune with that experience.

Thus it is that both the logicians and the poets, in their respective fashions, commune with the

experiential world; they commune with reality, ironically, by engaging and trying to resolve the increasingly vitiated theological and hence increasingly substantial philosophical investigation of a language that will never quite adhere to that which it claims to describe, and, in theological terms, as in the idea of the Word incarnate, a language that will never fully adhere to the world of reality which is perhaps in some sense the product of, is created by, language itself. "In the content, [. . .] even in the forms of thought," Stock observes,

medievals appear to have consciously imitated their ancient predecessors. Yet, as their imprecisions, misinterpretations, and sources of anxiety demonstrate, they were unlike their forebears in fundamental ways. The roots of these differences are traceable to the conceptual vocabulary, if not to the process of conceptualization itself, which derived from a few linguistic models, [. . .].
(Implications 530)

The new textuality contributed to a deepening dichotomy between word and truth, just as it implicitly held out the possibility of a language that owed its being only to itself. Rather than merely through its use as a descriptor of the world, this language could provide the realization of the world through its self-contemplation; as we have said, such self-reflection constituted a cognitive procedure that was provided by both logic and poetry. More and more, language had broken off from the world it could hopefully signify in

order to form another, coeval world of its own. It was in these terms that the poets of the high Middle Ages could define themselves in relation to the larger world beyond both themselves and the language with which they struggled for the prize of meaning--a meaning that had to be inextricably woven within language's apparently ineluctable self-meditation. And so the vehicle for meaning could but only have been self-naming, and more importantly the manipulation of the current understanding of the process of naming as a fundamental epistemological concern. All of this, ultimately, allowed later medieval poets to define themselves as individuals apart from literary, theological and philosophical traditions. In short, in the light of auctoritas poets like Marcabru, Dante, Chaucer and Langland were able to effect themselves in their poems as being their own auctors, and they were able to speak about their struggle to arrive at this precarious state of individuality, poised as they were between the anonymity afforded by the larger tradition that demanded their subsumption, and the fully realized individuality of the later Renaissance. This crisis, in which meaning could no longer be satisfactorily expressed in either theological (i.e., philosophical, quasi-scientific, quasi-empirical) terms or in the language of poetry (i.e., the neo-mythical and/or quasi-scientific, as in Bernard's Cosmographia), most

vividly revealed itself in the changing attitude towards textuality as it increasingly came to be associated with writing and reading. "Texts," Stock writes, eventually

raised the possibility that reality could be understood as a series of relationships, such as outer versus inner, independent object as opposed to reflecting subject, or abstract sets of rules in contrast to a coherent texture of facts and meanings. Experience in other words became separable, if not always separated, from ratiocination about it; and the main field of investigation turned out to be, not the raw data of sense or the platonized ideal of pure knowledge, but rather the forms of meditation about them. This set of changes resulted in a rebirth of hermeneutics as a critical philosophy of meaning, in a renewed search for epistemological order, and in a widespread interest in diachrony, development, and processual evolution. Understanding as a consequence began to emerge from the accumulation of reiterated and reinterpreted experience, even though, as was recognized, the tools of methodological analysis were not given in each concrete set of events; and an understanding formed of similar elements links the contemporary reader to the past through the preservation of those very written artifacts which originated new patterns of thought and action themselves. (531)

As the physical representation of discourse it had come to mean, the notion of a text could have found justification in, before Aquinas, Abelard's rigorous elevation of words as being the only phenomena in which universals may reside; and, in consideration of this, Abelard concluded that words are themselves things in that only they may contain universality. Notably, he further distinguished between what words name (nominare) and the way in which they signify (Kretzman

7.369). To comprehend the epistemological crossroads we see exemplified in a thinker such as Abelard is to provide the key to reading the poets of the later Middle Ages, whose poetry--that is, whose fictions--were instigated by the recognition that the process per se of signification provided the opportunity to write and to talk about in the writing the ramifications of a supreme language or rather an unparalleled style.

The insistence on the part of the poets to create an individual poetic authority could only have occurred within a more diverse, dialectically ordered social structure. The dialectic was integrally involved in the very poetics of these authors, and so poetic self-referentiality, inextricably woven into the fabric of the poetry as well as into the linguistic traditions the poetry modulated, acted as both theme and poetic strategy for these ultimately secular texts. Auctoritas is a function of intertextuality. To say that intertextuality lies at the heart of the late medieval poet's attempt at self-definition is quite possibly to state the very obvious, for medieval literature, like the larger medieval world of which it is a part, can only take place within the context of a hierarchized authorial tradition. This does not assume, however, that poets since the twelfth century are not capable of creating images of themselves, for

these self-depictions depend for their insistence upon as well as distinction from the context of auctoritas that they consciously hold at a distance.

XII

The hierarchy of authority defining the medieval imagination, which in its time is considered to be immutable and rigidly determined, is not so much the consequence of Christianity's inviolable articles of faith as of the very language out of which the articles evolve. The metaphors of scripture and the exegetical tradition establish an unalterable field for poetic endeavor in their insistence on images of the word, the book, and so on; characterized by the field's intertextual nature, the metaphors are the central descriptions of revelation and redemption. Once a proportion is established between God and the word, it will be the word (i.e., the text, etc.) that will serve as a formal basis from which Christian epistemology will manifest itself and flourish.

Although no one event or even group of events might completely account for the emergence of a singular poetic voice in twelfth century Europe, what is clear is that poetry since then not only possesses such a voice as the mark of a unique point of view, but is virtually generated out of the impulse to establish an

individualized poetic authority. This is not the voice of the Renaissance, when the aim of poets and thinkers alike is to make "a radical break with tradition" (Stock Myth and Science 6). Particularly in the 12th century, the medieval imagination turns back toward the ancient, pagan world, and sees itself as a part of a continuum; people of this period are the "dwarfs," as Bernard of Chartres was reported to have said, who stood "on the shoulders of giants" (Curtius 119; cf. above). What sets the twelfth century apart from the later Renaissance is the latter period's energetic repudiation of its more immediate, medieval past. Hence the 12th century initiates tensions, rather than precluding their possibility, between its near and distant past, its sense of validity resting on Scripture and particularly the thinking of Augustine, and on a newly revised Aristotelianism that had made its way into Europe. Twelfth century Europe was thus also a contrast to its immediate past; in comparison with it, the twelfth century was a hotbed of contradictory (as well as, often enough, complementary) ideas and discoveries. Instead of denying the past, the task became that of reconciling the new learning to the auctoritas of what was already known and could not be doubted.

This turning to the past in order to augment it by

the assertion of a new present is not only the driving force among theologians and philosophers like Anselm and Abelard, Aquinas and Ockham, but, again, among poets as well. Jesse Gellrich notes that while Dante, and after him Chaucer,

look away from the medieval past, they also look back to the vital commitment of their past in the reading of the Bible, in the challenge to interpretation and change that it poses. (247)

Yet other poets more openly address their Scriptural roots, such as Marcabru and Langland, who effectively represent the near and far ends of a unique period in Western intellectual and esthetic development. As an early troubadour, Marcabru helped to inaugurate the new poetic. The troubadours go as far as to actually name the individualized poetic voice as a poetic cause célèbre--as the emblem for, the aegis under which verse is to be made. Ironically, in order to break with their past poets had to name it too. In consequence, the poetic impulse included nascent, historically determined discourses.

What must be recognized is that this dynamic could never have been possible without the legacy of Augustine, particularly the Augustine of the Confessions, which was never to be fully supplanted by Scholasticism or its descendants. It is in the Confessions that we find the most profound expression

of a primal link between a text that the "I" of the reader and of the author "reads," and the maker of that text. The "I" of a medieval poem may be only a part of a larger textual convention formulaically referring to, even fully discussing itself in the poem; in this case the poetic text may be understood to be the dominant factor in the poem (Zumthor "Autobiography in the Middle Ages" 30-32), rather than, say, the "I" of modern narrative that was fully born in Romanticism. As Vance puts it, in the Confessions Augustine failed

to consummate the logic of autobiography by refusing to allow the "I" of narrative recollection to converge with the converted "I" that is writing [in part because] he finally distrusted any attempt on the part of man to know his true nature by commemorating his existence in the abyss of time and space [. . .]. ("Augustine's Confessions" 9)

As we shall see, the poets of the twelfth to fourteenth centuries represent a bridge from an Augustinian world view to a modern one, which is defined by their poetry's budding historicism, fictional values, and a self-referentiality that makes the poets as distinct from their autonomous texts as from the literary tradition out of which these texts emerged. Yet the seeds of this transformation are to be found, of course, in Augustine. His

poetics of selfhood in the Confessions does not really differ significantly from that of any narrator--Virgil, for example-- who seeks to inscribe the sundry fragments of individual experience in an order of discourse whose code

serves as what we may call the notation of authority. In such conditions the self becomes merely a contingent signifier. The deictic "I" becomes a purely "grammatical" sign pointing to an order of written signs identical with history, to a logos born not of the speaking self but of the divine Other by whom we are originally spoken.
(12-13)

Whatever the circumstances, in other words, even within a binary category such as fact/fiction, the literary "I" is in some measure subject to the text it is creating in the sense that this "I"'s ultimate terms of self-definition will have to include an understanding of itself as a text, whether or not the understanding is explicitly stated.

XIII

Medieval poetic individuality, in the sense we have been speaking of it, can be said to have been a function of the very text in which such an individual may have appeared; that is, the individual is defined by the text. The ultimate measure of definition of the text's "I" is the text itself. Arguably, therefore, we might want to predict that a motif which can be found in all later medieval poetry is that of a persona who finds a reflection of himself in his text. This dynamic is a function of both the poet's effected inter- and intratextual maneuvers. The genre in which the voice of this individual first consistently shows itself is that of the troubadour canso. Thus we can

say that textualized self-awareness in the troubadour tradition was compounded by the troubadour's vidas and razos of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, which comprised revisionist readings of the original troubadour songs; the impulse of this tradition reached forward in time beyond this poetry. Yet, as already noted, such an inter-/intratextual strategy reaches back at least to Augustine. The canso, to be sung, was also written down, which provided later commentators with a fixed version that could be invoked to support a revisionist, interpretive gloss or razo. Hence writing in and of itself called into being a secular textuality that matched the exegetical tradition as promulgated in works such as De Doctrina Christiana. In fact the canso, even if first apprehended by an audience through the singing of the joglar, within the social interaction of the aristocratic court, contained an especially intricate structure that must to some extent have depended for its full appreciation on the leisurely and therefore careful scrutiny of a literate reader.

This is in part to say that the troubadours mark the transition from oral to written literature, perhaps in more dramatic fashion than their contemporaries, the writers of romance or geste. And at least some of what intellectual and political developments motivated in the romance genre can be said to have inhered in the

courtly lyric makers (indeed, quite possibly more profoundly). In all circumstances--Chrétien's romances, the Chanson de Roland, or the songs of Marcabru--what seems clear is the sense that there was an understood, inherent textual element within and beyond the spoken as well as the written word. All individuals, groups, and institutions could be defined in terms of texts. Again, this was the text as was most vividly defined by Augustine in the Confessions, whose vision of a "scroll of the firmament," we might remind ourselves, was that of "a layer of 'skin' [textus, tegumentum; cf. above] where the primary dictation of creation is dispensed as a written text, a Scripture [Confessions XIII.xv.16]" (Vance "Augustine's Confessions" 8). Thus, in the most graphic fashion, Augustine laid the groundwork for a later, fully evolved relationship between the "I" of an utterance and that very text the "I" speaks, writes, and even reads; by doing so the "I" reads itself as it is defined by its text. This dynamic is rooted in the association of skin, that which contains the physical body (as well as the soul) and which covers the self, and the text with which the self might both merge within a community and find distinction from that very same community. For the text represents the discourse that in turn essentially defines and orders the community as it is ruled by an ethical imperative.

Chapter Two

Guillem IX and Marcabru:

"Per savi · l tenc ses doptanssa"

and the Poetics of the "I"

I

As late as the 12th century the world view and even the language of Augustine is very much present in the songs of the troubadour Marcabru. Marcabru's songs are often meditations on the nature of themselves, as songs, on their ability to make meaning and to convey truth. Throughout the songs the poet carries on, at times implicitly, an argument between amors, true love, and amars, false, cupidinous love or lust. In order to arrive at this dialectic, the theology of Augustine has had to be taken up whole. Marcabru condemns the false use of words, a position that reflects contemporary rhetorical theory but one which is steeped in both classicism and early Christianity. "The blame of empty eloquence," as Linda Paterson has put it, is a pretext for establishing a true eloquence. This topos is traceable to Plato's blame of Isocrates; and Augustine writes in De Doctrina Christiana, making Christian doctrine the foundation of true eloquence, "In ipso etiam sermone malit rebus placere quam verbis; nec aestimet dici melius, nisi quod dicitur verius; nec doctor verbis serviat, sed verba doctor" (PL XXXIV.119,

and all of Book IV; in Paterson 11). This same outlook can be found more forcefully expressed in the imagery of the Confessions; the notion of false eloquence could have been derived from the false skins and garments (i.e., textus, tegumentum, textilis) of the sinner. This issue is unavoidable when we read Marcabru--especially, for example, when he attempts to combat the propagation of a new, eroticized love, by his immediate forebear, Guillem IX.

Marcabru draws upon many textual sources in order to establish the ground of his own literary authority. Although often recasting and hence disguising his sources in paraphrase and allusion, he can be quick to remind us--as for example in the eleventh strophe of his song "Dirai vos senes duptansa"--of the source of his authority, in this case the Bible:

Qui per sen de femna reigna
 dreitz es que mals li'n aveigna,
 si cum la Letra'ns enseigna;
 --Escoutatz!--
 malaventura'us en veigna
 si tuich no vos en gardatz!

Whoever is ruled by a woman,
 it's right that evil should come to him,
 just as the Bible teaches;
 listen!
 bad luck will find you
 if you're not on your guard!
 (my trans.; cf. Wilhelm Seven 64)

He clearly enjoys and uses the book of Proverbs, and he often cites David and Solomon. His subject, James

Wilhelm writes, is often "the Christian exultation that antedated secular joy [. . .] the perennial newness, the vita nova, of which Paul spoke." Accordingly, he tries to unmask "new impostors by restoring the original sacred values to their terminology" (65-66). Frederick Goldin observes that within this (newly restored) religious tone, Marcabru creates "for the first time the figure of the singer who takes a stand against 'false lovers', the fals amadors, whom he identifies as the other poets of the court" (Goldin Lyrics 52).

This troubadour "uses"--perhaps one could say "glosses"--other sources as well, as diverse as the classical Ovid or the contemporary Abelard. In his song, "Bel m'es quan la rana chanta," Marcabru attacks the false uses of eloquence by associating a frog ("rana") with the joglar Alegret; Marcabru sees him as a flatterer, whose obsequiousness towards his patron is repugnant (Paterson 39-40). Although modulated by medieval writers like Peter Damian (cf. De decem Aegypti plagis, PL CXLV.689) and Arnulf of Orléans (cf. F. Ghisalberti Arnolfo d'Orléans 217), as a symbol of boorish, noisy and finally "false loquacity" (39) Marcabru's image of a frog originally derives from the Metamorphoses (VI.339 ff.) where frogs are what boors become in their transformations (Paterson 39 n.). All

the same, the matter of a classical Ovid has been set in a new context. We can consider Marcabru as strictly up to date in his likely borrowing of Abelard's sic et non dialectic to alert us to the danger in its possible misuse (see Köhler Trobadorlyrik und höfischer Roman [Berlin 1962] 173; in Paterson 9). In one song, "L'iverns vai e'l temps s'aizina," Marcabru warns against Amars, which can set "a gracious trap" into which the "simpleton" can be lured in his attempt at divining truth:

Gent sembel fai que trahina
 Ves son agach lo brico,
 Del cim tro' qu'en la racina,
 Entrebescat hoc e no; [. . .].
 (Dejeanne XXXI.37-40)

[Amars] sets a gracious trap
 When it lures the simpleton into its snare;
 From the top to the root
 It weaves together yes and no [. . .].
 (trans. Paterson 9 n.4)

It is Augustine, however, with whom Marcabru remains on the most intimate terms. Marcabru begins his song, "Per savi'l tenc ses doptanssa," by contemplating the inherent ambiguity in all verbal expression and the misuse to which it can be put:

Per savi'l tenc ses doptanssa
 cel qui de mon chant devina
 so que chascus motz declina,
 si cum la razos despleia,
 qu'ieu mezeis sui en erranssa
 d'esclarzir paraul' escura.

I say he's a wise man, do doubt about it,
 who makes out, word for word,

what my song signifies,
 and how the theme unfolds:
 for I myself take pains
 to cast some light on the obscurity [. . . .]
 (trans. Goldin 83)

Here the peril for the poet is the very language he must use, a language that can easily be misconstrued. Quite possibly, the poet's language will never transcend an unavoidable obscurity taken in by the listener/reader and especially by the "false lovers" criticized in this poem's succeeding lines, those fools (pointedly given the name--i.e., "nom," l. 42--of fool--"fols" [cf. ll. 42, 46, 49, 59]) who live in bad faith. Thus the poem continues,

Trobador, ab sen d'enfanssa,
 movon als pros atahina,
 e tornon en disciplina
 so que veritatz autreia,
 e fant los motz, per esmanssa,
 entrebeschatz de fraichura.

E meton en un' eganssa
 Falss' Amor encontra fina, [etc.]
 (ll. 7-14)

[. . .] those troubadours with childish minds
 who worry honest men:
 they scourge and improve
 what Truth itself puts forth,
 always taking pains to make their words
 tangled up and meaningless.

And they put up that false love of theirs
 against true love, as though it were as good.
 (trans. Goldin 83)

Yet here Marcabru's elaboration of a rhetorical tradition must be noted, a tradition that in fact precedes Augustine and one which the poet could easily have discovered in Cicero. As Paterson explains,

When Marcabru introduces the problem of paraul' escura, he may well be thinking of the Rhetorical causa obscura: the kind of case "in quo aut tardi auditores sunt aut difficilioribus ad cognoscendum negotiis causa est implicata" ["in which either the audience is slow witted or the subject is bound up with matters which are fairly difficult to understand" (De Inventione I.xvi.20; cf. Brunetto Latini Li Livres dou tresor III.xvii.4)]. His own "case" could be described as obscure both because the subject is difficult-- it takes a wise man to perceive the exact truth in it--and because the foolish troubadours are tardi. The De Inventione says that in such a case the speaker must make the audience receptive in the introduction [De Inv. I.xvi.23] [. . .].

Marcabru precisely follows Cicero's formula, step for step.

He tries to gain the good will of the audience by discreet flattery: "Per savi'l tenc . . . ," and a "modesty formula": "Qu'ieu mezeis sui en erranssa . . . " [cf. Curtius 84]; he then states the nature of the subject: "paraul' escura," and after explaining the reason for his theme: that foolish troubadours have been confusing the truth (stanza II), he states the subject as simply and clearly as possible: "E meton en un' enganssa / Falss' Amor encontra fina." False and true love are not to be equated. This is followed by an attempt to define the difference between the two as clearly and graphically as possible, and in doing so Marcabru closely follows the basic pattern of dispositio in Classical Rhetoric: introduction, exposition, definition or division, defence of one's own case, refutation of the opponent's case, and conclusion [De Inventione I. xiv.19: exordium, narratio, partitio, confirmatio, reprehensio, conclusio; a digression is possible before the conclusion (I.li.96). Rhet. ad Her. I.iii.44 exordium, narratio, divisio, confirmatio, confutatio, conclusio]. (16-17)

Throughout his poems, Marcabru appears to be quite aware of the intellectual streams of thought of his time. All the same, his basic intellectual and

spiritual positions are thoroughly grounded in the past, and it is Plato, rather than the Aristotle who has come to dominate contemporary thought, whom Marcabru finds most compelling. The notion of obscurity in "Per sav · l," perhaps too easily attributable to either Cicero or Aristotle, also resonates in Platonic doctrine. This doctrine, moreover, has been redefined by Paul and Augustine, who hold that the natural world reflects a divine truth, in that knowledge of the obscured meanings the physical world contains is understood to be essential to a full comprehension of Scripture. This concept is central to Augustine's pronouncement in De Doctrina Christiana that "Rerum autem ignorantia facit obscuras figuratas locutiones, cum ignoramus vel animantium, vel lapidum, vel herbarum naturas, aliarumve rerum, quae plerumque in Scripturis similitudinis alicuius gratia ponuntur" (II.24; PL XXXIV.47; cf. Paterson 30- 31). Nature, for Marcabru, can be understood in Scholastic terms, but in his songs we find an awareness of Augustine's teachings that in any event form the basis of later theology. For Marcabru, and for Augustine,

nature is a reflection of hidden truth and moral order, requiring wisdom and effort to penetrate its outward form and discover its true significance. This attitude governs his use of nature imagery: imagery which not only illustrates moral truths, but in some cases, through the use of symbols, reflects the need to probe behind the outward appearance of natural objects to appreciate their true significance. (Paterson 31)

II

Obscure language, in the case of Marcabru, was an enemy to be reckoned with, for the poet's first responsibility was the words that most of all were his representation within his society. Thus the troubadour canso often took as its subject the travail of the poet's attempt to create clarity and truth that the poet saw as an ideal canso--the ideal form. It might be hoped that this form, a form of language after all, could convey the truth--that is, that it could not merely aspire to but could become the ideal. Yet if the canso represented the ideal to be achieved, it was in fact also seen to be the inevitable failure implicit in any striving towards that end. It was, however, in the failure that the ideal could be signified, could be gestured towards. The shaped beauty of the song could serve as the imperfect resonance of an ideal, singular temporality that had been felt to have been absent in language.

The ideal canso of the troubadours engulfs the potential individual; thus it precludes the possibility of the singular voice. Those who partake of this sort of literary experience, Godzich writes, "are there as the necessary correlatives of the memoria from which they derive their sense of identity and purpose" (xv-

xvi). The import of the canso's discourse, then, is the need to plumb the obscure world in order to reach deeper, inner truths, while the very music of this discourse that is the poetry, itself attempts a linguistic perfection; it makes a claim for itself as being the ultimate possible mortal expression of the truth. Even in its time bound, flawed language, which must ultimately fail to create the ideal form of the canso, the truth is evoked by the very failure of achieving it--that is, of naming it.

The emblem of this dynamic and indeed the epitome of this poetry's discourse is the poet's act of autocitation. The troubadour names himself in his poem and comments on the very writing of that poem, and ponders its future survival. This is the burden of poems such as Marcabru's "Pus mos coratges s'es clartits," "Per savi'l tenc ses doptanssa," "Contra l'ivern que s'enansa," and "Aujatz de chan com enans e meillura."

Guillem IX, Marcabru and other troubadours have not constructed the fully evolved autobiographical voice to be found in Dante, Chaucer or Langland; yet these earlier poets confront the issue of auctoritas. And they do this with great subtlety. What should we think of Peire Vidal's slightly self-derisive contemplation of his own poetic efficacy, durability,

and most of all singularity?:

Ajostar e lassar
 sai tan gent motz e so,
 que del car ric trobar
 no'm ven hom al talo [etc.]
 (ll. 1-4)

I can put together and inter-
 lace words and music with such skill,
 in the noble art of song
 no man comes near my heel [. . . .]
 (trans. Goldin 255)

For the troubadours, autocitation always served a specific end: theirs was an ongoing meditation in their poems on the act of making poetry. Perhaps it is not too farfetched to assert that the name they were after--that is, the ideal--was eloquence itself, that which cannot be named but which can be, as it were, softly spoken through a poetics. Working within the poetic tradition, Vidal nevertheless asserts that his individual achievement will set him apart from the literary, inherited past, the literary river that nourishes him. Indeed, Vidal speaks of poetry as the form for the voice of the poet, a form that must by definition subsume that voice--could the ideal of itself be attained. The force of his statement is contained within a conundrum whose power resides in the statement's commentary on itself. Vidal is saying, I can compose the ultimate song--that is, I can create the absolute song that must sing only of itself in its formal meditation--yet I can claim for myself the fame

for having made this song that in a sense will always "forget" me, for as its maker I have become its mere instrument, through which it has been brought into being. In making this song, however, Vidal has invoked a literary-historical time frame. He is looking backwards within a continuum and setting himself apart from it by suggesting that he is at the least its equal (e.g., the claim, "no'm ven hom al talo"). If Vidal is not engaged here in a fully blown contemplation of himself, an extended introspection of himself as poet, he is just the same creating by a kind of self-citation the very emblem of such an inward journey that must ultimately yield the full, unique voice of self-knowledge and self-acknowledgement.

Vidal and all troubadours name themselves and their competitors, as if to invoke totemic power, but such naming resides within the context of the craft not only of poetry but of the larger sensibility of the cortezia they serve and in which they ostensibly seek to be subsumed. This view of poetry as an adjunct of a more fundamental world view is firmly established in the twelfth century and it persists at least as late as Chaucer. Quite possibly the most emblematic of Chaucer's figures, for instance, which suggests the analogy between courtly loving and poetic inquiry--the makyr's epistemology--is the opening gambit of the Parliament of Fowls:

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
 Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
 The dredful joye, alwey that slit so yerne:
Al this mene I by Love [. . .].
 [1-4 (my emphasis)]¹

Formalism, as the guiding light of fin' amors, here becomes the principle in forging the mimetic artifact; these first lines may hint as well at the likelihood that all knowledge--all modes of apprehension of a world--must not only proceed by way of an artificial, "formed" method, but that knowledge is actually the forms themselves--"knowing" as one with form. It should follow that philosophical ideality (i.e., a notion of a perfect, pristine dimension) as well as the creative, or intuitive impulse must be amorphous in the sense that such a dimension is inferred by all finite, corporeal, perhaps lapsarian or "fallen" forms that are distinct from this ideal state. These forms are the manifestations or at least the Platonic shadows of it, the "ideal form." Logically, however, the notion of an ideal form is untenable, especially when form is understood in sensible, material contexts such as literal, physical shapes. Yet more abstract and

1. The lines are a conscious echo of Horace's "ars longa, vita brevis" (see Chapter Four, n. 1, p. 271). We should also note the ending of the Parlement of Foules, where Nature herself could not bring the birds' debate to an orderly end; the birds, however, must borrow an artificial order from French poets.

imaginative forms are easily recognizable--courtly mannered behavior, for instance, or literary genres. Such organizing principles as these are also limited, in any event; and mortal humans only know these finite forms although they may intuit--they make the attempt to conceive of, to know--the ideal, the infinite.

The question of God's active presence in the palpable universe (i.e., ideality perceived as existing in or through the sensible objects of the world) does not involve Chaucer directly, yet there is an underlying philosophical dialogue taking place, particularly in his dream poems. Nominalist thinking of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, remained intimately bound up in what was and perhaps still is skepticism in regard to a subtle relationship that might exist between imaginative and experiential cognitive realms. Nominalist doctrine emphasizes the particulars of the world landscape but refuses to accept the possibility of a universal ordering of these "things" of the world: the ideal may only be apprehended indirectly--if at all--through knowledge of the individual or perhaps through knowing the instant in time.

The dream visio, on the other hand, is for Chaucer the esthetic alternative to this dilemma, much as the

poetry of the ideal canso serves to answer the underlying Christian dichotomy that is the context of troubadour poetry. What is crucial in this dynamic is the very fact that the troubadours serve cortezia, that they are therefore determined by the poetry as the instruments, the mere scribes or joglars they despise and with whose identification they fear. Yet finally there is a subtle assertion of individuality, of individual will, among these auctors. They must excoriate the joglars. They fear being seen as mere performers who are in a sense liars, rather than as authors. And most of all they fear being silenced.

The minnesänger Heinrich von Morungen counterbalances the making of verse through which, as he claims, he will attain true worth, with the recollection that when he "[stands] mute in sorrow" he is worth nothing (to his lady): "do ich in leide stuont, dô huop ich si gar unhô" ("Leitlîche blicke und grôzliche riuwe" l. 12; trans. Goldin German 44, 45). Through composition and service, though, the poet may realize himself. In fact, this construct can become the vehicle for the ultimate self-enunciation, as in Walther von der Vogelweide's elegy for Reinmar von Reuenthal, which quotes a line from the dead poet ("`sô wol dir, wîp, wie reine ein nam!, '---"Joy to you, Woman, how pure a name"). Here Walther pays homage to his predecessor, but he does so

in order to valorize the art of poetry itself. Significantly, Walther is asserting his individuality in terms of a text, an inherited text. Reinmar's text becomes the example of how each of these poets serves courtly song. It is the text that reminds us of the worth of the poet that resides in his service to a beloved and which can in turn be expressed in the terms of devotion to the poetic vocation that is always in pursuit of an ideal or true art.

This is the hierarchy of the superlative, and in looking upwards toward the ideal, the individual feels himself as less and less distinct, yet there is no choice but to ascend. Nevertheless, there are ways out of this dilemma. Walther's ultimate self-assertion and his song turn on the very recognition that the art of song comprehends both himself and Reinmar:

Dêswâr, Reimâr, dû riuwes mich
 michels harter danne ich dich,
 ob dû lebetes und ich waer erstorben.
 ich wilz bî minen triuwen sagen,
 dich selben wolt ich lützel klagen:
 ich klage dîn edelen kunst, daz sist verdorben.
 ["Owê, daz wîsheit unde jugent" ll. 14-19]

The truth is, Reinmar, I mourn for you
 much more than you would mourn for me
 if you were living and I had died.
 I want to say this on my honor:
 you yourself I would not shed a tear for.
 I mourn the passing of your noble art.
 (trans. Goldin 130, 131)

Walther defines himself within the terms of courtly

forms. We know him to be the one who, at least as an appreciative witness, can name the art of courtliness as that which sustains him. And in the last lines of his poem he does not fail to align himself with his Other, thus to suggest perhaps his own poetic power. Addressing Reinmar, he foretells, poignantly, a future reunion:

sô leiste ich dir gesellschaft:
 mîn singen ist niht lanc.
 dîn sêle müeze wol gevarn,
 und habe dîn zunge danc.
 [ll. 25-26]

Well, I shall be with you again,
 my singing is over.
 May your soul fare well,
 and your tongue have thanks.
 (trans. Goldin 130, 131)

Through the naming of the Other, then, even in derision, as can be seen in the poetry of Vidal, Walther and others, the poet can achieve self-elevation. The name embodies great ethical power. La Comtessa de Dia, for instance, comforts herself in her attempts to win back a lover by noting that her name in itself is an asset in luring him to her: "Valer mi deu mos pretz e mos paratges" (etc.; l. "A chantar m'er de so qu'eu no volria" l. 29). Here the rewards of naming are obvious. The troubadour's strategy need hardly be deciphered--and in her example we perhaps observe the most compelling evidence of naming as a poetics. There is value in her "pretz" or "worth," an ambiguous term

as used here, which perhaps suggests both a kind of intrinsic human and a monetary worth, and surely a worth in relation to her familial descent ("paratges"). Within this tautological ("Valer [. . .] pretz") and virtually untranslatable line, however, the poet has inscribed the notion of fama, in ethical terms the good name of the worthy lover who in this case is doubly worthy in that she has been ennobled a second time through her longing for the distant beloved. This longing makes possible the bettering of the individual who subscribes to the courtly love experience. The longing, too, informs a poetry that aspires to its ideal.

Naming finds many ways of manifesting the poet's sense of an individuated self-worth. Peire D'Alvernhe not only names himself in one of his verses but he systematically dispenses with twelve of his fellow poets over the course of the same number of stanzas (in "Cantarai d'aquestz trobadors"). Yet, again, the form is what is important.

Given the expectations of Marcabru's audience, however, and the fact that he will employ a poetics of naming, we also find in his verse, remarkably, a poetics of absence. We examined this ploy as it is used in Dante's Commedia (see the "Introduction," above). Earlier poets, arguably, have shown Dante the

way in this. We have also observed Heinrich's conspicuous absence. Other troubadours have made use of absence too. One of Bernart de Ventadorn's songs names no one particularly, yet the poet manages to align himself with the song that comprehends all poets:

Non es meravelha s'eu chan
 melhs de nul autre chantador,
 que plus me tra'l cors vas amor
 e melhs sui faihz a so coman.
 Cor e cors e saber e sen
 e fors' e poder i ai mes.
 Si'm tira vas amor lo fres
 que vas outra part no'm aten.
 [ll. 1-8]

Of course it's no wonder I sing
 better than any other troubadour:
 my heart draws me more toward love,
 and I am better made for his command.
 Heart body knowledge sense
 strength and energy--I have set all on love.
 The rein draws me straight toward love,
 and I cannot turn toward anything else.

Bernart concludes his song by turning it back on itself; he will send it to the beloved at whose instigation he has had the opportunity to serve love truly, to serve cortezia, and thus to become a better poet and a better man:

A Mo Cortes, [. . .]
 tramet lo vers, e ja no'lh pes
 car n'ai estat tan lonjamen.
 [ll. 57-59]

To Mon Cortes, [. . .]
 I send this song, and let her not be vexed
 that I have been so far away.
 (trans. Goldin Lyrics 126, 127)

The burden of Bernart's discourse in "Non es

meravelha s'eu chan" depends upon an equation that was established by poets of his previous generation, which describes a cause and effect relationship between success at making truly great poetry-- synonymous with speaking the truth--and having the capacity to truly love. Bernart's a priori assumption is that he sings best of all, because he exists for the purpose of serving love; through such service he must thrive. The terms of this love reflect a dichotomy that was thoroughly explored by Marcabru.

III

In "Per savi'l tenc ses doptanssa" the poet is not specifically named, but he manages to assert himself through a first person voice that constantly insists upon itself as being someone who is not foolish, not brutish, not without speech, and so on; all that he is not perfectly describes other poets, other detractors, liars, and for that matter all others who live in a kind of bad faith. The voice does not invoke its owner through naming but, albeit less elaborately than the future Dante's triptych "io sol uno" (cf. the "Introduction," above), and in keeping with what can be called a poetics of the superlative, Marcabru employs a figure to refer to himself twice over--"qu'ieu mezeis sui (l. 5). Thus, subtly and powerfully, the poet

emphasizes himself, thereby distinguishing himself from all others. In doing so, moreover, he juxtaposes himself with the notion of light that can plumb, or clarify the obscurity of ordinary speech:

qu'ieu mezeis sui en erranssa
d'esclarzir paraul escura.
(ll. 5-6)

Ordinary speech is either spoken or sung by the troubadours of the next lines ("Trobador, ab sen d'enfanssa," etc.) who are essentially without true speech and who therefore "worry honest men" ("movon als pros atahina" l. 8). Indeed, Marcabru's point is typical of the thought of his time, in part dramatized by a resurgence of interest in categories, as seen in Porphyry's tree that delineates by genus and species the various possible forms of worldly existence (cf. Vance From Topic 85-87). Later in this song Marcabru finds he cannot even bring himself to refer to such troubadours as human; rather, they are the "dogs" of his world who have been "kept in the dark":

La defenida balanssa
d'aquest vers e revolina
sobr' un' avol gen canina
cui malvatz astres ombreia, [. . . .]
[ll. 55-58]

The end of this vers
takes its stand and turns
on a vile people, dogs
whom an evil star keeps in the dark [. . .].
(trans. Goldin 84-85, 86-87)

We have traced Marcabru's construct of obscure speech--versus the clarity the persona can bring to bear on such speech--to Augustine, and particularly the Augustine of De Doctrina Christiana. As well, we have noted how Marcabru establishes a dialectic; on the one side lies obscurity, the consequence of false love or amars (e.g., "qu'ieu dic: que Amar s'aizina / ab si mezesme guerreia" [ll. 15-16]--"And I say: whoever settles down with Lust / wars against himself"; trans. Goldin 82, 83), and on the other side lies amors, through whose power one can enjoy both insight and eloquence. These poles roughly resemble the Augustinian concept of cupiditas and caritas. In light of Augustine, it is possible to say that the basic impulse in Marcabru's verses is to restore an older ontological order that had been disturbed by immediate predecessors like the troubadour Guillem IX (cf. above, and Wilhelm Seven 65 ff.) who helped to fashion a revolutionary concept of courtly love that admitted of eroticism; yet this love, roughly speaking Marcabru's amars, was understood to be an ennobling force.

What has not been fully examined is the debt Marcabru's ideas owe to a textual tradition that can be credited first and foremost to Augustine in De Doctrina Christiana and particularly to the Augustine of the Confessions. For it is here that Marcabru most closely aligns himself with the Church father. Marcabru's

poetry elaborates an Augustinian view of textuality and creativity, the relationship between them, which defines itself in direct relation to the question of love. Furthermore, it is precisely the poem in which the poet does not overtly name himself, when the expectation of the time was that this is what poems would convey, which names the poet most profoundly.

In this fashion Marcabru most becomes his text. Within a dialectical matrix of amors and amars, "Per savi'l" discusses Marcabru's struggle to create true eloquence by using the imagery of light and the question of love, and by aligning these values with the success at making verse. Within this matrix we can say that the poet has truly become his text--for that is his implicit claim, as demonstrated in what amounts to his signature, the diptych ieu mezeis seu.

Marcabru's superlative assertion in "Per savi'l" that the poet sings best of all is set in opposition to the fools who cannot understand his song and who emptily mimic the true poet in the noise they produce ("Fols, pos tot cant au romanssa, / non sec razo, mas bozina" [ll. 49-50]--"The fool, since everything he hears he sings to others, / does not follow reason, he just makes noise" [trans. Goldin]). They are incapable of reason ("razo"), both in the sense of being rational, truly human and perhaps capable of

possessing wisdom, and as well in the sense of reason as it is used to denote the formal properties of eloquence, for the fools are also bad poets and poor exegetes (cf. ll. 4 and 50). This conjoining of eloquence and wisdom, as a kind of working definition of true poetry, is in turn used as a measure of the poet's moral worth. For Marcabru, intentionality prescribes the truth, insofar as a speaker's individual will is expressed in the sense of his words--a thoroughly Augustinian idea. Marcabru is reacting to a poetical climate that is most clearly enunciated in the work of his predecessor, Guillem IX, who attempted a revision of Augustinian thinking about language and truth in his poetry. Remarkably, Guillem's discourse reflects the philosophical inquiry into language, intentionality and objectivity, of Anselm in the tenth century.

In De Doctrina Christiana Augustine held that lying was constituted of three criteria: "objective untruth, the intention to deceive, and a misguided sense of what is to be loved and hoped for" (I.36.40, and cf. Confessions 5.35, 10.41.66- 10.42.67; paraphrased in Colish "Stoic" 30). Significantly, for Augustine lying involves an immoral intention that brings together both the hearer of the untruth and the speaker himself; moreover, it involves a "wrong intellectual attitude

toward the truth" (De Doctrina 3 ff.; paraphrased in Colish 30). In sum we may say that for Augustine--and for Marcabru--in lying there is a disassociation of words from the state of being marked by the presence of caritas, which reflects, on the part of a speaker, a hearer or, specifically, an interpreter, a defective love of the self and of others too (31). All the same, by the time of Anselm the machinery of rationality had already been brought to bear on religious or more to the point quasi philosophical tenets, which initiated a rethinking of the issues surrounding language and truth most comprehensively defined in the fourth century. Anselm sought to more finely distinguish among the parts of language, which led him to separate the Latin substantive grammaticus into two aspects, one adjectival and the other truly nominal. Of major importance is that this distinction also necessitated a rethinking of accepted notions concerning the role of the individual will in human affairs, especially as this related to the issue of language and its power to accurately describe experiential truth.

As Colish observes, rather than blindly embracing Augustine, Anselm "[resuscitates] the Stoic doctrine of lekta and the logical statements which they constitute" in order to contrast the kinds of statements that possess "a natural truth" and those that merely possess "an accidental truth" (39). But rather than

Augustine's perception of natural truth, in De veritate Anselm does not directly concern himself with the denotative ability of language to signify an objective truth, nor with non-linguistic natural signs, signs that for Augustine involuntarily denoted things in experience (such as smoke that will signify the fire producing it) (De veritate 2, 13 Opera omnia, vol. 1). Aristotle's distinction between substance and accident, furthermore, particularly obtains to semantic developments under way with Anselm. For Anselm holds that

[. . .] all statements, in virtue of their semantic coherence, possess an intrinsic truth (veritas). This truth inheres in them as a function of their logical and grammatical cogency, whether or not they correspond with anything in the real order [of things]. However, such propositions, while they always possess truth, do not always possess rectitude (rectitudo).

For there to be rectitude, a statement must indicate both a world beyond itself and a "reality" within itself. In other words, it must be

objectively accurate as well as internally cogent. A statement that has mere semantic truth is true naturally (naturaliter) while a true statement that also has rectitude is true accidentally and according to use (accidentaliter et secundum usum).
(Colish 40)

Any statement can signify, yet to what ends would such a statement serve? Anselm believes that all significatory utterances possessed natural truth; that

is, in terms of semantics, such expressions are said to be true. This is a revolutionary recognition, one which compels Anselm to demote the status of intentionality in Augustine's conception of falsehoods. The later theologian

omits the intention to deceive as the sine qua non or even as one of the necessary components of a lie. [Rather, in] De veritate, where he considers lies under the heading of the veritas enuntiationis, he confines lying purely to the level of incorrect objective reference. [Thus] his real goal [. . .] is to exalt both intellectual and moral rectitude as the criteria of truth in all respects. (40; my emphasis).

What must be underlined here is that in Anselm's scheme, except for the essences of things, nothing automatically possesses rectitude, and so in human affairs rectitude becomes "a function of the free exercise of human will and judgment," which Anselm prizes more than actions of a reflexive nature (40). He has virtually resurrected "the Stoic conception of logical statements as possessing their own internal rules" (41).

We of course see this issue played out to its greatest effect in the 14th century poem Piers Plowman, whose persona, Will, is to be viewed in the midst of yet a later struggle to reconcile or otherwise reestablish a balance between Augustine and--instead of Anselm, or for that matter the later Abelard or

Aquinas--Ockham and later speculative grammarians and realists. Anselm agrees with Augustine and the Stoics, that "lekta cannot legislate for the world outside the mind" (41), whereas the realists--in contention with Ockham and others like Robert Holcot--assert the primacy of language as the determinor of what could be held to be actual.

In the 12th century, an earlier version of this struggle is depicted in what might be called nothing less than Marcabru's counterrevolutionary ideology, which he promulgates in reaction to the new courtly love that had been elaborated at least by the time of Guillem. There is of course no textual evidence to support the claim that courtly love had fully evolved well before Guillem--and thus, perhaps, as early as Anselm--but as the poet and troubadour translator Paul Blackburn has proposed, we can see in the work of Guillem, who died in 1127, that he

is already bored with [his own] poses of being fated, of being sorcered, of being so dizzy from love that the troubadour cannot tell if he's coming or going or asleep or awake, of being sick and near death from [his] lady's refusals [of his romantic approaches]--even the theme of "the love afar" is there, which we do not otherwise find until Jaufre Rudel sings [of] the countess of Tripoli in the middle of the 12 C. (Proensa 275)

Employing terminology and concepts similar to Guillem, Marcabru's "Per savi · l" attacks what he considers to be a false language he finds generally in use all

around him--in the courts, on a crusade (Makin Provence 122), among other troubadours, and so forth.

In Guillem's songs, on the other hand, fundamental assumptions about perception (in other words, Augustinian assumptions), Biblical imagery and the Christian hierarchy of values are all invoked for the purpose of delineating and thereby elevating a system of secular, erotic love. In "Mout jauzens me prenc en amar" we find "a brilliant expression of mysticism applied to material objects" (Wilhelm 54). Guillem praises his lady, and in doing so, by a constant repetition of the word joy, he deftly makes of this emotion her very emblem:

Mout jauzens me prenc en amar
 un joy don plus mi vuelh aizir,
 e pus en joy vuelh revertir
 ben dey, si puesc, al mielhs anar,
 quar mielhs orna'm, estiers cujar,
 qu'om puesca vezer ni auzir.

[ll. 1-6]

I begin, rejoicing already, to love
 a joy that I want most to settle down in;
 and since I want to come back to joy,
 I must go, if I can, the best way:
 for I am made better by one who is, beyond dispute,
 the best a man ever saw or heard. (trans. Wilhelm)

In this and in the ensuing stanzas joy, which denotes for the poet a state of sheer rapture, echoes the liturgical gaudium that was

the favorite word of hymnologists to describe the emotional impact of religious belief or awakening.

It occurs again and again in Easter hymns and in poems written in praise of the Virgin Mary. As a result, when William writes in praise of his own lady, he seizes upon the sacred word and travesties it with the same kind of exultant repetition that one finds more often in the Latin Carmina Burana.
(Wilhelm 53)

Guillem "echoes the Scriptures" (Philippians 2.10), Peter Makin observes, when claiming that

Every joy must bow down before her
and every pride obey
Midons

and in the formula,

no-one can find a finer lady,
nor eyes see, nor a mouth speak of [etc.].

Moreover, the "incantatory fifth stanza of this song enumerates powers that were invoked every day in the Virgin and the saints [cf. the Te Deum and the Psalm Confitemini Domini from the Vulgate]" (102, and 324 nn.). Here we see only three of many possible examples of the ways in which Guillem remakes a received sensibility into a shape that can express new courtly values. And this amor courtois

was not "religious" in the sense of being part of any Christian ethic; it was a religion in its psychology. The courtly lover did not think of his lady as the Church thought of her, but as the Church thought of God. (102)

Yet at heart Guillem's strategy presupposes a view of language that echoes Anselm's emendation of Augustine,

who constructed the parameters of language and truth that affected the European world view well into the Renaissance. Guillem could not have made such novel and what in some circles would have been thought of as sacrilegious uses of language had the freedom to believe in a language that could be, in and of itself, either capable of truth or falsehood not been created by Anselm's testing of contemporary language theories with the force of logically determined, nascently forensic procedures. This is a subtext of Guillem's song, "Companho, faray un vers . . . convinen." Here he weighs the question of what expressions and/or thoughts can be considered to be truly fitting, appropriate, to use Anselm's term, perhaps, what expressions can truly possess rectitude. The specific question Guillem asks, which will have the greatest impact on what status courtly love can enjoy within its larger society, is whether or not foolish talk can be of any worth at all. For if in a vers such foolishness can be found to be worthy, even beautiful, then perhaps courtly love, amars rather than amors, can be seen as being a noble way of living and, implicitly, therefore, as being capable of redemption:

Companho, faray un vers . . . covinen:
et aura'i mais de foudaz no'y a de sen,
et er totz mesclatz d'amor e de joy e de joven.
[11. 1-3]

My companions, I am going to make a vers
that is refined,

and it will have more foolishness than sense,
 and it will be all mixed
 with love and joy and youth.

How can such foolishness, lack of sense, be refined,
 fitting, but that it is mixed up with love and joy?
 Guillem tells us that only those who are noble will
 understand and have an answer to this question:

E tenguatx lo per vilan qui no l'enten
 o dins son cor voluntiers qui no l'apren;
 greu partir si fai d'amor
 qui la trob'a son talen. [ll. 4-6]

Whoever does not understand it,
 take him for a peasant,
 whoever does not learn it deep in his heart.
 It is hard for a man to part from love
 that he finds to his desire.
 (trans. Goldin 20, 21)

Here he proves his point, and furthers argument in
 favor of erotic if not courtly love (indeed, the
 remainder of this song is thoroughly salacious--as is a
 considerable amount of his oeuvre) by invoking the
 Pauline and later Augustinian argument for exegesis
 that prescribes the proper ("convinen") reading of a
 text, so that the truth will out, despite what the
 words may signify on the surface. Guillem's attitude
 about language and communication emphasizes, though,
 the ambiguity of expression, and furthermore the
 possibility of a new kind of expression, one that
 demonstrates the divorce of word and intention. His
 expression is the very sign of the hairline fracture
 Anselm created in what had been an overall cosmology

whose cogency depended upon a seamless communion between language and truth, even if it was a language that had been made obscure.

IV

Reading Marcabru, and looking back at Guillem's "fractured" language--"totz mesclatz"--what the bawdy story teller is arguing for becomes more significant, inasmuch as Marcabru will later clearly favor a kind of expression in which language embodies the individual will, or, that is to say, in which language and intention are reunited in the Augustinian spirit. In "Per savi·l," for example, Guillem might easily be included in that group of troubadours who are essentially without speech ("Trobador, ab sen d'enfanssa"--i.e., as in the Latin infans; l. 7, my emphasis), who thus, in making meaningless noise, "worry honest men" ("movon als pros atahina" l. 8), and who twist beyond recognition the teaching of the auctores ("e tornon en disciplina / so que veritatz autreia" ll. 9-10; note the binary nature of "autreia," which suggests auctoritas as well as slander or detractation). In other words, these false speakers take the very words of the inherited past and make them tangled up and fractured ("e fant los motz, per esmanssa, / entrebeschatz de fraichura" ll. 11-12); and

in doing so they equate their false love with the true ("E meton en un' eganssa / Falss' Amor encontra fina" ll. 13-14).

Again, the basis upon which either Guillem or Marcabru validates his claim about love and language is the poetry itself, which significantly must, in turn, represent them; their mode of self-enunciation is their poetics. In "Per savi'l" self-enunciation takes the form of the poet's actual statement of poetics that comprises the burden of the poem's opening lines. Marcabru's prescription for poetry is to have the theme of the poem unfold as each word is taken in and comprehended ("devina" l. 2) by the listener or reader. What is suggested is that to understand his poem, which means to appreciate his view of how poetry ought to proceed, is to understand Marcabru, the author of the poem. In this metapoetical statement, it is the poet himself who will demonstrate the art of true poetry by making the effort to achieve in words a clarity of vision ("qu'ieu mezeis sui en erranssa / d'esclarzir paraul' escura" ll. 5-6). The "I" in these troubadours' poems ultimately understands itself as a text, just as these poets define themselves in light of their vers that serves as the vehicle by which they may judge others of their society, and by which they may ultimately set themselves apart from those others who are false in love, lacking in wisdom, and as implied,

who use language unwisely and immorally. In "Companho, faray un vers . . . convinen" Guillem writes, "[. . .] tenguatz lo per vilan qui no l'enten" ("whoever does not understand [the song], take him for a peasant" l. 4; trans. Goldin 21), and in "Per savi'l" Marcabru retorts, "La defenida balanssa / d'aquest vers e revolina / sobr' un' avol gen canina [. . .] c'ab folla cuida bobanssa" ("The end of this vers / takes its stand and turns / on a vile people, dogs / [. . .] all pompous with their dumb ideas" ll. 55-57, 59; trans. Goldin 85, 87).

This association of the poet with the text takes place within the broader context of a meditation on naming that mirrors previous and current thinking about the role of names in thought and more largely in theological affairs. What either of these poems can show us is that their authors treat them--and therefore we can guess how they approached all poetry--as the forums in which their assertions can be vindicated and perhaps redeemed. If the poem is true to itself, then, the ideas it presents will also ring true. This textual connection in part accounts for the almost constant ploy, in much of troubadour verse, of self-referentiality at the ends of poems, which both poetically and rhetorically provide closure, a roundness to the poetic discourse, but which also

emphasize the fact that the discourse is rooted in a certain philosophy and poetics of the self, as we have seen in Marcabru's inward turn that concludes "Per savi'l" (see above), particularly in the use of the word "revolina." Guillem's "Pus vezem de novel florir" ends first with a call to all noble persons to read the poem correctly, followed by a brief review of precisely how the discourse was carried out, and then the comment that indeed Guillem is pleased with what he has made, for it is worthy:

Del vers vos dig que mais en vau
qui ben l'enten e n'a plus lau,
que'l mot son fag tug per egau,
comunalmens,
e'l sonetz qu'ieu mezeis me'n lau
bos e valens.

["Pus vezem de novel florir" ll. 37-42]

Concerning this vers

I tell you a man is all the more noble
as he understands it, and he gets more praise;
and all the strophes are built exactly
on the same meter,
and the melody, which I myself am happy about,
is fine and good.

(trans. Goldin 39)

Furthermore, Guillem proposes that his very song represent him to others, when he is unable to do so:

Mon Esteve, mas ieu no'i vau,
sia'l prezens
mos vers e vuelh que d'aquest lau
sia guirens. [ll. 43-46]

Let my vers, since I myself do not,
appear before her,
Mon Esteve, and let it be the witness
for my praise. (trans. Goldin 41)

While Marcabru's intentions are to wage war on the values of Guillem, in order to restore society and poetry to a proper balance, both poets reflect a contemporary, gradually changing attitude towards language. Language was coming to be understood as capable of being either a mental construct in and of itself, or a medium, perhaps the cement that holds society together as a vibrant whole. As already noted, we can locate the most dramatic shift in the way language was viewed in the writings of Anselm, who elaborates a conception of what language is through the critical recognition that language can, in a sense, enjoy its own internal coherence or rather logic; and this language can also signify a world beyond the language per se, a world that becomes the arbiter of the language's rectitude.

For Augustine, the palpable world had to be "read" or interpreted in order to arrive at the truth of it, because it was at best an imperfect reflection of the real. For Anselm, this imperfect reflection becomes the standard for measuring the worldly power of any given statement. Augustine's view of words and statements was that, even as they were a part of a world, a world as an imperfect reflection of the divine truth, they were nevertheless derived from the world they sought to represent; they were in keeping

with that world, intrinsically of a piece with it. Augustine's, and Anselm's ideas are much like the earlier Stoics who viewed words as being "[automatically correlated] with the material and corporeal realities for which they [stood]" (Colish "Stoic" 19).

With Anselm, however, the hierarchy of natural speech is transformed. Augustine's speech was natural in its "automatic correlation" to the phenomenal world, yet his doctrine never fully recognized an integrity to language in and of itself, an integrity separate from the world the language aspired to signify. As we have seen, Anselm calls natural that speech which need not signify any reality other than itself; all the same, he ascribes to language a propriety (i.e., rectitudo) that takes the capacity for actual, objective reference as its criterion for validation, where such propriety is the function of human will and judgment.

Marcabru is surely, if unintentionally, echoing the Stoic distinction between the articulate human voice and the meaningless, inarticulate sounds made by animals, when in his songs he sets himself apart from the others (i.e., the troubadours and joglars) who are without mature speech, perhaps without any speech whatsoever ("Trobador, ab sen d'enfanssa"; in "Per sav·l"). At best, they make sounds that would

approximate true discourse but are finally meaningless, like the sounds of animals, for these others are the "gen canina" (57). Marcabru's point, of course, is in keeping with Anselm's tenet of rectitudo, for a "freely willed decision," Anselm notes, "is superior to a merely automatic reflex" (De veritate 4-5; paraphrased in Colish 40); likewise, true eloquence for Marcabru can only result when an individual is engaged in a fully reflective process. It is then that individuals can be said to have songs of their own, songs possessed of razos or rationality, harmony, poetic integrity, and to all other uses this razos was put. We find razos especially contrasted in Marcabru's depiction of a bluejay as "an image of pride and discord" (in "Quan l'aura doussana bufa"), which draws on a tradition that saw the jay as a gossip and "imitator of other bird's songs." Moreover, those cries were ugly (Paterson 36-37):

Quan l'aura doussana bufa,
E'.l gais, desotz lo brondel,
Fai d'orgueil li ramel,
Ladoncs deuri' hom chausir
Verei' amor ses mentir
C'ab son amic non barailla.
[ll. 1-6]

When the gentle wind blows,
And the jay beneath the twig
puffs itself up with pride and disdain,
and the branches are shady,
then one ought to choose true, undeceiving love,
which causes no strife with its lover.
(trans. Paterson 37)

What is perhaps clear in Guillem, Marcabru, and other troubadours, is not simply the recognition that language can be possessed of plenitude, clarity, and thus can be truly glorious, but that there is another possibility, which is that language can be empty, even tragically narcissistic and self-involved, so that it is no longer capable of conveying truth in the sense that Anselm speaks of rectitude. Such a language, for Marcabru particularly, will remove its user to beyond the pale of courtly (lege: human) society, and so the language is not only ultimately useless but pernicious as well.

In effect, what Anselm initiated in elevating an intellectual system to a level commensurate with a moral one was the contemplation of a language that is untrue, that is irresponsible towards objective truth.

[. . .] Anselm obliterates the distinction between lies and falsehoods drawn by [. . .] Augustine, for he omits the intention to deceive as the sine qua non or even as one of the necessary components of a lie. In [. . .] De veritate, where he considers lies under the heading of the veritas enuntiationis, he confines lying purely to the level of incorrect objective reference.

One should not be misled by Anselm's apparent neglect of ethics at this point or by the fact that, in calling rectitudo an accident, he appears to be placing it on a lower plane than the semantic or natural veritas of propositions. His real goal in De veritate is to exalt both intellectual and moral rectitude as the criteria of truth in all respects. (Colish 40)

Marcabru's trobar naturau, as if consciously

comprehending both Augustine and Anselm, includes what is within as well as beyond the pale, in the sense that Marcabru "is concerned with what is in harmony with nature and outside it, 'segon natura et estiers' (XLI.5)" (Paterson 29-30). It is precisely this harmony that is at stake in Anselm's presumption. Ironically, perhaps, we see this most acutely in his attribution of the term "natural" (naturaliter) to any statement that might possess an "intrinsic truth" (veritas), a decidedly internal, "logical and grammatical cogency," even when such cogency does not "correspond with anything in the real order" of things (Colish 40; cf. "Chapter One" above). In these terms, then, Marcabru most profoundly seeks to restore an older order that reaches back in time to before Anselm, while the poet necessarily employs the terminology and concepts inherited from the recent theologian.

Marcabru especially locates these language problems within the social sphere. Trobar naturau includes rationalism and intellectualism in its vision of the world (Paterson 29-32), but it sees this rationalism as a necessary component in a world harmony. Similarly, John of Salisbury saw rhetoric as a necessity in any system of thought that might accurately comprehend society and its larger sustaining world. The Metalogicon (ed. Webb, pp. 7, 13 ff.) proclaims that "[r]hetoric is the beautiful and fruitful union between

reason and expression. Through harmony, it holds human communities together" (paraphrased in Curtius 77). In a poem, John restates Cicero's view of rhetoric (in De officiis I, 50), which has its roots in Posidonius and Isocrates; reason and speech, acting in conjunction with each other, create the foundation for manners and society:

Eloqui si quis perfecte noverit artem,
 Quodlibet apponas dogma, peritus erit.
 Transit ab his tandem studiis operosa Juventus
 Pergit et in varias philosophando vias,
 Quae tamen ad finem tendunt concorditer unum,
 Unum namque caput Philosophia gerit.
 (Entheticus pp. 250, 363 ff; in Curtius 77)

Augustine is of course a trained rhetorician, and we have seen how central a role discourse and textuality generally is in his world view. In the same way, language for Augustine was integral to all meaning, intrinsic to the unfolding of world events, (albeit it was seen by him to be opaque, in the Pauline sense of vision through a glass darkly). Thus Isidore of Seville could construct his Etymologia predicated on the belief that the "intrinsic meaning of an object [could be discovered] through often hypothetical etymology" (Paterson 31); Isidore's procedure was a direct outgrowth of Pauline typology and the Augustinian notion that the objects of the world contained hidden meanings, meanings capable of being deciphered, which had led to interpretation of

Scripture and all literature of Latin Antiquity "in the light of supposed symbolic meanings" they contained (31). And according to Isidore, words possessed a natural hidden force that could be disclosed through etymology:

Etymologia est origo vocabulorum. cum vis verbi vel nominis per interpretationem colligitur. . . . Nam cum videris unde ortum est nomen, citius vim eius intelligis. (PL LXXXII.105)

This world unity, a harmony among the world's elements, is revealed in the language of Occitan and particularly in the use of that language, which reveals a poet's opportunism but also suggests his like attitude towards the world and as well as towards the language with which he wishes to speak of the world. Marcabru defined this epistemological construct most profoundly in his ability to utilize the philosophical view that saw a fundamentally intimate relationship between language and the phenomenal world; he did so in order to speak about poetry and, ultimately, to speak about himself as being at least as worthy and noble as the poem he has created. If the "major innovation Augustinian rhetoric offers is the valorization of desire, or will," as Sarah Spence contends, then will becomes the "motivating force of persuasion" (114); in a model of discourse in which will must be present in both speaker and listener, in order for the language of

the discourse to have an effect, we can note an inherent relationship between language and will, on the one hand, and on the other "a dialogue of powers in which reason is balanced by faith and will" (114). Consider the rich pastoral scene of a song such as "Bel m'es can s'esclarzis l'onda," in which Marcabru insinuates himself among the many birds--each possessing its own language--and the poet capable of singing better than any of them. He sings best of all because of a joyful understanding:

Bel m'es can s'esclarzis l'onda
 E qecs auzels pel jardin
 S'esjauzis segon son latin;
 Lo chanz per lo(s) becs toronda,
 Mais eu tropo miels qe negus.

Qe scienza jauzionda
 M'apres c'al soleilh declin
 Laus lo jorn, e l'ost' al matin,
 [etc.; ll. 1-8]

It pleases me when the wave grows bright
 and each bird in the garden
 rejoices according to its own language;
 the singing gushes from their beaks,
 but I compose better than any.

For joyful understanding taught
 me to praise the day at sunset
 and my host at sunrise (to count my blessings)
 [. . . .] (trans. Paterson 30)

Marcabru has deftly aligned his ability to sing--to compose poetry--with the natural cycles of the sun; thus the confirmation of his poetic powers is effected, not merely by his bald assertion that he is the poet par excellence, but by comparing himself with

nature in which he derives a joyful understanding of the world. He is suggesting that his own cycles of composition are as true as the cycles of the day and night, the seasons, and so on.

We need only to return to "Per savi'l" to realize the full import of Marcabru's strategy here:

Per savi'l tenc ses doptanssa
cel qui de mon chant devina
so que chascus motz declina,
si cum la razos depleia, [. . . .]

Here we see that the true reader, who we must presume possesses the joyful wisdom that understanding of the natural world and one's place in it brings, will be able to "divine" the structure, rationale (razos) and purpose of Marcabru's song. There is no doubt ("ses doptanssa") about this, for the poet is in step with the progression of the world's events--as we see precisely in his song that represents him: wise persons will appreciate how each word unfolds ("declina"), much as the day and night unfold naturally according to the declination of the sun, as we see in "Bel m'es can." "[I]nstead of seeing the necessary distance from God and truth as frustrating, Augustine suggests [in De Doctrina] that such a gap provides necessary room in which [a] divine spark can occur" (Spence 109). The Pauline echo ("paraul' escura") is used to full effect as both poet and reader--indeed, all members of a

society essentially defined by their joyful wisdom--engage in an Augustinian struggle to tease out ("d'esclarzir") from an opaque and symbolically rich language the transparency of the truth. The struggle also finds a parallel in Jerome's dictum that in translation the spiritual meaning of a text should be "extorted"--"exprimere"-- from the litera.

To elucidate the truth finally is for Marcabru to restore a unity in the world, a unity that has been threatened by all misusers of language who create the fractures in discourse and perception and thus cloud the truth. In "Lo vers comens quan vei del fau" he attacks those who would "confuse the truth" (the "menut trobador bergau / entrebesquill" ll. 9-10--the "buzzing, petty troubadours who confuse the truth"; trans. Paterson 9). And when Marcabru writes that "En do cuidars ai conssirier / A triar lo frait de l'entier" (Dejeanne XIX.9-10--"In two ways of thinking, I am anxious to distinguish the broken from the whole"; trans. Paterson 10), he is elaborating his "theme of imprecise and corrupting use of words [as] bound up with [his] concept of `dos cuidars', the `entier' and the `frait', the right and illusory ways of thinking" (Paterson 10).

Such a perception of this fractured language that is incapable of denoting objective reality, yet which

might seem to be capable of such signification, is a consequence of Anselm's postulation of a naturally occurring language, in a sense one which need not comply with any objective truth. Such speech is false'; thus it sets the natural world in opposition to truth, and in its use this language sows confusion and doubt. Marcabru's task to restore truth and certitude, to reassociate these values with the workings of the phenomenal world, that world through which he derives a "joyful understanding," drives him to compose his songs. To accomplish this is to return to the Augustinian vision of truth as discourse, to the unity embodied in the notion of a world text.

V

Certain basic assumptions underlie a poem like "Per savi · 1." Viewed in their context, the poem represents the later Middle Ages' shifted and enlarged apprehension of time, the society's conception of auctoritas within an overall hieratic framework, and the developing claim for individual poetic authority in the light of a specifically literary auctoritas, on the part of the poets of that society. Marcabru's poem represents the cultural nexus of an older, dying culture, and a newer literate culture in which we witness the individual poet's struggle for singular recognition. The poem is precisely about such a

struggle; it conveys the sense of that struggle through both its discourse and its poetic per se. Furthermore, the poem displays the intersection of the two intellectual streams that provide the language and thus the thought processes of a "modern" culture, in which individuals define themselves as much against the past and hierarchical authority as from within it. Particularly the thinking of Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian, as they are appropriated in the twelfth century, presides over the birth of the literate and modern world of individuals who feel compelled to inscribe themselves within the collective text of their society.

At its deepest level, Marcabru's poem reveals an anxiety over the possibility of being kept silent; or rather it concerns itself with the question of whether or not the poet will be able to speak, to sing, to utter an existential truth. At the poem's surface, therefore, its discourse takes up the question of poetic form that is the manifestation of the broader and generative form of fin' amors. The poem asks and also answers the question for itself, the new poetry an authentic language, a language capable of conveying a true assessment of the changing experiential landscape.

The binary oppositions that form the matrix of this

discourse are several: love versus lust, poetry versus mere metrics--and, perhaps at the root of these opposites, reason (i.e., "razo," ratio) versus chaos or disorder. In invoking razos, moreover, the poet comprehends a debate about whether or not narrative is a discourse capable of conveying truth: the nature of time (perhaps the various forms of time--cf. Le Goff's observations, above), the empirical validity of history, and the ontological validity of the literary impulse, are all thus also invoked in the poetic attempt at speaking or singing the truth--that is, at rendering an accurate verbal description of reality. Interpretive strategies common to exegesis, according to Judson Allen (Friar as Critic 42 ff.), were appropriated by writers of fiction. As Gellrich comments, however, purely literary endeavors in the later Middle Ages did not simply replicate, mirror and otherwise repeat the inherited "matter" of Scripture and antiquity--an operation that was "[grounded] in the Platonic and Augustinian concept of imitation" (25)--but rather the rewriting of the past in the hands of poets like Dante, Chaucer and Langland, was constituted of "a new kind of interpreting, one that no longer allows for the straightforward validation of meaning in an 'old book', the sequence of events, or the voice of a speaker." The "convention of imitation" was usually undermined "by casting the narrator in the

role of copyist or reporter" (26). What Gellrich calls the inherited "Book of culture," essentially defined by the Church Fathers' exegetically sanitized versions of Scripture and pagan myth,

leaves no doubt that it is a true account of the cosmos, history, nature, and the afterlife. Medieval fictions, in contrast, specialize in doubt, and while they also delight in religious values, they remain basically different from, if not opposed to, the myth of the book of culture.

The opposition consists in the recognition that Plato mentioned in the Phaedrus [275AB; cf. Gellrich 33 and n. 6] and the Republic [II; cf. Hazard Adams 22-23, and Gellrich 47 and n. 31] and that is extended so clearly in Boccaccio [in e.g. "De Genologia deorum; cf. especially Boccaccio on Poetry 63; cf. Gellrich 47]: fiction creates illusions self-consciously and proceeds on the assumption that readers will not turn away complaining of its "lies." (48)

A poet like Dante understands literature to be for the sake of his reader in the sense that "Dante's poem is less an allegory of history than a reflection of the reading process, with all its limitations in the uncertainty of meaning and the temporality of understanding" (24; cf. Mazzotta Dante). Thus such fictional narrative procedures are significations that destabilize logocentrism as never before "in the pages of the grammarians and exegetes, and the question about locating the authority of meaning in an origin or text is postponed indefinitely [. . .]" (24). We clearly witness such a destabilization in obvious ways, such as the profoundly unreliable narrator to be found in the greatest part of Chaucer's work. Chaucer's Geoffrey is

a "mere" reporter who warns us of the questionable accuracy of his narrative due to the fallibility of both perception and memory.

The destabilizing force is what a modern reader would quickly identify as the element of play. Huizinga has noted that the Middle Ages

[. . .] had inherited its great culture-forms in poetry, ritual, learning, philosophy, politics, and warfare from classical antiquity, and they were fixed forms. Medieval culture was crude and poor in many respects, but we cannot call it primitive. Its business was to work over traditional material, whether Christian or classical, and assimilate it afresh. (Homo Ludens 179; cf. Gellrich 49)

It is in the context of a tension between the authority of the past and the present author that we ought to read a poem like the Commedia, because the allegory at the heart of this work

[. . .] consists in the structure of temporal distance between the originary liber of God, envisioned in the sky at the end of the poem, and the book of written efforts to explain the experience of its meaning. The allegorical sign is constituted not by a desire to represent its referent--to have ontology--but rather by the impossibility of the sign to coincide with the full significance of its origin or end. The understanding, therefore, that the allegorical mode occasions for Dante is the recognition of the continuing desire for recovering the volume with which he began--both his memory and its image of God's presence. For the determination to move through the limits of language in time, to struggle with meaning, was another medieval way of realizing the desire for God. (Gellrich 165)

The parameters of what amounts to Dante's meditation on

ontology and epistemology, a discourse as much philosophical as theological, will presently be taken up at length. For now, all we might note is that there is an inherent "playfulness" in all narrative, in that narrative will always invite acts of judgment and interpretation. One sign of this emerging aspect of play in the later Middle Ages, grounded in the dialectical impulse, is of course a separation insisted upon by the individual poet, between himself and both his own text and those texts of the past.

The fundamental burden of Marcabru's poetic enterprise is this separation. His budding narrativity is evident first of all in the pose he adopts in relation to his society. There is a pitched battle taking place between himself, the poet, and those who love falsely and who are untrue in the very language they use. As a poet, Marcabru is steeped in the rhetorical tradition. His diction consistently resonates earlier Latin meanings that are the conveyors of that tradition. "Per savi'l" is built out of such terminology; as well, the poem is precisely organized according to the structure of medieval dispositio, "the ideas in [the poem] clearly arranged, [. . .] the Rhetorical structure [coinciding] with an especially strong concern to clarify, define, and argue his ideas on love" (Paterson 18-19). Marcabru's songs, in fact,

are definable both in terms of rhetoric and medieval dialectics, while the power and ingenuity of his trobar naturau comes from an understanding of the phenomenal world that derives from contemporary Scholasticism.

Of special importance is the fact that dialectical procedures, which might be structured according to the precepts of rhetorical disputatio, let us say, gave rise to poetic forms like the partimen (see, for instance, "Amics Marchabrun, car digam" by Marcabru and Ugo Catola). As it "came to dominate the trivium" in the twelfth century, Glynnis Cropp points out, dialectics "had the special task of being used to distinguish true from false, in contrast with rhetoric, which could be used on behalf of both" (95). Hence in its examination of dialectics the Leys d'amor, for example, reveals the peculiar cast of Augustine and Cassiodorus both. Augustine had written, "Qui enim disputat, verum discernit a falso" (in Köhler Trobador-lyrik 279 n.32); and Cassiodorus similarly claims, "Vera sequestrat a falsis" (Institutiones II, Praef. 4; cf. Cropp 110 n. 13). Likewise, the Leys d'amor sharpens the powers of discernment.

Dialecta ensenha tensonar, contendre e disputa e far questios, respostas e defensas la us contra l'autre e mostrar per dreyta razo e per vertadiers argumens la vertat e la veraya oppinio de la questio moguda.

[Dialectic teaches one how to argue, contend, dispute and to compose questions, answers and defence in opposition to one another and to show by sound reasoning and by truthful argument the truth and the correct opinion about the question set.] (Anglade, ed. Las Leys d'Amors [Toulouse, 1919] t.I, p. 81; in Cropp 95 and 110 n. 14)

Dialectics had once been "viewed as a snare set to trap the believer" (Murphy Rhetoric in the Middle Ages 46), as in Hilary of Poitiers' De trinitate that celebrates truth for its innate resistance to "marvelous devices of perverted ingenuity" as were contained in Arian logic (VII.1; PL 10.199; in Murphy 46). But dialectics came to be regarded as the means for arriving at truth, which in turn allowed for the manipulation of others through the ability to prevail in dialectically structured argument. Thus Peire de Corbiac's thirteenth century encyclopedia offers, as a definition for dialectic, the following.

Per Dialectica sai arzonablemens a paubar e respondre e falsar argumens, sofismar e conduire, e tot gignozamens menar mon aversaire ad inconveniens.

[Through dialectic I know to present a case and reply and falsify arguments by reasoning, to use sophistries, to conduct and lead my adversary quite cunningly into discomfiture.] (Paterson 26-27; cf. Cropp 110 n. 15)

On his part, Marcabru "attributed to the troubadour the legal role of 'investigator, defender and inquisitor' in the enquiry into the truth about love" (Cropp 95). Note, for example, these lines:

Qu'ieu sui assatz esprovaire,
 Deffendens et enquistaire, [. . . .]
 [ll. 43-44]

For indeed I am investigator,
 defender and inquisitor, [. . . .]
 (Dejeanne V; trans. Paterson 14)

The point here is that the poetic form of the partimen invites a poet "to discriminate between right and wrong (lo dreit and lo tort), to choose the better alternative" (Cropp 95). Through such rhetorical and cognitive procedures, then, we can say that the discourse of a poet such as Marcabru, grounded in recent developments in dialectics, embodies a nascent assertion of individual poetic authority within the confines of a poetic that makes a convention of the individual singer. This singer, however, is understood to be a part of the larger text that comprises the song, one which subsumes the singer under its aegis (Zumthor "Autobiography" 30-33, and cf. above). In other words, the struggle to assert the individual is mirrored in the intellectual movements of the time.

Chapter Three

Marcabru, the Modistae, Aquinas and Dante:

The Poet As Text, the Text As Name

I

The legacy of Augustine determined that the concepts of writing and text would comprise the chief metaphor for truth in the Middle Ages. The Book, as image, was a primary instance of this metaphor. Its "idea," Gellrich writes, "is perpetuated in a sense of writing as a metaphor of the 'system of signified truth'" (44; cf. 29-44, 96-101 ff.). Writers of the later Middle Ages can assert themselves as individual auctors through their manipulation of this metaphor. Hence, their "fictions" are integrally, inherently, bound up with the notion of textuality, for textuality must become their ultimate subject; in the metaphor of the text lie the profoundly theological and/or philosophical issues that centered themselves around the issue of signification. It is inevitable that, through a self-imposed identification with a text, poets announce themselves as unique, and this is particularly true in the later Middle Ages when poets purport to speak to us from their very own texts; in their alignment with the issue of textuality, they make the claim that they are the unique text sine qua non. They are authors who would speak to us in that they

are themselves texts. This fundamental poetic assertion mirrors its larger Christian world. For in the Middle Ages, Bloch writes, "words always refer to the Word" (Etymologies 60; in Gellrich 121 n. 75). Words are the attempt to recover the "plenitude of God" after the Fall, as follows from the sense of the relationship of part to whole established by Augustine, for whom creation was

a concatenation of utterances proceeding from the first Word [. . . .] Although the primordial creation is a moment of profound differentiation, the created world and words of Augustine endure not a breach but an expansion from their origins of meaning. (Gellrich 120-21)

Augustine's expression of a sentiment such as in the Confessions, "Ipsum est verbum tuum, quod et Principium es quia et loquitur nobis" PL 32, 812), provides the basis of the traditional source for the identification of author with his text; his authority for this conception is the received notion of the Word incarnate. Furthermore, particularly in the Confessions, he employs the strategy of textual self-commentary. In the eleventh chapter, for instance, just as the distinction between divine and human discourse is being made, he parallels his own act of writing

with the creating Verbum: while there is nothing similar in essence between them, the first nonetheless is profoundly involved in the second

by virtue of the differentiation they both carry out. The strategy through which the text comments on itself occurs at various points when Augustine speaks of haec verba, but it is particularly emphatic in the interrogative mood, with which the chapter closes: "By what word of yours was it announced that a body might be created, from which these words might be created?" ("Ut ergo fieret corpus unde ista verba fierent, quo verbo a te dictum est?" 11.6, [PL 32, 812]). (Gellrich 120)

Through such an alignment medieval authors also make possible their emergence from a textual tradition as entities distinct from it, and from their own "new" texts as well, which they are at the moment creating. After Augustine, we see the way for this assertion prepared in the development of dialectical thought, which in its ability to atomize systems makes possible the fundamental bifurcating transformation of poetry into double voiced discourse, a human discourse that will eventually lead to "the structural complexity and heterogeneity" of a work like the Canterbury Tales (McClellan 485). Chaucer is actually a far cry from the Confessions. Yet--a case bearing resemblance to Marcabru (cf. above)--in Augustine's thought and in later treatises on dialectics we can locate the ground for the eventual differentiation that occurs. The poet stands back from his text; such a poet establishes himself as a reader and commentator, and of course as the author of that text. Using Bakhtin's theory of dialogic discourse as a model for reading medieval texts, William McClellan has analyzed these texts in a

way that can demonstrate their filiations with seminal works like the Confessions as well as with other contemporary or near contemporary writing. Chaucer's "Clerk's Tale," for instance,

is one of the tales where Chaucer was experimenting with multi-voiced narrative discourse. The combination of vari- directional discourse and the decrease in objectification of the narrative voice results in a mode of discourse where several different narrative voices participate in the tale's narration. These heterogeneous voices can conveniently be identified as the Petrarchan voice of moral allegory, the clerkly voice of humanistic pathos, and the nominally Chaucerian voice of grotesque parody. These different voices are not, however, completely autonomous voices. Although the tendency toward the radical extreme of complete splitting has progressed sufficiently to make these different voices distinctly identifiable, they are only relatively autonomous. They are still intertwined with each other; they form a conceptual bond; that is, they constitute a dialogic relationship. ("Bakhtin's Theory" 483)

Fourteenth century narrative possibilities, such as we see in Chaucer, exhibit the tension between past and present to the extent that there is a struggle for a unique point of view that must emerge out of a world view that insists upon homogeniety. The effect of such writing

is to see the past and present from a different perspective, and that difference compares with the objectivity sought by scholars in the renaissance who wanted to separate themselves from medieval tradition by understanding the past in its own right before [Christological] time put meaning upon it. Medieval fictions certainly brought about no Copernican revolution. But the difference of myth from fiction figures prominently in the separation of "Middle Ages" from "Renaissance" [. . . .]
(Gellrich 50)

Fourteenth century nominalism is a mark of this shift--just as it is a contributor to a further evolution of narrative writing. The same can be said for an increasing reliance, among intellectuals, on empiricism as it came to apply to a budding physical science. So too, fiction writing might also have contributed to "important changes in the modes of signifying meaning" (50). We see this transformation serving as the fabric of Chaucer's writing. But Marcabru, Dante and Langland are the pivotal poets whose works exhibit intellectual developments that will include what we may call a "poetics of the text." All four of these poets align themselves with their texts in progressively complex, subtle and powerful ways. The development of fictional narrative poetry makes possible the creation of figures or characters who represent the poet, and who therefore are at a remove from their author-signifieds as a part of the poetic texts. Yet they are used to maintain a link with their authors; this maneuver is most readily discernible in the fact that these figures bear the names of their authors and are often portrayed, to one extent or another, within the contexts of many of the events of the authors' real lives. That is to say, we know something of the lives of Dante and Chaucer; we know little if anything about Marcabru and a poet like

Langland presents a slightly different problem, as we shall see.

By the fourteenth century, especially but not exclusively as concerns an increasingly popular dream vision genre, the author's act of "signing" his or her text took a wide variety of forms such as overt naming, cryptograms, anagrams, codes of alphabetic numbers, "acrostics and syllabic disarrangement with punning effect" at times employing macaronics, and so on (Kane Piers Plowman: The Evidence 54). This naming could, moreover, extend to other real personages in the poet's life. A rondel by Eustace Deschamps is a good example of how subtle and clever such "signatures" can be:

Les noms sarez du seigneur et servent
Couvertement en ce rondelet cy
 Maiz diviser les vous fauldra ainsi:

Une silabe prendrez premierement
 Du second ver et la fin autressy:
 Les noms sarez du seigneur et servent
Couvertement en ce rondelet cy.

En reversent prendrez subtivamente
 En derrain ver troiz petiz mos de li:
A ce eust bien un autre defailli.
 Les noms sarez du seigneur et servent
Couvertement en ce rondelet cy,
 Mais diviser les vous fauldra ainsi.

(Oeuvres, 1880, iv, p. 114; in Kane 68)

George Kane writes of this poem that its "essence [. . .] is the technical ingenuity applied to compliment" Deschamps's patron, Coucy (who is signified by the combination of the first and last syllables of

the poem's second, seventh and eleventh lines--cf. my emphases above). But Deschamps's true poetic mastery is revealed in his ability to "covertly [name] patron and poet together" in a poem whose subject is such naming. Deschamps succeeds in aligning himself with his patron, within "an exacting lyrical form," while in doing so he associates himself with that form, which is his text (note Deschamps' signature in the poem's tenth line--cf. my emphasis of his name embedded in the poem in reversed syllabic order) (68).

In a sense, Kane has quite possibly missed the point of this poem when he asserts that the "poem has, in effect, no other meaning"--or we may presume no other purpose--than to signify Coucy and his poet (the "seigneur et servent" respectively). The poem's first line announces, on the contrary, a submotif that establishes a logical pretext for the clever acts of naming, one which would not have gone unnoticed to a contemporary audience. Both Deschamps and Coucy are elevated in stature precisely because they are named, and, again, the entire poem is a discussion of how naming occurs, how language functions, and so forth. Too, we should note that the poem is self-reflexive; the poem's naming is here presented as being an integral part of a particular genre, the "rondelet," which has been impressed into the service of a rather cool discussion of how exactly the poem goes about

signing both its author and his patron (and in so doing, implicitly signing itself as the agency of such naming) as a subtext of the rondel form. The signatures covertly ("Couvertement") insinuate the purpose of the poem, the poem's ultimate end, which is also, we are left to conclude, the poem's instigation. In other words, it might not be too farfetched to say that the poem is about the act of naming; the discourse of the poem suggests that its very genre, in this instance the rondel, has been created for, or at least is presently serving, the act of nomination. Deschamps's poem is particularly powerful for its ability to encapsulate the language and epistemology theories of his time in a few circular, well turned and symmetrical lines that offer a polish, an esthetics of finish, which suggest perhaps a benign and airy innocence, even pseudo- childishness. At the same time the poem not quite secretly carries out a serious and penetrating examination, a demonstration of how language works. Furthermore, the implication is that the structure of language either mirrors or can be used to structure human society, to promote and advance certain individuals while, it might occur to the poem's readers, language can be the downfall of others.

Indeed, the poem indulges in detail concerning the ways of language signification, which brings to mind

Robert Payne's observation regarding Deschamps' friend, Chaucer. In Deschamps's rondel constructed personae are deeply, textually embedded. Chaucer's Hous of Fame conducts a discourse concerning the dynamic of language and idea, as being grounded in the physicality of experience. The character of the eagle establishes the basis for one of Chaucer's ongoing preoccupations: not merely an author's ability to "speak" with his present audience, but with future readers as well. The issue of what constitutes a sentence, a word, a syllable--all of which is raised by Deschamps in his rondel--is echoed in Chaucer. Or perhaps Deschamps was echoing Chaucer. One poem is decidedly more comical and irreverent than the other, yet this difference may be pointedly unimportant to the poem's shared agenda:

Loo, this sentence ys knowen kouth
 Of every philosophres mouth,
 As Aristotle and daun Platon,
 And other clerkys many oon;
 And to confirme my resoun,
 Thou wost wel this, that spech is soun,
 Or elles no man myghte hyt here;
 Now herke what y wol the lere.
 "Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken,
 And every speche that ys spoken,
 Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,
 In his substance ys but air;
 For as flaumbe ys but lythted smoke,
 Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke.
 But this may be in many wyse,
 Of which I wil the two devyse,
 As soun that cometh of pipe or harpe.
 For whan that a pipe is blowen sharpe,
 The air is twyst with violence
 And rent; loo, thys ys my sentence;
 Eke, whan men harpe-strynges smyte,

Whether hyt be moche or lyte,
 Loo, with the strok the ayr tobreketh;
 And ryght so breketh it when men speketh.
 (HF 757-80)

Speech here, for Chaucer, is a natural sign, much in the vein of Augustine's set of semiological distinctions. In fact, Augustine employs the example of smoke as a natural, unintentional sign of fire in De Doctrina Christiana (2.1.1 through 2.3.4-5; in Colish "Stoic" 28-29); Chaucer makes the analogy for sound as speech by positing that "flaumbe ys but lyghted smoke" (l. 769, above).

As Augustine would have had it, the notion of speech being defined by the eagle, if it is to be likened to natural signing, embraces the concept of unintentionality. Lack of intention is perhaps at the heart of Chaucer's humor in this first book of his poem, for in one sense, to speak unintentionally cannot help but be an act devoid of decorum, judiciousness, purpose, dignity, and otherwise importance or profundity, and in the world of human affairs (versus, say, the world of animals such as an eagle, or of gods such as angels) to speak unintentionally is to forego the possibility of making meaning or in any sense being truthful. Thus the act of human speech in the postlapsarian world, and more so perhaps the act of making poetry, Chaucer is telling us, is fraught with the greatest risks. On the one hand there is the

possibility of uttering less than the full meaning experience proffers to the seer. On the other hand one risks uttering falsehoods, banalities, but by extension blasphemies.

In any case, it is within this framework of the rehashing of current language theory that Chaucer is able, as Payne puts it, to "[manipulate] his self-image as narrator not (insofar as we can tell) for any overt psychological revelation, but to help try to define the poetic process [and therefore his poetic process]" ("Late Medieval Images" 251). It must be added that this poetic process is one which has been made into an emblem by Chaucer, an emblem that stands for the very poet who has gone to great lengths to create it, as well as to create a larger symbol system in which utterance and therefore formal utterance such as poetry become representations of their authors. This strategy on the part of poets like Chaucer and Deschamps partakes of the same tradition that produced a larger preoccupation with names and naming, which by extension included the notion that all particles of speech, even the letters that made up the very words of such speech, were reflections and thus in some measure representations of their divine and natural origins; that is, even letters, besides contributing to the signification of one or another meaning within a word

or group of words, also signified to a degree their own ontological ground in that they bore the mark or were somehow suffused with the essence of their origins in Adam's speech of the world before the Fall.

Letters, like words, maintained a "natural" connection with the past; it was possible to trace them to their divine source. John of Salisbury, for example, believed that

the very application of names, and the use of various expressions, although much depends on the will of man, is in a way subject to nature, which it probably imitates.

The study of grammar was also, for John, "an invention of man"-- even as it "imitate[d] nature, from which it derive[d] its origin" ("naturam tamen imitatur, et pro parte ab ipsa originem ducit" [Metalogicon p. 39; PL 199. 840D; in Gellrich 102-3]). And, as it followed that words and names bore the cachet of their origins, so too could letters that for Isidore of Seville were "the indices of things, the signs of words." Interestingly, he goes on to qualify his perception when he observes that in them "there is such a power that they speak to us without voice the discourse of the absent" ("dicta absentium sine voce loquantur" PL 82.74-75; in Gellrich 103). The question of absence is an important one, which must be explored at some length. For the present, it need only be remarked that

it is possible to read both Deschamps' and Chaucer's poems as containing the presence of their authors, even when these authors are absent from the scene of reading; in lieu of themselves, they have constructed poems that are their emblems, poems that in effect name them and therefore bring them into being. In a sense, then, it can be said that these poems furnish for their poets an ontological ground.

II

Of course, the role of absence in the thinking of intellectuals and poets of the Middle Ages presumes the construction of an ontological hierarchy that accounts for the phenomenon of language and which allows for a unity of experience precisely in that the language of contemporary human affairs came to be palpably linked to a historical continuum, to say nothing of a link with the more fundamental continuum of truth itself, in both a pre- and postlapsarian world. Such a philosophical outlook affords poets like Chaucer and Deschamps a ready made vocabulary, a set of metaphors and other cognitive tools they can readily bring to bear on their fascination with poetry and how it is both connected to and separated from them. Just as the word, even the letter, represents an immanent truth as well as a historical origin, so too the poem can be constructed so that its discourse will come to include

an annunciation of its origins, its terms of existence, and, particularly, its very capacity to serve as the emblem of its author.

Both Deschamps' "silabe" (l. 4) and Chaucer's perception that "spech is soun" (l. 6), at their deepest levels, hearken back to the Augustinian dichotomy of phenomenal meaning and ultimate meaning, which is embodied in his image in the Confessions of the angels' silent syllables. Addressing God, Augustine says of the angels that they

have no need to look upon this firmament, to know through reading your word. For they always see your face, and read there without the syllables of time your eternal will. They read, they choose, they love. They are always reading [. . .] the changelessness of your counsel. (in Gellrich 29)

Augustine records in the Confessions the death of his mother, which suggests for him the silent will of the Divine. The "tumult of the flesh" ("tumultus carnis") has been silenced, as well as "every tongue and sign" ("omnis lingua et omne signum"). Not even the "obscurity of a similitude" ("aenigma similitudinis") interfered in their final conversation (9.10; PL 32, 774; in Gellrich 118). Thus, Augustine has confronted "outright the irony of speaking and writing about silence"; and so he must seek

a means of avoiding further confused wandering in the regio dissimilitudinis. He recognizes fully

the separation between the text that the angels read "without the syllables of time" ("sine syllabis temporum") and his own noisy, distracted reading [PL 32, 852]. But he is led irresistibly toward that Book, toward the discourse that Ambrose, like the angels, read in silentio [cf. PL 32, 720] and that he now reads with Monica.
(Gellrich 118)

As for Chaucer, he compounds this fundamental Augustinian dichotomy with Aristotelian notions of substance and accident to conclude, perhaps, that the last, best hope for communication lies in poesis. Our speech is likened to breaking wind (especially when implicitly compared with that of angels). Yet Chaucer's ongoing meditation throughout his corpus on the nature of the past, the efficacy of the specifically literary past to bear the burden of the truth, the dichotomy of books and writing versus first hand experience (as is most sharply drawn in the opening lines of the "Prologue to the Legend of Good Women")--this great and multifaceted question of which the present discourse with the eagle is a part--is raised finally for the purpose of staking an ontological claim for poetry, for specific poems, and ultimately for the poet who is the maker of such formal, poetic language. Chaucer must win a place for himself in the pantheon of poets through the ages. His best hope of doing so lies in the trenchant exploration of the possibilities for communication which his own and all poetry affords. Here we find the background

for and some of the extended meanings of Deschamps' rondel; in them we can appreciate the even larger theological, philosophical resonance having to do with the question of whether language can serve an ontological function.

Simply because, as Kane rightly observes, a "common feature of [such] signatures [as "Cou . . . cy"] is their obscurity" (69) does not mean that they could not have been grounded in larger, weightier matters that entered into and affected their reception. What for instance does it mean, what is the full import, of Langland's keying of his signature in Piers Plowman B XV.152 by the words, my name is? Kane writes that this phrase "apparently" keys the entire signature, yet there is an obscurity here (note the possibly puzzled arrangement of Longe Wille--"I have lyued in londe", quod I, 'my name is Longe Wille'" [my emphasis]--to indicate in transposition William Langland). The "full meaning would be denied, it must seem, to anyone initially ignorant of the poet's surname" (69). On the other hand, the statement's direct assertion, its claim to provenance of a particular name-- that is, its underlying ontological claim--would have held a fascination for Langland's audience; the character speaking his name, who overtly signs himself in this manner, furthermore, would have had the effect of a close identification on the part of his audience.

III

Marcabru names himself in his poems, has his poem's voice--the poem's persona--proclaim himself as "Marcabru." Thus the persona is understood under the aegis of its author. Dante's persona does not proclaim himself as the poet "Dante," though it is quite evident that this is the persona's name (he is actually named by Beatrice). Langland goes out of his way to name himself by explicitly proclaiming, "my name is longe wille." The differences in methods of self-naming among these three poets disclose important turning points in the evolution of the poetics of authorship in the later Middle Ages, as they reveal a common underlying weltanschauung founded in two sources of the European intellectual and otherwise textual tradition, both the Judeo-Christian and the Greco-Roman.

Once again, the interweaving of these two streams can be located in Augustine's De Doctrina Christiana--but particularly in Thomas Aquinas' reading of this text. At the end of De Doctrina's second book, Augustine, having discussed the nature of signs, finally asserts that all signs will ultimately indicate the truth of the divine; in other words, all texts are ultimately univocal (Gellrich 113). Having inherited Augustine's basic distrust of figurative language,

Aquinas (in De sacra doctrina, art. 9), who is echoing Dionysius as well, observes that in principle figurative language must lead us away from the truth; however,

it is natural for man to seek intellectual truths through sensible things [from which metaphors and other figures are drawn], because all our knowledge originates from sense. (trans. Gellrich 111)

Employing the idea of dissimilarity, Aquinas concludes that such figures are a kind of necessary evil, and therefore figures that are constructed to signify divine things should by their nature be only remotely connected to these things.

Rather than a world whose presence is being profoundly felt in Augustine's construction of univocity, in Aquinas' thought we find the development of a second element. Here Aquinas is invoking, essentially, a doctrine of absence, which takes the form of his notion of dissimilitude and which is predicated on the belief that in our attempts to understand God we come not to know Him: "what he is not is clearer to us than what he is" (Summa theologiae 1a.1.9.; trans. Gellrich 111). According to Dionysius, the via negativa "accords more closely with that which is ineffable" (trans. Eds. Mystical Theology 25; cf. Gellrich 112). In order that we not attempt a comprehension of the divine in terms of (lesser and

thereby misleading) worldly images, Scripture uses "unlike images" that will not easily allow for comparisons, since what the "Invisible, Infinite and Unbounded" is not is what we learn of it, which is "more in accord with Its nature" (Mystical 25; cf. Burrell, and Gellrich 112). Hence what Dionysius calls "'inharmonious dissimilitudes' or negative images do not risk the identification of sign with signified"--which is always a danger in Augustine's construct of univocity--"because an 'unseemly image' cannot be mistaken for that which surpasses all comparison" (Gellrich 112).

What we see in all three writers, then, Augustine, Dionysius and Aquinas, is an acute sensitivity to the forces of absence and presence; this sensitivity is rooted in what Auerbach has called "foregrounded" (and therefore present) meaning in classical mythology, versus the relative absence of meaning in the ellipticality and consequent mystery of the Bible. In Homer, for example, we find "externalized, uniformly illuminated phenomena, at a definite time and in a definite place, connected together without lacunae [and with] thoughts and feelings completely expressed [. . .]" (Mimesis 7). In contrast, Biblical accounts externalize "only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of narrative"; only the "decisive points" are made explicit, and so "time and

place are undefined and call for interpretation," as do thoughts and feelings (7; cf. Gellrich 123). What confronts readers of Scripture, then, is an essential mystery.

Exegetical practices, however, constituted an attempt to fill in the lacunae left by Judeo-Christian sources, in order to explain in typological terms the actions described therein, so to achieve conformity and unity, and in this fashion to invoke a peculiarly Christological power. What amounted to a rewriting of religious history meant that the literature of this tradition, which comprehended "the essential secrecy and mystery of divine meanings, and an appreciation of their absence," would be rendered into an entirely new form, a form of presence that derived from the other sensibility reflected in a text like the Odyssey whose "foregrounded" style of myth seems to be of a piece with the immanence of divinity in signs--the logocentric presence of meaning" (Gellrich 123). Ironically, although medieval exegetes undoubtedly knew the difference, there might be no sign of such knowledge in their writing styles, "and where one style [slid] into the other, the earlier mythological form of signifying [. . .] left its mark on the course of the medieval hermeneutic project" (123-24). This rewriting need not be examined here. What does have to be noted,

however, is the effect of this early tradition on the later Middle Ages when we essentially see within the texts of poets and theologians a dance taking place between the contingencies of both forces, absence and presence. Dante and his relationship to Aquinas are a particularly good example of this tension. It is possible to achieve an unusual illumination of the Dantean triad, "io sol uno"--in which Dante the author of his poem is both absent in name, yet ironically and powerfully present as poet--through the establishment of a connection with Thomas' ideas about absence and presence generally, and especially as they concern themselves with the question of language. We have seen how Aquinas draws upon Augustine and Dionysius in his discussion of metaphor, which in turn is determined by the larger perception that worldly reason cannot hope to describe the mysteries of the divine; as with the Trinity, reason will never capture its esse, for it can only "clarify--manifestare--the articles of sacred doctrine" (Summa Theologica Ia.1.8, 2; Gellrich 66). In order to fully appreciate the Dante-Aquinas relationship, a brief summary of the background of some of their shared ideas is necessary.

In the philosophically based insistence on studying the "how" of language signification instead of the "what" that language signified, a group of later theologians, the Modistae, continued to assert that

there was a separation between language and the world it attempted to describe; they sought to place language in a category unto itself. We have noted how, prior to the twelfth century, this development can be traced to Anselm in his use of the term naturaliter to describe statements that may not accurately reflect reality although they might possess an internal cogency, a kind of "truthfulness," in and of themselves. For, truly, language could be seen to be self-consistent, as a consequence of progressive advances in dialectics and logic. But after Aquinas another Thomas, of Erfurt, and other modistae who continued the study of language beginning where twelfth century grammarians had left it off, further established for language a self-sufficiency that has been placed squarely in the provenance of the phenomenal world, that world of human rather than divine affairs. Before Thomas of Erfurt, Roger Bacon had "[summed] up much of the theoretical speculation of his age" in his insistence on a single grammar, that is, Latin; this grammar was "subordinate to the nature of the physical world and the structure of human understanding" (Gellrich 105). In the next century Thomas of Erfurt furthers Bacon's ideas while appropriating the terms of Scholastic logic, the "contrast of matter and form," in order to talk about language per se (106).

Another of the modistae, Siger of Courtrai, found it possible to elevate the noun to a place of greater importance than the verb. Siger made a formal distinction between a word's material appearance, its dictio, and its class, its pars orationis. Furthermore, he found there to be a difference between being, essens or ens, and understanding, intelligens. His decisions were based on a consideration of potentiality and actuality, which in turn was predicated on assumptions about language that still linked it to natural and historical origins in the prelapsarian world, as was understood about language since at least the time of Augustine. Within this framework, however, Siger is able to say of the noun that it "is the mode of signifying substance, permanence, rest, or being" ("modus significandi substantiae, permanentis, habitus seu entis"); that is, the noun is more clearly and directly rooted in the prelapsarian origin of language than the verb. The verb, according to Siger, is a "mode of signifying becoming or being" ("modum significandi fieri seu esse" [Summa modorum significandi in Les Oeuvres de Siger de Courtrai 95, 108] Gellrich 107 n. 33). In other words, the verb resides more in a state of activity and temporality, and in the sense that its temporal quality causes it to be relatively transient, in comparison with the noun, it possesses, perhaps, less presence.

Siger concludes that in the hierarchy of being nouns precede their verbs, as ontologically prior--we might presume that verbs are derived from their nouns-- since it is clear that "the state of esse (action) obviously follows the state of ens (rest)" (Gellrich 106-7; cf. Summa 108).

After Siger, what became particularly significant was the privileging, on the part of Thomas of Erfurt, in his respective analysis of language, of the first person pronoun over that of the second person. The distinction is important in light of Dante's autocitational triad, "io sol uno", and before him, to a far less extent, Marcabru's "ieu mezeis seu" (cf. the "Introduction," and "Chapter Two" above); for these poets are employing words that act as pronouns would--in that the words stand in for the kind of first person insistence we see later in Langland, whose dreamer will overtly claim for himself, in his own words, his actual name: "'I have lyued in londe,' quod I, 'my name is Longe Wille'." All three poets, moreover, do employ pronouns. We can say that, modulating the troubadour tradition of naming, Dante insists on his presence in his text through, paradoxically, employing a poetics of absence (not to be confused with emptiness). Marcabru's ieu, Dante's io, and even Langland's I--like Thomas of Erfurt's ego--are ontologically richer and more powerful than a

lyrically anonymous address to a reader or listener, a rhetorical posture which corresponds to Thomas's second person, tu. In Thomas's Grammatica speculativa there are two possible modes of signifying, which derive from the active and passive forms of understanding and verbal moods, as delineated by Siger. Hierarchical and ontological priority of signification had been most clearly defined by Hugh of St. Victor in the Didascalion, in his stipulation that all language descends from the divine Word. Hugh, like Thomas after him, identified discourse with presence (Gellrich 108). For Thomas hierarchy became a function of what he called propriety; he writes that "every active mode of signifying comes from some property of the thing [signified]" ("omnis modus significandi activus est ab aliqua rei proprietate" (GS ed. and trans. Bursill-Hall 136-37)).

Proprietas is a principle that Thomas can apply to all elements and particles of a language, and which ultimately subsumes the possibility of human convention to what occurs naturally. In Thomas's thinking "grammar," as Gellrich shrewdly comments, "is imitating nature, which is in turn imitating it" (107). We might now consider how the principle of proprietas functions in Thomas' description of pronouns. In the demonstrative pronoun, a thing is signified by means of

the "property of presence" ("proprietas praesentiae" [GS 200-01]).

IV

Thus it is that through a growing interest in grammar we can understand a consonant development in poetry: namely, the various uses of authorial personae, which are, more or less, present in their poems in a variety of ways. In Anselm we first see a critically new alignment of language per se with nature. This alignment also divorces the decisive criterion, in Augustine's thinking, for determining falsehoods--the criterion of intentionality. Anselm's terminology, his changing concept of what is natural, drives a wedge between intentionality and the judgment of what is true or false. Now a statement can be true in the sense that, let us say, grammatically, or else syntactically, the statement makes sense; yet such coherence need have nothing to do with the world beyond the statement. In other words, in Anselm's thinking, a statement may be a falsehood in that it does not accurately describe the experiential world. "My chair," as Anselm would have it, may not really be "upside down," and in fact I know this to be true by virtue of the fact that I am able to sit in it as I write this passage, while I am quite free to assert that "my chair is upside down" and in doing so I would be using language to denote a falsity

even though my statement (i.e., "my chair is upside down") is perfectly understandable; my statement, however, is unbelievable. Due to Anselm's separation of intention and objective reference, centuries later Thomas of Erfurt feels free to prioritize various grammatical elements based on a natural hierarchy. By the time of Langland--whose poem Piers Plowman can conveniently be viewed as the culmination of the poetics of naming--author, persona and theme are all brought into a single linguistic embrace. Langland's elaborate "signature" takes into account its own textual dimensions in a special way, moreover, for Piers Plowman consists of a profound meditation on the nature of language. Two phrases particularly anchor the poem's discussion of the nature of language and discourse, each echoing the other; at one point the poem states that "grammar" is "the ground of all" and at another, "God is the ground of all" (see below). Langland's persona, Will, a figure who allegorically represents human intentionality,¹ and who is in search

1. The most extensive discussion of this is John Bowers The Crisis of Will in Piers Plowman, who also includes a comprehensive review of scholarship on this topic; see pp. 41 ff. My discussion here presumes that the C text is the most fully realized version of Langland's endeavor; all the same-- in light of my remarks in my introduction and those of Vance et alia, condoning multiple text critical approaches to the study of medieval literature--I must consider Piers Plowman as a poem that to a degree will always be in flux. In short,

of Truth, must struggle to understand the language that may hopefully serve that truth. The linguistic "ground" of Langland's poem is abundantly fertile. It has been nourished by intellectuals and poets who have preceded him.

Common to Marcabru, Dante and Langland, who as has been stated are pivotal in the evolution of the modern persona (Chaucer's "Geoffrey" may be the most brilliantly drawn instance of poetic presence, but this persona does not demonstrate a new development in the poetics of naming), is the understanding that moral integrity is a necessity for enjoyment of truthful perception and for the proper use of language (which is, therefore, a truthful use). At one and the same time they view language as separate from them and as having a life of its own. Within this understanding, one evolved into a discourse, each of the poets insinuates himself; and, as well, another element is injected into the discourse--the question of authorship. The issue of authorship is linked to the search for the truth; therefore finding for one, according to the equation of the poetry, will lead the reader to the other.

. . . Continued . . .

I want things both ways, yet such a procedure should not foreclose on the possibility of a close, intimate reading of Langland's poetic and philosophical tendencies.

The modistae specifically located the discipline of linguistics as functioning somewhere between "being" (essens or ens) and "understanding" (intelligens). Their construct reflects a central preoccupation among poets who are contemporary and nearly contemporary with them, and who strove to achieve an ontological fullness through their capacity to understand their world. Since it is through the personae of these poets that the drama of this struggle is carried out, it should not be surprising that for these poets the power to understand and indeed to be redeemed, was self-centered. The voice of a poem, to be identified by the reader-listener, will both lay claim to the poem's discourse while seeking its own distinction from that discourse; that is, the voice will, in a manner of speaking, seek its own integrity. This distinction reflects the original breach of language and intention that had been instituted by Anselm.

The proper noun, like the first person pronoun, epitomizes the poet's attempt at autonomy and centrality, which if achieved will bring to this author's, the persona's text, a profound sense of presence. In Langland this poetics is brought to full flower, since the sine qua non in assessing autonomy and distinction is individual volition--which we see portrayed in the Langland persona, Will. Hence the

presence of the individual will becomes the theme of Piers Plowman, as the poem progresses, and in fact the poem can easily be viewed to be the testing ground of Langland's ideas about precisely how salvation is to be accomplished for the autonomous individual of later fourteenth century England. Not only do we see the roots of Langland's vision in earlier theologians and philosophers, but of course in earlier poets; we see the origins of Langland's issues as they are centered in thinkers like Aquinas, Siger, Thomas of Erfurt, and Ockham, just as well as in the poetics of Marcabru and Dante. In Thomas of Erfurt, the question of the first person pronoun goes right to the heart of the poetics of all three poets, first of all because, like all the modistae and for many thinkers before them, what holds Thomas' attention is the modus of language rather than the object of language's reference. Likewise, Marcabru, Dante and Langland, are interested in aligning themselves with their texts, as they locate themselves or we might say as they insert themselves into their respective discourses. The discourses thematically characterize these texts. Just as what is important for Thomas is the ways in which language, in and of itself, actually works, so too the preoccupation of the poets' discourses is with the very making of poetry and, furthermore, with the viability of poetic and by extension all linguistic expression. In the

later Middle Ages both the philosophers and the poets, then, are involved in an examination of self-referential systems, which they are able to separate from the world they describe and perhaps even enact, as autonomous. Furthermore, both groups seek to ontologically ground their projects, as if poetry can be viewed as a kind of reality. On the one hand, the world of the poem is of at least equal importance with the world beyond it, that world to which it, as a minimum, purports to refer. On the other hand, a philosophy of language might enjoy the status of being a full-fledged, "scientific" discipline of thought.

Thomas's prioritizing of pronouns is a crystallization of this issue, for it invokes the question of presence in language as well as in the world at large. We can recall that for Thomas proprietas, as a function of meaning, becomes peculiarly crucial in the case of pronouns, since although a pronoun can only, as it were, stand in for a noun, it nevertheless "signifies the thing by means of the property of presence" ("proprietas praesentiae" [GS 200-201; cf. Gellrich 107-08]). Of importance is the fact that Thomas finds six indications of presence, the five senses as well as the intellect. This finding generally parallels the epistemological concerns that fuel the poetics of authorship of Marcabru, Dante and

Langland, for they can only truly be, in their poems and in the world, if they can rightly know and therefore speak or write. In turn, at the risk of putting it perhaps too simply, such intellection can only come through the benefices of caritas. Thomas does after all make distinctions between sensual presence and intellectual presence; there are "different modes of certainty and presence" ("diversos modos certitudinis, et praesentiae" [200-201]). Yet even though he constructs different categories of perception, what is constant for him is that linguistic expression can convey presence; Thomas conceives of "spoken or written utterance as a property of the presence of meaning" (Gellrich 108). Remarkably, it is in distinguishing among relative degrees of presence that Thomas privileges the grammatical first person, which he uses as a metaphor to help his reader conceptualize these distinctions. And although he might not apparently construct a hierarchy of presences in an expression such as "the grass is growing in my garden," spoken by someone who might actually be holding a bunch of grass in his hand--where obviously one "thing is being demonstrated (demonstratur) and another signified (significatur)" (108)--Thomas surely does, all the same, create a set of priorities when he likens these different presences to a hierarchy of personal pronouns. We can conceive

of what is "actually established or present, as is demonstrated by the pronoun ego, to the less certain and present [. . .] demonstrated by the pronoun tu," and so on down the line ("contingit enim rem esse praesentem et certam, et maxime certam vel praesentem, et sic demonstratur per hoc pronomen ego, vel non maxime esse certam et praesentem, et sic demonstratur per hoc pronomen tu, et alia similia" [200-201; Gellrich 108]). In Thomas' view, and Hugh of St. Victor's before him, "discourse" enjoys a fundamental identification with presence. "But this factor means that, for Thomas and the other modistae, the modus essendi is just as much defined by, as it defines, its modus significandi" (108).

This same impulse is clearly operating in the poetry of Marcabru, in his unqualified assertions that he can sing best of all poets, that he is the one who can truly use language to its fullest, truthful potential, and in his claims that his language and his written texts are the representations of him--that they indeed speak for him. This both philosophical and poetic position is carried on after Marcabru, as it is elaborated and enriched, until it is fully evolved in a poet like Langland. Dante, Chaucer and Langland present far more complex versions of the troubadours' poetics, yet they never depart from the recognition that the discourse which embraces the issue of

metapoetry will ultimately best define their more overt philosophical and/or theological themes, and, too, that such discourse will most profoundly enunciate themselves who are the auctors of texts that have, through such self-assertions, staked out a literary territory distinct from literary and theological traditions. At bottom, here is the import of Marcabru's railing against eroticism, for the act of true loving will bring eloquence with it. Marcabru makes himself present most overtly by mentioning himself in his poetry; presence is enacted more deeply through his discourse on the nature of morality and its relationship to the possibilities for eloquence. On the deepest level we sense Marcabru's presence in an ongoing discussion of the means to knowledge, which takes him into the issues of language and self.

In "Per savi · l" wisdom belongs to the person who can perceive ("devina") the way in which his song presents meaning, how each word unfolds ("chascus motz declina") to reveal the poem's theme or reason ("si cum la razos despleia"). What Marcabru and all wise persons seek is the illumination that is a property of clarity ("d'esclarzir paraul' escura"), which brings the understanding of truth and which in turn will show the way to living an upright life, the life of "joy, patience and restraint" ("Jois, Sofrirs e Mesura").

This is a likely description of how truthful poetry might operate or decline (again, "declina"). Thus the epistemological question is bound up in the issue of poetry itself; and so is, too, the question of the individual as being someone who can know and act autonomously through the use of language that at one and the same time can be viewed as capable of either falsity or truth, depending on who uses it (cf. "Chapter Two," above). For Love ("Amors" rather than "amars"), "by its word, action and its look, comes from a true heart when it gives its promise and pledge" ("Segon dich, faich e semblanssa, / es de veraia corina / car se promet e's plevina"; cf. Goldin Lyrics 85). Contrary to what occurs in many of his other poems, Marcabru does not employ his own name in "Per sav'1" but the question of naming is within the poet's purview; a person might befoul love's gifts, he continues, and "whoever does not hasten to [Love] / bears the name of fool" ("ab sol que'l dos no sordeia, / e qui vas lieis no s'enanssa / porta nom de follatura" [trans. Goldin 85; my emphasis]).

v

In Dante the epistemological issue is more fully evolved. The philosophical question of knowing had always impelled the later, but it is in the Divina Commedia that we encounter a Dante persona who has

become a virtual witness. The term virtual is most appropriate here, because the Dante figure will speak of the ability to see as virtù; the word is almost as fecund for us today as it was in Dante's time. Virtù's range of meaning extends from the ability to negotiate the physical world, to the comprehension of ideas per se, to spiritual truths, to a moral integrity and/or stature. Dante's work contains an abundance of themato-imagistic cruces that exemplify the issue of poetry, epistemology and morality; in the larger context of our discussion of authorship and epistemology, his exploitation of the Italian word virtù, and the cachet it brings with it, will more than suffice.

At sunset, at the center of the Commedia, Purgatorio XVII, in his climb up the mountain of Purgatory the Dante persona first sees the sun again through the smoke of the third terrace; this re-vision is poignant, elegiac. The light is fading, almost totally gone. Strategically, at this moment the pilgrim calls upon the reader's power of imagination, and aligns it with his own, and sets it against the ebbing, tangible world--for when that world is gone, how does one "see"?:

e fia la tua imagine leggera
in giugnere a veder com' io rividi
lo sole in pria, che già nel corcar era. (7-9)

"then your imagination will be quick
 to reach the point where it can see how I
 first came to see the sun again--when it
 was almost at the point at which it sets."¹

Dante's use here of "rividi"--"saw again" (ri-vidi: literally, to have "seen again")--is set in opposition to "imagine"-- "imagine" (in the sense that Dante uses this word, in an appeal to his reader's imagination)--specifically to invoke two texts, a past text that is philosophically central to Dante's poem, the Summa Theologica, and a future text by Dante himself, Paradiso XXX. The nexus of these texts is Purgatorio XVII, which describes the transit from the third to the fourth terrace. Here is where, as noted by Italo Borzi, "through the speech of Virgil Dante expounds the theory of love that represents the fundamental problem of his philosophical thought [. . . . This theory will lead him finally to the] infinite love [of God. . . . The road Dante will travel is] part poetical and part ideological" (363, my trans.). Paradiso XXX, the beginning of the end of

1. All translations of the Commedia are by Allen Mandelbaum. In this section of my discussion I am deeply indebted to Professor Mandelbaum for his commentary on the Commedia generally and specifically for his glosses of Purgatorio XVII and Paradiso XXX. I am also grateful to Paul Spillenger for his careful reading of my analysis of these cantos and his helpful comments, especially for pointing out some lapses in translation. Last but not least, I must thank George Economou for his careful reading of this section.

Dante's journey (cf. Shaw 191), will synthesize imagistic, philosophical and theological issues raised in this middle canto, Purgatorio XVII, thus bringing together preceding and engendering texts. In the Commedia Dante wants to test the integrity of material existence, just as he would want to reach essential immateriality and behind it the divine; in short, his strategy aims at developing a dichotomy in Aquinas' thinking about knowledge.

Sight, for instance, is mediated by spirits of sight, according to the science of Dante's time and as discussed in the Convivio (III, ix, 7-10); the agency of sight, then, is non- physical, so that the act of seeing a three dimensional world is contingent upon a power that derives from yet another dimension or dimensions. Indeed, there can be more than one kind of sight, and so in the Commedia we find an "identifiable pattern" involving "the pilgrim's sensory faculties," a progression that is

central to the theme of redemption. Throughout the narrative the poet documents the pilgrim's spiritual progress with careful attention to a shift in the use of verbs of perception and to his gradually increasing ability to interpret what he perceives correctly, so that spiritual truths finally can be apprehended directly with the intellect. In this second pattern [of seeing] Dante demonstrates the role of perception to conversion. (Adams 3379)

Dante, ultimately, is able to portray Aquinas's construct of the material/non-material universe, by bringing the question of the making of poetry--the question of, finally, an amorphous but decidedly poetic imagination--to bear upon the Thomistic dichotomy. Dante wishes to forge theology and poetry into a unified world. In this regard the relationship of the Summa is crucial to an often subtle and complex communication between Purgatorio XVII and Paradiso XXX. The key passage in Dante's parent text deals with the struggle to arrive at the Aristotelian concept of vision through likeness, by way of categories (i.e., briefly, we see an object in that its form resides in our soul [ST I.I.85.2]). In the spirit of Plato, Aquinas' diction here tellingly links the verbs videre and intellegere, as if to assert the evolution of natural knowledge out of two kinds of activity. One activity remains within the agent, such as seeing or understanding ("ut videre et intelligere"), and one passes over into a thing outside; each activity is produced in accord with a form. Thus, "what is understood is in the one who understands by means of its likeness"¹ ("quod intellectum est in intelligente

1. Mandelbaum uses "fantasy" and "imagination" interchangeably to designate "that internal sense or power that retains sensible forms drawn from external things through the 'outer' senses" (Purgatorio 345, n. for ll. 13-18).

per suam similitudinem"); and, so, "what is actually understood is identical with the intellect as actualized" ("quod intellectum in actu est intellectus in actu"). In Purgatorio XVII this natural knowing is to be coupled to the divine through the querying of the origin of any sensible form that might reside in the imagination when no external thing is present. Aquinas had written that "with natural reason we only come to know God through images in the imagination" ("per rationem naturalem in cognitionem divinorum pervenire non possumus [etc.]").

However, "the same is true of the knowledge we have through grace" ("nisi per phantasmata, similiter etiam nec secundum cognitionem gratiae"). Even so,

By grace we have a more perfect knowledge of God than we have by natural reason. The latter depends on two things: images derived from the sensible world and the natural intellectual light by which we make abstract intelligible concepts from these images. . . . The light of grace strengthens the intellectual light and at the same time prophetic visions provide us with God-given images which are better suited to express divine things than those we receive naturally from the sensible world.

"per gratiam perfectior cognitio de Deo habetur a nobis quam per rationem naturalem. Quod sic patet: cognitio enim quam per naturalem rationem habemus, duo requirit, scilicet phantasmata ex sensibilibus accepta, et lumen naturale intelligibile, cujus virtute intelligibiles conceptiones ab eis abstrahimus. . . . lumen naturale intellectus conforatur per infusionem luminis gratuiti; et interdum etiam phantasmata in imaginatione hominis formantur divinitus, magis exprimentia res divinas quam ea quae naturaliter a sensibilibus accipimus, sicut apparet in visionibus prophetalibus [. . . .]" (ST I.12.13).

Yet faith, which is necessary to the attainment of grace, "lacks the element of seeing"; hence, faith "fails to be genuine knowledge, for such knowledge causes the mind to assent through what is seen [. . .]" ("Et sic in quantum deest visio deficit a ratione cognitionis quae est in scientia, nam scientia determinat intellectum ad unam per visionem [. . .]"). All the same, faith may be necessary to knowledge of the divine, as it may perhaps be a prerequisite to truly prophetic visions ("visionibus prophetalibus").

Perhaps Aquinas is trying to chart a progression from physical sight, to imaginative "sight," to divine knowledge that somehow eludes empirical procedures such as those predicated on sight, understanding and imagination. Dante plays out this resultant dialectic of the material-immaterial through a likely metaphor for revelation; first the act of seeing the sun and the question of how a reader might be able to imagine such a thing are delineated at the beginning of Canto XVII:

Ricorditi lettore, se mai ne l'alpe
ti colse nebbia per la qual vedessi
non altrimenti che per pelle talpe,
come, quando i vapori umidi e spessi
a diradar cominciarsi, la spera
del sol debilmente entra per essi [. . .]. (1-6)

"Remember, reader, if you've ever been caught in the mountains by a mist through which you only saw as moles see through their skin, how, when the thick, damp vapors once begin to thin, the sun's sphere passes feebly through them [. . .]."

This is the place where the imagination will be linked with physical sight ("e fia la tua imagine leggera / in giugnere a veder com'io rividi / lo sole in pria, che già nel corcar era"; cf. above). To be sure, the entirety of Purgatorio XVII is nothing less than a paean to the imagination that is frequently invoked in the words "imagine" (6, 21, 31), "imaginar" (43), "imaginativa" (13) and "fantasia" (25). All of these terms are philosophically grounded in Aquinas' assertion (above) that the mortal imagination can at times serve as the vessel for images that are "divinely formed," so to better express divine things of the kind often conveyed in prophetic visions (cf. Pasquini, esp. 144-45, 151). As Mandelbaum asserts, however, Dante's usage reveals an ontological claim for the poetic imagination or fantasy:

while Aquinas would hardly have qualified poetic fictions (or fictions within a fiction--as Dante's are here) as 'prophetic visions', Dante does conjure that possibility both here and, implicitly, in the fiction of which these fictions are a part.
(Purgatorio 345-46)

In considering this fictio-visio context, then, it is especially important to note that words out of the Latin root videre occur in signal fashion throughout the canto--in "vedessi" (2), "veder" and "rividi" (8), as we have seen already, in "veder" (46, 130) and "vede" (59), distantly in "visione" (34), more

distantly in "vista" (52), and even in a word like "viso" (41, 68, 107; i.e., "face," especially the forehead where sins are inscribed, each to be lifted off with the brush of an angel's wing as the Dante pilgrim makes his way upward [68]; cf. Ferrante 124 on this use in Par. XXX). There is also "apparivan" (72), "sentiva" (74), "sai" (93) and "comprender" (103). More importantly, perhaps, there are the varied uses in this canto of the Latin root virtus, which first appears in "la mia virtù quivi mancava" ("my power of sight was overcome" Purg. XVII.54); "virtù" substitutes for words like sight, or eyes (cf. Paradiso XXX.58-9: "che nulla luce è tanto mera, / che li occhi miei non si fosser difesi"--"that the purest light would not even have been so bright / as to defeat my eyes"). Although the Dante pilgrim continually bemoans what seem to be his own perceptual mortal limits, his use of virtù progressively transforms him and extends those limits. In his attempt to climb up to the fourth terrace, it is not long before he is moved to exclaim, "O virtù mia, perché si ti dilegue?" ("O why, my strength, do you melt away?" Purg. XVII.73). Then, shortly thereafter, Virgil's commentary makes an epistemological leap to: "Quinci comprender puoi ch'esser convene / amor sementa in voi d'ogne virtute" (From this you see that--of necessity-- / love is the seed in you of every virtue" 103-4). Other word play

leads to the same Thomistic knot in which the corporeal somehow becomes the vehicle for the spiritual. Note, for example, the much removed rhyme of "raggi" in "li ultimi raggi che la notte segue" ("the final rays of [sun]light before the fall of night" Purg. XVII.71) with the implication of reason, ragione, embodied in the verb to discourse, ragionare, which is shrewdly employed at the canto's end:

L'amor ch'ad esso troppo s'abbandona,
di sovr'a noi si piange per tre cerchi;
ma come tripartito si ragiona,
tacciola" (136-39)

"The love that--profligately--yields to that
["different good" Dante will meet further on
in his journey]
is wept on in three terraces above us;
but I'll not say
what three shapes that love takes--"

The association of reason and speech was an "antique ideal [of] rhetoric as the integrating factor of all education" (Curtius 77). This association is evident in the twelfth century, most notably in the popularity of Martianus Capella's The Marriage of Mercury and Philology, which was "perhaps the most widely used school book of the Middle Ages" (H. O. Taylor Classical Heritage 49). The particular conjunction of the image of light rays and both reason and discourse--which incidentally brings to bear upon Dante's pun the assumptions on the part of later modistae that presence resides in discourse (cf. above)--has precedent in none

other than Marcabru's trope, "d'esclarzir paraul' escura," which we have already examined extensively. Nearly concomitant intellectual developments in the universities may help to account for the figure, such as the influx of Averroism generally and specifically that of "Arab natural science and a 'metaphysics of light'" (Curtius 56). While there may be a false etymology to account for the association of light and reason or, alternately, discourse, actual etymology reveals a profound difference ("raggi" from the Latin root radix, "ragionare" from the Latin ratio). Nevertheless this figure, and indeed this intellectual association, exhibits a great tenacity, as evinced in writing as late as that of the seventeenth century. The Spanish poet, Gracián, like the earlier Marcabru, employed the negative version of the Dantean construction, to emphasize darkness and obscurity. Gracián speaks of an "eclipse del alma"; this figure, immediately likened to the "paréntesis de mi vida" (cf. Curtius 415), implicates discourse as the medium for knowing by employing the rhetorical term parenthesis as a metaphor, which in turn can suggest that, again, presence is a function of such discourse.

Previous to the composition of the Commedia, Dante had aligned both reason and discourse with the powers of the sun and its manifestation in its rays of light.

The song, "Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona"--a part of the Convivio that is resurrected in the Purgatorio conversation between Dante and Casella, who starts to sing it--begins by proclaiming that Love discourses in Dante's mind; the discourse is about his beloved. The song's second stanza creates a parallel with the sun, which in a sense, like the discourse that speaks of his lady, "never sees a thing so noble as in that moment when it lights the region where she dwells" (Non vede il sol, che tutto 'l mondo gira, / cosa tanto gentil, quanto in quell'ora / che luce ne la parte ove dimora / la donna"). She is, says Dante, "the lady of whom Love makes me speak" ("di cui dire Amore mi face"); and indeed, "every intelligence above beholds her" ("Ogni Intellecto di là su la mira" [trans. Goldin German 377]). Just as the sun can see, so can the intellect behold his beloved, of whom Dante speaks. Perhaps even more closely anticipating the Purgatorio passage, several stanzas later Dante further elaborates this topos of the weak intellect that can barely express, that can barely comprehend the truth of his beloved's beauty, which was established early in the poem ("[. . .] se le mie rime avran difetto / ch'entreran ne la loda di costei, / di ciò si biasmi il debole intelletto / e 'l parlar nostro, che non ha valore / di ritrar tutto ciò che dice Amore," 14-18 [if my verses are not adequate / that undertake the praise of her, /

let the infirm intellect be blamed, / and our speech, which does not have the power / to recount all that love speaks]). He proclaims that "Divine power descends into her" ("In lei discende la virtù divina"), much as the sun's rays descend to earth to illuminate the world; the implication here is that the rational intellect-- which determines the ability to discourse--and one's physical powers of sight are on a Platonic scale perhaps alike although not as powerful, not as penetrating or comprehensive as the supernatural powers afforded by the bestowal of grace. The song "Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona" also anticipates a Pauline echo that is crucial to the relationship between Purgatorio XVII and Paradiso XXX, the recounting of the blinding light, on the road to Damascus, which brings Saul revelation. The Convivio's song continues its elaborate analogy:

Cose appariscon ne lo suo aspetto
 che mostran dé piacer di Paradiso,
 dico ne li occhi e nel suo docle riso,
 che le vi reca Amor com'a suo loco.
 Elle soverchian lo nostro intelletto
 come raggio di sole un frale viso:
 e perch'io non le posso mirar fiso,
 mi convien contentar di dirne poco.
 Sua bieltà piove fiammelle di foco,
 animate d'un spirito gentile
 ch'e creatore d'ogni pensier bono;
 e rompon come trono
 l'innati vizii che fanno altrui vile.
 (ll. 55-67)

In her aspect things appear
 that image the joys of Paradise,
 in her eyes, I mean, and her sweet smile:
 Love leads them there as to his realm.

These things overcome our intellect
 as a ray of sunlight eyes that are weak;
 and because I cannot gaze on them continually
 I must be content to speak little of them.
 Her beauty rains down flames of fire
 alive with a gentle spirit
 that is creator of all good thoughts;
 and like a thunderbolt they shatter
 the inborn vices that make us vile.

(trans. Goldin German 377)

For Dante, the confluence of "raggi" and "ragiona" in Purgatorio XVII helps to delineate how it is that the intellect can become the mediating force between spirit and body, one which, in its capacity for abstraction or, that is, for the non- palpable, mimics or perhaps mirrors the truly divine experience. Dante can see the rays of the sun, and can as well understand the idea of divine light even if he cannot (yet) experience it. Other ghost rhymes with Paradiso XXX make this clear, such as "[O]cchio" (Par. XXX.48), and "occhi" (Par. XXX.60), as mentioned earlier, and "raggio" (Par. XXX.106), which denotes the "light that [has made] apparent the Creator to the creature" ("Lume é là sù che visibile face / lo creatore a quella creatura" [Par. XXX.100-1]). Here "raggio" represents the ultimate in Thomistic teleology--that is, how the divine may be apprehended by a mortal. In this context "virtute" (Par. XXX.57) denotes the pilgrim's new (divine) knowledge when, concomitantly, he finds himself in a state of levitation due to an agency that "[sormante] di sopr'a mia virtute" (that surmounts, is

"beyond the power that [was] mine"). Of course, the thematically critical passage in Purgatorio XVII, which makes all that ensues in the poem possible, is Dante's apostrophe that grows out of his recognition of the possible depth of imaginative experience:

O imaginativa che ne rube
 tavola sì di fuor, ch'om non s'accorge
 perché dintorno suonin mille tube,
 chi move te, se 'l senso non ti porge?
 Moveti lume che nel ciel s'informa,
 per sé o per voler che giù lo scorge. (13-18)

"O fantasy, you that at times would snatch
 us from outward things--we notice nothing
 although a thousand trumpets sound around us--
 who moves you when the senses do not spur you?
 A light that finds its form in Heaven moves you--
 directly or led downward by God's will."¹

Doctrinally, these lines come right out of Aquinas (as we have seen), but also evident here is the general, experiential manner, in which Dante has come to sympathize with, to understand the very instigation of Aquinas' pursuit; it is out of a state of rapture, in which the normally sensible world would fall away, that Dante can acquaint himself with an "inner" light.

Hence, just as a dialectic of the material-immaterial is established in this canto, in another canto, Paradiso XXX, the play of sensible and divine light is adumbrated in, likely enough, direct response

1. Mandelbaum uses "fantasy" and "imagination" interchangeably to designate "that internal sense or power that retains sensible forms drawn from external things through the 'outer' senses" (Purgatorio 345, n. for ll. 13-18).

to this earlier phenomenological meditation (perhaps anticipated at the start of the Commedia in the line, "O mente che scrivesti ciò ch'io vidi"--"O memory, that set down what I saw" [Inf. II.8; cf. Pasquini 135]).¹ The light in the Paradiso canto is sumptuous and dazzling to its unique witness, Dante, who writes of it employing forms of the verb to see no fewer than 16 times. As well, he uses the words "vista" and "occhio-i," each appearing five times; in addition, we should note the noun "palpebre," the adjectives "visible" and "visivi," and the verb "Mira" (Di Scipio 156, n7; cf. Pasquini 134-35, 138-39). Beatrice, furthermore, speaks a succession of three sentences that begin with the imperatives "Mira," "Vedi" and "vedi" respectively (Shaw 211). Indeed, such repetition and alliteration suggest, as Joan Ferrante puts it, "the 'vita nuova' that the vision in each case [each imperative] heralds," particularly in the rhyming of vidi with itself (XXX.95-99)-- which focuses on the concept of vision and "also connects Beatrice, the sight of whom started Dante on the journey to God, with the God to whom she has now brought him"--vidi being the only self-rhyme in the Paradiso apart from Cristo (124).

1. In passing, let us not Chaucer's Proem in Book II of the Hous of Fame: "O thought that wrot al that I mette,
/ And in the tresorye hyt shette / Of my brayn [. . .]."

These lines crystallize the question of the individual's capacity, his spiritual and intellectual depth as well as volition--that is, the question of an individual's resolve--to make poetry that can comprehend a truth beyond linguistic expression.

VI

In Dante the epistemological aspect of the poet's struggle is more fully explored than in Marcabru. But so too is the question of the individual will, which we see dramatized broadly in the frequent exhortations of the pilgrim's various guides to continue his journey. That journey finally leads to a splendor that is almost more than can be beheld and is of course much more than, as the poet-pilgrim tells us, he can report to us. His vision, as well as his resolve, and ultimately his ability to speak of his experiences, are all determined by his faith. Much as Marcabru establishes a link between the individual poet and the question of knowing, which is fully explored by Dante, in turn the link Dante establishes between faith and volition will be fully developed by Langland. In this light we might better understand what takes place in the Commedia; we particularly need to comprehend the inter- and intratextual relationships Dante has created there, such as the special communication between this

Purgatorio and this Paradiso canto. Poetically, Dante is attempting a critique of experience, one which he would like to have reach beyond Aquinas' phenomenology.

What is remarkable is that Aquinas can be seen to be both doctrinal and poetic source for Dante. Aquinas has written, for instance: "the stronger our intellectual light [is] the deeper the understanding we derive from images, whether these be received in a natural way from the senses or formed in the imagination by divine power" ("quod ex phantasmatibus vel a sensu acceptis secundum naturalem ordinem, vel divinitus in imaginatione formatis"). Revelation provides a "divini luminis." Yet "Faith is a sort of knowledge" ("fides cognitio quaedam est"); but (again) because it "lacks the element of seeing faith fails to be genuine knowledge" ("Et sic in quantum deest visio deficit a ratione cognitionis quae est in scientia" [ST I.I.13.2]; cf. above).

Considering Aquinas, who is so thoroughly appropriated by Dante, it is fair to ask how the poetry of the Commedia is new-- how might it strive to resolve the dialectic beyond Dante the reporter's, the witness', retreat into his topos of ineffability when confronted by Godly things? An answer lies in the special relationship between these two cantos. The earlier one, Purgatorio XVII, invokes the question of

knowing the nonsensible and even the divine, establishes the terms for such knowing in the imagery of the sun and otherwise a light whose apprehension might bring such knowledge, and describes the ascent from the third to the fourth terrace, where Dante will have another burdensome sin removed while the sun has almost wholly set. The corresponding canto, Paradiso XXX, when Dante first apprehends the celestial Rose--finally, a rose of light--occurs when the sun is about to rise; this rising sun counters the Purgatorio canto's sunset.

This pivotal relationship is unique, ultimately founded deep in the linguistic fabric of Dante's doctrinal sources: Aquinas, and his source, Augustine. In trying to find a way out of Aquinas' epistemological dilemma, the dilemma of how to know the divine with only the tools of perception (i.e., the Aristotelian aspect of Aquinas), Dante can only name the unnameable through a poetics of intense linguistic "play." He employs strategies like alliteration, rhyme and repetition. He uses neologisms. More pertinent to this present focus is Dante's telescoping of Latin syntax and morphology in the simpler Italian (as Ferrante has examined at length). Along these lines, however, we find an even subtler and truly penetrating play, which has everything to do with Dante's loaded

use of the word virtù--a key to a finer, almost subliminal procedure that is grounded in polysemous punning.

Aquinas speaks of how knowing--and its necessary adjunct, mental knowing, by which the sign of the object is apprehended (or, as Augustine calls it, the "verbum mentis")--unavoidably means consciousness of both good and evil. Thus Dante paraphrases Aquinas in Purgatorio XVII:

Lo naturale é sempre senza errore,
ma l'altro puote errar per malo obietto
o per troppo o per poco di vigore. (94-96)

"The natural is always without error,
but mental love may choose an evil object
or err through too much or too little vigor."

Aquinas' authority for this assertion derives from Augustine, who is quoted in the Summa (I.1.12) in the general context of Aquinas' discussion of grace as that capacity to bestow divine knowledge--a knowledge that belongs only to the good. Aquinas writes that Augustine says in his retractions, "Non approbo quod in oratione dixi; Deus, qui non nisi mundos verum scire voluisti. Responderi enim potest multos etiam non mundos multa scire vera" ("I do not now approve what I said in a certain prayer, 'O God who hast wished only the clean of heart to know truth . . .' for it could be answered that many who are unclean know many truths"; my emphases); then Aquinas adds to Augustine the

explanatory: "scilicet per rationem naturalem" ("i.e.,
by natural reason" [3.43]).

It remains for a poet, rather than a theologian, to appreciate the depth of Augustine's diction, and to profit by it. Here Dante finds the opportunity for semantic expansion in Augustine's use of "mundos" (as in, "multos etiam non mundos verum scire"-- "many who are not clean know many truths"). In Augustine's Latin, as in the Italian mondo, there are two meanings for this word: "clean," as well as "world" or "universe."¹ Therefore, privileging mondo as a rhyme word, Paradiso XXX begins with a description of a world in shadow:

e questo mondo
china già l'ombra quasi al letto piano [. . . .]
(2-3)

"and now our world
inclines its shadow to an almost level bed. . . ."

Such a world presages the Pauline echo (first indicated, by the way, in Inferno II. 28-33) of later lines:

1. Lewis 1175. Souter's A Glossary of Later Latin (to 600 A.D.) cites for mundus as an adjective: "clean from (some filth)," and for undo: "cure, heal; blot out (sins), purify (the sinner)." Niermeyer's Mediae Latinatatis Lexicon Minus also cites for mundus as an adjective: "3. lavé d'un blâme, innocent -- clear of guilt, innocent."

Come sùbito lampo che discetti
 li spiriti visivi, sì che priva
 da l'atto l'occhio di più forti obietti,
 così mi circunfulse luce viva,
 e lasciommi fasciato di tal velo
 del suo fulgor, che nulla m'appariva. (46-51)

"Like sudden lightning scattering the spirits
 of sight so that the eye is then too weak
 to act on other things it would perceive,
 such was the living light encircling me,
 leaving me so enveloped by its veil
 of radiance that I could see no thing."

Before Dante, Saul--whose life was, in a sense, still
 in shadow-- was blinded by a uniquely strong light on
 the road to Damascus (Di Scipio 151-52):

Factum est autem, eunte me, et appropinquante
 Damasco media die subito da caelo circunfulsit me
 lux copiosa: decidens in terram, audivi vocem
 dicentem mihi: Saule, Saule, quid me
 persequeris? Et cum non viderem prae
 claritate luminis illius, ad manum deductus a
 comitibus, veni Damascum. (Acts 22.6-11)

"And it came to pass, as I was going, and drawing
 nigh to Damascus at midday, that suddenly from
 heaven there shone round about me a great light:
 And falling on the ground, I heard a voice saying
 to me: Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?
 And whereas I did not see for the brightness of
 that light, being led by the hand by my companions,
 I came to Damascus." (trans. of Rheims 161-62)

Thus we find the Dante pilgrim speaking of a veil of
 light that can blot out the ordinary light of the world
 (derived from Paul's "da caelo circunfulsit me lux
 copiosa").¹ This image turns on the verb for

1. But note Aquinas (ST I.I.13.2 and contra): ". . . for
 Dionysius says, 'It is impossible for the divine ray to
 shine upon us except as screened round about by the
 many-coloured sacred veils' [De caelesti hierarchia I.
PG 3.121]"; and, Sed contra: "St. Paul says, 'God has
 revealed to us through his Spirit [I Corinthians 2, 8,
 10] a wisdom which none of this world's rulers knew' and

apprehension, "appariva" (51; above). Arguably, the earlier distant rhyme of "raggi" and "ragiona" foreshadows this revelatory development. Yet, finally, discourse and reason (ragione, ratio) must belong only to the clean of heart.

This dynamic--sight, reason, discourse and spiritual purity-- has been abundantly drawn previously. In Purgatorio X, the pilgrim comes upon a sculpted wall with three examples of humility, prior to his encounter with the prideful souls. Marilyn Migiel comments that, although Virgil has pointed them out (ll. 101-02),

the pilgrim has difficulty deciding what it is that he sees, and says to Virgil, "Maestro, quel ch'io veggio / muovere a noi non mi sembian persone" ("Master. . . what I see moving toward us does not seem to me persons") (Purg. X.114), but then in a more severe outburst, "O superbi critiani" ("O proud Christians") (X.121-29), Dante presents his inability to see as the result of a scene which is in reality confused: in short, it is the proud who are blind, unable to integrate themselves into Christian society, and therefore render themselves unrecognizable as men. (151)

Dante has in effect spoken to the reader several lines earlier, by explaining the purpose of the bas-reliefs:

[. . .] io mi dilettaua di guardare
l'imagini di tante unilitadi, [. . .].
(X.97-98)

. . . Continued . . .

a gloss says [Interlinear Gloss from St. Jerome. PL 30.752] that this refers to philosophers."

[. . .] I took much delight in witnessing
these effigies of true humility [. . .].

This previous address to the reader becomes the agency
by which the question of "who it is who really sees,
and who on the other hand is responsible for the visual
confusion," is clarified.

If the pilgrim has trouble figuring out what the
"text" of the body says, the fault lies in the
inability of the text to communicate virtue
properly; the fault of the text is, interestingly
enough, also called blindness, in accordance with a
theology of humility which associates pride with
blindness and humility with clear vision.

(Miguel 151-52)

The intertextual message embedded in the complex of
texts--that is, the testimony of Paul, *Purgatorio* XVII
and *Paradiso* XXX--is that only the good, whose sins
have been removed, who are now pure, may know a divine
and clear light. The diction of *Paradiso* XXX, and
perhaps the imagery, are anticipated in *Purgatorio* XVII
through a Thomistic dichotomy imagistically introduced
in Dante's observation of the sensible light of the
stars:

Già eran sopra noi tanto levati
li ultimi raggi che la notte segue,
che le stelle apparivan da più lati. (70-72)

"Above us now the final rays before
the fall of night were raised to such a height
that we could see the stars on every side"

In this "re-seeing" of the sun another truth emerges;
lights appear through the rays of another (sun)light.

The implicit, ultimate Thomistic meaning, of an opposition like this is that the sight of the divine is a moral sight, the virtue enjoyed by the purified; for in Paradiso XXX Dante counterpoints Purgatorio XVII's paradox of fully sensible starlight in a night sky, when the sun has yet to fully disappear, in his playful use of vidi to enact the absolute Godly radiance:

O isplendor di Dio, per cu' io vidi
 l'alto triunfo del regno verace,
 dammi virtù a dir com' io il vidi!
 (97-99; my emphases)

"O radiance of God, through which I saw
 the noble triumph of the true realm, give
 me the power to speak of what I saw!"

In Purgatorio XVII the sun is seen again ("rividi") as the light of the stars overtakes it. Likewise, in Paradiso XXX there is a twice-seeing ("vidi . . . vidi"). And even if Dante does not have the power ("virtù") to speak of what he sees (he does, however!), he nevertheless has clearly been given a vision that is possible because of both his purity and his "understanding."

The poet Ezra Pound might have been thinking of this moment when he wrote that artists are the antennae of their race (73). Paul Ricoeur writes that in the use of metaphorical expression we extend the frontiers of meaning and thus extend the reach of human knowledge (257-313). And James Hans has stipulated (cf. the

"Introduction," above) how artistic activity allows the employment of "the furrows of [a] predictable range [of experience] to get outside of those furrows of predictability and, in going outside of them, [to enlarge] the field of some of the furrows" (90). Perhaps this is, in a fashion, what Dante has in mind. The bas-reliefs in Purgatorio X, for example, raise the question of a mortal poet's limitations. The sculptures are Godly art, of course. Yet they are art. Rather than a prideful emendation of Aquinas, what we can find stipulated in the very presence of the sculptures is that they

are in fact a most effective way of presenting the necessity of the expression of humility. Humility is given life here in a medium which is otherwise silent, a medium which in its cold stoniness could remind us of tombstones, which conceal rather than reveal. Clearly, this association was present to Dante, who notes in Purgatorio XII.16-24 that the images of the proud were like tombstones. Not only do the images immediately communicate their message, but that message is immediately available to the interpreter. (Miguel 150-51) Dante was at least indirectly influenced by new Aristotelian texts, particularly the Nichomachean Ethics. As a result of these texts, "[h]umility came to be defined as a mean in opposition to extreme exaltation or deprecation of the self" (156). Francesco Tateo asserts that for Dante, rather than a "mortification of one's person"--as conceived of by theologians and as Aquinas might have understood it, "that deprecation of the self with which the Middle Ages was familiar in the even exaggerated behavioral manifestations of certain kinds of mystics"--

[h]umility is the awareness of human limitations (just as pride is blindness, unawareness of those limitations); and it is precisely the sense of human containment that renders man equal to himself, a creature worthy of the highest divine acknowledgement. (trans. Miguel 153)

It is the ability of art, of poetry, through its inherently artistic tensions, tensions founded on ambiguity of expression, which makes possible both the realization of mortal limits and the promise of transcendence of these same limits through divine aid, that is, through grace. Thus it can be said that through the reportage of the pilgrim-witness he creates Dante attempts a universal unification through poesis. In doing so he will deny that he has the power to authentically name his experience in Paradise; perhaps, though, he has quietly spoken that name in the sense of, not only Paul's vision that only sees "through a glass darkly," but, more graphically, in the sense of the parables that end: "let those who have eyes to see, see."

VII

Dante does not actually name himself in the Commedia but has others do it for him. In this sense we can speak of him as absent in his poem--in comparison with both Marcabru and Langland, who do specifically name themselves. However, Dante is profoundly present throughout his writing, by virtue of his poetic ingenuity; though he is not self-named, he is just the same signified by a construction like "io sol uno" as well as through the naming of others. Beatrice, for

instance, actually calls the pilgrim "Dante" (Purg. XXX.55);¹ she actually speaks his name aloud.

Dante invokes presence, too, by bringing to the fore of the Commedia the issue of discourse itself, its possibilities and its dangers, which he examines in the context of a larger epistemological discussion. Discourse is first and foremost dramatized in the conversations with his various guides, which represent spiritual as well as intellectual unions. These conversations are carried on as vehicles for alternate, in a sense absent, "intertextual conversations" Dante enjoys between himself and others. In the case of Purgatorio XVII and Paradiso XXX, for example, it can be said that Dante "discourses" with Aquinas, Augustine, Paul, and quite possibly Dionysius, Aristotle and Plato.

The Commedia finds its contrast in the fourteenth century English poem Piers Plowman. Like the earlier Marcabru, William Langland invokes presence in his poetry by specifically naming himself. Langland presents us with a newly poetic and philosophical development. He aligns his name with the thematic crux of Piers Plowman, which centrally involves the

1. See Holloway's discussion of Beatrice's naming of Dante, and its parallel in Piers Plowman (pp. 220-21), to be examined later.

individual's capacity to direct his or her own journey towards salvation. The poem further asks how that journey is determined by knowledge; once again and most of all, the poem asks whether or not that journey can be comprehended by discourse--because for Langland journey, discourse, knowledge and salvation, are all represented repeatedly by images of texts and books. This is no longer the merely Augustinian book, however, nor is it that which had been conceived of by Scholastics or Aquinas. Rather, Langland's understanding of the symbol of the book shows how symbolism can be pushed to its extremes, by the nominalist point of view, as was most comprehensively developed by William of Ockham.

Dante's poetic authority is ultimately asserted by the fact that, symbolically, he triumphs over his "father poet" Virgil; Dante the pilgrim continues on into Paradise while Virgil the pagan must turn back from making that ultimate journey. Subtextually, too, Dante triumphs over Aquinas through a peculiarly poetic "resolution" of Thomistic doctrines. In like fashion Langland triumphs over Ockham and other thinkers of his time--the later Modistae, the Moderni; he transcends his circumstances, specifically through his philosophical meditation on language and reality. The transcendence is depicted in the triumph, in a sense,

over other characters Will the pilgrim encounters on, as in the Commedia, his own journey towards salvation. For Dante, self-enunciation is linked to the thematics of the persona's poem. In Langland's work we see a final stage in the development of the poetics of authorship, as the poem's theme and its persona are seamlessly fused into one entity. This fusion occurred--perhaps it can be said that it was first attempted--in the Roman de la rose; but in this encyclopedic, early allegory, the persona was merely an allegorical figure. Langland's Will, on the other hand, much like the Dante persona, is fully drawn. He is a flesh and blood individual with whom a reader can easily identify. Thus, as we shall see, Langland's persona is fully present.

Chapter Four

Ockham, Chaucer and Langland:

Poetic Voice, Poetic Text, Thematics and the Individual

I

In Piers Plowman the sheer preponderance of proper nouns--names-- incidents in which things or characters are named, and the like, attest the theologico-philosophical currents of the poem's time. In the B text, for instance, there are an astounding number of names of individual personages (approaching three hundred), of which the greatest majority represent allegorized, personified concepts. Nominalist views, professed by thinkers like William of Ockham or Robert Holcot, brought to a critical mass what had already been a progressively focused meditation on language. Language could be identified by theologians with the processes of nature. As we have seen, the identification arose as early as St. Anselm, in his recognition that any given utterance contained a natural ("naturaliter"; cf. above) cogency or internal logic that inhered in a statement regardless of its objective truth or falsity. Anselm's recognition modified Augustine's description of what was natural and true. Both men held that naturalness could be the criterion of a kind of truth, and separated that criterion as distinct from other means of determining

knowledge and truth. In effect, Anselm had begun to elevate the realm of the natural world to a greater status than it had previously enjoyed, first and foremost by recognizing its unique character and its autonomy.

The shared concern of theologians from the time of Anselm to that period characterized by what became known as the modistae, and even later the moderni of the fourteenth century, involved the attempt to describe the role and significance of the noun in the dynamic of language, especially in relation to a reality beyond the dynamic proper. Inevitably, the moderni involved themselves with the role of the name. Within this particle of language resided the greatest possibility for language to reflect reality, it was thought, because nouns, and proper nouns (and, secondarily, pronouns), were in the most radically philosophical inquiries viewed as containing the full plenitude of being (cf. "Chapters Two and Three," above). As nouns and pronouns functioned within their utterances, their language was understood to be as ontologically full as any mortal language could be. Or, rather, we can say that particularly these parts of speech could be understood as possessing immanence. Therefore, they were capable not only of fueling the phenomenological processes of linguistic expression,

but of ordering such expression as first of all proceeding from a source within them.

The issue of nouns speaks directly to Langland's poem. As Coleman writes, furthermore, pertinent to any examination of Piers Plowman is the recognition that "[t]he way in which the moderni understood language as signifying reality shows us how they would later, as theologians, deal with the language of Scripture as signifying historical reality" (Piers 19). The twelfth century expansion of the Aristotelian corpus included the Sophistical Refutations, which was of great importance to a seminal nominalist work, Peter of Spain's Summulae Logicales; the Summulae, in turn, concerned itself with what Peter considered to be the primary elements of propositions--nouns and verbs (Coleman Piers 21, 198-99 n. 12). Augustine had linked signs to real and true signifieds. Aristotle, and Boethius, had recognized that through the significative function of substitutive nouns things in themselves could come into being, within the confines of statements about these things (cf. Aristotle Soph. Refut. I.165a.6-13). This shared view was succinctly expressed, for example, in Boethius' assertions that "nomen est vox significata," and in commenting on Aristotle's Categories, that the work seeks "de primis rerum nominibus et de vocibus res significantibus disputare" (In Categorias Aristotelis Libri quattuor

in PL 64.159a-294c, espec. 159a-61c; in Coleman 21, 199 nn. 13 and 14). This traditional view of language was elaborated in the early nominalism of Peter Abelard, who over "[emphasized] Scriptural word as signifier" (Coleman 21).

All of these critical turns in the intellectual history of the Middle Ages set the stage for the fourteenth century moderni to "[press] the methodology of speculative grammarians and logicians onto issues of dogma" (Coleman 22). The adoption of the basic position of earlier thinkers like the speculative grammarians resulted in a "linguistic realism," since the moderni were virtually following Peter of Spain who ascribed "physical properties to terms" and hence endowed "words with material and formal causes usually reserved for substances." In propositions, words substituted for things whose physical characteristics were attributed to their signifying words (199 n. 16). This resulted in a further vitiation of the discipline of theology, as this speculative energy continued to spread into a newer discipline of philosophy that comprehended questions of language and logic. Perhaps such a change could be better understood as the inability of theology to withstand purely abstractive procedures that also relied on rationalism, in a denial of mysticism. The common medium between the two--the rational and the mystical--was language.

Instead of grammar, logic and theology remaining separate but interrelated disciplines, they were merged under the conceptual rubric of Logic. Theology was, so to speak, dragged down by the "scientific" methodology of the logicians. All knowledge was resolved into propositions. Rational dialectic with its emphasis on argumentation by means of the soundly argued sophism analysed the parts of speech in the proposition. This methodology intruded into all other fields of knowledge and invaded the realm of theology with dramatic consequences because of the belief that all knowledge, thought, language, could be broken down into the terms of propositions. (22)

As Paul Vignaux writes, "[b]eginning with the logic of language, the nominalist consciously [set] up ontological problems" (in Coleman 22).

A counterpart of this emphasis on language is the deepening conviction that the mortal individual "was exalted in the realm of nature, to the point of working his own salvation through the exercise of his free will" (23). Again, it is possible to see the origin of these views in Anselm's observation of the natural machinery of linguistics, as well as in nominalistically literal readings of Scripture. Yet by the fourteenth century the properties of statements had become integrated into a more complex vision in which language, human will, and salvation through divine grace, exist in an interactively existential structure. In fact the new theology, more than before, is concerned with moral issues, especially after the thirteenth century and particularly in England (cf.

Damasus 1256-1956. 146- 274, espec. 149; in Coleman 23-24, 200 nn. 22, 23). These issues centered around the necessity for humanity's "conformity to God's reward or justification and acceptance" (Coleman 24), which in a thinker like Holcot is embodied in the claim that to do one's best naturally ("ex puris naturalibus") facilitates the bestowal of Grace upon the individual ("Facientibus quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam" [In Librum Sapientie Salmonis 28 B and 120 fol. clxxxiii.ra-va; cf. Coleman 24 and 200 n. 25]).

In the thirteenth century, Aquinas had distanced himself from Aristotle by likening the rational appetite (appetitus rationalis) with the Christian will (voluntas) (W. H. V. Reade 116 ff.; in Freccero Dante 47-48). In the fourteenth century, as we see virtually mirrored in Piers Plowman, pivotal theological and philosophical concepts become the sense of obligation and merit on the part of the individual. Now the focus is on the viator, and his possible reward. Ultimately, the question being asked by both Langland and the nominalist moderni is, can there be a natural act that is a prerequisite for salvation? For the natural act might be that which is distinct from human actions that unfold with the aid of divine grace (Coleman 25).

II

It is within this theologico-epistemological construct that the ways in which reason and conscience were conceptualized in Langland's time intersect in his poem. In it Langland holds, "wot no man . . . who is worthy to have'," since, as Coleman has keenly noted,

worthiness for reward is to be understood so that God's free will as well as the free will of men might survive intact. A reconciliation of the wills, like a reconciliation of the two orders of justice, finds its unity in Christ. The poem, then, is an elaborate gloss on John 1:17--"for the law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Through Christ, justice and mercy are reconciled. (195)

This conception of reconciliation represents a decided shift in how the workings and effect of divine grace were conceived of, a shift away from what was generally held to be true in the previous century. The new alternative, also mirrored in Langland's poem, a poem of epic stature, can easily be viewed as the ethical expression of its time. As elaborated by Dante in the Commedia, Thomistic philosophy sees the realms of the senses and of the imagination as distinct from faith and grace; these realms are alternative points of departure for acquiring knowledge of the world and furthermore for expressing that knowledge. Such a poeticized theology receives a total renovation in Piers Plowman. This fourteenth century poem's ideas about knowledge, language and reality embrace the

thinking of Langland's contemporaries, the moderni. Not only Ockham, of course, but other grammatico-logistic theologians such as Holcot, Thomas Buckingham and Adam Woodham, all caused a reaction and radical turn to orthodoxy (23). The reaction is central to Langland's vision, measurable in shared concerns for grammar and epistemology.

From the point of view of the history of philosophy, ironically, we can say that these fourteenth century figures needed to construct a world vision that contained two fundamental aspects, the potentia absoluta and the potentia ordinata of God. Respectively, the one was designed to express the absolute freedom of God within a world of necessity, the other to indicate divine power in its aspect relative to humankind and the possibility for the exercise of the individual will towards the achievement of salvation, all according to the divine covenant. This ultraconservative response was a consequence of the dismantling of miraculous thinking that, in 1277, resulted in the condemnation of the Paris arts faculty, an event brought about by advances in philosophy that included rationalism as a central procedural tenet of current theology. Just as Duns Scotus (c. 1265-1308) had approached theology as a science that he held must be as mathematically exact as geometry, so too

succeeding theologians "felt their inadequacy as scientists when it came to knowing and demonstrating properties of the divine essence which they knew only as a general idea, not as a distinct object of knowledge" (18).

In defense of logic and philosophy, Ockham and others chose to make a stand within the domain of language, by pursuing the question of whether or not it could contribute to the establishing of truth or falsity in the demonstration of principles. This in a sense became their "geometry." Yet there was, perhaps, a cost to be paid in this "retrenchment." Just as the paradoxical nature of the Trinity was irreconcilable (cf. Auerbach Dante 8-9, and above), God's "primacy and unity" could not be demonstrated. Consequently, the

realms of experience and faith were split as they never were for thirteenth century thinkers. This meant that logical analysis applied more to the workings of God in the world as it is (the ordinata), than to God's nature per se.

(Coleman 19; see Scotus I Sent. d. 17 q. 1,
and Ockham Quodlibet VI q. 1).

As we have seen in the Commedia, Dante diverges from Aquinas' doctrines in relatively conservative ways. We have examined this attempt to establish poetic thought and language as an entity unto itself and subsequently to integrate the poetic processes into an all embracing, theologically grounded epistemology. Langland perpetuates such a claim for poetry. Dante

also places the heathen emperor Trajan and Ripheus in Paradise (Par. XX.121- 24) despite the Thomistic doctrine of the supremacy of Grace in the machinery of knowledge and salvation (i.e., Dante's claim for the pagans was based on their good faith apart from other circumstances). In the fourteenth century there is an even greater accommodation to the idea that the individual will, which can manifest itself as faith, through good works performed naturally, can achieve salvation. In the C text of Piers Plowman, Langland, having elaborated the Trajan story more emphatically than Dante before him, in order to show the importance of following natural law (cf. B XI.140-59, C XIII.86-7, B XII and XV, and C XV and XVIII throughout; in Coleman Medieval 251), gradually settles into a position similar to Wyclif. Langland has done so, moreover, after having taken up the more radical views of Ockham or Holcot. We can say in hindsight, from the point of view of the development of philosophy as a discipline that would someday be considered as distinct from theology, that Langland has traveled great lengths beyond what was possible in the thirteenth century. Taking the latter portion of the C text to be Langland's ultimately evolved position on these matters, it is possible to conclude that he at last held there to be a concord necessary to salvation between individual deeds and divine grace, attainable

through the agency of faith. This doctrine is espoused in C's later passus by Liberum Arbitrium, whereas earlier in the poem a more extremely "modern" position had been proposed by figures who represent "the more intellectual faculties" (Coleman 252). In any case, what needs to be underlined here is that Langland's theology is clearly at odds with Dante and Aquinas.

And here is the context in which we might understand Langland's intense poetics of naming, a poetics that at least matches the vast array of personages in Dante's Commedia. The number of proper names in Langland's poem reflects, perhaps, its unusually intense, animated quality, which we see in the three dimensional characterization of personified abstract qualities such as Reason, Conscience, or Truth (they need only be compared with previous and succeeding counterparts, such as in De Meun's and Lorris' Roman de la rose or Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress). Even Dowel, Dobet and Dobest are arguably memorable within the limits Langland sets for them, although these terms do not readily adhere to clearly recognizable forces in the objective world existing beyond the purview of Langland's poem--that is, they are "coined terms" (Middleton "Two Infinities" 171). We shall examine, shortly, their existence within the poem as grammatical anomalies. And as poetic figures, our conclusion

concerning them can only be that within themselves they provide a unique integration of Langland's concern to establish a discussion about the making of poetry. This discussion is intimately connected to his conception of the availability of salvation to the individual. Of course, we have already tentatively advanced the notion of such an integral relationship--one suggesting that poetry possesses the power of redemption--as operative, albeit in less determined forms, in the works of Dante and Marcabru--those predecessors of Langland who develop the later Middle Ages' poetics of naming.

Beyond the instances of Langland's allegories we also appreciate his poem's unusually animated energy, in the many levels of consciousness through which a reader views "reality" within the poem, as in the persona Will's frequent dreams, the multiple levels of dreaming, dreams within other dreams, and so on. These dreams interweave in terms of points of view and perception and as pertains to their thematic contents, with the pilgrim's waking states in which, ostensibly, the drama of the poem unfolds. The dream vision genre is fully exploited by Langland in ways we might presume never occurred to Dante, who in comparison with Langland hardly makes use of the relationship between dreaming and waking. In hindsight from Langland's point of view, we see in Dante's hands the dream vision

as almost a mere vehicle, a context for his overall discourse. And Marcabru does not really concern himself with dreams and the questions of perception within the confines of different states of awareness. The genre had yet to become useful for poets of his time. Nevertheless, there is a relationship between the growing popularity of dream poetry and the concomitant development of a poetics of naming, and a relationship, too, which includes the changing theologico-philosophical landscape of the later Middle Ages among contemporary intellectuals who were not poets. The "animation" that deeply characterizes Piers Plowman finds a parallel in contemporary nominalist beliefs about language and particularly the hope for the efficacy of language, which, in extreme cases, when driven by the forces of rationalism, had embraced the logical conclusion that words could contain reality--that they could contain being and, therefore, that they could enjoy at least an ontological parity with the things of the world beyond language. In Piers Plowman dreams too are at least as interesting, espouse at least as complex, profound and provocative beliefs, and are at least as vivid and in terms of plot as important, as anything that occurs during the dreamer Will's waking moments.

In other words, we might say in sum that the poem's

language itself contains an animated quality in its capacity to contain being. For Langland, the dream visio was integral to his philosophy and his poetics. In one sense, we can read Piers Plowman as a poem that makes its strongest statement through its poetics, which represent not only the culmination of the development of a poetry of naming but ultimately the explosion of the very poetic forms Piers Plowman inhabits. Langland is of course interested in availing himself of the inherent grace and power of the dream vision genre, just as he is writing a poem of pilgrimage, and, moreover, composing an allegory. Yet he is intent upon employing these genres to achieve new ends. He wishes to demonstrate his vision rather than directly to state it; thus his poetry, a poetry of indirection, ultimately expresses its author's world vision through subversions of various poetic genres. In Langland's view, we might presume, these genres have become stale, even obsolete.

Hence one question that invites examination is the possible significance in Piers Plowman of the dreamer's waking states-- beyond the mere exigencies of the story itself and aside from those values embodied in the poem's dreams--since the poem's dream sequences comprise the vast majority of the poem. The phenomenon of dreaming and its connection to language, knowledge and poetry, take us to the very heart of Piers

Plowman's critical "problems" and its power. This phenomenon is operative particularly in its relationship to the manner in which the poem proceeds, in all three versions, as an allegorized set of dream visions.

We will note at some length, however, that in the C version's autobiographical fifth passus the insertion of the awakened Will, and what he says to Reason and Conscience, not only considerably alters the significance of the dreams in and of themselves but of the poem as a whole, when seen as being one instance in the large context of a dream vision tradition. On the other hand, if readers can say that the poem is an allegory, they must also admit that its allegoresis is in the final analysis maddeningly equivocal in terms of its possible "meaning." The problems of interpretation attendant upon any close reading of Piers Plowman must first be met by setting Langland's poem within the dream vision genre's literary history, precisely because the poem departs from generic expectations in unique ways. In a manner of speaking, Langland's originality can be described especially in terms regarding what might be viewed as the radical attempt to take apart his very own dream vision architecture, for prior to Langland the dream vision structure has lent itself to the allegory process. Langland's

attempt, a success in large measure, is to set Piers Plowman apart from all other dream visions by creating a poetic structure that implodes; in so doing the structure calls attention to and thus implicitly comments on itself. By extension, moreover, the structure of the poem comments in large on the nature of the poetic imagination. And it is this connection, to a radical poetics, a poetics that is characterized by a self-awareness as both dream vision and allegory, which discloses most fully the significance of the Langland persona.

III

We need only consider the dreamer Will's contemporary, "Geffrey," as he functions in Chaucer's dream visions and perhaps as we see him at work, even if not so named, in Troilus and Crysedes and the Canterbury Tales. It is perhaps not making a minor point to say that Langland, unlike his contemporaries or predecessors in the tradition of self-naming (cf. Kane Authorship 26-51, 56-57), chooses precisely not to name himself, though this aberration does not take the form of absence as we find in Dante. All the same, there is a strong parallel between the Commedia's protagonist, who late in the poem is first actually called by the name "Dante," by Beatrice, and the first actual naming of "Wille" by Lady Church (C.I.5; cf. "Chapter Three," n.

7, above). While textual evidence tells us that Langland was called William or Wilhelmus, in his poem his persona is never called by these names but by the name Will (Bowers 177). To appreciate the full dimensions of this maneuver, and its significance within its larger tradition, requires some lengthy discussion.

In C.V Will's debate with Reason becomes profoundly important when we consider that in Langland's time the human will was often viewed as an antithetical force to wit (Bowers 177; cf. OED XII.201, "wit" I.2; and cf. Alexander, and Gilson, in Bowers 177 n. 33); wit was almost indistinguishable from ratio. Unlike Chaucer's persona, indeed, whenever Langland's dreamer is called by his name we must read a special import into the event itself. On two occasions it is clear that Will is being named specifically in order to establish a relationship with Reason or Wit.

While Skeat maintains that Will is first named in the B-text after Reason has delivered the sermon that "made Wille to wepe water wip hise ei₃en" (B.v.61), there is some doubt that this is anything other than the collective voluntas of the people [II.71; cf. Kane 59]. Yet the Dreamer is certainly the one later named Will by the figure Thought, who has taken him in search of Wit: "Wher Dowel and Dobet and Dobest ben in londe / Here is Wil wolde wite if Wit koude hym teche" (B.viii.128- 29). In the B-text, Wit's sermon represents the first expansion upon the teachings of Holy Church since Passus I, placing important emphasis on the internal rather than external reality of the good life. The C-poet, knowing that the action would

eventually focus upon the Dreamer and his inner quest, inserts the personal allegory of C v and uses it to signal future difficulties by pitting Will against Reason, the faculty that should be his partner and guide, in an informal but recognizable debate. (Bowers 179)

In modern times the Chaucerian figure has been far more widely admired than Langland's Will. While both personae confront themselves with their own activity of making poetry and while they are confronted by others, in both cases in comedic ways, we tend to derive greater enjoyment from Geffrey because of his author's realism generally, and especially because of this persona's obviously ironic demeanor for a modern audience. Yet both personae, Will and Geffrey, emerge from the same traditions. There are more similarities. Both personae are first and foremost identified as poets, and are concerned time and again with the act of recording their respective experiences, with being able to achieve revelation on some level or other through the possible reflection makynge might afford. Both concern themselves with what the meanings and uses of texts, books, stories, and so on, are. As well, for instance, both cannot adequately defend themselves in their roles as poets against the accusations of those who can see no use for their verse making, an activity which, furthermore, allows both of them to bring into their poems or stories the issue of poetry's and by extension language's suitability and effectiveness.

Undoubtedly aware of a tradition as old as Western letters, in which poets complained that the buffoons of their respective societies received the better treatment, these "medieval poets too had every reason to emphasize the value and dignity of their art and to defend it from reproaches" (Curtius 473).

Where the conceptualizations of the two personae most obviously part company is in the fact that Will is clearly an allegorical representation of voluntas, if he is nothing else (he surely is, however), while Geffrey clearly does not serve any obvious allegorical function in Chaucer's poems (which accounts in part for the realistic sense we have about this character). We feel, so to speak, that we need not see past Geffrey or rather through him to some didactic value for which he might be standing in; he does not seem to be carrying out some mission for his poet. Nevertheless, we need not see Will in this fashion--even if it is so very easy to do, and we should hesitate before presuming that we understand him in ways similar to readers' responses in his own time. Perhaps it is fair enough to assert that a certain critical reception of Will in his own time is often presumed, and therefore categorical condemnation of Langland's supposed lack of creativity or vitality may follow--or rather, his lack of realism--when he is judged by the standards of a later era that prizes a realism most vividly

exemplified in the fourteenth century in Chaucer's writing.

Other critical theories, however, make possible new forays into Langland studies, and there is a new appreciation of Piers Plowman based on its metatextual dimension. An examination of Chaucer's use of dreams, how he uses the dream vision genre to help to define his persona, and to instigate an epistemological discussion that will include a focus on the making of poetry, will in comparison with Langland tell us much about this latter "allegorical" poet's metalinguistic, metapoetical, and ultimately self-enunciatory intentions. Particularly in Chaucer's dream poems, there is an underlying philosophical dialogue taking place, which unites in a single poetic vision the interrelated motifs of authorship, dreaming, language, and the possible perception of reality. As noted earlier, Chaucer makes the attempt to reconcile a discrepancy between the principle of formality, and knowledge--an essentially epistemological problem that we see most vividly addressed in the opening of the Parlement of Foules, which draws an analogy between formalistically determined courtly love that occurs within the realm of experience, and artful writing; if writing, then, by extension, the capacity to truly know the world, is held to be a likely possibility through

the act of writing that must also take place, for the author, as an experience (cf. "Chapter Two," above). In short, having at one's disposal only the forms of postlapsarian languages, and the artful uses to be made of them, how can the truth be told, Chaucer is asking, considering that the truth is an ideal state existing ultimately beyond all physical and/or temporal structures--that is, beyond all experience? Hence, the poet can at best only gesture--perhaps ultimately through the very failure of his language, and thus it is a linguistic gesture--towards the ideal truth beyond his language.

IV

The question of God's active presence in the palpable universe (i.e., ideality perceived as existing in or through the sensible objects of the world) does not involve Chaucer directly, yet there is an underlying philosophical dialogue taking place in his dream poems. Philosophical nominalist thought of the twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, remained intimately bound up in what was a skepticism regarding a subtle relationship that might exist between imaginative and experiential cognitive realms. Nominalist doctrine emphasizes the particulars of the world landscape but refuses to accept the possibility of a universal ordering of these "things" of the

world: the ideal may only be apprehended indirectly--if at all--through knowledge of the individual or perhaps the instant in time. The dream visio, on the other hand, is the esthetic alternative to a wrestling with this dilemma, in that a dream state's miraculous-like texture, if at times a sharpening force, may also blur or otherwise undermine differences between particularity and abstraction, time and eternity--the feasible as opposed to the supernatural. Yet the dream vision poem eventually returns to these distinctions, from within the visio context, because it recognizes a paradoxical truth that resides in the imaginative literary impulse, a truth that exists separately from the sensible, factual world. Thus in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women Chaucer confronts the conundrum of knowing through literature as opposed to first hand, material experience (cf. Payne Key 93 ff.):

But Goddes forbode, but men shulde leve
 Wel more thyng than men han seyn with ye!
 Men shal nat wenen every thyng a lye,
 For that he say it nat of yore ago.
 God wot, a thyng is nevere the lesse so,
 Thow every wyght ne may it nat yse.
 Bernard the monk ne say nat al, parde!
 Thanne mote we to bokes that we fynde,
 Thourgh whiche that olde thynges ben in mynde,
 [. . .]. (G 10-18, F 10-18)

The philosophical and problematical relationships between memory and the factual present, the auctoritee of books (history and imaginative literature) and experiential reality, are eventually resolved in

forgotten that all which is being viewed takes place through the persona's fantastic vision. This awareness is the result of the Prologue's enchanting quality, since it is possible to understand through the memory of one's own dreams, which informs one's reading, the magical quality of dreaming. The dream visio, then, moves readers precisely because of its unreal nature. However, when they partake of its fantasy they also intuit, or derive, a sense of unity out of a contradictory actuality--that is, the experiential as well as literary "reality."

Indeed, the introduction of gods, Cupid and Alceste, into an existential equation is announced by the fictive birds in the narrator's dream;¹ they are precisely like the birds he would encounter on his walks through the countryside in his worship of the daisy. And after all they are the same birds. One realizes this duplication in part because the settings and actions of visionary and waking states are closely aligned, although what the birds say and do are altered by dream consciousness. It is a wondrous and lovely scene. Nevertheless, and perhaps paradoxically, a more serious note is sounded at this juncture in the poem.

1. My discussion throughout this chapter focuses on Chaucer's G text that I am considering to be the later, revised version of the Prologue. The birds in the F text do not introduce Cupid and Alceste.

This same dream circumstance becomes the vehicle by which Chaucer's persona and the gods take up the problem of epistemology itself; it is because all that finally occurs in the "Prologue" happens within a dream framework that the very real problem of how to know, by way of a cerebral process like literature, may be discussed and synthesized. Literature enjoys a kinship with dream consciousness because, like dreaming, it is once removed from the experiential, perhaps physical and certainly objective reality that is its very "matter." In fact, the problem of matiere is the raison d'etre, though not necessarily the crux, of the God of Love's argument against what Chaucer has accomplished in his translations of poems that become the Romaunt of the Rose and Troilus and Crysedee: Chaucer has "lat be" the "corn" and written the "chaff" of old "apreved storyes." This confusion is, again, paralleled in Will's misprisions and misquoting of scripture when defending himself against Reason (463).

In Chaucer's poem, the answer the dream state allows will preclude philosophical dogma. The dream vision itself, therefore, becomes emblematic of an imaginary, intuitive process that may engage the complexity of "truth"; the dream vision represents, moreover, as Chaucer understands, language's idealized potential for which literature may strive: literature,

like truth, is a complex affair, and if we try to make less of it than it is, if we try to simplify it, we will be lost in what becomes meaningless language. Exactly and disjointedly so, the God of Love misreads Chaucer's translations. Likewise, Langland's Reason thinks the making of poetry is not a proper occupation. The Chaucerian narrator is accused of crimes against love. Confusion ensues, in consequence, to be sorted out by Alceste who like the daisy, and rather than Cupid, is a symbol of love. Alceste becomes a figure, a poetic embodiment, the "apotheosis" of the daisy the Chaucer persona had been worshipping earlier in the poem (Payne Key 106), as part of his poet's revamping of the French margerite lyric genre; as the deified flower, she also exists as an inscription, a symbol of intelligence.¹

To overstate the case, let it be said that the God of Love perceives what Chaucer has written, and in fact the phenomenon of traductio itself, through nominalist eyes. The irony in this circumstance is that he is a god who remains an icon for ideality in its

1. I am assuming, here, an equivalence between the philosopher's striving for a world unity and intelligence that may serve as an emblem for such a unity; intelligence may also be perceived, however, as being the way of achieving knowledge of unity, or as being the paradigm of that knowledge. In the daisy-Alceste figure we may also see, because of its idealized beauty, the paradigm of that striving for unity. See Appendix A, below.

interactivity with the phenomenal world. To return to the larger philosophical problem this situation implies, by definition the God of Love is a contradiction in terms, for the nominalist question precludes ideality's capacity, paradoxically, to manifest itself. How, then, will the ideal be known through literature? Moreover, in a sense the poem's persona is being asked for the impossible when the God of Love misinterprets the Troilus and the Romaunt of the Rose. Even in a dream this seems to be a bit much. Yet for many thinkers of Chaucer's and Langland's time an awareness of the limitless ideal, the immortal, is an actual possibility. Hugh of St. Victor had said that the whole sensible world is like a book written by the hand of God (Didascalion, PL CLXXVI.814).¹ Then one only needs to "read" the book, an imaginative act Chaucer is about in his writing of the dream poems and the Troilus. Conversely, the God of Love is incapable of reading Chaucer's translations correctly; thus he prefers them rewritten to suit his own sensibility.

This method of knowing the world body, in which

1. "The entire sensible world is, so to speak, a book written by the hand of God [. . . .] All visible things, visibly presented to us by a symbolic instruction, that is, figured, are proposed for the declaring and signifying of things invisible."

Hugh of St. Victor died in 1141; nevertheless, his thinking influences others in the fourteenth century.

writing itself becomes a form of "reading" the world as well, is not an altogether new notion in the fourteenth century, though Chaucer occupies himself with it often enough. We have noted how this way of knowing surfaces through Chaucer's analogy, in the opening assertion of the Parlement of Foules ("The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne," etc.; cf. above) which sees love as a truth to be attained through the struggle for craftsmanship (as in Horace's "ars longa, vita brevis"; see Everett 1 ff.).¹ Like the skill in loving that helps to define courtly love, Chaucer's "craft" or makyng becomes the agency by which man may establish a vital relationship with his environs, with the natural world and God. Therefore, also, readers often find the perversion of skyl or craft--humanity out of synch with nature--a disorder such as occurs in the Prologue when a fowler is cursed by Spring's birds for betraying them:

Now hadde th'atempre sonne al that releved,
 And clothed hym in grene al newe ageyn.
 The smale foules, of the seson fayn,
 That from the panter and the net ben skaped,
 Upon the foulere, that hem made awhaped
 In wynter, and distroyed hadde hire brod,

1. Robinson's note to this first line indicates its origin with Hippocrates (cf. Skeat, Early English Proverbs 57.135 [Oxford: 1910]); but see also, J. M. Manly, "Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," Proceedings of the British Academy, 12 (1926): 8; and in regard to Horace see especially Dorothy Everett, "Some Reflections on Chaucer's 'Art Poetical'," Proceedings of the British Academy, 36 (1950): 1 ff. (Cf. n. 1, p. 137, above.)

In his dispit hem thoughte it dide hem good
 To synge of hym, and in here song despise
 The foule cherl that for his covetyse
 Hadde hem betrayed with his sophistrye
 This was here song, "The foulere we defye"
 [G 116-26, F 128-38 (my emphasis)].

Although nominalist thought emphasizes the importance of the physical, the potentia ordinata, one might reasonably include words as part of this natural, phenomenal world. Augustine's notion (to offer another example of miraculous thinking) is that words, perhaps even literature, we may surmise,¹ indicate the knowledge of God as signs to be used, furthermore, to make truth pleasing, plain, and effective (De Doctrina Christiana 4.11.26).² On the other hand, recalling the problem of palpability in and of itself as being devoid of human power to abstract or to draw any universal or class distinctions from what can be discovered in such a sensible world, "words" must also be the names for these things of the world

1. "Augustine, in Soliloquia 2.16, explains that the feigning of art is pleasing rather than deceiving [. . . .] In De mendacio Augustine lists eight categories of lies; but in Soliloquia 2.18 he distinguishes between those who will to be false and those who are capable of being true. He excludes from opprobrium the artist's will to imitate truth" (Taylor 315-16nn, 325n).

2. Earlier in De Doctrina Christiana Augustine writes: "Rerum autem ignorantia facit obscuras figuratas locutiones" (2.16.24). Hence words, as being the beginning of any potential figuration, figuration's Ur-forms, would seem to be contingent upon at least one's knowing the "things" of the world, which are the source, it appears to be here, of knowledge.

and are therefore at variance from the physical universe (i.e., they are apart from these material instances).

V

It is in a complicated, philosophical context, that we see Chaucer composing a literary realism in verse, which departs radically from the verse forms, and thus the thinking of his contemporaries. No one, certainly, can equate the Canterbury Tales with Pearl, or with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, a work like the Temple of Glas or with Piers Plowman. Yet we hardly need observe that none of these works are "philosophical" in the same manner as are the writings of, for instance, William of Ockham, Thomas Bradwardine, Robert Holcot, or Chaucer's friend, Ralph Strode. Furthermore, although poems like Pearl or Piers Plowman are perceived to be allegorical by nature, they do just the same include dramatic and otherwise tropic material not to be found in a work such as, say, Boethius' Consolatio. And, conversely, dream visions such as Pearl, or Machaut's Dit du Vergier, Froissart's Paradys d'Amours, Deschamps's Lay de Franchise, and so on, do not take up the questions we see Chaucer grappling with in his own dream poems, problems the Consolatio certainly engages.

In one of its aspects the dream visio genre remains celebratory, while Chaucer will use the panegyric mode, such as the Prologue's praise of the daisy, as but an entrée into his real discourse that of necessity (if not at least tangentially, as in the Book of the Duchess) mounts a philosophical inquiry. Questions in regard to nominalist or other schools of thought did not interest Chaucer in themselves; nor, most likely, were they of special interest to authors of these other "imaginative" works (i.e., Deschamps, Froissart, et al.). Yet Chaucer had access to a branch of nominalism in the Stoicism of Macrobius' commentary on the dream of Scipio Africanus, which asserts that "every word has a true meaning" (Somnium 20.1); words, as it were, possess their ontological realities after all. The point is that for Chaucer there is a confusion, or at least a disagreement of fourteenth century thinking, a plethora of divergent philosophies ranging throughout the time and place he inhabits.

As well, although Chaucer puts forth at the beginning of the Parlement of Foules a rather sophisticated notion of the relationships among art, life, and love (and perhaps intelligence), we as readers nevertheless re-discover in this poem his ingenuous, perhaps bumbling narrator who has been and will continue to be the poet's alter ego throughout the

Chaucer corpus. This persona acts as a foil as he is set against Chaucer's philosophico-esthetical dilemma (i.e., the contradictions comprising the background against which his characters live in the poems).

As Russell Peck writes, Chaucer

is profoundly interested in the moral implications of nominalistic questions. Dorigen will gladly leave the fine points of disputation to the clerks [viz her complaint to "Eterne God" in the Franklin's Tale 865-93, but especially 885-90]; after all, she has the conclusion. Chaucer, for the most part, is her opposite. He seems to prefer the questions and will leave the conclusions to the clerks (or rather, the clerks to their conclusions). Though he may not be interested in whether we can know with certitude only individual things, he is profoundly interested in how we know individual things. And though his concern may not be with the questions about whether universals exist in creation or only in our heads, he is always interested in those generalizations which fill people's heads and which exist there exclusively insofar as they matter to that individual. (745)

Chaucer's various examinations of this same nominalist versus anti-nominalist theme through characters and plots in all of his poetry are thrown askew, to one degree or another, by his narrator, thus producing what Diomedes in the Troilus calls an "ambage" or, in this case, a wanted ambiguity:

That is to seyn, with double wordes slye,
Swiche as men clepen a word with two visages
[5.898-99].

These "two visages" of language, and more to the point of poetry, are what gets Chaucer's persona into trouble

with the God of Love in the "Prologue," because this supernatural god can only understand literature in ideological terms. Yet the ambiguity is desirable because Chaucer the poet's literary realism recognizes the hesitancy of conflicting philosophical dogmas which are themselves exegeses of human, fallible situations. Moreover, ambiguity operates even when the persona is merely one who may report events though he cannot, he claims, understand them, as in the Troilus in which the narrator tells his tale of erotic love and betrayal even though, he dutifully reminds us, he has never experienced such a love for himself and so he may not pass judgment on the events transpiring in his poem.

In Chaucer's dream poems, furthermore, as any writer of this genre must have realized, the problem of an ambiguous reality is compounded by the addition to the poetic terrain of the psychological dream dimension. Dream consciousness may violate at will the strictures of rationality and sensibility, more so in order to demonstrate the unique, pristine but ineffable absolute that underlies and otherwise engenders, ironically, an imperfect state of world affairs. In fact this is one purpose most dream visions serve, in a variety of fabulous, fantastic, and to one degree or another allegorical constructs. Because the reader will never quite forget he or she is reading a poem within a dream

framework, the poem, by virtue of its own structure, will therefore never escape its allegorical orientation as a result of, simply, this very same structure that insists upon the distinction between experience and imagination. Such bipartism might work against the unified vision that is the ideal of the poem's method of discovering and describing the world--the poem's, as it were, potential or kinetic epistemology. However, in terms of Aristotelian principles of mimesis, Chaucer's inclusion of philosophical themes within a framework in which dream and reality share more than a coincidental similarity of setting and plot, such as occurs in the Prologue, indicates his choice to abandon an allegorical impulse (Malone 96) for the more viable "fusion" of literary realism. Perhaps the re-creation of experience in art will not lend itself to polemical (i.e., philosophical) and otherwise allegorical exegesis.

Chaucer's dreams are actually valued by modern readers precisely because they have gone far in abandoning what can be viewed to be burdensome apologetic frames, since allegory reduces the possibility of semiosis in the sense of such meaning being an accurate reflection of the sensible, real, synthesized world--in other words, of "reality." Angus Fletcher has pointed out that because allegories tend to be anatomical, or otherwise depend for their success

upon principles of enigma (i.e., the inclusion of a formal obscurity that results from mysterious, so to speak, elements of a poem or plot [5n]), allegories tend to subvert the poet's capacity to create textures consonant with the more complicated reality of living, those actual complexities of life and love alluded to in the opening lines of the Parlement of Foules and elsewhere.

The whole point of allegory is that it does not need to be read exegetically; it often has a literal level that makes good enough sense all by itself. But somehow this literal surface suggests a peculiar doubleness of intention, and while it can, as it were, get along without interpretation, it becomes richer and more interesting if given interpretation. Even the most deliberate fables, if read naïvely or carelessly, may seem mere stories, but what counts [. . .] is a structure that lends itself to a secondary reading, or rather, one that becomes stronger when given a secondary meaning as well as a primary meaning. (7)

Although an allegory's virtue is its ability to sustain a consistent "secondary meaning," Fletcher's comment makes clear that such a duplicity, almost by definition, will not readily lend itself to the mirror-like unity, the distillation of intellect and experience which in fact constitutes esthetic realism, possibly something closer to the metonymic versus the metaphorical impulse. On the other hand, Chaucer perceives the problem of re-creating complexities in a poem that might satisfy the demands of imitatio. Truly, it is because Chaucer, his persona, has achieved

a "wholeness" in a poem such as Troilus and Crysed that he becomes subject to Cupid's displeasure in the "Prologue," and will therefore have to write the Legend of Women who were "true in love" as penance.

As Lisa Kiser observes, the most significant shortcoming

in the God of Love's reading of the Troilus is his failure to perceive the poem's complex expression of the relationship between pagan secular love and Christian caritas [. . .]. In short, his thought is dominated by a rather simple-minded conflation of pagan and Christian love, both of which he sees as the same virtue. (82)

Again, considering the comedy Chaucer creates, we might remind ourselves of the matter of the legends he resuscitates, which is particularly violent and uncharacteristic of an idealized courtly love (Frank 26) the God of Love is supposed to but does not represent. The legend genre, though, is especially appropriate to assuage him because of its didactic nature. Kiser rightly notes, as well, that the

Legend is also a poem about the difficulties inherent in Chaucer's role as a teller of others' tales, one who has obligations to his sources and also to the new and different audience [here, of course, the audience must include the God of Love] for whom these sources were to be adapted.

To present his views on the uses of classical fiction, Chaucer finds it necessary to include several other issues in his poem [i.e., in the LGW entire] as well. He reacts to certain traditional theories of art, he comments on allegorization (one of the commonest ways in which medieval poets made classical texts confirm Christian truth), he

reveals to us many fourteenth-century assumptions about literature's usefulness to everyday life, and he betrays his beliefs about the act and purpose of translation. (26)

All the same it is because the God of Love thinks in a simplistic, polemical, perhaps allegorical fashion (as many fourteenth century readers of religious sermons and other exemplary literature might have done), that he has misunderstood Chaucer's translations.

In the simplest terms, allegory says one thing and means another. It destroys the normal expectation we have about language, that our words "mean what they say." When we predicate quality x of person Y, Y really is what our predication says he is (or we assume so); but allegory would turn Y into something other (allos) than what the open and direct statement tells the reader. Pushed to an extreme, this ironic usage would subvert language itself, turning everything into an Orwellian newspeak. (Fletcher 2; my emphasis)

In this sense, that allegory "destroys" our "normal expectation" for discourse, we might conclude that the proclivity of dream visions is toward allegory because they are indeed dreams, not real; yet they make use of reality's very space in order to establish something other out of it, some new meaning from this same ground. This is a problem of poetics. As we shall see, it is worked out in a novel and radically different fashion by Langland, other than that which Chaucer attempts. And it is indeed a problem. By modern standards, allegory is understood as a form of

thought and/or expression that might naturally subvert reality, as it forsakes language's full semiotic power. A case in point, "Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, with its dialogue form, its verse interludes and its pervading tone of contemplative irony, is a pure anatomy, a fact of considerable importance for the understanding of its vast influence" (Frye 312). The Consolatio does not need to appeal to readers on grounds of drama (although it certainly makes that attempt within the medieval expectation of sermonary and other allegorical literature); for if anything is true of it, it is that the Consolatio's metaphoric vitality is so shaped and directed as to create meanings that are nothing less than ideological, nothing short of unqualified polemic.

If Boethius' work is popular in Chaucer's time, however, this is because it affords a certain matrix in which logical functions take precedence. Unlike Shakespeare's or Henryson's version of her, for instance, in Chaucer's Troilus we find Crysede's betrayal agonizing because, on one level, it defies logical dicta. It is as if fourteenth century readers were intent upon working out the subtleties of nominalist and realist doctrines extant in literature like the Consolatio. Yet this is in fact the case, precisely so because Boethius' poem takes the form of an "anatomy," as Frye has termed it (above). What such

a structure will not allow is the "uncertain" tropism and simulacrae (a hypersemiotic, multiplicity of meaning) that occur more and more throughout Chaucer's career. If we were to change the form of some of Chaucer's imagery, we as readers would "stop looking to think, to condemn, to marvel, exult, pity, or judge" (Tuve 101). It is because we instead suspend such judgments, participating in language and characterization itself, that we know an experiential reality, as we might say of it, in the poems. In turn, Chaucer would have us condemn or praise by virtue of tensions he establishes between personalities and situations, which depend for their vitality upon shaped meanings that avoid a one to one, "unreal" or fantastic deciphering of imagery on the part of the reader.

Yet the dream vision that so readily--and here it is assumed "dangerously"--lends itself to an allegorical epistemology, may also achieve an effect of quite another order. As stated, readers of the visio sequence of "events" will eventually be brought back to the realization that what occurs in the dream state is merely a fantasy, a dream. A reader cannot avoid this reflection, even in the "Prologue." Yet to know the miraculous-- the dream--so might the logic run, means that indeed the dream sequence suggests a principal, unifying God-force behind an imperfect and sensible

world: the dream is itself a psychological miracle implicating the fantastic, allowing the reader who indulges in such a state of mind a helpful machinery in his or her exegetical search for the divine. This inclusion of the imaginary is readily perceptible in poems like Piers Plowman, but such a dynamic is more deeply embedded, and more powerful because it is more subtly present, in a work like the "Prologue." After all, the dream poem is in turn a creation of the miraculous world by way of the hand and an almost Coleridgean imagination of the poet (of course, the "Prologue"'s focus is directly on the poet and his striving to "make" truth in his poetry [Payne, Key 93 ff.].)¹

In part, this is Chaucer the makyr's meditation, based on the assumption that dreams, like words, have their ontological realities, even when words are names

1. As stated, the "Prologue"'s dream sequence is in its setting and emotional structure (such as, e. g., the worship of the daisy that occurs in both dream and waking states) so very like reality that the problem of limited semansis, which occurs when allegory distances primary and secondary literary interpretations from one another (i.e., unlike settings between dream and experiential reality), is reduced to its minimum so that the poem may be said to approximate, to a greater degree, the natural synthesis of philosophical contradictions--the gestalt of the real, natural world experience (i.e., the intellect-sensibility dynamic), which philosophical speculation disrupts, intrudes upon, as it were--occurring in God-ordered nature. On the Chaucer's relationship to the allegorical tradition, see this chapter, and Appendix B, below.

sequent to, instead of concomitant with, the things named (a sentiment he might have found expressed in Dante's La Vita Nuova: "nomina sunt consequentia rerum" [Cap. 13]). By logical extension, imaginative and historical literature¹ seem also to be real, suggesting truth in themselves and beyond their own instances of being--beyond themselves as well. In other words, literature may partake of a protean nature--art as the product of the creative impulse. Chaucer points to this phenomenon in his preoccupation with the viability of adherence to tradition and auctoritee, as an epistemological method, his way of knowing the world. Set against such a construct of knowledge is the real, experiential world. Hence, the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women begins with this very discussion, finding in mind-sustained memory a unifying force (here is the opening passage in full):

A thousand sythes have I herd men telle
That there is joye in hevne and peyne in helle,
And I acorde wel that it be so;
But natheles, this wot I wel also,
That ther is non dwelleth in this contre,
That eyther hath in helle or hevne ybe,
Ne may of it non other weyes witen,
But as he hath herd seyde or founde it writen;
For by assay there may no man it preve.
But Goddes forbode, but men shulde leve
Wel more thyng than men han seyn with ye!
Men shal nat wenen every thyng a lye,

1. In my argument I am of course presuming the medieval world's confusion in which imaginative literature is taken, to a degree, to be synonymous with written history.

For that he say it nat yore ago.
 God wot, a thyng is nevere the lesse so,
 Thow every wyght ne may it nat yse.
 Bernard the monk ne say nat al, parde!
 Thanne mote we to bokes that we fynde,
 Thourgh whiche that olde thynges ben in mynde,
 And to the doctryne of these olde wyse
 Yeven credence, in every skylful wyse,
 And trowen on these olde approved storyes
 Of holynesse, of regnes, of victoryes,
 Of love, of hate, of othere sondry thynges,
 Of which I may nat make rehersynges.
 And if that olde bokes weren aweye,
 Yloren were of remembrance the keye. (G 1-26)

The poem begins by outlining precisely its own and Chaucer's prevailing and very workable strategy: literature as a viable world force will be set against the trial of present experience, even when the experience occurs within the poem-sustained dream frame. Furthermore, Chaucer's poetry will be put to a test by his own persona's artlessness--though we may easily concede the simpleminded reading of the poetry by Cupid as well and, if Alceste is not at least artless in her defense of Chaucer, she does not really, either, invoke his poems' fundamental virtues. But the controlling philosophical stance is Chaucer's.

Readers view the events of the dream poems and Troilus, however, if not always through the eyes of the narrator then at least through what is going on, so to speak, from over his shoulder. As Robert Payne points out in connection with the Prologue (to one degree or another his remarks obtain to the narrator we meet in each of the poems in the sequence--whatever that precise order might be), Chaucer's whole discussion

is framed in that troublesome defensive irony--the self-revealing pose of naïveté--which provides him simultaneously with a sub-liminal awareness of the limitations of human certainty, and with a prearranged escape from having to face up finally to the profundity of the aesthetic problem which his poetry constantly raises. (Key 96)

Payne goes on to say that our participation in the poem through the agency of the persona's point of view, or at least as a result of this tangential connection with the narratorial machinery, involves us in one of a number of the poems' "paralyzing system[s] of ironies" (109).

VI

To return to the discussion of form and ideality for a moment, we need to bear in mind the nominalist thinking of Ockham, which raises a key contradiction. On the one hand, nominalism proclaims that all knowledge resides in the "things" of the world, unordered by any universality man might know. But Ockham tends to "subordinate questions of intellect to questions of will," thus shifting the nominalist focus:

Just as God's ordained power (potentia dei ordinata) ties the contingencies of the world to God's Will, so are the mental structures created by men within their intellects instigated by voluntary choices which give them meaning.

(Reportatio III, q.10-12 [in Peck 746])

In light of Ockham's point of view, it might be

possible to conclude that Chaucer's translations are the result of the poet's or translator's will, his ability and inclination to engage the semiosis of language in order to make cognitive choices. Again, an allegorical structure circumscribes to a great degree "choosing" in this manner, almost by definition. But reaching further for a form, beyond allegory, means the poet may effect a truly--in the modern sense--literary meaning, hopefully to resurrect or intimate immanence if not the presence, at least on the metaphysical level, of the ideal. The warrant for the poet, then, is to be like God, or rather, to discover the real that resides in multi-meaningful figuration and to convey these same figures. Paradoxically, the God of Love either cannot understand or simply will not tolerate Chaucer's deified project(s) in which the poet seeks to invest words, literature, with ontological substance--the excuse or the reason for being.

Further, because Ockham "places the efficacy of the will at the center of his epistemology," his views are all the more "compatible with Chaucer's strongly Boethian orientation. Knowing, for Ockham, becomes a combination of desire, perspective, choice, and judgment" (Peck 746). P. B. Taylor has speculated about the source of Chaucer's nominalism. The concept that

universal ideas have ontological reality in words is an aspect of philosophical realism, and [as stated] Chaucer knew its most persuasive expression in De consolatione philosophiae. [Yet] nominalism, which posits that particulars precede the idea of a universal and that words are without real referents may have become known to Chaucer through Boccaccio, if indeed the Decameron was known to Chaucer, for Boccaccio's epilogue stresses the indeterminacy of intent over word and word over effect. (318)

Assuming that Chaucer had not seen the Decameron, it must nevertheless be conceded that even if a unity of philosophical point of view is not derived from Chaucer's poems, it is at least possible to read there the discrepancy of points of view being demonstrated through characters and situations. This diversity is as it should be, because these characterizations are derived out of language's signifying power. They are the creation of language and so they implicate language as being a creative force. The medieval mind, Stewart Justman contends, understood symbols as a reality in the sense that analogies were "nothing arbitrary or verbal" (cf. Mazzeo "Universal Analogy" 302).¹ In the medieval tradition

an analogy can pass for a literal identity [. . .]. The bread of the Eucharist was not just a symbol of Christ's body, an analogy for it; it was Christ's body. Again, St. Paul says, "as the body is one and hath many members; and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body: so

1. Justman quotes Joseph Mazzeo here, "Universal Analogy and the Culture of the Renaissance," Journal of the History of Ideas, 15 (1954): 302.

also is Christ [1 Cor. 12:12]." But this is not merely an analogy for merely illustrative purposes. In fact it is not an analogy. Paul means it: "Now you are the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:27) [. . . .] For another medieval ideal of the perfect symbolic body, we may look to Dante. In his ascent through Paradise, Dante sees souls which form the symbols of eagle and rose. In each case the symbol literally is the larger community. The symbol of the eagle stands for law and literally embodies law, in that all the souls that make it up have taken their proper places. To the modern reader, the rose may signify transfigured sexuality. But the great transfiguration that has made the rose is also an actual display of something much like what we understand by "sublimation," the redirection of will according to "law" and in the mode of symbols. In each case the symbol is more than a symbol. It is itself real. It is a claim for the reality of analogical thought. (Justman 200)

In the Canterbury Tales, some of which were being composed during the period in which the G version of the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women was also being written, certain characters are clearly using language to attest the idea that words are more than merely "verbal." Rather, the words

are real, formal acts [e.g., the power of oaths in the Friar's and Summoner's Tales, the Pardoner's rhyme of "swere" and "totere," and so on]--a contract with reality. On the other hand, though, we have the Reeve's statement, "when we may nat doon, than wol we speke" (A 3881); Symkyn's challenge to the clerks, "Lat se now if this place may suffise, / Or make it rowm with speche, as is youre gise" (A 4125-26); the absurd verbal dilation of the Nun's Priest's Tale, as opposed to the brevity within it [and so forth]. In these cases, words are vain, inauthentic fictions that stand for nothing. (200)

Taylor's commentary is appropriate here, in his attempt at reconciling the two Chaucerian aspects:

It has been recently suggested that Chaucer the poet is a Boethian realist while Chaucer the [. . .] reporter [. . .] is a confused nominalist.¹ In general, [. . .] Chaucer's emphasizing of nominalist views on language are found more often in comic and satiric contexts than in serious ones, and considerations of linguistic realism occur in serious contexts. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. (318)

In the "Prologue" to the Legend of Good Women it is indeed, often enough, difficult to make such distinctions; but they are there. The "Prologue" makes a claim for figuration and tropism, for the reality of symbols and "analogical thought," as Justman terms it, just as there is an understanding of the psychological and philosophical necessity in the experiential present. It is the tension that Chaucer establishes between these divergent viewpoints which in fact unifies the poem. His meditation is at the same time humorous while it is considering serious, linguistic and philosophical alternatives; and he uses this double edged sword in striking an esthetic unity in the poem.

What is important to see here is that Chaucer is interested in demonstrating a breach of faith, the

1. Taylor cites, here, Rodney Delasanta, "Chaucer and the Problem of the Universal," "forthcoming in Mediaevalia. Delasanta suggests that the purpose of Chaucer's translation of Boethius was to clarify and reassert his own faith in the neo-Platonic universal. I [Taylor] read this paper too late to incorporate his provocative conclusions into this study" (318n).

known lapsarian world, in the discrepancy between intent and deed (Taylor 318-20). The "Prologue" demonstrates conflicting philosophical points of view with which Chaucer was familiar. He develops his persona through the successive dream poems in part because the dream state demonstrates the resolution of these philosophical opposites; in this the dream state is akin to language when language is not limited and thus being abused--when it is meaningful--and in this Chaucer departs from the mere, conventional dream visio mode. According to Ockham, "insights of faith, though they cannot be proved by reason, are not therefore contrary to reason, but simply go beyond it" (Peck 747). Of course, there is as well the knowledge of experience. But because of the

mind's capacity to manipulate words and images in the shaping of its state of being, the boundaries of man's interior reality are open to almost limitless variation. (747).¹

Chaucer's narrator in the dream poems, therefore, strikes a pose, for the sake of the matter being presented by and through him, which depends upon Diomedes's ambage:

1. Ockham's insistence upon the primacy of faith to higher understanding, a faith partially determined by an act of will, is in keeping with St. Anselm's fides quaerens intellectum and credo ut untelligam (Peck 747n).

Though the ficta of the mind have no independent reality outside the mind, they form the basis of man's deductions. The nominalist idea that the mind and its knowledge are an ongoing imagistic-linguistic process is appealing to Chaucer.

(Peck 747)

In all likelihood, one source of Chaucer's interest in the relationship between language and perception was the Consolatio, where Philosophia's therapy is largely an elaborate words game that utilizes words and images to break down other words and images, and then uses words and mental pictures to construct a psychological dwelling place (747n).

This idea of an "ongoing imagistic-linguistic process" forms the basis of Chaucer's claim for the efficacy of literature vis- à-vis tradition. Another fourteenth century nominalist, Robert Holcot, noted that despite man's double incapacity of weak intellect and weak will he still can achieve his final end if he does what is in him to the best of his ability (Oberman 241-8).

Holcot's views stem from Ockham, who attempts to show that although God cannot be known in Himself or as a single concept proper to Him, He can be known in a concept which is predicable of Him and others (i.e., creation, especially man's mind.

(Peck 750)

VII

These existential descriptions of mankind--it is not a

coincidence--certainly obtain to the narrator we meet in all of Chaucer's poems, but especially in the dream poems and then, especially, in the "Prologue." Chaucer's posturing through his persona as being a bit obtuse reveals for us the philosophical and theological dynamic (in conjunction with a meditation on esthetics) which is deeply embedded in the other characters of the poems and in the action of the poems themselves. And, as Kiser points out, in the Legend of Good Women Chaucer's esthetical problem is brought under control through a contrast with the God of Love who is as obtuse as the poem's narrator (though this manifests quite differently since he is a god and not a poet) in his accusations against what the Chaucer narrator has translated. It is the God of Love's inability to make a distinction between exemplary literature and that which may be paradoxical, and thus perhaps truthful--more so because of the force of traductio--which Chaucer has brought into being. The God of Love has a hard time separating "wheat" from "chaff"; he cannot distinguish between language--traductio--and the matiere that language treats--auctoritee. However--keeping Holcot's view of humanity's double incapacity in mind (above)--it is because of Chaucer's

characteristic refusal to be self-congratulatory [that] we do not get a "corrected" interpretation of the Troilus from the Legend's narrator, even

though he is given a chance to respond to the accusations of his deified (and reified) reader [Cupid]. Instead, the only remark we get from him is the reminder that authorial intent ought to be weighed in the literary Last Judgment over which the God of Love presides (F 471-74, G 461-64). Neither articulate nor forceful, the intimidated narrator only weakly asserts his innocence in response to the charges brought against him. Finally, Alceste is left with the responsibility of defending him, which she does with shrewdness and skill. (83-4)

Alceste as dream figure exists barely beyond an allegorical pale; yet she is not merely allegorical in intention because of, among other reasons, her striking resemblance to the real daisy. She resolves the discrepancy between ironic narration and a philosophico-esthetical problem, embodied here in the indictment of what Chaucer has written (vide Cupid's ". . . in pleyn text, it nedeth nat to glose, / Thow hast translated [etc., G 254-55]"; and, earlier, Chaucer's own remark: "For myn entent is, or I fro yow fare, / The naked text in English to declare / Of many a story [G 85-87]").¹ But note that she only resolves the problem within the context of her own figuration, at Chaucer's hand (as well as in Chaucer's dream), and therefore we view the indictment of translation by the God of Love from within the dream vision mode (in the

1. My reading of the poem, here, is emphasizing the leitmotif of Cupid's displeasure with the act of traductio itself. This I understand to be a decidedly nominalist view of all art and, underlying this attitude, a distrust of language itself.

point of view of Alceste) as well as out of the objectively real, experiential position (the poem's narrator who relates to us both his dream and his feelings about how one may "know" the truth--either through books or through experience or, we are left to conjecture, through a combination of the two).

Chaucer as persona may therefore claim to be making no judgments upon what he sees taking place around him in the poems,¹ but since he so begs his own question he prepares readers to finally pass judgment, to condemn

1. The persona does, however, subtly indicate through an ambiguous syntax his preference for the daisy within the context of the courtly flower-leaf debate:

And if it happe me rehersen eft
 That they han in here freshe songes said,
 I hope that they wole nat ben evele apayd,
 Sith it is seyde in fortheryng and honour
 Of hem that eyther serven lef or flour.
 For trusteth wel, I ne have nat undertake
 As of the lef agayn the flour to make,
 Ne of the flour to make ageyn the lef,
 No more than of the corn agen the shef;
 For, as to me, is lefer non, ne lother. (G 66-75)

The narrator's analogy between "corn" and "chaff," and flower and leaf, makes clear his valuation within a larger discussion, in the poem entire, of the value of both auctoritee and traductio. He would of course prefer the "corn"--in other words, the matter of the old approved stories that should be brought to life, once again, in English. This problem of the matter of old stories is, as has been discussed, the substance in part of Cupid's indictment.

Nevertheless--to return to the original point--beyond the persona's adherence to one symbol or figure (such as the daisy, or the "corn") over another, he does not take sides in the larger philosophical debate (that has more to do with the phenomenon of translating than it does with that of the matter to be translated).

or celebrate as if they are free to understand all of the implications of the poems' events and discussions. Readers feel this way, however, not because of the poem's allegorical structure, but exactly because the poems' narrator has put them off their guard. Because they are told, and because they see through the agency of Chaucer's deft use of irony and comedy the bungling narration of the persona, they tend to take what he says and does, not without consequence so much as that, rather, what he says may be false (and, therefore, readers jump to conclusions of right and wrong based on this polarity the poems' persona has in effect established for them). Readers make decisions, that is, within the narrator's choice of context, though they often tend to forget this.

We can thus say that Chaucer uses Horace at the opening of the Parlement of Foules to bring together the strands of a complex discussion in the dream poems and the Troilus; this is a progressively trenchant meditation on knowledge sustained in literature and in other life experience as well, knowledge that is to be measured against a religious and philosophical ideal. Rhetoric itself, then--or certainly the question of figuration in language such as verse-language, which for Chaucer perhaps underlies the concept of translatio--becomes the metaphor in a poetic search for

a truth that may be viable in all spiritual, mental, experiential states of being. And in the "Prologue" Chaucer seizes the opportunity to write, particularly here where he may turn his innovative hand to established forms such as the dream visio and margerite genres, what should be understood to be a palinode to this poetic form (beyond Ovid, Froissart, Machaut, Deschamps). Robert Frank adds his commentary to that of a long line of critics regarding the Prologue's conventionality (cf., e.g., Kittredge Chaucer and His Poetry 2; and Lowes Geoffrey Chaucer 126).¹ But he rightly observes that in the "Prologue" the appearance of orthodox conventionality is misleading, especially so because the poet's "explanation and defense of what he is about to do [is] not merely conventional. True, the Prologue has all the conventional furniture" (12), even if these formulae are employed for a new purpose. Yet the term palinode must be used advisedly, although, as Robert Estrich states, the G prologue to the Legend of Good Women certainly makes best use of dramatic humor and irony which we recognize, moreover, as a predominating quality of the later Chaucer and "in line also with the steady development of the poet away from the clichés of medieval courtly-love poetry" (329-30).

1. See, for example, G. L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U Press, 1915), 2; and J. L. Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), 126.

Some of these clichés are of course necessarily bound up in allegorical values, even when Chaucer finally eschews the dream genre's allegorical determinism, most notably in the "Prologue" as well as earlier in Troilus and Crysedes and later in the Canterbury Tales. Because the dream vision allows the poet to wed real and surreal states of consciousness, Chaucer manages to include in his examination the problem, to designate it so, of civilization's historical--and thus its moral--impulse. Chaucer's secularity becomes the force by which he may reconcile the miraculous nature of religio-historical knowledge with that of the tangible, "real" terrain he is a witness to in his every day world.

The world "text" Chaucer reads is composed of sensible "things," but as Hugh of St. Victor's remark intimates (i.e., that the sensible world is like a book written by the hand of God), through the imagination's power the mysterious force that orders the palpable world body may also be known. Allegory, for one, reflects the presence of the mysterious through enigmatic duplicities of meanings, while it seeks to establish a context for logical thinking within an esthetic mode; of many esthetic epistemologies, allegory is the form that attempts to reconcile the factual with the supernatural through a reinvention of

a world experience often dismantled by philosophical attempts to "explain" such an experience. The more poetically framed inquiries recognize the supernatural because, like language (and dreaming), logically the imagination must be God-induced.

Yet logic need not concede, due to its very nature, the existence of the less material, supernatural, dream-like often enough and literary, world elements. This discrepancy is played out in the debate between Chaucer's narrator and the God of Love. Translatio, or makyng, the imaginative acts of reading the world or God's text, are questioned because they are interpretive, imaginative ways of being-in-the-world, just as dreaming is an interpretive act in its rendition of waking reality. Alceste, naturally, who finally is real only through her figuration in a dream, in a literary work, the "Prologue," "settles" the issue.

Smiling and mollified, the God of Love, also Chaucer's figure, concedes that, after all, Chaucer may restore the unified world, may reestablish order by writing the "wheat" and letting go of the "chaff" in the forthcoming legends of women true in love. We as readers know the connection between love and imagination; and we restore the unity by reading Chaucer's text of the buffoonery of dream-induced gods.

This text is a reflection of the complex book of the world from which it derives--a book whose "narrative," as Gellrich writes, "is the 'history' of mankind from creation to the ascent to the celestial city" (22; cf. 211). Peck's notion of the nominalistic idea, that the "mind and its knowledge are an ongoing imagistic-linguistic process" (above), forms the basis of Chaucer's meditation on the authority of literature within a world that would rather rely on experience alone. But when we "read" the world landscape we may also realize a historical, and imaginative dimension beyond the physical present. Reading is, indeed, humanity's unique, ennobling epistemological virtue, and, through the act itself, reading becomes an experiential action as well. Thus, through the "Prologue"'s comedy, our nobility is remembered in the various misreadings by the God of Love, Alceste, and even the "Prologue"'s narrator, of Chaucer's corpus. Chaucer's comedy serves a serious purpose. Misreading, rather than reading, in Chaucer's hands becomes the emblem for the efficacy of all artistic endeavor; art may most authentically signify the truth, Chaucer seems to be saying, in its gesture towards that truth, a gesture that takes the form of human expression's ultimate failure at truth's description.

VIII

No less than Chaucer's, we have noted that Langland's innovative skills worked to undermine traditional expectations of various literary forms such as the dream visio, the poem of pilgrimage, and allegory. Like Chaucer, Langland reflects the upheavals of their common time--social and political, theological and philosophical. Piers Plowman has frustrated as well as pleased readers and critics by its virtual unwillingness to adhere to what at first appear to be the poem's set literary forms; this is how we can identify its innovative energy, an energy that in itself is a reflection of the changing fourteenth century landscape.

While Chaucer turns his back on the allegorical tradition, and in doing so sends it up in a spoof that has ultimately serious purposes, just as seriously Langland achieves power by methodically dismantling poetic structures, from within. Considering the wide range of theological and philosophical thinking in the fourteenth century, and the concomitant range, in England alone, of poetic voice and genre, it is likely that an innovator like Langland should have approached the problem of generic expectation from quite a different direction than had Chaucer. In Langland's time, England produced an extraordinary variety of

poetry, and literature generally. Cleanness, Pearl, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Piers Plowman, Chaucer's dream poems, Troilus and Crysede, and last but not least The Canterbury Tales, are all contemporary with each other, and we may safely assume they were all popular.

These poems attest, of course, not only a wide range of literary taste and originality, but the divergence of values between their own period and ours. Especially to a twentieth century sensibility, there is a world of difference between Chaucer's literary output and that of, say, Dame Julian of Norwich. Richard Rolle, if we are to judge by the number of extant manuscripts and other records in the fifteenth century, was enormously popular, more so than his contemporary Chaucer. Apparently, the Form of Perfect Living was more compelling for fourteenth century readers than was the Canterbury Tales. All the same, to gauge these two works by such a narrowly drawn criterion as this comparison must miss the point; Chaucer's audience was surely less clerical, more secular.

In Piers Plowman we see a poem that in all likelihood could reach out to many different kinds of readers, some of whom would more readily enjoy Rolle than Chaucer, or vice versa. Yet what is interesting about Langland, in this context, is not so much the

matter of his poem as his method of treating that matter. Both Chaucer and Langland confront the issue of allegorical thinking, deeply rooted as it is in Christian theology since Paul and Augustine. Again, Chaucer has ostensibly rejected the received poetic forms of his time--and in so doing he has staked out an ontological claim for poetry, in the "Prologue" to the Legend of Good Women and elsewhere; thus he has chosen to fashion what the modern mind comfortably designates as esthetic realism. Langland, however, has decided to develop a poem whose very machinery presides over the essential Christian question of the efficacy of language, in making a claim for poetry as a solution to this problem. Moreover, Langland manages this in more explicit fashion than is possible for Chaucer, not least because Piers Plowman links the question of specifically Christian salvation with the act of writing. The philosophy of language, as it has come down to him in the Christian tradition, provides Langland with an alternative poetic strategy. Employing a discourse that in comparison with Chaucer's is more overtly philosophical, apparently didactic, and so on, Langland recognizes that the resolution of knotty theological and philosophical issues can take place only through a language that can demonstrate its own undoing (a decidedly postmodern notion); therefore we find in Piers Plowman a cogently self-reflexive

intent to make use of irony in the construction of poetic genres, which will most eloquently demonstrate their own integrity of expression, by dint of their ability to unravel or rather to deconstruct themselves. From this perspective, it is fair to call Langland's method a poetics of self-cancelation; time and time again it demonstrates its own impossibility as language exists in the Pauline tradition, and perhaps this represents the ultimate possibility of an artist's self-enunciation within a presence-absence textual matrix (cf. above).

Thus, for some readers, of the present and in the fourteenth century as well, Langland's poem may be the more powerful expression of the human condition. Chaucer's is a profound discussion of the ultimate confounding that language and poetry cause in their quest for absolute truth, whereas Langland's poetry is a demonstration of that deeply problematic, deeply Christian perception that language and poetry will inevitably only lead back to themselves, and that the only hope of describing truth lies in the gesture poetry can make in its inevitable failure to adequately name the absolutely real--to say the truth. Chaucer's gesture is oblique, and thus is peripheral, when contrasted to Langland's gesture that is central. Hence, we might want to reconsider the canonical status of works like the Canterbury Tales and Piers Plowman,

as our own critical standards both widen and are transformed--for in obvious ways Langland's poem lends itself to the kinds of critical analysis that have become popular since the advent of structuralism. Indeed, to view the poem as a demonstration of its own poetics is to be able to loosen many of what have been widely recognized as the poem's critical problems. The poem's attempt at poetic self-reflexivity occurs, furthermore, in order to make a clear theologico-philosophical statement.

IX

It can be argued that--more so than in Chaucer, or for that matter than in Dante or Marcabru--Langland's epistemological concerns become crystal clear when we place his poem within the intellectual context of its time. We have seen how immensely important linguistic paradigms were for thinkers contemporary with Langland as well as for those before him. Well within the embrace of the Augustinian tradition, such as it has been herein defined, Langland has resorted to linguistic metaphors that are of crucial importance to any attempt at understanding his complex, subtle and powerful poetic structure. They point to the ultimate meaning of his poem, which is conveyed by a self-reflexive commentary on the nature of poetry and its

various generic forms. While this self-evaluation is as penetrating as Chaucer's, it finally leads full circle to where the poem essentially begins, with the theological question of free will and its relationship to salvation.

This question is foregrounded in the use Langland makes of one particular "genre," that of self-naming. As in the typical Chaucerian gambit, Piers Plowman opens with a description of the Fair Field of Folk; in a dream, Langland poses the question of how to interpret that dream (cf. Finke "Truth's" 57-58). For Langland, the question ultimately becomes whether or not the dreamer as pilgrim can exercise the will to interpret and to communicate what he experiences. In several passages of Piers Plowman it is implied that interpretation and communication are the key activities for anyone who holds out the hope for salvation. But we are explicitly told this through the inclusion of the C text's autobiography, a passage that immediately highlights the issue of self-evaluation and redemption by virtue of the attention the passage, first of all, calls to itself. The form this takes is of a textual nature. The C passage disrupts an expectation that has been previously established in the poem's last version, the B text. Hence the discourse in B, which had been firmly set within its own chronology, is displaced and deferred by Langland's new discussion of his persona

Will's identity as a poet and what that can mean for him in terms of his own personal salvation. We are told this symbolically in the metaphor of the plough, which would have been for both Chaucer and Langland immediately apprehended as signifying the poet's pen. Ploughing was understood as a form of writing; in fact, in some fundamental fashion it was the very act of writing, where the field of the pen signified the text or book.¹

Particularly in the C text, the poem's final revision, the issue of self-writing is most vividly at work, and then most conspicuously in the "autobiographical" Passus C.VI, but elsewhere too. In these passages the Langland persona seeks to establish a complementary relationship between the question of the uses one can make of language, such as poetry, and the exercise of the individual will within a world of conditional and absolute necessity. Indeed, this

1. In this section of my discussion I am of course trying to demonstrate the analogous relationships between writing and pilgrimage--the source for the ploughman as pilgrim is Luke 10, which calls upon disciples to preach and therefore to harvest, to be laborers worthy of hire--and between writing and education--the sources for which are similar to pilgrimage, especially in that both pilgrimage and education involve preaching; thus preaching, an orally based discourse, is equatable with writing, an otherwise literate discourse (see Holloway 79-81). See Appendix C, below, for an extensive discussion of ploughing as a metaphor for writing, as well as ploughing's secondary associative network.

complex of forces is most graphically depicted in the C text's 91 line expansion of a discussion in B concerning "heavenly reward, measurable hire, and illicit worldly mede" (Coleman Piers 88). The passage crystallizes two pursuits: philosophico-theological truth, and the truth of the poetic vocation. Both are founded in a shared epistemological assumption. Thus this passage

best comes to terms with the [contemporary] understanding of just reward according to the covenant operating in the ordinata [i.e., the created world]. It is also in keeping with [contemporary] interests in logic and grammar that Langland should interpolate a grammatical explanation of mede in terms of right relation, and thereby give us some insight into what an audience for the poem was expected to understand.
(88)

Grammar, which as a primary forensic tool had still been enormously popular in the last several centuries, in Langland's time remained as a vehicle by which new perceptions and beliefs might be conceptualized and articulated. In a later discussion of the seven arts, C.VI has in effect retroactively created a penetrating echo, originating in B.XV; the earlier passage deplores the fact that, in the present state of society's decline, "Gramer, the grounde of al," now "bigyleth" children (365). In the C text, use is made of the echoing of the earlier perception in a reprise that proclaims "god [to be] the grounde of al":

'Relacion rect,' quath Conscience
 'ys a recorde of treuthe,
Quia antelate rei est recordatium,
 Folwyng and fyndyng out
 the foundement of strenthe,
 And styuelyche stonde forth
 to strenghte of the foundement,
 In kynde and in case
 and in cours of noumbre;
 As a leel laborer that by-leuyth with hus maistre
 In hus paye and in hys pyte
 and in hus pure treuthe,
 To paye hym yf he performeth
 and haue pyte yf he faylleth,
 And take hym for hus trauaile
 al that treuthe wolde.
 So of hol herte cometh hope and hardy relacion
 Seketh and suweth hus substantif sauacion,
 That ys god, the grounde of al
 a graciouse antecedent.
 And man ys relatif rect yf he be ryht trewe;
 He a-cordeth with Crist in kynde
uerbum caro factum est;
 In case, credere in ecclesia
 in holy kirke to byleyue;
 In numbere, rotie and aryse and remyssion to haue,
 Of oure sory synnes asoiled and clansed,
 And lyue, as our crede ous kenneth
 with Crist withouten ende.

This is new to this revision. Langland's strategy here is to come full circle, through these like sentiments, in linking together issues of language, knowledge, and salvation. It is important to see that such linkage especially pertains to the issue of the exercise of one's individual will, and whether or not such action will result in the ultimate reward of salvation; exercise of volition obtains to the activity of writing. For Langland, late in a twice revised long poem, and more pointedly than in either its A or B versions, this relationship is clearly established

through an identification between the author, William Langland, and the poem's persona, a persona who exists as both an allegory within the action of the poem, and as a fully drawn, round character, about whom we learn much in the way of personal details in the uniquely autobiographical passage, C.VI.

Not only is this passage in itself new with C, but it has been prepared for by a greatly expanded discussion of the nature of reward and free will in the two passus leading up to it. Indeed, this renovation of the A and B texts is sufficient unto itself, to tell us of Langland's interest in self-enunciation. Self-assertion, however, is not for Langland an end in itself. Rather, it is employed in order to examine profoundly ontological and epistemological issues of the time, which in turn, in their discussion, serve to deepen and commemorate the individual author within as well as beyond his text. And it is the very mode of the actual signing of the author's name in the poem--as Kane has so elegantly discussed, the signing changes from one version to the next (61-65)--which amounts to powerful evidence of Langland's intentions.

Dante, earlier, was intent on defining himself in terms of the philosophical issues of his day, particularly in an implicit relationship with Thomas Aquinas. Langland's intellectual dialogue is

conducted between himself and, alternately, Ockham, Holcot or even Wyclif. In this manner, similar to Dante, Langland at one and the same time wishes to assert his individuality as a poet, and by extension to legitimize poetry as an act that can lead to salvation. This of course is an attitude not only common to Dante but to Marcabru as well. All the same, like his forebears, Langland strives to have himself be subsumed into a larger discussion of individual conduct, truth and salvation; he wishes to be subsumed, that is, into the essential discourse of his text. Here we see another instance of the inherently tautological nature of autobiography, also operative in Dante (cf. Freccero 264; and the "Introduction" above). Furthermore, the subsumption into a text of pilgrimage, in which a protagonist experiences travail and frustration in his attempt to arrive at his destination, underscores not so much the possibility for understanding the human plight as it does the struggle to exercise the human will (cf. Freccero 29 ff.). This intricacy in Langland's poem, particularly as the questions of will and understanding intertwine, provokes and satisfies; and it is through such a complex that we will finally know and appreciate the poet, the person who has set all of this in motion.

Another motif germane to this discussion, which is modified in all three texts of Piers Plowman, is

Langland's treatment of minstrelsy. Minstrelsy is the only occupation, as Donaldson has observed (C-Text 136-55; cf. Economou "Self-Conscious" 189), that is treated differently in each version of the poem. It is valuable and perhaps even essential to consider all variants of Langland's poem, as part of a larger poetic experience that we can posit as being the real poem we call Piers Plowman--the A, B and C texts together constituting the "hypersign" (Corti 100 ff.) we understand to be the expression that is more than the sum total of the poem's parts. In a sense, the aggregation of the poem's earlier and last versions points to the role the poet plays in relation to the central factor in the poetic process, as Gottfried Benn comments: "Here is the mystery: the poem is already finished before it begins; only the poet does not yet know the text. The poem absolutely cannot be different from what it then is, when it is finished" (Corti 84). This understanding of poetry may account for George Economou's careful separation of the treatment of Minstrelsy in the C text, as being of an essentially transformed nature, from that which we find in either or both A and B. While the earlier texts differentiate between "minstrels who guiltlessly `geten gold with hire glee' and those `lapers and langelers, Iudas children', who could work if they wanted to," C simply presents the idea of "one bad class of minstrels, those

'That wollen neyther swynke ne swete'" (189; cf. Donaldson C-Text 136 ff.). In C the view of minstrelsy is more distilled. Moreover, this last revision

moves from its one-class definition to a view that distinguishes between the original class of minstrels and "godes mynstrales" (C.viii.100), a phrase deriving ultimately from Franciscan tradition. The B-text, between passus x and xiii, begins to show a severe judgment against all but the most pious kind of minstrelsy, while at the same time tending to disassociate the dreamer from the vocation. Still, in its identification of Hawkin as a minstrel, the B-text appears to persist in its preoccupation with minstrelsy, possibly even contributing to the connection between Hawkin and the poet so many readers see. But it is in the C-text, with its explicit separation of God's minstrels from the body of everyday minstrelsy and entertainment, that we find the clearest expression of the poet's "conscious assimilation of himself to a minstrel" [Donaldson 155] along the basic line of development found in all three texts: "first, an honest, plausible, idealistic entertainer and ultimately an apostolic- Franciscan ioculator Dei" [155]. (Economou 189).

Significantly, the autobiographical section in C is related by a Will who is fully awake. In his persona Langland has wedded his discourse on volition to a recognition, furthermore, that inherent in humankind there is a creative aspect that can manifest as playfulness and even verse-making. Hence, the notion of play, and of poetry largely, is to be explained within an otherwise alien, binary context: idleness versus work. The question being asked, then, is whether or not the exercise of an individual's will is contingent upon the desire to work, to work in a way

that suggests the lack of playfulness. And, it is suggested, if poetry is to be legitimized as a serious endeavor, on a par with sober work, then salvation may be possible by way of unusual, otherwise less than serious, or rather willful, means. Of course, poetry is ultimately to be seen as a means towards salvation. Economou continues his exploration of this theme in Piers Plowman by observing the noteworthiness of Will's seeming

to identify his making with his search for salvation, a quest which is finally profoundly affected and directed by this entire crucial encounter with Imaginative, a vivid example, incidentally, of self-consciousness fourteenth-century style. If he could get his answers elsewhere--the reader is aware of an earlier failure of a pair of friars to provide any--the narrator would give up his "werke" and go to church to do his more conventional duty. The assertion that poetry is his proper work and the suggestion that for him it is something more serious than play are indeed remarkable, all the more so when we consider that after Langland arrived at his view of himself as one of God's minstrels, they became superfluous. (190-91)

A relationship is established between human will and human imagination, not unlike what Dante develops in the Commedia. And so "the concept of acceptable forms of work must be expanded to contain the calling of poetry when it is specifically committed to serving God" (191). Much as we have seen in Chaucer's portrayal of an opposition between imaginative knowledge and knowledge acquired through the process of reason--or rather a kind of right reason, since in

the "Prologue" to the Legend of Good Women Cupid may represent an attack on the imagination, which readers might have been all too quick to label as reason instead of blind inflexibility--Langland's poem also emends or redefines a narrow, received notion of reason that otherwise cannot quite serve to elucidate the machinery of salvation.

Just as Will's admission that he has wasted time (and his resolution a few lines later not to waste it further) in his closing speech of the autobiographical passage foreshadows Imaginative's claim that he has taught the narrator-dreamer not to waste time some nine passus later, the unique connection between these two parts of the poem is also probably partially based on a rather subtle but unmistakable connection between their personified interlocutors at the conclusion of the passage's opening paragraph. We have already read there that Reason, "Romyng in remembraunce," reproached the conscious narrator for his past and current attitude towards work. Considering that part of Imaginative's function, represented by the scholastic ars commemorativa, operates through memory, we can see that Reason and Imaginative resemble each other in their vivid representations of experience to the narrator in both dream and non-dream states. Indeed, their similarity is symptomatic of a much deeper connection [. . .].
(193)

What was an assault on the narrator's verse making by Imaginative (in B.xii) turns into, in the C text, a "more broadly based attack" on the manner of the narrator's working, by Reason. Reason's diatribe has "preempted" that of Imaginative, which has been deleted. The result is Will's "proposal of a commitment and hope in his making, just as

Imaginative's attack had resulted in a definite, though weaker, defense of it" (193; cf. Skeat's gloss for "made of" in line 5: "For ich made of tho men as reson me tauhte").

X

Finally, however, it is the unique insertion of a parity between God and language (i.e., grammar) which provides a critical link to Langland's self-identity, within his very poem, as a poet. We see him as someone who may provide a workable description of truth and self-revelation, albeit with the aid of a fallen language. We have seen this equation elsewhere, in the balance between the natural world and the language of Marcabru's verses. Troubadours could suggest that they possessed the ability to create poetry, as it were, ex nihilo, in the same way as there was a creation of the world. Sarah Spence observes that "most of the early troubadours start their poems with a word that emphasizes the distinction between their role in the work, and their role in the world"--for example, Guillem IX's use of farai. "So too the troubadours emphasize their power over standard topoi, most notably the Natureingang" (120-21). In Dante, too, we find a version of this parity. As Freccero writes, regarding the centrality of formalism in the Commedia,

[i]n a culture which called its central principle "the Word," a certain homology between the order of things and the order of words is strongly implied. This is another way of stating Kenneth Burke's "logological" principle [Rhetoric of Religion 1-7]. If theology is words about God, wherein linguistic realities are used to describe a transcendent divinity, then "logology" is the reduction of theological principles back into the realm of words. What ensures the possibility of the reversal is the central tenet of Christianity, the doctrine of the Word, according to which language and reality are structured analogously. (260)

How is this poetic tradition made manifest in the fourteenth century? For Chaucer language, and secondarily poetry, provide the matter of his poetic discussion, in which the possibilities of expressing the truth are weighed within the confusion that language also causes in striving towards that truth. For Langland, however, the truth is posited as being the language itself, a language that will be perceived as being emptied of its content, and a language he will literally inhabit. Within such a construct we may profitably find a comparison with Chaucer's attempts to talk about the problems as well as the hopes for language to enunciate the truth. In Chaucer, the problems come to be identified with his persona, who as a poet nevertheless is seen as standing apart from the poetry he has written, while in Langland there is the suggestion that the poet is in fact his very language and therefore his poetry, without distinction from Will. The grammatical analogy in C.iv (cf. above) provides a forum for an extended examination of how

human reason and conscience affect the capacity for individual choices in the world; these abilities help to determine the vocation of writing, a choice that in the C text Langland has finally and unequivocally made as his work, a choice that will lead him to the truth of salvation existing beyond the vicissitudes of language, thought, and the reality of the created world, the potentia ordinata. In conjunction with other critical passages revised in the C text, C.iv establishes the ground for the direct assertion of the efficacy of poetry made by Will, to Reason and Conscience, in the autobiographical addition, C VI.

The nexus of these concerns inscribes the fundamental world vision of the poem, most eloquently expressed, though, by the ultimate terms of Will's search--Dowel, Dobet and Dobest. And if there is a paradox in this equation it is that these are truly enigmatic terms. Dante's treatment of Augustine's Confessions, in the Convivio, focuses on his life as a progress, which went from bad to good, and then from good to better, and finally from better to best ("lo quale fu di [non] buono in buono, e di buono in migliore, e di migliore in ottimo"). What interests Dante is the central paradox of the "Divine tautology" (cf. above in this chapter and in the "Introduction"): I am I, but I was not always so--which finds a correlary in Benn's observation on the making of

poetry: "the poem is already finished before it begins" (above). For Langland, the paradox of a journey to a fully realized I is dramatized in the enigma of the states of being, Dowel, Dobet and Dobest, as these terms come to be considered in and of themselves, as terms, and moreover as terms that both further and undermine the poetic matrix in which they exist. On the one hand, as terminology they fulfill the demands of allegory (as it was defined by Fletcher; see above), that the meaning of an allegory depends upon and gains power through enigmatic elements within the allegorical dynamic. On the other hand, these terms do not readily serve a primary requisite that allegory mean something on its literal level, for even if a reader could quickly deduce the burden of these portmanteau words, they still would not be, strictly speaking, readable as components of the syntactical formulations in which they are to be found. Their "application keeps changing as the poem goes on," Middleton notes; yet to observe this fact is merely to perceive the symptom of their influence on the poem as a whole. Contrary to normal expectations for allegory, we find that

Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest are not personified or hypostatized abstractions taken from the stock of English common nouns; rather, they are coined terms using several parts of speech. Interpreters of the poem, like many of the allegorical speakers within it--including the arch-interpreter Will himself--have assumed that since "allegory is saying one thing and meaning another" the words do not mean what they say. (170-71)

Indeed, Mills has argued that the allegorical value of these terms derives from their "syntactic impossibility" (195; in Middleton; cf. the "Introduction," above). This is precisely the point. The ultimate terms of Will's search are syntactically and grammatically anomalous, and, like the eventual illogicality of so very many of the allegorical motifs in Piers Plowman--such as, in a most profoundly, apparently unreasonable moment, the tearing of the pardon--Dowel, Dobet and Dobest are the terms by which the poem attempts its own unraveling. They are central to the poem. As a part of Langland's larger project to write a poem about the act of interpretation itself, particularly through the act of writing or "fynding," the use he makes of the three terms requires no simple translation but rather a process of "decipherment" through which readers can possibly apprehend the terms' metapoetical function in their role as "a major structural device." Chaucer's comedies of misinterpretations and otherwise confusions over the truths of texts and experiences find, at the very least, an adequate comparison in the many attempts in Piers Plowman to explain concepts, terms, definitions, and not least of all the three lives. However,

[w]hile there is no lack of capsule definitions of the Three Lives in the poem, none of them appears to fit all the uses of the triad. Moreover, the

terms stick thornily in virtually every sentence in which they are used, conspicuously at odds with the ordinary syntax surrounding them, like creatures from another world than that of poverty and practical moral precept--and so they are. (171)

As Clergy's analogy in the banquet scene (in the B and C texts) indicates, in Scholastic terms an analogy based on grammar--as any "meaning" to be derived from these anomalies must be--cannot be "referential, but purely formal." Their function in the poem, then, is to "order the progressive form of the search for perfection, rather than characterize its object." Thus (to step back a few paces, for a moment, from this search for perfection Langland portrays) the relationship between grammar and pilgrimage will reveal the poem's overall matrix.

The grammar of the three terms suggests that Langland coined them in an attempt to show intellectual or spiritual relationships in their essential, changeless aspects, independent of the temporal circumstances into which they may be translated. By drawing a complex metaphor from the realm of intellectual rather than sensory reality, Langland has created in his triad an explanatory instrument which is free as is poetically possible from the merely contingent. The use of the Three Lives as an organizing device is an attempt to purify allegorical language--a medium highly vulnerable to misunderstanding and misuse--of its most immediate rhetorical appeal, and hence one of its most slippery qualities. They represent an effort, visible everywhere in Piers, which perhaps can never totally succeed: to make human language eschatologically adequate, valid beyond the narrow base in the world and experience upon which the terms of its metaphors rest. (171-72)

The "attempt to purify allegorical language" on the

part of Langland, as Middleton has it, must finally lead to the undoing of the essential allegorical impulse. The poem, which immediately states that it will begin a process of self-decipherment, as the attempt is made to divine the meaning of the dream of the fair field of folk, then proceeds to unfold one or another allegory that depends on (not unlike the situation in Chaucer) a dreamer who can fathom the meanings of what takes place and who, as a poet, can record the truth of these events. The problem for Will, and for us as well, is that any of the meanings proffered are absolutely equivocal. Thus, finally, it is only the surety of grammar, whose rules provide language with, in a sense, meaning, which allows Will any respite at all from the enormity of the confusion he perceives in all that he witnesses. Yet even here grammar may not serve him "truly"--when, that is, he is asked to consider the meaning of terms like Dowel, Dobet and Dobest, and so he must embark on his ultimate journey. It is not that these terms do not mean anything at all; they are, rather, at one and the same time denotatively empty while they retain the power of multidimensionality. Recalling the situation Chaucer repeatedly presents us with, we can say that these terms provide the ground on which nominalist and realist thought can merge.

XI

A discussion of the process by which poetry is created, and generally the recognition on the part of the poet of the efficacy of aligning his will with that of God's, was of course an important aspect of Piers Plowman prior to the C revision. But it is in the C text that the full implications of the three terms, and their relationship to makynge, are made clear.

If it is possible that a revision in an earlier part of the C version of the poem helps in part to explain the deletion from C.xv of the defense of making that occurs in B.xii, it is possible that the way the B text was completed also helps explain the revision of a passage such as the one with which this same passus, C.xv, opens. The writing, which mostly means the rewriting, of Piers Plowman incorporates poetic activity into the subject matter of the poem. What was written in B, especially from this very point in the text on, becomes part of the personal experience the narrator-dreamer brings to bear on his subsequent treatment of his continuing quest, the ongoing nature of which will be confirmed by the identical conclusions of B and C when Conscience announces his intention to seek out Piers the Plowman. Thus, the accomplishment of B in its explorations of Dowel, Dobet, and Dobest influences the removal of a passage that predicates its justification of making on the condition of acquiring knowledge about those three lives; it also influences the rewriting of the lines that introduce the figure that has already initiated the acquisition of that knowledge in the previous version.

(Economou "Self-Consciousness" 191-92)

As Lorraine Kochanske Stock points out, "the free will necessary for voluntarily embracing the life of spiritual upward mobility in Do wel, Do bet, Do best, which is repeatedly suggested and endorsed by Langland,

is demonstrated by the renaming of the soul, or Anima, as Liberum Arbitrium in Passus XV of the C Text" ("Will, Actyf" 475). The invention of the three terms, in representing a path of spiritual ascent, can be seen to have precipitated the exchange of terms that designate the soul. The making of poetry is to be seen as conditioned by a state of free will; we view the spiritual journey in a like context.

John Bowers' comprehensive treatment of Langland demonstrates convincingly the intent on the poet's part to make of Will the figure of voluntas. In order to accomplish this identification, Langland must invest in his poem the theme of language as the most important step on the pilgrimage towards redemption. The poet assiduously casts the greatest sacred historical events as "miracles" of either

speech or writing. Wit interprets the act of divine creation as a linguistic process under the control of God: "And al at his wil was wrou₃t wiþ a speche, / Dixit & facta sunt" (B.ix.32-46). The word of prophecy in the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ (B.xix.80-82), and because the Virgin "conceyued þoru₃ speche" of the Holy Ghost, the Incarnation is also transformed into a linguistic act: "Verbum caro factum est" (B.xviii.129; v.499). Just as Moses had received the Old Law through the letters engraved upon the Tablets (B.v.566- 91), Christ inaugurated the New Law by saving the adulterous woman through the characters he wrote in the dust: "Holy kirke knoweþ þis, þat Christes writyng saued" (B.xii.76-84). Even the first act of salvation is described as a result of language, when the gates of Hell are broken with the uttering of the words Rex glorie and Christ marshals a phalanx of texts against the speechless Satan--"I may do mercy þoru₃ my rightwisnesse and alle my

wordes trewe" (B.xviii.389). Langland never misses an opportunity to look beyond the evocative and even the hieratic powers of language to elevate it as the supreme instrument of God's work on earth. (192-93)

Furthermore, Langland aligns the human activity of writing with Genesis' "Faciamus hominem ad imaginem nostram" (I.26) in B.ix.42. In this vein, we must note that the first instance of Dowel is represented by "Christ's verbal miracle at Cana," to suggest that "the use of language must somehow be involved in living the good life and repairing man's divine image" (Bowers 193). Linguistic imagery abounds throughout the poem. There are the "lele wordes" and blossoms of "buxom speche" on the Tree of Charity (B.xvi.6-7).

The linguistic context especially obtains to the three Do's, to argue for a right use of language. A person who practices Dowel is "meke of his mouþ, milde of his speche" and "trewe of his tonge," according to Thought. Dobet, likewise, is described as someone who is "louelich of speche," and someone who has not only preached to people but who has also translated the Bible (B.viii.78-95). The meaning of Dobest, Wit says, is a right economy of speech, without wasted words "þat spire is of grace / And Goddes gleman and a game of heuene" (B.ix.99-106). Later, the Holy Ghost metes out the gifts of grace; the first of the blessings is to go to those who aid fellow Christians through preaching and instruction. Thus

definitions offered by Thought and Wit are really elaborations of a lesson given much earlier by Holy Church herself. When Will asked the question of central importance to the whole poem--"How may I save my soul?"--she explained that the surest treasure was Truth:

For who is trewe of his tonge,
 telleþ noon ooper,
 Doop þe werkes þerwip
 and wilneþ no man ille,
 He is a god by þe gospel, a grounde and o lofte,
 And ek ylik to oure lord by Seint Lukes wordes.
 The clerkes þat knowen it
 sholde kennen it aboute
 For cristen and vncristen cleyમેp it echone.
 (B.i.88-93)

This is the first passage in the poem to suggest the alliterative trio of words, works and will that develops into such an important interlocking theme.
 (193)

In order to be saved, Holy Church stipulates, there must be a true speech along with true works and good will towards others. Thus, as in Thought's defining of Dobet, clerics must spread the gospel. However, in such an injunction the core problem of signification is unavoidably evoked. As Bowers asserts,

beneath the placid surface of her advice lurk problems that Langland would discover later when he began to plumb deeper. Cannot a man speak true words arising from a false will? And cannot a well-intended cleric write a long allegorical poem but lose the merit of his work through the inability of his audience to understand its hard meaning? (194)

There are numerous instances of Langland's use of exempla in order to further a claim that there can be a useful literary endeavor; this is so when the source of

The ultimate means at Langland's disposal for justifying the existence of his poem are, perhaps paradoxically, to engage in a formal meditation on the nature of poetry and language by writing into his text the very undoing of that text. In the 1960's, A. C. Spearing noted the existence in Langland's poem of textual echoes, including (important to the present discussion) intratextual echoes, especially in the poem's final revision where "thematic recurrence" is key to the evolution of Langland's ideas: "verbal repetition plays an important part in the rhetoric of Piers Plowman and [. . .] its use is consistently intensified in the C-Text of the poem" (722; in Stock 461). One theme, that of hunger and bread, which was examined by Spearing, is used in the C Text to unify the poem by linking together three pivotal passages that in turn point towards Dowel, Dobet and Dobest as the ultimate expressions of the pilgrim's truth. Significantly, the first of these passages is Passus C.VI, where Will confesses to his slothful life as a clerk:

"Non de solo," y sayde, "for sothe viuit homo,
"Nec in pane et in pabulo,
 the pater-noster wittnesseth;
Fiat voluntas dei--pat fynt vs alle thynges."
(82-88)

These phrases crop up again, first in the C text's

banquet scene, Passus XV, in which Pacience instructs Activa Vita on the nature of being patient. Finally, Liberum Arbitrum defines charity for Will and Actyf, echoing these phrases, in C.XVI.

Much in the vein of the Chaucerian persona, Will thoughtlessly mouths the phrases from Matthew 4:4, "Non de solo vivit homo nec in pane et in pabulo," and from the third petition of the Pater Noster, "fiat voluntas tua," which "betrays his ignorance of their specific content and biblical contexts." Later, Pacience and Liberum Arbitrum "correct Will's misperceptions." The point here is that

each repetition or thematic recurrence of this pair of verses serves to rewrite the all-important revelation of the narrator's self that Langland conspicuously interpolates into C Passus VI. The result of this series of revisions or reinterpretations [of what, in some broad sense, can easily be construed to be misreadings] is the gradual emergence of one of Langland's most important triads which corresponds to the formulas Do wel, Do bet, Do best. (461-62)

The parallel with these terms is achieved by an inverse progression that includes Will's acedia or sloth, which in the fifth passus correlates with Dowel.

Activa Vita's positive recharacterization in Passus XV as a foil for Will's inactivity proves that. Furthermore, the positive example of Pacience, whose role is expanded and refocused in the C Text's Passus XV, suggests that to "Do bet" is to be patient. Langland's exploration of the theme of patient poverty throughout the B Text, the coverage of which is increased and intensified in the C Text, attests to his admiration for and advocacy of that virtue. (Stock 475)

These scenes are "glosses of one another" (468).

If they do nothing else, the scenes at least present us with a paradigm of interpretive and/or writing strategies, which leads us to the contemplation of Will as the poet adumbrated in C.v, a passus that recasts the entirety of Langland's final revision in order that it center around the activity of makyng. Thus the poem is at heart self-reflexive both in its focus on the activity of writing poetry (i.e., of producing itself) and by extension on the capacity to discover significance in either poetry or any other form of expression. Laura Finke shrewdly comments that

Piers Plowman, at times, seems almost an allegory of the impossibility of discovering either significance or truth within language, whether one searches for divine or merely for human significance. ("Truth's Treasure" 57)

Whether the language serves as "a vehicle for classification (of ways of life, or mental powers), a means of imposing order (the law), [or] paradoxically, a means of disorder and deception"-- uses which more often than not are indistinguishable--"although created in the image of the Logos, the language of fallen humanity "is capable of only an imperfect parody of it" (Finke "Dowel" 129). Hence, what becomes plausible is that "[t]he more human language strives to represent the world, the more it is trapped and frustrated by its own failure to assure referentiality" ("Truth's" 57).

Language may provide a definition of itself as ultimately failing to do what it should--that is, to signify truth. As has been observed, however, this failure of language can also be placed in the service of, as occurs in poetry, a fundamental gesture towards the truth that is otherwise beyond language's denotative ability. As is the case in Chaucer's constant reversion to the theme of textuality versus experience, two methods of knowing the world, and more importantly in his self- enunciatory strategy of naming himself as the author of his own poetic works that are both attacked by others and both humorously and feebly defended by Geffrey, the fundamental poetic gesture finds its most stable ground in the act of self-interpretation. Chaucer's Geffrey does a bad job of self-exegesis; through this machinery, though, we not only contemplate more than before the depth of these literary works Geffrey is a part of, but we also gain an appreciation of the multi-layered discourse of the present poem that, perhaps innocently on the surface, is engaged in a deeply philosophical struggle. It is precisely the philosophically determined level of discourse that profoundly causes the present poem's effect on its reader.

We have also noted the almost painfully baffling actions of Cryseide in Chaucer's Troilus and Cryseide,

and how, at a time when among theologians the value of logical procedures was being given perhaps its greatest test by the moderni as well as by their detractors, Chaucer strikes a balance within this controversy. Spearing's accounting for the popularity of dream poetry misses the point:

A fiction might be seen as an allegory or parable, in which case it could be said to convey the truth in a veiled form [. . .] Or again a fiction might claim to be a true history, an account of what really happened as set down in authentic sources. But there was no way of saying that a fiction possessed an imaginative truth or validity even though it did not correspond to any literal truth [. . .] In these circumstances, to present a literary fiction as a dream--one imaginative product as an analogue or metaphor for another imaginative product--offered a medieval poet an extremely useful way out of his dilemma.

(Dream-Poetry 74; in Bowers 195)

Truly, Crysede's character resists any univocal interpretation of the sort Cupid demands in the "Prologue" to the Legend of Good Women, and this is because of Chaucer's deep sensitivity to the intellectual currents of his day; as well, his was an intellect that could grasp the ultimate implications of those currents. As for Piers Plowman, an allegory that will simply defy the demands of univocity, its "resistance to interpretation" of the sort Chaucer's Cupid would prize, "inheres in its own interpretations of its difficulties"; for the poem is engaged at its deepest levels in a discussion of its own poetics.

This discussion, moreover, must lead to the contemplation of language as a viable force in the world, which for Langland will explicitly mean as a force for salvation.

The dreamer's question "How may I save my soul?" leads him in the B Text] to search for Truth (Passus I-VII), for Dowel (Passus VIII-XIV), and finally for Piers himself (Passus XV- XX). These quests become, in one sense, the search for a transcendental signified that would legitimate all the human signs of the mundane world, the world of the "fair field" and the "half acre." Indeed, the promise of a truth in, behind, or beyond the poem's language, and with it the possibility that Will's dreams actually mean "something," is from the beginning of the poem both proffered and withheld.

(Finke "Truth's" 57-58)

Will tells us in the opening tableau of Langland's poem,

[Ac] as I biheeld into þe Eest,
 and hei₃ to þe sonne,
 I sei₃ a tour on a toft treiliche ymaked,
 A deep dale byneþe, a dongeon þerInne
 Wiþ depe diches and derke and dredfull of si₃te.
 A fair feeld ful of folk fond I þer bitwene.

(B Prologue 13-17)

We are to take his vision here as figurative, in that Will is seeing "representations of things [. . . .] signifiers--tower, dungeon, and field--that seem to mean more than the poet tells us about them, that seem to point to other signifiers" (Finke 58). Will sees--that is, he beholds ("as I biheeld")--the scene that is very much like what he might have been able to find in a state of waking. Compared with the

Chaucerian dichotomy, Langland's equivocation of meaning is at least as intense and profound; the

simplicity of the physical scene shades into the ambiguity of interpretation. The reader, like the dreamer, is compelled to ask, "What my it [by]meene?" The scene, in short, demands a gloss, an interpretation, additional text to explain the poetic utterance. The space that exists between the images of the tower, dungeon, and field and what they signify becomes the figural space of interpretation. It can be bridged or filled only by the attempt to understand it, by reading or creating a text that comments upon the text.

(Finke "Truth's" 58)

With its complex internal echoes and its constant, at times relentless, intention to appeal to texts and authorities beyond itself for verification, validation and eloquence, Piers Plowman is a poem that foregrounds and otherwise privileges the act of self-interpretation, an act that may arguably be a quality of any literary text, if only to a small degree. Chaucer's act of self-interpretation may be, to an extent, an act of self-unraveling; but it never finally appeals to an authority beyond itself, even as it seeks to subsume others' texts within its own discourse through echoes, explicit sententia, and the like. In Langland's hands, however, textuality (inter-, intra-) finally becomes the desirable discussion, as predicated on the Pauline and Augustinian linguistic and textual metaphors for revelation and salvation. Will aligns the virtues of natural, "kynde knowyng" with what knowledge and understanding can be achieved through

"craft," when he seeks from Holy Church an explanation of the vision he has beheld at the start of his journey:

"Yet haue I no kynde knowyng," quod I,
 "ye mote kenne me bettre
 By what craft in my cors
 it [truth] comsep and where."
 (B.I.138-39)

Yet the answer Holy Church offers Will "simultaneously postpones the dreamer's inquiry and widens its perspective until it encompasses--or attempts to encompass--everything, including the divine" ("Truth's" 60), as in B.i.148-58:

And alle his werkes he wrou³te
with loue as him liste;
And lered it Moises for the leuest thing
and moste like to heuene,
And also the plente of pees
moste precious of vertues.
For heuene my³te nou³te holden it
it was so heuy of hym-self,
Tyl it hadde of the erthe yeten his fyllle,
And whan it haued of this folde
flesshe and blode taken,
Was neuere leef vpon lynde li³ter ther-after,
And portatyf and persant as the poynt of a nedle,
That my³te non armure it lette
ne none hei³ walles.
For-thi is loue leder
of the lordes folke of heuene,
And a mene, as the maire is
bitwene the kyng and the comune [...].

What is important to see here is that in this passage's virtual proclamation of language's inadequacy the poetry achieves its greatest eloquence; that is to say, here poetry is "most full of speech." The effort to

In his address to Lucifer, Christ has completely succeeded in manipulating signifiers; they come to mean their contraries: life and death, grace and guile, and so on (Finke "Dowel" 135). The question of text and meaning--or, alternately, language and truth--is of course epitomized in the pardon scene, whose symbolic values, arguably, most vividly elaborate the philosophical issues at the heart of Piers Plowman and simultaneously resolve them if only in opaque terms.

Piers's tearing of the pardon implicitly underscores his recognition of how inadequate human language is to comprehend the divine Logos. As he rejects the terms of perfection offered by the Visio and the pardon, he transforms the Visio's language to propose a very different notion of perfection. He rejects the largely economic definition of virtue (do well), suggested by the image of plowing, by divorcing the sign from its signified. (126)

The plow, symbolically the pen, is transformed by Piers into prayer and penance, spiritual endeavors: "Of preieres and of penaunce my plou₃ shall ben heafter" (B.vii.122). And "whete breed" becomes tears (lacrime):

The plowman who up until now has occupied himself solely with the physical needs of the folk ceases to concern himself with such necessities as food and turns to asceticism, identifying himself with God's holy hermits. Like them he abandons the world, placing his trust in a power his experiences cannot confirm. By way of authority he cites Luke's parable of the birds who are fed in winter though they neither sow nor reap. The parable's command, "ne solliciti sitis" ("be not solicitous"), replaces dowel as the poem's definition of spiritual perfection. For Piers dowel gives way to

dobet when he turns his back on the world and sets out on a journey whose goal he perceives but obscurely. (126-27)

Yet Piers has only gained for himself "the world's scorn rather than its understanding." He is not readily understandable by the folk (a likely parallel to Chaucer's character Cupid in the "Prologue" to the Legend of Good Women), because his conversion has been

cast in a language that does more to obscure meaning than to reveal it. Piers deliberately describes his transformation in a parable, the narrative form Christ frequently used. Since a parable is primarily a "similitude," usually between the physical and spiritual realm, it requires an act of interpretation to distinguish the "carnal sense" from the spiritual, hidden sense. (127)

In all of these passages we are witnessing various characters who have recourse to the essential paradox inherent in all attempts at expression, which leads readers, and Will as well, to the recognition that the very act of questioning--rather than any answer that might be elicited--is what is most important. Through the questions, Will can possibly come to know the divine (127-28).

At the moment of his rebellion Wille looks at his experiences, at the discourse that surrounds him and by which he defines himself (as scholastic philosopher, as dialectician), and perceives only absence. [. . .] Wille responds to this situation by poetically creating himself, assuming the ironic personae he has fashioned for himself--rebel, sinner, penitent, pilgrim, witness. His roles are the trappings of rebellion.

(133, 134)

XII

In the B text's banquet scene, Clergy describes Dowel and Dobet as "two infinites, / Whiche infinites, with a feith fynden oute Dobest" (XIII.127-28). An infinite, according to Priscian, is usually used in "sentences as the object of a wish or command: volo legere, 'I want to read'" (Middleton 176). In the same fashion,

each of the Three Lives is in turn the "object," both of the imperative to pilgrimage and the desire of Will, who is also the will, the voluntative capacity personified. (176)

Will's desires are "infinite" in the sense of being incomplete, unfinished or unsatisfied. In the same way it can be said that in "Clergy's definition Dowel and Dobet, like Will himself, become pilgrims to [a] 'finite', seeking their own perfection in Dobest." More significantly, there is another meaning offered by Priscian for infinite, one which "enforces the association of these two Lives and Will the pilgrim through a metaphor of asking and answering"; yet the meaning also points to the central concern of Langland's poem as it is conveyed by his meditation on language:

The second grammatical sense of the word is utterly unrelated to the first, referring to a pronoun rather than a verb, and Priscian makes no attempt to connect them. They are for his purposes as unrelated as a monkey wrench is to a chimpanzee, or an oyster to a cloister. Yet it is the business of the poet to see or make occult resemblances between

things unlike to the merely discursive intellect, and in Priscian's discussion of the "infinite" pronoun Langland found in an accident of terminology further substance for his theme.
(Middleton 176)

For the Scholastics, the cachet for the term infinite was Boethius who had to use the word in order to translate the Aristotelian term, into the Latin nomina infinita. As, literally, meaning "indefinite noun," in the Categories it refers to negative predicates such as non-albus or non-homo (OED "infinite" [8]; Aristotle Categoriae X.3, De Interpretatione X.1; Middleton 180). Thus infinite can suggest emptiness and indirection; and it acts not unlike the anomalous three Do's.

They are only words whose grammatical form gives to the search for perfection the comforting illusion that the quest is orderly and comprehensible. They are the necessary fiction underlying any cognitive pilgrimage. [As Pacience would say,] the terms Dowel and Dobet are not the treasure itself, a healing substance Will sees, but the "boustes," the precious and fragile vessel of linguistic form, which contains and transports meaning. (180, 181)

The human cognitive faculty processes information in a linear or rather serial fashion, in increments. The three Do's reflect this process. As "coined verbal nouns" they are "the fictive terms which give progressive form to Will's pilgrimage"; in doing so their "reassurance of intelligibility" fulfills the journey (181).

Piers Plowman will always return to the

contemplation of its own poetic, generic form; and in this examination, it will demonstrate the very limits of that form. This is the poem's linguistic gesture, which we find enunciated through the relationship established among the three Do's and the question of the validity of writing itself. But this gesture pervades the poem entire. Consider, for example, the recurring attention that is paid to "the heuristic shortcomings of personifications by exploding their narrative and dramatic consistency in mid-scene" (185). An example of this is Piers's intercession when the figure Hunger acts brutally towards the folk to keep them at their plowing. It was Piers who had asked Hunger to perform this task. The results of this request, however, may be surprising.

The immediate requirement of charity toward his "bloody brethren" momentarily suspends Piers' allegorical role. He must interrupt the sequence of symbolic events which would further the narrative pilgrimage to charity, in order to act charitably. (185)

In doing so, linear narrative is thrown into doubt, as is, in large, the "single-mindedness of the pilgrimage ideal." Scenes such as this one compel what is perhaps an extraordinary conclusion:

Langland's allegory considered as narrative is a study in frustration, and therein lies its value. We are made to apprehend the meaning of an idea only when all its embodiments within time and space fail us. (185)

The poem's own enigmatic qualities are evinced in its demonstration of its formal limits. Thus it is an allegory about the failure of allegory to express the truth. As we have seen, Chaucer alludes to this failure as well; he chooses to satirize allegory, and to opt instead for alternative literary forms that we understand to be, in contrast, "realistic." Langland is equally original. He chooses to reveal the "unreality" of the allegorical project by composing an allegory that must fail in its effort, in order that it can indicate a Christian truth which incorporates the allegorical process in its enterprise of debunking that very process. In the tradition of Paul and Augustine, all that we can see will be through the darkened glass of the poem.

What will this "failed allegory" tell us? As perhaps can be derived from what the character Book says in the Harrowing of Hell episode, the one hope of divining the events a pilgrim witnesses is to see, as in the Augustinian sense of it, with moral eyes. A. V. C. Schmidt, in an attempt to gloss one of Piers Plowman's more puzzling lines, "Badely ybedded, no book but conscience" (B.XV.534; in "Langland's 'Book'" 482), reminds us of the myriad uses text and book could be put to by Christian theologians. Schmidt argues convincingly that the source of Langland's line is St.

Jerome's Commentary on Daniel 7:10: "Iudicum sedit, et libri aperti sunt". Set against the unalterability of the written word is the will to be conscionable, which may deny or otherwise alter the meaning, the "bouste" of a text, a text of words. Within this tension Langland posits the figure of the poet, who must embody and unify the dichotomy. He does so. Of Will's dream in church, in which he is also dreaming of a church, Economou writes that we can say of this church, it

has given him the testament and its exegesis that
allow him to articulate the yearning that charges
his soul and work. It is no accident that he
proposes to write this down [. . .].
("Piers" 318)

For in Will's writing he is dramatizing the essential poetic of his author, who has named himself by constructing an infinite regress of reflected, mirror images. Will is the poet and theme of his own (Langland's) poem. In a poem of dreams within dreams, we find a dreamer whose fictive dream, like Chaucer's birds in the "Prologue" to the Legend of Good Women, too closely resembles an objective truth; in a church, he dreams he is in a church-- God's house. From there, he goes to carry out what he has forcefully proclaimed to be a godly activity, the writing down of his dreams.

Conclusion

The Middle Ages and the Modern Persona

The emergence of the modern individual in the Western world, the formation of an individual psyche, can be located in the act of self-naming that occurred in Western poetry of the later Middle Ages. Such a development is appropriate, since autocitation virtually depended for its existence on tracing its relationship to and on identifying itself with the text of the author whose name and individuality were being invoked. How could it have been otherwise? A sensitivity to the idea of a text, even as that idea went through numerous transformations, resides at the foundation of Western sensibility. Our discussions of Plato, Paul, and most of all Augustine, have evinced this sensitivity to the concept of a text, a concept that was of an ethical nature. In Augustine, the basic textual metaphor achieves its full effect; it can be argued that the world, for him, was a text. The medieval sense of community, whose cement was the notion of textuality that often manifested itself in reverence for the Bible as well as other specific, actual texts, evolved under Augustine's influence. Thus later poets' self-naming functioned as a recognition of and belief in a language centered in the notion of textuality; this textuality was an accurate,

authentic way of describing reality. Poets of the later Middle Ages could not help but include themselves in their attempts to point to the truth. The world Marcabru, Dante, Chaucer and Langland portrayed supported their self-assertions, for they were a part of that world, and the force of Aristotelian logic mandated their self-inclusions as well as their self-promotions.

All of this, however, was only made possible once text and language could be viewed as entities separate from the poet. The thing that sustained a poet's enterprise was the language used in poetry to signify the world. Once language was understood to be an entity unto itself, the poet's meditation on his or her relationship to it could lead to a self-understanding in which the self was posited as that which had come to exist apart from discourse. And so the poet was the user of discourse, the finder (i.e., the trobador) who shaped the language that ultimately, by virtue of the recognition of its independence, threatened to determine the very world thought to have included language as a part of it. Language was both within the world and outside of it. Now, if the poet could be the definer of the poem (i.e., the makyr), why could he or she not define the world? Logically, such an attempt at definition was the fundamental issue confronting

poets of the later Middle Ages, an issue that ultimately came into being because of a theologian.

In one graceful turn of thought, Anselm altered the intellectual, spiritual and social makeup of the West. In his emendation of Augustine's meditation on the nature of falsehoods, Anselm liberated language and thereby ushered in a modern world. First of all, he set aside the issue of intentionality, which was for Augustine the primary determining factor in assessing truth or falsity. Once Anselm could recognize Augustine's distinctions, he could also realize that statements had integrity though they might fail to authentically refer to any objective truth. Anselm ascribed to any statement an intrinsic unity, a natural cogency. Thus he aligned language with the world while setting language at a remove from it. Language, then, did not have to conform to the strictures of the perceptible world, nor did language need "to obey" the poet.

In effect, Anselm had let go of a golden rope descending from Heaven. With him a new possibility arose, one that was problematic. Even moralistically right interpretations of expressions that were comprised of language made opaque since the fall of Adam and Eve--as depicted by Paul's image of a dark glass--might no longer yield revelation. In the later

Middle Ages poets grapple with this central difficulty. Their texts, inherited from Augustine whose ideas concerning interpretation derive from Paul, are accessible only through a combination of hermeneutics and the recognition of any text's autonomy; yet such an equation could prove hopeless in the attempt to arrive at either absolute beauty or absolute truth. Where does this leave poets like Marcabru, Dante, Chaucer and Langland, who are faced with the task of realizing the truth? They must include discussions of themselves in this attempt; otherwise, how else might they come to terms with the very separateness of language and ultimately of texts? In Langland this discussion spirals back to Augustine and the question of intentionality; Piers Plowman investigates the role of the individual will in the achievement of salvation. Yet by the time of Langland, after Anselm, the world has become more complicated, and in a sense modern.

Can poetry work? Can it serve? Does it lead to a salvation? The questions forced poets to turn to a meditation on the nature of poetry and its relationship to truth, and, finally to consider their efficacy as both poets and mortals. The stakes involved in this exercise were immense; and poets went about their task with an extraordinary vigor. Their poetic conceptions were driven by the new demands of rationalism that were a function of a spreading literacy and therefore,

coupled with technological innovations, of a shift in orientation from oral to written discourse. Now the text was physically represented as separate, at a distance from writer and reader. The complexity of this text necessarily deepened, since there was no hurry on the part of readers to embrace it; literate, increasingly silent readers could indulge themselves in it at leisure and reflect on the fact of its authorship.

Truth will be both atomized and narrowly defined when logic and technology come to be the dominant forces in a society. As history and fiction become separate disciplines in the later Middle Ages, we see the distinction between them being modulated by the inevitably creative acts of poets. Poets discovered themselves squarely within a larger debate that was the context of the evolution into such disciplines; these poets possessed varying degrees of objectivity regarding their role in the debate, but, intellectually curious, and acutely sensitive to the shifting and transformation of categories, they were instrumental in this process. Marcabru is a poet who writes about the efficacy of his poetry, and of all poetry, and proclaims that the craft of song cannot be brilliantly utilized unless the poet is of good faith. Dante's journey through the three realms inscribes once and for

all the epistemological issues that comprise the fabric of his and possibly our own time. Langland continues this tradition. As in the Commedia, his persona virtually replicates its author. In Piers Plowman a poet is named Will. By virtue of his existence he reminds readers of the key to mortal striving, that of the individual will--not unlike Augustine's notion of intentionality. The mere embodiment of this issue in this persona confronts the question of writing as the way to achieve salvation. Implicitly, though, Langland is also examining the structure of this form of discourse. In Piers Plowman's ubiquitous illogical turns of plot, such as the tearing up of the pardon, we see the signs of a poet's attempt to unravel the form of his poem in order to comment on that form and ultimately to examine its larger epistemological concerns.

Langland's attempts to deconstruct a fundamentally allegorical poetic structure are perhaps more in keeping with Anselm's approach to the problem of language and meaning. Chaucer, too, contemplates the form of poetry; his attack on allegory as a viable epistemological procedure is overt, as in the "Prologue to the Legend of Good Women." Langland's attack, however, proceeds from within, with the tacit recognition that a poetic in and of itself does not necessarily serve to render a believable description

of reality. Langland's focusing on the poetic asks the question, can there be unity, an internal logic or efficacy in poetry? In effect, Langland wishes to demonstrate that there is a lack of internal cogency in allegory. Allegory might not accurately reflect actual experience; the assumption is that allegory was created to do so. More importantly, Langland implies that, structurally, allegory can be said to be "unnatural" or rather ultimately untrue. Truth, then, continues to reside beyond the pale of expression. All the same, we see this dynamic, the tension between expression and truth, most vividly portrayed in the roles that language plays in the poem. "Grammar," for Will the dreamer and for William Langland, like "God," is the "ground of all." And so language may bridge all realms, all planes of existence, be they dream, waking perceivable experience, or books--as Chaucer also recognized. For Chaucer as well as for Langland, the literatus proffers the "key" of memory, and thereby a sort of truth. Language, in other words, strives for unity while it may, paradoxically, also intend to assert its own individuality.

Accordingly, Langland's poem strives for unity by its demonstration of the ways in which poetry and ultimately language undo themselves. Hence Piers Plowman features the search for Dowel, Dobet and

Dobest; all three are grammatical anomalies. These linguistic aberrations underscore the recognition of a chasm between language, ostensibly the stuff of poetry, and allegory that is quite possibly the very sign of all figuration, and so, necessarily, to be associated with the idea of poetry. The sign of Langland's inquiry into the relationship of language and truth is the poem's persona. In the largest terms, this persona embodies the tension between Augustine's and Anselm's ideas. Will the dreamer is also the sign of unity, for in his name the poem's theme and authorship come together. Comprehending this sign would be particularly welcome, since--as is evident in the great lengths Langland has gone in order to demonstrate it--there is an inherent disunity in all poetic and other expression. In other words, Langland's evocation of unity occurs by way of oblique strategies. Self-naming, both at the margin and the center of his poem, remains as Langland's solution to problems of signification which he has inherited from past theologians and poets who comprise the auctoritas, the fabric, of Western thought and aspiration.

How does Will, then, represent the emergence of the modern persona? What affinity might he share with, say, Tom Jones of the bildungsroman that goes by the same name? Part of the answer to this question is obvious; a persona's connection to its text may now be

inevitable--given the tradition out of which modern literature emerges--and indeed their alignment continues into the present in books like Saul Bellow's Herzog and Derek Walcott's Omeros, whose protagonists bear the names of their stories. An antagonist can do the same, as in Toni Morrison's Beloved. But what about Joyce's Ulysses or any other modern work that does not, overtly, bear the sign of either author or character? And, in any case, what has become of the authors' explicit self-inclusions in their texts? The answer is that any attempt to define the modern persona must proceed from a broader base. The purview of this study does not allow for extensive probing into the nature of modern fiction and its possible relationships with fact. Still, it may be suggested that twentieth century authors see themselves as quite as fictional, as ephemeral, as any speaker or personage created in their texts. There is tacit agreement among writers and readers concerning these personae, an assumption that they are fictional. If we contemplate, then, our contemporary literary projects, may we not come to a fuller appreciation of what must have been the intense pleasure and gratification of authors who saw themselves in their work for the first time? The mirror that contained the medieval writer's image may not be the one used today, but it surely cast a reflection.

APPENDIX A

Alceste as a Unifying Figure

In the daisy-Alceste figure we find, because of its idealized beauty, the paradigm of the striving for unity. Chaucer's description of Alceste is so very similar to the properties of the daisy that there can be little doubt that she does indeed personify that flower in his dream; Alceste, furthermore, exists in an enchanted garden type sequence while the daisy, of course, exists in a real--though garden-like--pastoral setting. On the exact inversion of the dream world and reality in the Prologue, see among others Malone, and Bronson; and Payne, "Making" 202. On the physical similarity of the daisy and Alceste, see among others Payne, Key 106; and on Alceste as the poem's unifying force, Payne writes:

Alceste provides the most obvious means of unifying the two different parts of the prologue. She is, first of all, the figurative transformation of the daisy; she is also the maiden of all maidens, as it had been the "flour of alle floures"; but most significantly, her relation to the poet is the same: she is to provide the "cause," the compelling attraction for the reverential poetry of the legend which Chaucer is to write in penance for his "bad" poetry. Finally, we ought to observe that these transmogrified qualities of the daisy find their physical personage in a character from an ancient legend. As a thirteenth-century rhetorician would have put it, through an invented figure of the poet's, the fact of experience and the values of tradition become identified. (98)

See also, in this regard, Donald Baker "Dreamer" 11.

It should be noted that the figure, "flour of all floures," has a long and proud history from ancient times: Flos Florum

is an image of perfection often used of the beloved in medieval lyrics of amour courtois, but it is remarkable also for the variety of its manifestations--sacred and profane, from a casual façon de parler to a philosophical or mystical apprehension of perfect beauty in the paradox of the many and the one [. . .]. The paradox lies in the relation between the beloved and nature, whose crown he or she is. When nature fades, the beloved can keep nature's beauty alive; when nature flowers, the beloved both surpasses nature's flowering and fulfills it. (Dronke Medieval Latin (Oxford: 181-82; see also pp. 183-92; cf the "Introduction," above)

On the etymology of margerite and the connection, in English, between pearl and daisy (from the French and Latin) and the religious associations between the daisy and the Virgin Mary, see Dronke and, as well, Payne, Key.

APPENDIX B

Chaucer and the Allegorical Tradition

The "Prologue to the Legend of Good Women can easily be viewed as an allegory, although many readers will pass too quickly over the poem's "analogical" elements because of Chaucer's seamless, crafted poem in which they are doing their work. An example of this subtle embedding occurs when the poem's persona returns to his house in order to rest (to "conserve" himself) for the night; but more than this, he has his house and "herber" or garden made up to be consonant with the spirit of the new summer. It is here, furthermore, that the persona will have his dream of which we will read:

Hom to myn hous ful swiftly I me spedde,
And in a lytel herber that I have,
Ybenched newe with turves, fresshe ygrave,
I bad men shulde me my couche make;
For deynte of the newe someres sake,
[etc. (G 96-100, F 200-206)].

Robinson's gloss of these lines is particularly revealing; it is as if he has missed the lines' allegorical values: "The remark about the house with the arbor [. . .] seems hardly applicable to Chaucer's house over the city gate, and he is known to have surrendered his lease in October, 1386, [and so on]" (842).

Perhaps a fourteenth century reader, on the other

hand, would immediately recognize the sententious and symbolical quality of the narrator's "house." In allegorical terms the house becomes, among other things, the symbol of, as well as the place for, carrying out procreation; it is the source, in other words, of the persona's poetry (the craft and the maker of the craft which is the subject of the "Prologue," as Payne has observed).

Malone notices the eschewing of personified abstractions (that intend to heighten an allegorical feeling) in the G text revision of the Prologue:

Al found they Daunger for a tyme a lord,
Yet Pitee, thurgh his stronge gentil myght,
Forgaf, and made Mercy passen Ryght,
Thurgh Innocence and ruled Curtesye [F 160-63].

The indication here is that Chaucer is moving away from the allegorical poetic mode in his later career (96). He will therefore effect, more and more, a seamless quality in his later poems. This is also demonstrated by the house image, which is not at all either a personification nor an abstraction. Yet it does recall Chaucer's earlier use of this image in this way, and it does reflect contemporary rhetorical-poetic theory.

The announced purpose of Chaucer's dream in the House of Fame, for example, is that it will teach him something about what poetry actually is. The words

place [Robinson 783]) as much as would any natural event. That is, the poet's words must have meaning, evolving in turn out of an ordering, a formalism. And, the poet's words have their proper place in the universe (they have their own gravity, as it were); every thing has its "propre mansyon."

Other instances of the use of a house or mansion as an image standing in for the idea of an originary intuition or creativity might be cited. It should be noted that this image has a grounding in medieval poetics, as Marie Hamilton has observed ("Notes on Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," PMLA, 49 (1934) 403-09 [in Payne, Key of Remembrance 16]). "Miss Hamilton helpfully quotes, as a supporting parallel [to the House of Fame], five lines from Troilus and Cryseide which are translated from Geoffrey of Vinsauf":

For everi wight that hath an house to founde
 Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne
 With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,
 And sende his hertes line out fro withinne
 Aldirfirst his purpos for to wyne
 (1.1065-69 [in Payne 16] my emphasis).

In light of Malone's above remarks on allegorical elements and structuring, see also Payne, Key 139.

APPENDIX C

Ploughing as a Metaphor

In the Etymologarium (VI.9.2) Isidore of Seville claims that Romans wrote with a stylus made of iron or bone on tablets made of wax, and quotes "from a lost comedy by the poet Atta": ". . . Vertamus vomerem / In cera mucroneque aremus osseo"--which Curtius translates as "Turn we the ploughshare upon the wax and plow we with a point of bone" (313). See Gellrich 34 ff.

In Chaucer's "Shipman's Tale" the monk has asked the merchant for a loan, which is granted. The merchant then announces--

But o thyng is, ye knowe it wel ynogh.
Of chapmen, that hir moneie is hir plough.
We may creaunce whil we have a name;
But goldlees for to be, it is no game.
Paye it agayn whan it lith in youre ese
(VII.287-91)

--to which we may add Holloway's comments:

The metaphors of the speech, of ploughing, of "creauncing," hold true for mercantile undertakings, yet they are blasphemy. In the Roman de la Rose, a Golden Calf of a poem, the plough metaphor applied to sex, "Plough, barons, plough!" to man's seed sown for the harvest of a new generation. In Piers Plowman the plough metaphor, as in Christ's parables, applied to preaching, to words as seeds to be sown in men's hearts. (192-93)

Elsewhere Holloway has pointed out the "scribal" aspect of this multipurpose symbol. Her elaboration of Isidore's pronouncement is particularly germane. Isidore

had quoted the metaphor in a lost Roman comedy [cf. above] stating that the Ancients had written furrow-wise, in Greek [. . .] boustrophedon, turning like oxen in ploughing, writing from left to right and from right to left alternately. A medieval adage reads: "He urged on the oxen, ploughed white fields, held a white plough, and sowed black seed" [Jeffrey 313-14]. Chaucer is familiar with the scribal metaphor though he uses it in an apparently oral tale. The knight in order to excuse his omission of a complete description of the wedding of Ypolita to Theseus explains:

I have, Good woot, a large feeld to ere,
And wayke been the oxen in my plough, (886-887)
[etc.]. (167-68)

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