READING MEDIEVAL COURTESY

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This dissertation explores the significance of medieval courtesy literature in its larger literary context. Courtesy literature was central to early education; furthermore, alluding to courtesy books as a literary move could evoke problems surrounding the educational process they stood in for as well as problems surrounding self, community, and society. I have attempted to restore some of the context that shows courtesy literature to be more than just the formulaic, sententious side that shows most readily. I begin by reading the Harley 2253 version of *Urbain le courtois*, together with other works related to it, arguing that *Urbain* is a more dynamic examination of family and social life than a reading of the poem in isolation might suggest, one that raises more questions than it answers about the instability of words, the limitations of didacticism, and the practicability of any set of precepts in a treacherous society. I then read Guillaume de Machaut's *Fonteinne amoureuse* and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* as literary texts that draw on the language and conventions of didactic literature. Scenes of social instruction offer solutions to problems that could not be solved while characters occupy their ordinary social roles, though these special, mutually productive relationships are possible only in momentary departures from the ordinary world—in dreams, in poetry. I turn finally to *Piers Plowman*, which, like Machaut's and Chaucer's poems, brings the language of courtesy and the *habitus* of grammar school out of the schoolroom. Conscience transforms the initially suspect ethos of courtliness into "patient courtesy," stretching the limits of the concept and his own identity. Despite the

comforting solidity of simple, didactic couplets, courtesy cannot entirely resolve the complexities of social life, and this is evident in literary works and courtesy books alike. Instead, courtesy (and the larger *habitus* it stands in for) offers a starting point for inquiry, a set of "rules" to be explicated, rationalized, adapted, parodied, and translated, in the pursuit of a knowledge that can never quite be contained in words.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Melissa Winders was born in Atlanta, Georgia. Her interest in literature and the Middle Ages dates from childhood and shaped the course of her studies at Bard College. She graduated from Bard in 2005 with a B.A. in Languages and Literature. She received her M.A. in English from Cornell University in 2008.

To my family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Nothing seems more ineffable, more incommunicable, more inimitable, and, therefore, more precious, than the values given body, *made* body by the transubstantiation achieved by the hidden persuasion of an implicit pedagogy, capable of instilling a whole cosmology, an ethic, a metaphysic, a political philosophy, through injunctions as insignificant as "stand up straight" or "don't hold your knife in your left hand."
>
> Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*

> There are things I do not know. I was absent the day they passed out the information sheets…Right away I knew I'd missed something important. "Ask the other students to fill you in on what happened while you were ill," the principal said when I handed her the note from my mother. But none of the others would talk to me. Immediately I knew this was because they'd gotten the information sheets and we no longer spoke the same language.
>
> A. M. Homes, "Things You Should Know"

There are the "rules" they tell you about and the ones they do not, the rules that are unspoken because (once one knows them) they go without saying. A. M. Homes's story "Things You Should Know" captures the paradox of this latter kind of knowledge: to acquire it is generally to become blind to it. Homes's protagonist cannot get anyone to give her the "information sheet" because the information exists below the level of conscious discourse (as

Bourdieu would put it). Those who "got the sheets" do not have the language to communicate the knowledge she seeks or to understand her when she asks for it. She herself has only the inkling that this is knowledge that one has, not gets: "It's not things to know, not things you will learn, but things you already should know but maybe are a little dumb, so you don't."[1] Her ignorance makes her feel alienated from everyone else at school, but it does give her the perspective to be aware of the existence of "things you should know," even when, at the end of the story, she acquires the elusive knowledge years later. For while there may have been no sheet, there were in fact things that she did not know, things that they do perhaps teach in school but not in so many words, and that she has apparently learned since: "Because I had stated this and had not asked for a second chance, because I was standing and he was seated, because it was still early in the evening, the man who had stopped me nodded, all right."[2] The implied logic linking these apparently arbitrary circumstances is an example of the things she now knows and, more importantly, does; her knowledge is expressed in actions and attitudes that allow her to keep control when the man tries to interrupt and to claim ownership of the "list," which at the end of the story has become something "you make yourself."[3]

Courtesy literature inhabits the nebulous territory between spoken and unspoken knowledge with which Homes's protagonist struggles, in that it attempts to make implicit pedagogy explicit. After all, what, and who, is it for? What information does it offer that the audience has not already internalized? It is reasonable to assume that, among the upper classes at least, courtesy was primarily taught by parents or guardians, through implicit pedagogy as well as direct instruction and correction. Indeed, the custom of fosterage was meant to provide a sort

[1] Homes, *Things You Should Know*, 133.
[2] Ibid., 134.
[3] Ibid.

of apprenticeship in courtesy and social graces, among other skills.[4] Why own, or produce, a courtesy text, then? What was it good for, and for whom?

As to the "who," the audience of courtesy literature was relatively broad, increasingly so towards the later Middle Ages. Courtesy books belonged to schools and monasteries, royal tutors, noble households, gentry, merchants, and masons.[5] For some among this audience—upwardly mobile non-nobles--these texts might have served to supply missing cultural capital.[6] This is particularly the case in the later Middle Ages, when courtesy books became more prolific and began to be written in English. However, the audience of courtesy books also included those who would not have needed to learn courtesy from a book, such as the "henchmen" at the court of Edward IV, who were ideally located to receive implicit pedagogy if anyone was.[7] Furthermore, if courtesy books were in one sense excessive in supplementing implicit pedagogy for such readers, they fell short in another sense, in that no courtesy book could fully stand in for a *habitus* for those who lacked such early training.

Doubtless different groups had different relationships to courtesy literature, but I argue that at a basic level courtesy literature was good for education. Perhaps the primary practical use for courtesy literature was the teaching of Latin and French. The *Distichs of Cato* were long used for basic grammar instruction in schools, and the encyclopedic *Urbanus Magnus* was used to teach Latin at a more advanced level in monasteries. French courtesy poems were also used to teach French; such instruction would have taken place at home, and indeed manuscripts containing French courtesy poems tend to belong to noble and gentle households. Thus a very straightforward answer to the question of what courtesy literature was good for was that it was

[4] Keen, *Chivalry*, 26.
[5] See Part I of Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet*, 1985.
[6] See e.g. Amos, "For Manners Make Man."
[7] Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, 82.

good for learning language and grammar, that it provided material for parsing and useful vocabulary. But why should courtesy books in particular be used for this purpose? The answer, I argue, is that learning courtesy, like learning Latin or French, was part of a larger process of education as habitus acquisition. As Katharine Breen asserts, learning (Latin) grammar meant learning how to think: "For the traditionalists, *grammatica* was not simply one *habitus* among many, but rather the first and paradigmatic *habitus* to which all subsequent *habitūs* necessarily referred."[8] The very process of learning grammar was a formative process of self-regulation, preparing the student to become part of a learned community. Thus it makes a certain sense that the development of this first *habitus* should involve studying texts that record many of the social scripts, gestures, values, and attitudes that would be second nature to a "courteous" person; nor is it surprising that so many courtesy texts should stress the self-regulation or governance that according to Breen was so central to the medieval conception of *habitus*. Through such an educational process, "correct" habits, attitudes, language, and structures of thought are knit together from the beginning.

My approach to courtesy and courtesy literature, then, has been guided by Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which he defines as "a system of lasting, transposable dispositions which…functions at every moment as a matrix of *perceptions, appreciations,* and *actions*."[9] As described in my epigraph, a *habitus*, for Bourdieu, is primarily internalized through "implicit pedagogy," an immersive apprenticeship in practical mastery. This process works below the level of discourse; these dispositions are the things they don't tell you about. Reading courtesy literature in the context of habitus helps to avoid the misreadings to which medieval didactic literature is susceptible, specifically a focus on the static, sententious aspects of texts to the

[8]Breen, *Imagining an English Reading Public, 1150-1400*, 5.
[9] Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, 82–3.

exclusion of the dynamic, heuristic aspects. From the time of Norbert Elias and before, scholars have seen medieval courtesy literature as inflexible and simplistic, repeating the same basic rules for behavior for centuries. This misapprehension is understandable given the conventional form of the literature, particularly when the texts are read in isolation. However, thinking of courtesy as part of a *habitus* prompts us to look for a more complex relationship between rules and standards and their practice, for resistance and adaptation within the structures outlined by courtesy literature.[10] To fully appreciate medieval courtesy literature is to recognize the *habitus* that defines its reception and use: not just the rules and *sententiae* but the educational process by which they are internalized, practiced, worked on, and adapted. Evidence of practice can be elusive when one is investigating an era many centuries past; this is one of the reasons that it has been so easy to focus only on the sententious side, the rules that have survived in manuscripts long after those who practiced and experienced them had died.[11] Nevertheless, the texts that survive from the Middle Ages can tell us about the other side, the *habitus*, if we know to look for it. Strohm finds in coronation rituals telling evidence of exceptional moments, departures from the norm. I look for dynamism in courtesy literature by placing it in intertextual conversation with texts of other genres, such as satire and narrative literature, to reveal the *habitus* that animates it.

[10] Strohm, "Coronation as Legible Practice." is exemplary in this regard. Strohm points out that Bourdieu's practice theory allows us to recognize the importance of structures without assuming them to be monolithic: "[P]ractices open the possibility of symbolic manipulation of power relations out of which they are produced…Moreover…social change may be a paradoxical result of good-faith failure; that is, change may result from 'failed reproduction'"(3). Other scholars have similarly used Bourdieu's framework to bring to the surface unspoken social dynamics in medieval literature, particularly the works of Chaucer. Fewer, "The Second Nature." draws on Strohm and the concept of *habitus* (both Bourdieu's habitus and classical and medieval conceptions of *habitus*) to illuminate the complexity of medieval social practices in texts like Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. Koster, "Privitee, Habitus, and Proximity." argues that the concept of habitus helps us to avoid misreading the complex social negotiations of Chaucer's poem.

[11] For a discussion of the elusiveness of praxis, see the introduction to Ashley and Clark, *Medieval Conduct*.

The concept of courtesy outlined or implied in medieval texts--courtesy poems, other varieties of didactic literature, and literary or narrative works that deal with the idea of courtesy in some fashion--looks not so much like a static set of rules or hierarchical relations or a rarefied ideal as a concept that includes both a range of possible strategies of behavior, self-presentation, and social relations and the social landscape one navigates using this social repertoire. Medieval courtesy involves holding one's utensils or passing a cup in a certain way, yes, but also observing certain conventions of gesture, gaze, and carriage, and deploying certain phrases or even genres of speech in particular times and places. Courtesy often seems like a language, or at least a social dialect: one Middle English romance even makes a joke of describing it as such.[12] Furthermore, as Chretien's Percival would attest, the "rules" of courtesy are not to be enacted in a simple or mechanical fashion; they are, again, more like a common vocabulary to be deployed and adapted as the situation requires. In works as diverse as Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, Langland's *Piers Plowman*, and the anonymous "King in Disguise" romances, characters form relationships, learn, and teach each other not only by following the precepts of courtesy but also by strategically departing from those precepts, creating alternative or subcultural versions of them, and redefining them in new contexts.

My discussion of texts thus far assumes a distinction between courtesy books and literary texts. The literary status of didactic texts (and *vice versa*) can be a thorny issue, and I am aware of the danger of trying to neatly separate the two. It has, nevertheless, been useful to distinguish the genre of "courtesy books"—the group of texts Nicholls describes in *The Matter of Courtesy*—as texts that hew to shared conventions and often share whole phrases, lines, or groups of lines. Still, I consider it important to attend to what these texts have to say to other

[12] This is the "King in Disguise" romance *Adam the Shepherd*, which I discuss in Chapter Four below.

types of writing as well as to each other. Thus I have chosen to focus not only on courtesy books (specifically the courtesy poem *Urbain le courtois*) but on literary, narrative poems that draw on or respond to the discourse of courtesy. This provides a fuller, more complex picture of medieval courtesy and gives a better idea of what sorts of ideas and problems courtesy was good for thinking through than do the courtesy texts in isolation. Even in my second chapter, in which I focus on *Urbain le courtois,* I find it necessary to attend to the larger intertextual "conversation" within Harley 2253—including the fabliau *Le jongleur d'Ely et le roy d'Angleterre* and the political poem *Trailbaston*—of which *Urbain le courtois* is one voice among several. Similarly, in the following chapters I argue that courtesy, and the formative educational process of which it is a part, provides a language and a set of metaphors useful for thinking through love, grief, community, and salvation in works from Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* to Langland's *Piers Plowman*.

I have also found it necessary to attend to the contribution to this conversation of texts written in French and Latin. In the fourteenth century, the period of my focus, neglecting these voices gives an incomplete view of courtesy. Indeed, histories of courtesy and didactic literature have at times given medieval courtesy short shrift because of the distorting effect of looking primarily at texts in English. For example, in the introduction to her influential book *From Courtesy to Civility*, Bryson claims that there were no "systematic and precise" treatments of manners in England until the fifteenth century and the appearance of English vernacular poems like *Stans Puer ad Mensam* and *The Babees Book*.[13] In fact, courtesy poems very similar to the fifteenth-century English ones Bryson mentions did exist before the fifteenth century, but they were written in Anglo-Norman, perhaps unsurprising given their role in educating upper-class children. As Langland's Reason puts it in the late fourteenth century,

[13] Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, 27.

"Frenche men and fre men affaiteth thus hire children:

Bele vertue est suffraunce; mal dire est petite vengeance.

Bien dire et bien suffrir fait lui suffrant a bien venir.

[French men and noblemen train their children thus: Patience is a fair virtue; to speak ill is small vengeance. To speak well and suffer well will cause the patient one to come to good.]

(B.11.382-4)[14]

Reason's attribution of the French didactic couplet to French men and noble Englishmen suggests that for courtesy books written in Langland's time (and before), we should look to Anglo-Norman literature, and indeed courtesy poems like *Urbain le courtois*, *Edward*, and *Bon enfant* appear in English manuscripts dating to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[15] Earlier still are English courtesy books in Latin, notably *Urbanus Magnus*, which I argue provided source material for the Harley 2253 version of *Urbain le courtois*.[16] Reading the French and Latin materials means doing a great deal of hunting around for editions, and some of them have not yet been edited. At present anyone wanting to read *Urbain le courtois* has recourse only to the manuscript itself or Ker's facsimile.[17] There is an edition of *Urbanus Magnus* but no translation from the Latin. Nevertheless, these less familiar texts are vital to our understanding of courtesy in medieval England. It is encouraging that they are beginning to get more scholarly attention

[14] The source of this couplet is unknown. A similar sentiment appears in the MS Harley 2253 version of *Urbain le courtois*: "Si ascun home vous volt mesdire/ ne sailez mie por ce en yre/ lessez ly dire ces volenteez/ qar mieux venqe ne ly poez" [If any man wants to slander you, by no means rush out in anger because of it. Let him say what he wants, for you can't have a better revenge] (172-5). Quotations from the B text of *Piers Plowman* are from Donaldson and Kane, *Piers Plowman*.

[15] These include Selden supra 74 (*s.* xiii[2]) and Bodley 425 (*s.* xiv) among others. See H. Rosamond Parsons, "Anglo-Norman Books of Courtesy and Nurture," 383-5).

[16] See Smyly, *Urbanus Magnus Danielis Becclesiensis*.

[17] A three-volume edition of the complete contents of Harley 2253 is forthcoming from TEAMS. At present, to my knowledge, my edition of Harley's *Urbain le courtois* in the appendix of this dissertation is the only one. For the facsimile, see Ker, *Facsimile of British Museum MS. Harley 2253*.

(particularly the Anglo-Norman ones), and I have included a representative selection as far as the scope of this project has allowed.

For the purposes of this project I have, for the most part, limited myself to the fourteenth century in order to include courtesy books and literary narratives, texts in French and Latin as well as English. I have chosen *Urbain le courtois* as my primary example of a courtesy text because it speaks to so many of the other kinds of writing that are important to this dissertation. It is in French, as are many of the courtesy books current in fourteenth-century England; however, it comes from MS Harley 2253, which brings together all three of England's major languages of the time, and it owes a great deal to a Latin courtesy book, the late twelfth-century *Urbanus Magnus*. It also offers links to other genres of writing, both because the poem itself features narrative moments at several points and because it shares a set of verbal echoes with two other poems in Harley 2253, a *fabliau* and an outlaw poem. From there I move to literary texts that include the themes and sometimes the language of courtesy literature. I pair a canonical English text, Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, with a French one, *Le fonteinne amoureuse* of Guillaume de Machaut, in order to explore the intersection of courtesy with the "courtly" mode of literature; Chaucer's use of Guillaume's poem also provides a counterpart to the Harley scribe's translation, adaptation, and reimagining of his sources. Finally, I turn to *Piers Plowman*, a poem in which courtesy, courtliness, and didacticism show up in unexpected contexts.

In my second chapter I seek to demonstrate the medieval courtesy is more than just manners and table etiquette, more than the specific genre of courtesy books, though these elements are an important part of it. I do so by reading an Anglo-Norman courtesy poem, the Harley 2253 version of *Urbain le courtois*, together with other works related to it: sources and analogues, companion pieces from the same manuscript, and contemporary texts sharing its

broad concerns with family, heritage, reputation, and conflict resolution. In comparing *Urbain* to other courtesy poems, including the Latin source *Urbanus Magnus* as well as other versions of the Anglo-Norman *Urbain*, I argue that *Urbain* is a more dynamic examination of family and social life than a reading of the poem in isolation might suggest. While the poem appears to be a hodgepodge of formulaic *sententiae*, the author/adaptor's choice of material from the (much longer) source and his patterns of amplification suggest that he made choices about what subjects to emphasize, what audiences to address. Furthermore, the additions and amplifications in the Harley *Urbain* often amount to interpretation: many of these passages either rationalize or dramatize what in the source are precepts given without explanation or justification. Through comparisons with passages from *Piers Plowman*, I seek to demonstrate that a courtesy poem can ask some of the same questions as literary or philosophical texts about what it means to live in a community and to weigh responsibilities to self, neighbors, forbears and heirs, and God—and that what answers it offers exist within a range of possible positions and emphases. Finally, I argue that, considered as part of a conversation with other texts in Harley 2253, specifically the fabliau *Le jongleur d'Ely* and the outlaw poem *Trailbaston*, Harley's *Urbain* may raise more questions than it answers about the instability of words, the limitations of didacticism, and the practicability of any set of precepts in a treacherous society.

As the second chapter discusses the status of the literary in a courtesy book, the third deals with the status of courtesy in literary works. I read two narratives of social instruction, Guillaume de Machaut's *Fonteinne amoureuse* and Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, as literary texts that draw on the language and conventions of didactic literature. *La fonteinne amoureuse* approaches problems of loss using the structures of the clerical *habitus*, using the process of grammar school education as a metaphor for love. *The Book of the Duchess* preserves its

source's educational focus and gestures more specifically towards both the written and unwritten rules of courtesy. The Black Knight uses the language of courtesy books to portray his instruction by Blanche, while Geffrey uses the unwritten rules of courtesy—styles of speech, gesture, and behavior—to establish a common language as he becomes the Knight's new instructor.

Chapter Four continues my focus on courtesy and education in literary works. I turn to *Piers Plowman*, which, like *La fonteinne amoureuse* and *The Book of the Duchess*, brings the language of courtesy and courtesy books and the *habitus* of grammar school out of the schoolroom. That courtesy, like learning (or *clergie*), is a problem in the poem is indicated by the fact that Langland works against generic expectations by associating Conscience, who would typically be a prickly character in most allegories, with courtesy, applying the word to him more than to any other character; and by the changes in Conscience's relationship to courtesy, which stretch the limits of his very identity. Again, I argue that the connection between courtesy and basic education is fundamental. Conscience goes from standing against a cynical, self-serving version of courtesy in the Meed episode to embracing what I call "patient courtesy": a courtesy suffused with grace, with the openness, humility, and educability of a student or a page. Still, as in the *Jongleur d'Ely/Urbain le Courtois/Trailbaston* series in Harley 2253, courtesy provides no easy answers. Conscience practices courtesy without making distinctions—yet making distinctions is part of what conscience as a faculty does. He offers fair welcome when it might be more prudent to shut the door, imperiling Unity and the stability of his own identity as an allegorical figure. Despite the comforting solidity of simple, didactic couplets, courtesy cannot entirely resolve the complexities and conflicts of social life, and this is evident not just in literary works like *Piers Plowman* and *The Book of the Duchess* but in courtesy books themselves.

Instead, courtesy (and the larger *habitus* it stands in for) offers a starting point for inquiry, a set of "rules" to be explicated, rationalized, adapted, parodied, and translated, in the pursuit of a knowledge that can never quite be contained in words.

CHAPTER 2

URBAIN LE COURTOIS: COURTESY, EDUCATION, AND THE POWER OF WORDS

> There are two kinds of taste in the appreciation of imaginative literature: the taste for emotions of surprise and the taste for emotions of recognition.
>
> --Henry James, "Anthony Trollope"[18]
>
> Quar vos meymes savez bien/ Que nule trop valt rien.
>
> --Harley 2253, *Le jongleur d'Ely e le roi de Engleterre*

Though James refers to "imaginative" and not didactic literature in the epigraph above, and I am not suggesting an analogy between *Urbain le courtois* and the likes of *Barchester Towers*, nevertheless the distinction between surprise and recognition is a useful way to think about courtesy books and their relationship to more "literary" texts. If courtesy books offered pleasure as well as utility—and I think they may sometimes have, then as now—much of that pleasure must have appealed to the taste for recognition. After all, courtesy books generally tell the audience things they already know, often in familiar language and formulas. When other kinds of literature cite or allude to courtesy books, the rhetorical effect depends on this familiarity as well. The precepts of courtesy books echo in works like Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* and *Piers Plowman*, suggesting that while poems like *Urbain* and other examples of the genre are the stuff of elementary education, they remained part of the mental edifice of a medieval writer or reader precisely because they are so basic. They formed a fund of

[18] James, *Partial Portraits*, 133.

commonplace wisdom shared by anyone with some level of education; most such people had probably memorized a courtesy poem in childhood and could summon an apt couplet or feel a flash of recognition when encountering one. Citing or alluding to courtesy literature as a rhetorical move allows authors like Chaucer and Langland to pursue issues associated with reception of that genre: education, character formation, social identity, group inclusion or exclusion.

The chapters following this one will focus on the subtle uses such literary works make of the language and conventions of courtesy literature, but such creative adaptation and reimagining of courtesy books is not limited to Chaucer and Langland—they can be found in the courtesy books themselves. The Harley *Urbain le Courtois* is an example of such a work that, for all of its conventional, formulaic content, nevertheless holds some surprises. It shows a scribe translating and adapting material in a dynamic way: his amplifications add commentary to the *sententiae* of his source material, seek to draw out or supply the underlying logic behind precepts, and at times even veer into narrative. He also adds material that puts the poem in conversation with other texts in the manuscript about the duplicity of speech and reputation, adding a layer of complexity as the speaker Urbain's voice is joined by those of other speakers who may or may not be "sage" and "de grant valour." Being told what one already knows begins to seem not so simple a proposition after all.

Because many of my claims in this chapter concern the relationship of the Harley *Urbain* to its sources and analogues, and because *Urbain* in any form is not today a well-known poem, I will begin with background on the poem before discussing patterns of scribal authorship in the Harley *Urbain* and what they suggest about what one could do with a courtesy poem in the

Middle Ages. The work known as *Urbain le courtois* (or simply *Urbain*) exists in at least three rather different versions, and so it cannot really be treated, in depth at least, as a single poem. Though this complicates any discussion of *Urbain*, it also offers a range of local interpretations of *Urbain'*s core of commonplace wisdom, highlighting the divergences in scribes' reception and understanding of the material as well as the commonalities. Such a case is not uncommon among medieval courtesy literature. Because the material is so conventional, and because scribes so often excerpted from longer works and combined and adapted material from multiple sources, it can be difficult to draw clear lines between works or establish relationships with any precision.[19]

The most current edition of *Urbain* is still the one H. Rosamond Parsons published in 1929.[20] Parsons gives two editions of *Urbain*, an "earlier" version and a "later" one.[21] Her designations are problematic because she gives no convincing evidence that the one predates the other.[22] A third version, of which Parsons was not aware, appears in Harley 2253. The longest

[19] See Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet*, 1985, 161–76.
[20] Parsons, "Anglo-Norman Books of Courtesy and Nurture," June 1929." Parsons's edition is based on eight manuscripts. She gives these, roughly in chronological order, as follows: Selden supra 74, second half of the 13th century (sigil "S" assigned by Parsons); Bodley 39, end of the 13th century (F; a fragment of the poem appears on the flyleaf of this ms, a collection of Latin records relating to St. Mary's abbey, York); Douce 210, c. 1300 (D); CUL Gg.1.1., early 14th century (G); Trinity O.1.17., 14th century (O); Bodley 425, 14th century (U); Trinity B.14.40, c. 1415 (T); and Bodley 9, c. 1430 (C). See p. 385. Two other versions, of which Parsons was apparently unaware, appear in Harley 2253 (c. 1340) and Emmanuel 1.4.31. According to Jonathan Nicholls, the Emmanuel version has been edited by J. P. Strachey in "Anglo-Norman Poems from Emmanuel MS 1.4.31," ("unpublished typescript in Newnham College, Cambridge, 1962"). See Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet*, 1985, 187. The Harley version has not hitherto been edited: my edition appears as an appendix to this dissertation. Throughout this chapter, I will use Parsons's sigils, and I will assign the sigil H to Harley 2253.
[21] Her earlier version includes D, G, O, C, and part of F, and her later version includes S, U, T, and part of F.
[22]Parsons' evidence for this dating is based on the fact that one manuscript, F, contains material from both versions. She posits a scenario in which the scribe of F (or of F's posited exemplar) supplements the earlier version, which is "becoming insufficient and antiquated," with new material of his own composition; later scribes then reproduce the new material without the old (388). It is not self-evident that the SUT group is the new material and the DGOC the old, however. In fact, S, dated to the second half of the 13th century, is probably the earliest MS. Parson's reason for regarding the DGOC version as earlier is a rather tenuous ontogeny-recapitulates-phylogeny argument: she sees the "earlier" version as simple and childlike and the "later" version as more concerned with *fine amour* and thus more sophisticated: "The page is no longer a restless little boy…but a perfect little knight in embryo" (394). In any case, F is not the only "hybrid" version; the Harley version likewise contains material from both versions as well as unique material and lines that Parsons thought to be unique to D, G, and O from her "early" group (D being her base text for the "early version"), U (her base text for the "later version"), and, most extensively, S (the earliest MS).

surviving version, Harley combines material from both of Parsons's versions, has more unique lines than any other version, and shares a number of lines that Parsons believed to be unique to one or another of the other versions, both "early" and "late." For the sake of clarity and convenience, when referring to particular versions of *Urbain* I will distinguish the versions described by Parsons using her terminology and refer to "PE" (Parsons Earlier) and "PL" (Parsons Later), with the caveat that we must consider the relative dating of these versions indeterminate. Unless otherwise stated, PE and PL refer to Parsons's editions as collated; Parsons takes D as the basis of PE and U as the basis of PL. I will refer to the Harley 2253 version as "Harley."

It is probably impossible to determine the relative dating or the precise genetic relationships between the versions. What can be assumed is that the poem known as *Urbain* dates probably to the middle of the thirteenth century;[23] that it encompasses an array of material only some of which appears in any given manuscript version; and that we now know that the versions, though often quite different from each other, all draw heavily on a common Latin source, the encyclopedic *Urbanus Magnus.*[24] *Urbanus Magnus* was composed in the last quarter of the twelfth century; at 2839 hexameters, it is "the most comprehensive courtesy poem in any language, covering every aspect of life."[25] It is composed of four main sections, each representing a different subgenre of conduct literature. The first section is indebted to the *Distichs of Cato* and is made up of proverbs and general precepts for living well and wisely. The second covers table etiquette and also circulated independently as *Liber curialis*.[26] The third is in the "mirror" tradition and offers specialized advice for a broad array of estates and professions,

[23] Nicholls, 187.
[24] Lachaud, "Littérature de Civilité." The only full edition of *Urbanus Magnus* is Smyly, *Urbanus Magnus Danielis Becclesiensis.*
[25] Nicholls, 185.
[26] Ibid., 150.

with a heavy focus on lords, judges and lawyers, and administrators but also including advice for groups such as teachers and students, merchants and doctors, sailors and fowlers; it also contains more general advice for household management. The final section is in the dietetic or *Regimen sanitatis* tradition, drawing heavily from the *regimen* known as *Schola Salernitana*.[27] *Urbain*'s debt to *Urbanus Magnus*, which has only recently been recognized, illuminates features of the poem that otherwise seem strange, including the wide variation between versions (PE and PL have only twenty-two lines in common), the loose organization, and the sudden shifts of subject matter.[28]

Most likely *Urbain* served to adapt *Urbanus Magnus* for household use. Manuscript evidence indicates that Latin courtesy poems are most often associated with schools, vernacular poems with noble households, and this seems to be the case for the manuscripts of *Urbain*.[29] *Urbanus Magnus*, like other Latin courtesy poems, was used to teach Latin, and in at least one instance *Urbain* was used for French instruction (which would have taken place at home rather

[27] Ibid., 173.

[28] To my knowledge Lachaud's 2001 article is the only one to directly argue for the influence of *Urbanus Magnus* on *Urbain.* Nicholls and Gillingham, "From *Civilitas* to Civility: Codes of Manners in Medieval and Early Modern England." discuss the influence of *Urbanus Magnus* on later courtesy literature more generally.

[29] Nicholls, 73. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne says of one manuscript containing *Urbain*, Parsons's sigil D, "The manuscript is thus in large part an anthology of texts dealing with the estates and the spiritual and moral obligations of lay people and particularly the estate of marriage. If MS Douce 21 is not the copy of a collection made for a seigneurial patron, it is an anthology that would make a valuable resource for a chaplain required to instruct his patron on these matters." See Wogan-Browne, "How to Marry Your Wife with Chastity, Honour, and Fin' Amor in Thirteenth-Century England," -." This is very similar to the probable context of Harley 2253. Another manuscript, G, contains items that might be useful for a household chaplain, including William of Wadington's *Manuel de pechiez*, three guides for confession, a number of basic devotional materials in French (prayers, the penitential psalms, poems on the passions), and Walter of Bibbesworth's treatise for learning French. See Cambridge University Library, *A catalogue of the manuscripts preserved in the Library of the University of Cambridge*. Bibbesworth's treatise also appears in S, in which it is followed by Walter of Henley's treatise on estate management (again, suggestive of a manorial context); the fragment of *Urbain* on the flyleaves of F (Bodley 39) is followed by a fragment of Bibbesworth's treatise as well. For S, see Bodleian Library et al., *A Summary Catalogue*. For F, see Parsons, 384. Other common manuscript neighbors of *Urbain* consistent with the context that Wogan-Browne proposes for D include a French version of Edmund of Canterbury's *Speculum Ecclesie* (D, S, O); Gossuin de Metz's French encyclopedia *Image du monde* (G, S); and, notably, versions of the antifeminist poems "Le blasme des femmes" and "De conjuge non ducenda" (D, G, O, C, and Harley).

than at school).[30] The Latin poem is encyclopedic in scope, covering all sorts of quotidian issues in remarkable detail: care of fingernails and nose hairs, when, where, and how to conduct bodily functions, when to say "Wassail" at a feast, what to do if one receives two dinner invitations for the same evening, how to visit a prostitute if one must, etc. *Urbain*, at its longest hardly a tenth of the length of *Urbanus*, offers a more general and practical version of *Urbanus*'s content, leaving out the microscopic detail, satirical excursions, and exuberant wordplay.[31] Though compact, it does preserve some of the basic elements of *Urbanus*: the moral and Catonian proverbs, basic table etiquette, rules for dealing with family, friends, and neighbors, and even "mirrors" for different professions (pared down to the most relevant, including student, lord, lawyer, and counselor). What *Urbanus* divides into four sections by genre *Urbain* presents as a continuous series, suggesting that the different genres and diverse subjects were in some sense considered of a piece.[32] In short, *Urbain* preserves a generalized version of *Urbanus*'s encyclopedic scope and retains (or adds) only the details that are most germane and practical.

The Harley version of *Urbain* gives a good sense of the poem's audience and context. It appears in Harley 2253, a trilingual (English, Anglo-Norman, Latin) miscellany probably created for use in a noble household circa 1340.[33] Though the identity of the main scribe (who was the scribe of *Urbain*) is unknown, there is strong evidence that he was a chaplain with legal training, active in the Ludlow, Shropshire area and possibly serving in an administrative position in a

[30] For the appearance of *Urbanus Magnus* in schoolbooks, see Nicholls, 66-8 and Smylie, vii-viii. *Urbain* appears with a full (frequently inaccurate) interlinear translation in the fifteenth-century treatise *Femina*, which was intended to teach children French. See Rothwell, *Femina (Trinity College, Cambridge MS B.14.40)*. All three versions of the poem have lines on the importance of learning French.

[31] E.g. "Si luco uel agro uentris purgatio fiat,/ Flamina sint uenti uentrem purgantis in ore" [Should the bowels be voided in a wood or field, the wind should be blowing towards the face of the one voiding his bowels] (1090-91; here and elsewhere, translations are mine). The excess of detail lavished on a mundane bodily function allows for an educational display of various word forms and cases (*ventris*, *ventrem*, *purgatio*, *purgantis*) and a pair of false cognates (*venti ventrem*).

[32] Similarly, two manuscripts (Bodley 310 and Rawlinson C.552) include condensed versions of *Urbanus Magnus* made up of extracts drawn from throughout the poem, the latter under the heading *Proverbia Urbani*. See Nicholls, 162.

[33] Revard, "Scribe and Provenance." 32.

noble household.[34] Such a scribe might have included *Urbain* for the instruction of household members, both in the French language and the "language" of social mores. *Urbain*'s focus and subject matter is consistent with the concerns of a noble (or gentle) household: reputation, family, marriage, and child-rearing, good relations with neighbors. The scribe's adaptation of his material suggests how one reader at least interpreted and responded to courtesy literature and how he understood the place of courtesy in the fabric of everyday life.

In particular, the material unique to the Harley *Urbain*, of which there is more and more as the poem progresses, suggests a pattern of scribal authorship and amplification. While it is impossible to determine if any unique line or passage was composed by the scribe or simply taken from a lost exemplar, many such passages suggest a consistent *modus operandi*: the scribe amplifies by associative linking and repetition of key words; elaborates on sententious material with rationalizations and narrative moments; and explicates Latin material as he translates. All of these techniques are consistent with the habits of a secular cleric concerned with instruction and pastoral care; he seems to be there on the page, guiding the reader (or hearer) towards proper understanding and use of the poem's content.[35]

Harley's version of a passage on choosing a wife may be taken as an example of the scribe's *modus operandi.* It includes several of his signature techniques: amplification of a couplet into multiple lines on the same rhyme, repetition and embroidery of key words, and the suggestion of a rationale or explanation. Below is the Harley version together with corresponding lines from PL:

[34] Ibid. According to Revard he produced at least two other manuscripts with materials appropriate for the office of chaplain to a noble household, Harley 273 (a book of devotional and instructional materials) and Royal 12.C.xii. (a commonplace book also containing devotional and instructional materials), as well as some 41 deeds and charters.
[35] There is some evidence that he may have been the author of some of the contents of his manuscripts, including *Fouke le fitz Waryn* in Royal 12.C.xii and the biblical translations and unique fabliaux prologues and epilogues in Harley 2253. For the Harley scribe's possible authorship of Fouke and the biblical translations, see Thompson, "'Frankis Rimes Here I Redd,/Communlik in Ilk[a] Sted ….'" For the fabliaux prologues and epilogues, see Nolan, "Anthologizing Ribaldry."

mes de vne chose vous gardez

e si fiez que senez

prendre femme tost ne hastez

ne ia femme ne prenez

pur sa valour ou son pris

sanz consail de vos amys

Si pur tei meismes prese lauiez

de lur aie bien faudrez

[But concerning one thing take heed and act wisely: do not hasten to take a wife, and marry no woman for her value or worth without the counsel of your friends. If you have chosen a wife by yourself, you will indeed miss their support.] (H 77-84)

Mes de une rien vous gardez,

Ke ja en femme ne affiez

Pur sa valour ne pur son pris,

Saunz counsail de voz amys.

[But concerning one thing take heed, that you never marry a woman for her value or worth without the counsel of your friends.]

(PL 119-22)

The evidence for scribal authorship in the Harley version lies in the form of its lines, specifically patterns in rhyme words and repeated key words. I take them to be indicative of the scribe's typical amplification technique: he repeats and elaborates on key words in the original lines to form new lines, and these new lines repeat the end rhymes of the lines they amplify. In this case, Harley expands what in PL is a couplet into four lines. Because the new material is inserted

between the first and second lines of the (postulated) original couplet, all four of Harley's lines must rhyme on "-ez" to preserve the rhyme scheme. "Prendre femme tost ne hastez" is very similar to the line it expands, "ne ia femme ne prenez" ("Ke ja en femme ne affiez" in PL); essentially it repeats the key words "femme" and "prendre" and adds the words "tost" and "hastez." These new lines do more than repeat the original sentiment; they add a layer of complexity and even an implicit interpretation. The added lines expand one injunction into two: do not choose a wife in haste, and do not choose a wife without consulting your friends (friends here takes the sense of parents, guardians, and family members). The pairing of the injunctions suggests that choosing a wife without counsel is a rash, imprudent act, much like marrying in haste. Thus it implies a rationale for the advice, which in the original version is a simple prohibition without explanation. The scribe adds two more lines at the end of the passage, returning to the rhyme on "-ez": "Si por tei meismes prese l'aviez/ De lur aie bien faudrez." These lines add a further incentive for the following its advice, again appealing to prudence and long-term well-being: choosing a wife on one's own initiative represents not only a personal failure of prudence (for which he will pay when the marriage becomes a burden)[36] but also an ill-advised forfeiture of familial support.[37] Later in the same passage the scribe expands a couplet in a similar manner, adding a rationalization and extending the end rhyme for the additional lines:

> Ta feme espouse ben amez
>
> en nul autre ne delitez
>
> qar de dieu hay serrez
>
> e de ton prome poi amez.

[36] Cf lines 331-2: "veiez qe ele seit sage/ qe tei ne peyse la mariage."

[37] Robert of Brunne's *Handlying Synne* makes the same point from a more specifically religious standpoint in its section on the Fourth Commandment ("honor thy father and mother"): "Þou owyst to do no þing style/ Withoute leue of þy fadrys wylle;/ Þat ys to seye, take no wife/ For to make betwyx ȝou stryfe" (1189), translating "Qe grant chose fet sanȝ lur cuncail,/ Cum mariage, ceo serreit mal" (*Manuel des pechiers* 1639-40). See Mannyng, *Robert of Brunne's Handlyng Synne*.

[Love your wedded wife well; delight in no other, or you will be hated by God and little loved by your neighbor.] (95-7)

The corresponding passage in PL reads as follows:

Ta femme demeine amerez

Et nule autre desirer devez.

[Love your own wife; you should desire no other.] (157-8)

Again, characteristically, the Harley scribe keeps the additional lines on the same rhyme, in this case because the last line of the four picks up "amez" from the first in the form of the homograph "amez." As before, the added lines clarify the basis for the advice, or rather the bases: there is a moral/religious incentive as well as a more immediately practical social one.

Another example of amplification similarly combines mundane and heavenly rationalizations for advice and uses similar techniques of amplification. The passage, part of a longer section on wise speech, concerns the importance of giving good counsel:

gardez qe ne seiez losengour

vers amy ne seignour

e sil desirent lur deshonour

ou lur mal com font plusour

e vous savez lur penser

e les deuez counsiler

ne pensez mie de eux payer

pur lur gree donqe aver

ne pur nully pleyser

ne lur deuez losenger

mes a mieux qe vous sauez

lel counsail lur donez

e si a cele foiz corocer

se vueillent ou tempester

autre foiz vous sauerount gree

pur vostre fei e lealtee

ou dieu qe ne oblye rien

le vous guerdonera bien

[Take care not to be a flatterer, towards friend or lord, and if they desire what is to their dishonor or evil, as many do, and you know their thoughts and intend to counsel them, don't at all think of gratifying them to have their favor thereby.Nor should you flatter anyone in order to please them, but as best you can give true counsel; and even if in the moment they may become angry or storm at you, later they will thank you for being faithful and true; or God, who forgets nothing, will reward you well for it.] (142-59)

The passage corresponds roughly to PL 199-208:

Veez qe ne seez lousengour,

Vers amy ne vers seygnour,

E s'il desirent qe vous diez

Tote le male qe vous savez,

Ne pensez my pur eus paiere,

Mes pur bien dire sanz cuer grevere.

Et a la meuz qe vous poez,

Plus beal counsail lour donez,

E s'il crusent a cele foez,

Pus apres vous savrount grez.

[See that you are not a flatterer, towards friend or lord; and if they want you to tell all the evil you know, don't at all think of gratifying them, but, without grieving their heart, speak in good faith; and as best you can, give them fair counsel, and if in the moment they become angry, later they will thank you.][38]

The first two lines of Harley's version of this passage are not significantly different from the PL version. The next two lines preserve elements of the corresponding PL lines at the beginning: "e sil desirent" and "ou lur mal" (cf "tote le mal" in PL); however, where PL changes its rhyme, Harley continues to rhyme on "losengour," with "deshonour" and "plusour," typical of its amplified sections. This tendency to repeat rhymes is even more in evidence as the passage continues. Where PL has two lines, "Ne pensez my pur eus paiere/ Mes pur bien dire sanz cuer grevere," the Harley version has six, all of which rhyme on "–er" (lines 145-150). This stretch shares only line 147 ("ne pensez mie de eux payer") with PL; the rest seems to be amplification built around this line. It is not only the repetition of the rhyme that suggests amplification here, for the passage also creates new lines by repeating key words from other lines, another favorite technique of the Harley scribe. "Counsiler" at 146 picks up "counsail" at line 152 (PL 206); "gree…aver" at 148 picks up "vous saverount gree" at 155 (PL 208); and "ne lur devez losenger" echoes "ne seiez losengour" at 142 (PL 199), as well as repeating the structure of "e les devez counsiler." ("Penser" at 145 may also be a repetition of "pensez" at 147, the nucleus of this amplified passage.) After this section Harley hews fairly closely to PL 205-6 but then breaks up 207-8 ("foez" and "grez") into two couplets (H 153-6, rhyming "corocer," "tempester," "gree,"

[38] The last four lines of this passage appear only in U.

and “lealtee”). This expansion of one couplet into two by interpolation is rather similar to the situation at lines 77-80, though here, less typically, the scribe changes the wording in such a way that each couplet has a different rhyme. After this, PL ends, but Harley adds one more couplet: “Ou dieu qe ne obliye rien/ le vous guerdonera bien” (157-8). This addition rather qualifies the original promise that, if one refuses to flatter a lord or friend, he will be grateful in the end even if he is at first angry, particularly since the expansion at H 153-4 emphasizes the theme of anger by adding “tempester” to rhyme with “corocer,” while Harley’s omission of “sanz cuer grevere” (in PL 204) removes a possible reference to tactful delivery of home truths. In this case Harley acknowledges the limitations of a practical, social rationalization but bolsters it with a moral one.

The examples of amplification I have discussed above reveal the Harley scribe’s attention to issues of family, marriage, child-rearing, reputation, and good relations with neighbors, the same concerns that dominate *Urbain* and poems like it in general. The differences between the Harley *Urbain* and other versions (and differences from source material from *Urbanus Magnus* and elsewhere) also reveal the variation in local interpretations of the content of courtesy books, despite the commonplace nature of the genre. They suggest that courtesy literature could be dynamic as well as traditional, its *sententiae* offering matter for interpretation and expansion in new directions. In the next section of this chapter I will deal more specifically with how the Harley scribe uses *Urbain* to think through questions of family, community, and society and will situate his interventions in relation to literary works with overlapping social concerns, particularly *Piers Plowman*. I will begin with issues surrounding family and household, including marriage, lineage, and inheritance, and then proceed outward to issues of neighborly and community relations, focusing on conflict resolution and reputation.

"Ben fiz, ore escoter": Family, Lineage, and Transmission

Courtesy has long been portrayed as something passed down from father to son (and mother to daughter); the scene of parental instruction replicated in *Urbain'*s prologue is the conventional frame for medieval courtesy poems. *Urbain*'s concern with what can be transmitted from generation to generation goes beyond its prologue, and the duties of the "son" to previous and future generations undergird its precepts for living a good life. Urbain's training of his son in "nurture" can act as a figure for the full heritage he entrusts to him and wants him to perpetuate.

One particularly vexed variety of inheritance in late medieval England was land inheritance. This issue would have been of particular concern in the manorial context I posit for *Urbain le courtois.* Families' relationships to ancestral lands were often complicated and mutable, as the increasingly complicated legal codes related to land ownership, transfer, and inheritance attests.[39] All of the versions of *Urbain* show concern with managing land carefully to some extent. For example, PL and Harley both include in their rules on gift-giving (which overall emphasize generosity) a variation on the Catonian monostich "cui des, videto" specific to land:

> amez armes e chiuals
> si les eiez bons e beals
> e les donez si vilement
> Cum sil valsissent nyent
> mes si terre deuez doner/
> pensez de le bien emploier

[39] See Conscience's labyrinthine analogies involving property transfer by inheritance and entail at C.3.367-70 and Galloway's commentary on these lines. *Galloway, The Penn Commentary on* Piers Plowman.

metez cet en vostre cuer

aprenez richement a doner

[Love arms and horses when you have good and fair ones, and give them with as little regard as if they were worth nothing; but if you intend to give land, think to bestow it to good purpose. Keep this in mind: learn to give richly.] (H 118-25)[40]

Urbain puts much more emphasis on the social benefits of generosity, even when it looks a little reckless ("cum sil valsissent nyent"), than on caution in giving—except where land is involved.

The PE version shows a concern with the integrity of land in its elaboration on the Catonian monostich "meretrices fuge."[41] This passage is probably indebted to lines in *Urbanus Magnus* which themselves hark back to "cui des videto": "Dilapidatori, meretrici uel nebuloni/ Fraudibus imbuto que dantur, sunt data vento" [What is given to the spendthrift, the whore, or the scoundrel steeped in fraud is given to the wind] (2338-9). *Urbain*'s expansion emphasizes the dangers such bad company poses to one's heritage:

Car nous veoms mult sovent

Une grant partie de fole gent,

Ke vendent tere et tenement

Et alter chose qe a ceo pent,

Lour eritage tot enters,

E mettent tot en deners;

Et robent ceo beau damoyseles

Que sount en chamber si beales…

[40] The PL versions of this passage, at ll. 157-64, is very similar. One manuscript, T, reads "esploiter" for "empleer." For all quotations from the *Distichs of Cato* see Chase, *The Distichs of Cato*.

[For very often we see a great many foolish people, who sell their land and holdings and other things pertaining thereto, their entire inheritance, and turn it to deniers; and they clothe these fair maidens, who are so beautiful in the chamber…] (213-20)

Here the temptations of the harlot are portrayed as a threat not just to a landholder's personal virtue and well-being but to his ancestral lands, and the conversion of land to cash as a waste of his inheritance and a wrong to his future heirs. This point is strikingly similar to Winner's criticism of those who sell off their estates so that their wives may follow the new fashion in the Middle English debate poem *Wynnere and Wastoure*:

Lesse and ye wrethe your wifes, thaire willes to folowe,
Ye sellyn wodd aftir wodde in a wale tyme,
Bothe the oke and the assche and all that ther growes;
The spyres and the yonge sprynge ye spare to your children,
And sayne God wil graunt it his grace to grow at the last,
For to save to your sones: bot the schame es your ownn.
Nedeles save ye the soyle, for sell it ye thynken.
Your forfadirs were fayne, when any frende come,
For to schake to the schawe and schewe hym the estres,
In iche holt that thay had ane hare for to fynde,
Bryng to the brod lande bukkes ynewe
To lacke and to late goo, to lightten thaire hertis.
Now es it sett and solde, my sorowe es the more,
Wastes alle wilfully, your wyfes to paye. (395-408).[42]

[42] Ginsberg, *Wynnere and Wastoure; and The Parlement of the Thre Ages*.

Wynnere and Wastoure outlines even more clearly what *Urbain* suggests is at stake when people do not dispose of land wisely: it invokes past and future generations overtly, and its details of oak trees and ash trees, holts and fields full of game, act as a counterweight to the catalogue of new fashions, driving home how much is lost and how little gained. In the Middle English poem, foolish landowners sell off their lands, somewhat less scandalously, for their wives rather than for mistresses, but the horror at the injury such people to do future generations, and to the integrity of the estate, is the same.[43] Inheritance is not thought of as a liquid asset or an individual possession but as an estate that belongs to the family from generation to generation, and the heir is to think of his own heirs just as part of the father's advice to his son is to train his son in turn.

As with the disposal of land, marriage appears in *Urbain* as a family concern rather than an individual affair. Urbain warns:

> Prendres femme tost ne hastez
>
> Ne ia femme ne prenez
>
> Por sa valour ou son pris
>
> Sanz consail de vos amys
>
> Si por tei meismes prese lauiez
>
> De lur ait bien faudrez.

As I have discussed above, these lines as they appear in Harley show the scribe's characteristic patterns of expansion, adding to the precepts shared by other versions a suggested rationalization, that rushing to marry a wife of one's own choosing is not only rash but lets down

[43] The criticism of women's appetite for expensive clothes is a trope of antifeminist satire. *Urbanus Magnus* has a similar passage cataloguing the expensive clothes and ornaments one should not buy for one's wife (ll. 2240-49), but there, as is common, the reasoning is that these things will foster pride. *Handlyng Synne* addresses luxurious clothes, especially of the "new guise," under the heading of pride, though its paired exempla take aim at both men and women. *Urbain* and *Wynnere and Wastour* are more unusual in their focus on the waste of exchanging land and heritage for cash and luxurious clothes.

one's family. Harley and other versions make clear that one should not choose one's own wife even "por sa valour ou son pris," that is, for her good qualities and reputation. These are important attributes in this poem: Urbain is introduced in the opening line as a man "de grant valour," and he claims that by following his precepts the "son" will become more "prisé" (as well as parallel terms for social approbation like "amé" and "alosé."[44] They would seem to be otherwise sensible criteria for choosing a wife, underscoring the point that even if the choice seems good, it should not be made alone.[45] It might seem that this point may be taken for granted in medieval England, but the question of whether marriage is primarily an individual, familial, or communal concern was a source of tension. It is true that arranged marriages were exceedingly common among the nobility, gentry, and wealthy bourgeoisie, and that betrothals often resembled business negotiations meant to forge broader alliances and protect or enhance a family's influence and wealth. However, in the church's view marriage was primarily a sacrament shared by two souls, and the ecclesiastical position that a marriage was invalid without the consent of the two principals had the force of law.[46] The local community as well as the individual spouses, family, and church had an interest in regulating marriage as well; in light of these divergent and sometimes competing interests, no single medieval ideology of marriage, its purpose, and its proper practice can be assumed.[47] *Urbain's* attitude toward marriage aligns broadly with family and community interests. The fact that the poem gives the qualities one should seek and avoid in a wife suggests that the young man might choose his own wife. This is

[44] For "pris" and "prisé" see lines 128 and 107; for amé, 4, 20, 98, 179, 219, and 344; for "alosé," 19 and 169.
[45] *Urbanus Magnus* has no exact parallel to this precept. Like *Urbain*, it does list desirable qualities in a wife and warns of the unhappiness a bad wife will bring (see *Urbain* 89-90 and 329-32 and *Urbanus* 2120 ff.). In line with its more misogynistic tone, *Urbanus* does recommend that daughters be married off quickly lest, in their feminine frailty, they follow their own wayward desires (2437 ff.).
[46] For an overview of fourteenth-century English attitudes toward marriage, see Keen, *English Society*. For the church's position on marriage and its impact on law and ideology, see Sheehan, "Choice of Marriage Partner."
[47] For community investment in marriage see Sheehan, "Marriage Theory and Practice in the Conciliar Legislation and Diocesan Statutes of Medieval England."

not always the case, of course, especially at the higher levels of society. The PE version of *Urbain* recommends that those in the position to do so reward sergeants with marriages to widows, and such lucrative matches to widows (and wards) were indeed an important part of such patronage (PL 178-9).[48] Again, such an arranged marriage was not legally valid without the consent of the principals, but the social consequences of refusing such a marriage could be significant. Comparing *Urbain* to *Piers Plowman,* a fourteenth-century English poem in its own way very much concerned with social relations, highlights the nuances in the array of perspectives on marriage, family, and community. *Piers Plowman* contains scathing satire of a profitable marriage arranged by friends and guardians (Meed's betrothal to False) as well as an account of marriage (by Wit) that emphasizes duty towards friends more strongly than *Urbain* (but that delimits severely the interests those friends may consult). Both poems seek to balance the interests involved in marriage; *Urbain* takes a worldly, moderate approach while *Piers Plowman* ultimately reimagines social norms surrounding marriage in a radically unworldly, impractical way (in line with Conscience's move towards radically patient courtesy, which I will posit in Chapter Four).

Piers Plowman begins by satirizing a grotesquely, infernally venal marriage match in its Meed episode. Meed, for all her conniving and influence, plays the part of an obedient young woman submitting to the rule of her friends, who exult:

> Certes, cessen shul we neuere
> Til Mede be þi wedded wif þoruȝ wit of vs alle,
> For we haue Mede amaistried wiþ oure murie speche
> That she graunteþ to goon wiþ a good wille

[48] "As sergeauns les mariages/ De veve dame, quant il vous escherra" (178-9). See Church, "The Rewards of Royal Service."

To London to loken if þat lawe wolde

Iuggen yow ioyntly in ioie for euere. (B.2. 152-7)

The role of her friends in negotiating Meed's marriage and bringing her around to give the legally required consent seems here to go hand in hand with the open venality of the match, proudly proclaimed in False's enfeoffment:

Witeþ and witnesseþ that wonieþ vpon erþe

That Mede is ymaried moore for hire goodes

Than for any virtue of fairnesse or any free kynde.

Falsnesse is fayn of hire for he woot hire riche…(75-8).

Meed continues to play the dutiful young woman when another of her "friends," her kinsman the king, intervenes in the marriage negotiations. The king assumes the customary right of an older relative to guide a young woman's marriage choice (as well as the legal right of a king to license or deny matches involving his family members):

I wol assayen hire myself and sooþliche appose

What man of þis world þat hire were leuest.

And if she werche bi wit and my wil folwe

I wol forgyuen hire þe gilt, so me god helpe. (B.3.5-8)[49]

On the one hand, he takes pains at this point to approach Meed in a gentle, solicitous fashion, to "maken hire at ese," and this aligns with his stated intention to determine Meed's own will, now that the men who have "amaistried" her have fled (ibid. ln. 4). However, his support is conditional on her being reasonable (working "by wit"), which means following his will. Indeed, when he does call her to court, it becomes clear that when he proposes to "assayen hire" to

[49] "In English law from the mid-thirteenth century on, a member of the royal family holding an inheritance of the king in chief would need the king's license to marry…" In Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on* Piers Plowman.

determine which man she would like to marry, he means that he will ask for her consent to be married to the husband of his own choosing, his knight Conscience:

> I haue a knyȝt, Conscience, cam late fro biyonde;
>
> If he wilneþ þee to wif wiltow hym haue? (110-11)

The king's speech is meant to elicit the consent required for a legitimate marriage, and his wording is suggestive of that of the binding exchanges of consent that were, according to McSheffrey, the first stage of the marriage process in late medieval England. At the same time, he makes clear to her the social consequences should she choose contrary to his will, reiterating that she will have his grace and forgiveness only if she agrees to give up False.[50] Meed is suitably tractable:

> "Ye, lord," quod þat lady, "lord forbede ellis!
>
> But I be holly at youre heste hange me ellis." (112-13)

Though her language is rather stronger, her declaration is similar to those of real-life London women who swore to follow their friends' will in marriage, e.g. "I will have you as my husband if my uncle Thomas Roby and his wife Ann, my aunt, will consent to it; otherwise I will never have you as my husband nor any other man"; "[she] said that she wished to be ruled by them [her employers] in all things"; "I will never have none ayenst my faders will."[51] Conscience, on the

[50] His tone and conditional support are reminiscent of the Pastons' reaction to Margery Paston's relationship with Richard Calle. Margaret Paston writes of having the bishop remonstrate with her daughter: "And the Bishop said to her right plainly, and put her in remembrance how she was born, what kin and friends that she had, and should have mo if she were ruled and guided after them; and if she did not, what rebuke and shame and loss it should be to her if she were not guided by them, and cause of forsaking of her for any good or help or comfort that she should have of them…" Davis, *The Paston Letters*, 182. Interestingly, Margery refuses to be ruled by her friends partly on the grounds of conscience: "she said she thought in her conscience she was bound, whatsoever the words wern [that she and Richard exchanged—that is, whether they constituted a legally binding exchange of consent]." Ibid. In *Piers Plowman*, Conscience is the one who refuses to be ruled and guided by the king in accepting Meed as a wife.

[51] McSheffrey, 162, 164, 166. McSheffrey notes that the speaker of the last example, Margery Sheppard, "despite her protestations of filial obedience…balked at honoring the contract, even when her father likewise appeared in the case as the opposition's witness." McSheffrey argues that while some women were sincere in their intention to be ruled by their friends, others used such declarations strategically, conditional consent providing more flexibility and control over the courtship process than simple consent.

other hand, refuses to give his consent even after the king puts him on the spot by implying not only Meed's but his own consent to the match: "Woltow wedde þis woman if I wole assente?" (118). Again, the king's words are dangerously (for Conscience) similar to the common formula for exchange of consent ceremonies: if at this time a man and a woman spoke words along the lines of "I, [name], will marry you, [name]" in the presence of two or more witnesses, they essentially bound themselves legally as man and wife. The stakes are high for Conscience. His status as a man makes refusal to consent a more readily available option to him than it would be to Meed; still, refusing a wife of his king's choosing is a risky move. He ultimately stays in the king's grace, but not before having to defend his reputation against Meed. For all her docility, the woman who had been ostensibly "amaistried" by False and his friends is able to briefly convince the king that she is "worþi…þe maistrie to haue" (229). In sum, the "friends" who make marriage matches in the Meed episode do not inspire confidence: one proposed match is a venal mockery of marriage as a sacrament, and the other in well-intentioned but ill-conceived. Meed's avowed willingness to be guided by her friends is self-servingly prudent rather than virtuous, while Conscience's refusal of an inappropriate match, following his own will over his lord and patron's, is the right thing to do.

This is not to say that *Piers Plowman* condemns matches made by the friends and family of the principals. In fact, Wit will later declare that the first, and exemplary marriage, was arranged:

> The wif was maad þe wye for to helpe werche,
> And þus was wedlock ywroȝt wiþ a mene persone,
> First by þe fadres wille and þe frendes conseille,
> And siþenes by assent of hemself as þei two myȝte acorde;

And þus was wedlock ywroȝt and god himself it made.

In erþe þe heuene is; himself was þe witnesse. (B.9.115-20)

If Meed's marriage is the arranged marriage *in malo,* Wit provides an example of the arranged marriage *in bono*. Wit's purpose in discoursing on marriage is to demonstrate that "Dowel in þis world is trewe wedded libbynge folk"; perhaps because he will later lambaste certain kinds of arranged marriages, he begins his remarks on marriage by making it clear that he does not object to arranged marriages as such (110). Thus the first point he makes is that the first, ideal marriage was arranged by an intermediary (a "mene persone"). While he balances the consent of friends and of the principals, he makes sure to give priority to the friends' will: "*First* by þe fadres wille and þe frendes conseille, /And *siþenes* by assent of hemself as þei two myȝte acorde" (emphasis mine). Effectively, he reifies contemporary social norms (the authority of friends to actively guide marriage choice, though consent of the principals is still necessary, as well as the need for witnesses to a marriage) as ordained from creation.

With his *exemplum* drawn from Genesis, Wit makes a compromise between the sacramental view of marriage and the views of families wishing to exercise authority over marriages that concern their interests. Nevertheless, he is readier than that speaker of *Urbain* to delimit what familial interests a marriage may serve. In short, friends' first responsibility is to promote "kynde" marriages, that is, marriages matching like with like according to God's will (the original "fadres wille") in order to produce offspring. Wit unambiguously condemns marriages made in the interests of a family's wealth, land or alliances:

For some, as I se now, sooþ for to telle,

Fo coueitise of catel vnkyndely ben married.

A careful concepcion comeþ of swich weddynge…

For goode sholde wedde goode, þouȝ þei no good hadde…

Forþi I counseille alle cristene coueite noȝt be wedded

For coueitise of catel ne of kynrede riche…

For no londes, but for loue, loke ye be wedded

And þanne gete ye grace of god and good ynouȝ to lyue wiþ. (159-181)

While Wit affirms the traditional authority of friends to arrange marriages, he condemns those who would look to what must have seemed to many to be practical, even family-minded concerns of profit, estate, and lineage. Clearly many people did feel justified in refusing to let their sisters "sell candle and mustard in Framlingham" as John Paston III said when he opposed the marriage of Margery Paston and Richard Calle.[52] In its own way Wit's insistence that good people should marry for love without worrying about goods is as radically high-minded as Conscience's "patient charity" (which I will discuss in chapter 3). Furthermore, Wit strongly condemns the arranged marriages to wealthy widows that one version of *Urbain* sanctions and that were certainly a common feature of court life:

It is an vncomly couple, by crist! as me þynkeþ

To yeuen a yong wenche to a yolde feble,

Or wedden any wodewe for wele of hir goodes

That neuere shal barn bere but it be in armes.

In Ielousie, ioylees, and ianglynge on bedde,

Many peire siþen þe pestilence han pliȝt hem togideres. (165-70)

Wit's disapproval of ill-matched couples can claim the authority of commonplace wisdom, going back at least to the *Distichs of Cato*, but his exhortation "maidens and maydenes macche yow

[52] 176.

ysamme;/ Wideweres and wodewes wercheþ riȝt also" nevertheless condemns what was a common and practical approach to marriage at his time (178-9).

Urbain's advice seems to take a practical, worldly approach: one should exercise some degree of choice in that it is best to marry someone with good habits and a good reputation, that is, someone who will contribute to the good of the family. Part of such a rational choice is not being swayed by one's own less practical impulses: attraction to a beautiful or a literate woman. On the other hand, the exercise of one's own judgment is balanced with a consideration of one's friends' counsel. They have an interest in the marriage, too, and their support ("aie") is important.[53] One thing that is notable about this advice is that it assumes that young men (the audience it explicitly addresses in the form of Urbain's "son") are not wholly independent actors, whereas Shannon McSheffrey finds in her study of marital litigation in late medieval London that women are much more likely to give consent conditional on the approval of "friends," while young men appear to be more independent actors. If in practice men were less guided by the counsel of others—or at least were less likely to declare themselves to be—Urbain's theory of marriage nevertheless considers them obliged to at least consult their friends.[54]

"Quant ton congie auez pris escharny serrez": Self-governance, Speech, and Conflict

In addition to family, the other social context *Urbain* gives special attention to is the local community—neighbors, friends, hosts, and guests. The advice on family and marriage focuses on responsibly managing one's heritage, in both the literal and the metaphorical sense, and on

[53] Shannon McSheffrey finds a similar attitude in marital litigation records from late medieval London: "Legally, only the present consent of the principals was necessary to create a binding contract of marriage; but socially, the right and wise thing to do was to marry with the advice and sometimes the consent of relatives, employers, and friends." See McSheffrey, "'I Will Never Have None Ayesnt My Faders Will': Consent and the Making of Marriage in the Late Medieval Diocese of London."

[54] See ibid., 160. McSheffrey does note that women could use the idea of familial consent as a strategy to exert more control over the courtship process than they otherwise might.

acting in the interests of one's kin. The advice on social relations in the community, on the other hand, focuses primarily on the skill of self-government and the cultivation of "good fame." These sections in particular belie the "courtesy to civility" narrative, which posits that only with early modern "civility" came a conception of conduct involving self-governance as a strategy for peaceful, diplomatic coexistence with others (as a courtier or citizen). Again and again, instructions for behavior in public are couched in the language of self-control and restraint: restraint of the hands and feet, of the gaze, and above all of the tongue, which is often both the cause of social *faux pas* (through foolish or imprudent speech) and the instrument of punishment (through public condemnation and gossip). Social control, in the form of good and bad fame, praise and blame, is constantly invoked as a motivation for wise conduct. In particular, *Urbain* is remarkably consistent in concluding advice related to speech with such references to public approval or disapproval. One should learn to speak French because it is "langage alosee de gentil homme e molt amee" (H 19-20); one should not talk excessively, because a jangler is "tenui sot"; do not mock the less fortunate, because you will never be "alosez" but rather "escharny" (168-71); avoid boasting, because if you keep quiet, paradoxically, everyone around you will speak well of your words (186-9). Often these references to fame are couched in formulaic participles, like "alosee," "amee," "tenui sot," "escharny"; this holds for all versions.

The Harley version takes these formulaic references to fame a step further by including narratives (or incipient narratives) of gossip. These narratives not only highlight the potential danger of speech to one's reputation, they link the poem to others in the manuscript, blurring the generic boundaries of the material and placing Harley's *Urbain* into a larger conversation about fame and speech. In these additions, the speaker repeatedly encourages his "son" to imagine what everyone will say about him behind his back if he does not behave well, cultivating a

mildly paranoid imagination in order to internalize social control. I believe the scribe has composed these sections to echo one of *Urbain*'s quire-mates, the fabliau *Le jongleur d'Ely et le roi d'Angleterre*, which is apparently the scribe's own adaptation of *La riote du monde*; the material appears once more in the outlaw poem *Trailbaston.* [55] *Le jongleur d'Ely* is a poem about the instability and danger of words. The jongleur of the title, a sort of inversion of courteous Urbain who lives in vice and dishonor, counsels the king about the inevitability of being slandered by others. Nearly half of the poem is made up of a litany of imagined slander:

> Si vus estez simple e sage houm,
>
> Vus estez tenu pour feloun
>
> Si vus parlez sovent e volonters,
>
> Vus estes tenuz un janglers…
>
> Si vus alez poi en compagnie
>
> E tavern ne hauntez mye:
>
> Cesti est escars, avers e cheytif;
>
> C'est damage qu-il est vyf…
>
> E si vus alez par le mostrer
>
> E ne volez point entrer,
>
> Donqe dirra vostre veysyn:
>
> Cesti ne vaut plus qe un mastyn.
>
> Si dieu me doint de son bien,
>
> Cesti ne valt plus qe un chien…

[55] Nolan, "Anthologizing Ribaldry." The contents of quire 12 are as follows: "God þat al þis myhtes may," an English lyric of contrition; *The Sayings of St. Bernard*, an English *contemptus mundi poem*; *Le jongleur d'Ely*; the French fabliau *Le trois dames qui troverent un vit*; *Le dit des femmes* and *Le blasme des femmes*, paired pro-feminist and anti-feminist poems in French; *De la femme et de la pie*, a French anti-feminist poem by Nicholas Bozon; *Urbain*; and the French outlaw poem *Trailbaston*.

> [If you are a wise and humble man, you are considered treacherous. If you speak often and gladly, your are taken for a jangler…If you seldom go out in company and never haunt the tavern: "That man is a mean, miserly wretch; it's a shame he is alive"…And if you go by the church and don't want to go in, then your neighbor will say, "That man is worth no more than a mastiff. So help me God, he is worth no more than a dog…] (197-98, 237-40, 330-35).[56]

Ultimately, the jongleur tells the king that the only course is to live in moderation (in words similar to *Urbain*'s lines on the same subject). The "trufle" ends on a didactic note, and the lesson is sound even if the teacher is depraved.[57] Still, the jongleur's simple lesson does not entirely dispel the disturbing effect of his catalogue of slander, which has demonstrated exhaustively how damaging and liable to misprision and perversion words can be. This element of the jongleur's lesson haunts the poems that follow, including *Urbain*.

In *Urbain* there is no place for such shocking lessons as "Ataunt valt vivre en folye/ Come en sen ou corteysie," even if they do come around to the side of good sense in the end (*Jongleur* 191-2). For the most part the poem promises that it is possible to see one's virtue rewarded and to gain a good name through sense and courtesy. However, the echoes of *Le jongleur d'Ely* complicate the picture by introducing the treacherous potential of words. Harley's *Urbain* attempts to harness this threat in encouraging the "son" to imagine hypothetical slander before he speaks or acts; the self-restraint the speaker advocates is also preemptive self-defense. Still, the effect of the little vignettes remains unsettling, the more so because these moments of failed courtesy are often when the poem seems most vividly to come to life. For instance, the thoroughly conventional advice against being overly chatty at the table (likely derived ultimately

[56] Quotations from *Le jongleur d'Ely* are taken from Ulrich, "La Riote Du Monde." Translations are mine.
[57] "Qy cest trufle velt entendre,/ Auke de sen purra aprendre" (400-401).

from the Catonian monostich “pauca in conuiuio loquere”) turns into a painful scene of backbiting:

> a autry table ne ianglez trop
> qe tu ne seize tenu pur sot
> qant ton congie auez pris
> escharny serrez pur vos dys
> Pur fol serrez ileque tenu/
> e dirront vous estez enbu/
>
> [Don’t chatter too much at someone else’s table lest you be considered an idiot; when you have taken your leave, you will be mocked for your words. You will be considered a fool, and they will say that you are drunk.] (210-15).

The passage immediately following this is likewise expanded with a scenario in the style of *Le jongleur d’Ely,* this one moving further towards the territory of narrative. This passage is at first much like its counterpart in PE: if you meet someone you know in the street, make sure to greet him enthusiastically, and if he greets you first, be sure to give a friendly response. From there Harley launches into a little story about what will happen if this advice is not heeded:

> si vous ne fetez en cele manere
> donqe dirra le fitz al piere
> le deable ly dust saluer
> yl ne velt respounz doner
>
> [If you don’t do this, he will say to his father, “The devil can greet him, he doesn’t wish to give a response.”] (222-25).

Again, Harley uses the “if you x, they will say y” formula, and the bit of imagined dialogue is similar to that of *Le jongleur d’Ely* in its colloquial diction. Also similar in tone and diction is the passage a bit later reporting what people might say if he does not remember to reward those serving him:

> a ascun tu en seriant
> Son doun ne refusez mie
> e ne le metez en oblie
> quil ne pust aillours dyre
> cest vn estout syre
> de noreture siet il rien
> ne corteysie plus qe vn chien
>
> [by no means refuse anyone serving you his gift, and don’t forget about it, lest he be able to tell others “that is an obstinate lord; he knows no more of good breeding nor of courtesy than a dog.”] (267-73).

One such narrative in particular dramatizes the delicacy and attention to reputation that public speech demands. Harley uniquely elaborates on the line "aprenez les nounsachauntz" with a little example of how to do this tactfully:

> si nul mesfet petit ou grant
> ni li tencez tant ne qant
> mes diez ly preuement
> ce fu malfet deuant gent
> autrefoiz seiez garny
> qe tu ne seiez de gent hony

Cely diez entre vous deus

ny ly fatez autre maus

pur estranges qe ileque sunt

qe mal los ne vous porterunt

qant ton congie deuez prendre

[If anyone, great or small, does something wrong don't by any means scold him but say for his instruction, "That was done wrong in front of people. Next time, be forewarned so that you are not shamed by people." Say this between the two of you, and don't do him any other harm, on account of the strangers who are there lest they carry a bad report of you when you have taken your leave.] (250-60)[58]

This passage might be an explication of "urbane corrige" in *Urbanus Magnus*; the lines demonstrate how exactly to correct someone courteously, even providing a little script. In this situation courteous speech requires a sensitivity what may be said in public and in private. The speaker begins by specifying that this is an occasion for private speech ("diez ly preuement") and reiterates the point in conclusion ("Cely diez entre vous dues"). The content of the script suggests what is at stake by emphasizing the public nature of the situation; two references to the mistake as public ("devant gent," "de gent hony") match the two references to the correction as private. The passage ends by invoking the threat of harmful gossip as an incentive to follow its advice; the alternative is essentially to be "de gent hony" just like the inexperienced companion. The lesson of this passage thus replicates the lesson of the embedded speech, that guarding oneself against the voice of public judgment means internalizing that voice in anticipation.

[58] The general source for this content is probably *Urbanus Magnus*, 159-60. These lines refer to a specific circumstance in which one might be required to correct one's fellow (singing or reading in church): "Non sis derisor consortis si male psallat, /Siue legat; si scis, urbane corrige doctus" [Do not mock your fellow if he sings or reads badly; if you are skilled and know how, courteously correct him.] PE has similar lines in its mirror for students section: "Et si vous savez voster lescoun/ Avant ke tun compaignoun,/ Voluntiers lui apernez/ Et belement a lui parlez" [If you know your lesson before your companion, gladly teach him and speak nicely to him].

Urbain, then, somewhat softens the paranoid vision of gossip that *Le jongleur d'Ely* introduces by adapting it to an authoritative teacher rather than a transgressive one and putting it in the service of learning to live well in society. Courteous Urbain does not have the last word any more than the playfully ironic jongleur, however, for the jongleur's lesson on gossip is echoed once more in *Trailbaston*, the outlaw poem that immediately follows *Urbain*. The speaker bitterly recounts the havoc that malicious speech (in the form of slander and false accusations) has wrought in his life and renounces society as an entity. Once more, voices of slander create a paranoid social vision of betrayal and false speech:

> Si je sei compagnoun e sache de archerye,
> Mon veisyn irra disaunt, "cesti est de compagnie,
> De aler bercer a bois e fere autre folie;"
> Que ore vueille vivre come pork merra sa vye.
> Si je sache plus de ley qe ne sevent eux,
> Yl dirrount, "cesti constyratour commence de estre faus,"
> E le heyre n'aprocheroy de x. lywes en deus;
> De tous veysinages hony seient ceux.
>
> [If I am a companion and know archery, my neighbor will go and say, "This man belongs to a company, to go hunt in the wood and do other folly;" so now I will live as a pig will lead his life. If I happen to know more law than they know, they will say, "This conspirator begins to be treasonable," and I will not approach home within ten leagues of them; of all neighborhoods cursed be those.] (83-90)[59]

For the outlaw speaker of *Trailbaston,* there is no possible redemptive value in slander. He bitterly despairs of the social goods *Urbain* pursues—a good name, support from friends,

[59] I cite both text and translation from Wright, *The Political Songs of England*.

peaceful coexistence with neighbors, lawful justice—though he cannot help but wish to regain his place in society and finally reveals that the poem has been an attempt to win support by his words:

> Cest rym fust fet al bois desouz un lorer,
> La chaunte merle, russinole, e cyre l'esperver;
> Escrit estoit en parchemyn pur mout remenbrer,
> E gitte en haut chemyn, qe um le dust trover.
>
> [This rhyme was made in the wood beneath a bay tree, there sings the thrush, the nightingale, and the hawk cries; it was written on parchment to be better remembered, and cast in the highway, that people may find it.] (95-8)

As Carter Revard has convincingly argued, the Harley scribe has arranged his texts to speak to one another.[60] In the case of *Urbain* he seems to have adapted and amplified his material to highlight its contributions to a conversation about the power of words, their capacity to do harm, and their redemptive potential. The poem is both conscious of the danger of words (both ill-considered speech and the malicious gossip it may occasion) and optimistic about the prospect of turning wise, well-trained speech ("raisoun") to one's advantage for a peaceful existence in society, though lurking behind this hopeful vision is the possibility that "lel counsail" may, after all, only be rewarded in the world to come. I will conclude this chapter by turning to *Urbain's* treatment of conflict resolution, where the poem is perhaps at its most optimistic about the power of living "en sen [et] corteysie."

Urbain particularly emphasizes self-government as a strategy for conflict resolution, when the skill of patience (that is, prudent restraint) is both particularly important and

[60] See, e.g., Revard, "The Wife of Bath's Grandmother."; Revard, "Four Fabliaux."; Revard, "Oppositional Thematics and Metanarrative in MS Harley 2253, Quires 1-6."

particularly difficult to practice. PE warns against anger and violence, cautioning that disputes are to be settled by the law of the land, with well-considered words rather than weapons:

> Si nule home a vous trespace
> Ou de fait ou de manace
> Le maundez toust par bone gent
> Ke il vous face amendement.
> Vos ne prendrez la venjaunce
> De espeye ne de launce
> Mais autrement purrez conquere
> Amendement par lay de terre
> Ne seez pas trope hastifs,
> Ceo vous prie, moun chere fiz.
> Fole hastivesce mout poy vaut
> De simple home ou de haut,
> Car cely que poet bien soeffrir
> Sovent avera son playser.
>
> [If any man injures you, in deed or threat, promptly send good people to him to order him to make amendment. Do not take vengeance with sword or lance; rather you can gain amendment otherwise, through the law of the land. Do not be too hasty, I pray, my dear son. Foolish haste is of very little use to a humble man or a great one, for he who can be patient will often have his wish.] (PE 129-42)

The term *trespasser* indicates that this passage deals with wrong or injury in the legal sense of the word, so the subject is relatively serious or actionable (but not felonious) conflicts. This

version of Urbain particularly emphasizes observance of the "law of the land": the section on giving good counsel says to counsel "solum la ley" as well as truthfully ("la droit fey," "la droit verite"), and the section instructing lawyers says to speak in court also "solum la ley" (185-89, 196). The poem is not suggesting patience in the sense of putting up with being wronged; the object is to resolve conflicts in an orderly fashion without contributing to a breach of the king's peace. The protocol given keeps the conflict under control by addressing it through legal channels. Whereas the advice on seeking restitution is fairly specific to contemporary legal practice, the following lines ground the advice in one of the perennial *topoi* of wisdom literature, *pacientes vincunt*. This *topos* is well attested in literature contemporary with *Urbain.* For instance, in *Piers Plowman,* Reason cites proverbs on patience in English and French when encouraging Will to hold his tongue: "Suffraunce is a sovereyn virtue, and a swift vengeaunce…Bele virtue est sufferance, mal dire est petit vengeance./ Ben dire e ben suffrer fait luisuffrable a bon venir," and (B.11.378,). Several characters in *Piers Plowman* repeat the proverbial expression *Pacientes vincunt*, including Conscience, Anima, and Patience himself. *Urbanus Magnus* also promises victory through patience. At one point the poem says that if others envy your good fortune, "Audi, dissiumula; uinces patienter iniquos" [hear, but pretend not to; prevail over evils through patience] (399). In the same spirit is the line "Uincere si cupias inflatos, uince tacendo" [If you wish to prevail over pompous people, prevail by holding your peace] (671). These examples all promise victory through patience, a trope that Urbain invokes in the lines promising that the patient "sovent avera son pleyser."

The proverbial material on patience lies at the heart of *Urbain's* approach to conflict resolution and is consistent across the versions' varying material on the subject. Harley and PL apparently do not address conflicts serious enough to warrant litigation; the focus is on verbal

wrongs and on determining whether a conflict warrants response. Still, the role of self-control predominates. Harley has two passages on responding to verbal attacks. The first, which it shares with PL, focuses on responding, or rather not responding, to "janglers," while the second appears to be unique and adds instructions on speaking out in situations where a response is warranted. The first example, like the PE passage on conflict resolution, presents patience as the path to "vengeance" or victory as well as appealing to the prospect of social approbation as a motivation for self-control:

> Si ascun home vous volt mesdire
> ne sailez mie por ce en yre
> lessez ly dire ces volenteez
> qar mieux venqe ne ly poez
> e quant il aura tot tencee
> yl serra pur fol clamee
> e vous sage tenuz
> le mieux ame e cremuz
>
> [If any man should speak against you, by no means rush out in anger because of it. Let him say what he wants, for you can have no better revenge, and when he has finished scolding he will be called a fool and you will be considered wise, and loved and respected all the more.] (H 172-79)

> Et si home te voet mesdire,
> Ne saillez pas pur ceo en ire
> Lessez les dire tout lour voler,
> Kar meutz ne li poetz hunir,

E quant il avra tout countee

Si serra il pur fole clame

Et tu a sage tout tenuz

Le meuz ame et cremuz. (PL 227-34)

As in the PE passage, the point of this passage is that it is best to redirect the immediate, emotional impulse for vengeance ("sailler," to rush or burst forth, casts anger as a loss of self-control) towards vengeance by restraint: *vince tacendo*. This is a social victory: the incentive for verbal self-control here, as elsewhere, is to have good fame, to be "sage...tenuz," "ame," "cremuz."

Harley returns to the subject of janglers with a passage whose opening line ("si um vous mesdit de nule part") nearly repeats that of the earlier passage. Like much of the material at the end of the poem, the passage is part of a chain of passages loosely linked by association. In this case the passages offer advice on gaining the victory in various types of combat. The first describes conquering through silence, the second winning renown by (physically) fighting for one's country, and the third prevailing by words (apparently in a court of law):

si um vous **mesdit** de nule part

gardez bien cet art

respounce a ly ne donez

mes la place voidez

si vous **responez** al ianglour

le pis aurez saunz retour.

pur vostre pais combatez

en tous lyws ou vous serrez

poiez de ly si bie noun

qe tu ne le defendez pur resoun

si counter deuez a nully

qant il sa **resoun** ad fyny

responez amiablement

sanz **mesdire** e serement

pies ne meynz ne mouez

qant **resoun** parler deuez

tot eiez vous la victorie

[If someone maligns you anywhere practice this skill: don't respond, but leave the place. If you respond to the jangler you'll have the worst of it, beyond recall. Fight for your country wherever you are; you may have thereby a better name than if you didn't rightly defend it. If you have to argue against anyone, when he has finished his speech respond pleasantly, without slander and oaths. Don't move your hands or feet while you speak your piece. You will have all the victory.] (301-17, emphasis added to indicate verbal association)

In addition to their common theme of conflict, these passages are linked by several verbal associations. Some of them actually highlight differences between the situations. The first and third share forms of "responder," but in the former situation responding is not appropriate, whereas in the latter is it. "Resoun" links the second and third passages, but in the former the expression "par resoun" refers to physical combat, while in the latter "resoun" is used in the sense of "speech." On the other hand, all three passages are prominently linked by the similarity of their endings, each of which looks to the outcome, good or bad, of the situation described. In

this respect the three passages are part of an even longer chain of passages linked by verbal association. The beginning of this chain is the passage "honorez piere e mere…**si en avrez bon fyn**" (297-300), which itself is linked through verbal association (of the word "honour") to the preceding lines ("honorez ceux qe fyrent vous/ e lur fetez tous honours" (295-6). The "bon fyn" chain continues beyond the three "conflict" passages to include a related set of advice on verbal misconduct, which ends with instructions to avoid saying anything one cannot stand behind ("si vous ne le poez auawer/ **e a bon fyn torner**") (323-3).[61] The "bon fyn" linkage underscores the role of prudence in the three passages. In each case, the path to victory lies in developing the skill of subordinating immediate responses to the future good, a sort of projection akin to the imaginative projection of what people will say after one leaves the room (discussed above).[62] The section on janglers advocates the cultivation of a learned behavior ("gardez bien cet **art**") that goes against what may be a natural impulse, that is, to respond to the provocation. The following two sections treat situations in which it is appropriate not to walk away from a conflict. The second section, an adaptation of the Catonian monostich "pugna pro patria," adds in typical fashion a rationalization for the advice appealing to the concern with good fame. The third passage describes an occasion when verbal combat is appropriate. It is slightly odd in that it applies source material originally addressing general public speaking and conversation to the specific context of verbal conflict (possibly in a court of law). These lines (311-17) are likely an adaptation of a passage from *Urbanus Magnus*:

> Sermo moram faciat dum quis loquitur tibi; seruet

[61] The lines "a nully deuez manacer/ ne malfere ne mauparler" (319-20) echo "mesdit" at 301, strengthening the thematic associations between the passages.

[62] Cf also the section on good counsel, which forbids flattery for the sake of gaining a lord's favor in the short term and adds that in the long term "autrefoiz vous saueront gree…ou dieu qe ne oblye rien/ le vous guerdonera bien" (155-8); the advice not to mock others: "qar pur echarn ce sachez/ ne serrez ia bien alosez/ mes serra al chief de tour/ escharny ly escharnisour" (168-71); and, of course, the explicit instructions to consider the end result of any action undertaken: "de tote rien qu fere deuez/ a commencement vous purpensez/ a quel chief vous le poez trere"/ si il est bon bien fet a fere/ sil est mauois le lessez/ e de mieu fere vous prenez" (49-54).

Os sera continua; facies sit in ore loquentis.

Fine dato uerbis responde more Catonis.

Dum loqueris caput et digiti cum pace pedes sint.

[Delay speaking while someone speaks to you; keep your mouth shut; keep your gaze on the speaker's face. When the speaker is finished, respond in the manner of Cato. While you speak, hold your head, hands, and feet still.] (98-103)

These instructions appear in the first section of *Urbanus Magnus* as general precepts for speaking (rather than as specific strategies for conflict resolution). The basic elements (listen quietly while looking the speaker in the face; when speaking, keep the head hands, and feet still) are ubiquitous in medieval courtesy literature. They appear elsewhere in Harley and in other versions of *Urbain* in various contexts, and they can be found in many other courtesy poems in French as well as English.[63] Harley's version follows unusually closely the language and structure of the passage as it appears in *Urbanus Magnus*, to the point of translation. "Fine dato verbis" is rendered by "qant il sa resoun ad fyny"; "responde more Catonis" is explicated as "responez amiablement/, sanz mesdire e serement"; "dum loqueris" is translated as "qant resoun parler deuez," "digiti cum pace pedes sint" as "pies ne meynz ne mouez." The great departure from the Latin source is the line "tout eiez vous la victorie." While the passage in *Urbanus Magnus* is certainly concerned with acquitting oneself well in the eyes of others, it is not about winning; there is no contest. Harley may have a precedent for adapting the passage to some sort of verbal disputation: the PE version of *Urbain*, which pays particular attention to law and legal issues, incorporates the injunction to keep the hands and feet still in its advice to lawyers:

[63] See PE 195-200 (where the material forms part of the advice to lawyers pleading in court);PL 37-46; H 190-97 (part of a series of guidelines for speaking in public); *Edward* 91-6; *L'Apprise de nurture* 19-21; among the English poems, see *Babees Book* 80-87; *Urbanitatis* 13-18; *Dame Curtasy (Ashmole 61)*: 63-8; *Stans Puer Ad Mensam* stanzas 1-3. *Urbanus Magnus* is probably the ultimate source for the material, though it is impossible to be certain.

Si vous seez en assise,

Ou en court ou en justice,

Si l'em counte ver tei,

Responez bien solum la ley;

Saunz manace u serement

Devez counter devant la gent.

Mein en autre ne ferrez

Taunt cum vous od la gent parlez.

[var.: Piez ne mains devez mover

Taunt cum devez as genz parler.]

[If someone pleads against you, respond well according to the law; you should plead before the people without threats or oaths. Don't put one hand in the other while you speak to the people [var. You shouldn't move your hands or feet while you speak to the people].] (193-200)

Other parallels between this passage and the Harley passage are the lines "si l'em counte ver tei" (vs. Harley "si counter deuez a nully") and "responez…saunz manace u serement" (vs. Harley "responez…sanz mesdire e serement"). Though the rhyme scheme is different, there is enough similarity in the phrasing to suggest that the Harley passage, like PE, is applying the generic advice on speaking to the context of a legal dispute. The effect is to emphasize the role of skilled speech and of self-control (of one's body as well as one's mind and words) in conflict resolution, to show once again that patience prevails.

Urbain, despite its apparent simplicity and stylized contents, reveals a great deal about how medieval readers and writers may have understood courtesy and its intersection with social

relations, education, and the transmission of knowledge, values, and social identity. It also has more to say about other texts than is at first apparent. All of its versions to some extent respond to and adapt the poem's sources and influences, including *Urbanus Magnus*, the *Disticha Catonis*, the tradition of wisdom literature, and proverbial lore. Harley's *Urbain* offers a particularly striking example of courtesy literature's ability to interact with less expected genres like *fabliau* and political complaint. As I have suggested at the beginning of this chapter, this literary exchange worked in the other direction as well, and in my next chapter, I will turn to a pair of courtly dream vision poems in which characters employ the language of courtesy as one of a range of rhetorical moves that create a site for interpersonal bonds and social instruction.

CHAPTER 3

SOCIAL INSTRUCTION IN GUILLAUME DE MACHAUT'S *LA FONTEINNE AMOUREUSE* AND GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S *BOOK OF THE DUCHESS*

In my first chapter I argued that poems like *Urbain le courtois* are less straightforwardly sententious that they may at first seem to be. One of the assumptions behind the "childlike" middle ages narrative is that people operated by very clear, rigid rules. The conventionality of medieval courtesy literature, and its tendency to repeat sometimes centuries-old material, is taken as evidence that the ideas and the culture it represents are monolithic and static, with little or no room for more complex negotiation. In fact, texts dealing with courtesy are rarely so purely didactic: instead, the doctrinal and sententious element is in a dynamic interaction with the exploratory and heuristic. As the history of the Anglo-Norman courtesy poem *Urbain* indicates, *sententiae* can be adapted, translated, glossed, recontextualized, supplemented with rationalizations, explanations, narratives, and exempla; they may be placed in conversation with other texts that add to or change their significance. In the process, they go from prescribing certain behaviors and stating gnomic truths to exploring the logic and ethics behind the precepts, imagining how, why, and to what effect they might be enacted by the imagined audience. Furthermore, the general rules for conduct inevitably become complicated with the introduction of specific and variable contexts. This perhaps accounts for the encyclopedic scope of a poem like *Urbanus Magnus*, which tries to account for how wise and upright behavior plays out nearly any circumstance, or, for that matter, like *Piers Plowman*, where simple lessons like "truth is the best," "do well," and "learn to love" require thousands of lines of glossing and commentary. As in the previous chapter I have discussed the exploratory (and frequently narrative) turn in a group

of didactic conduct poems, in this chapter I will turn to a pair of narrative poems that adapt the language of courtesy as part of a fund of conventional discourses in order to reimagine some of the situations central to courtesy literature, particularly the scene of instruction and the interaction between social superior and inferior. Guillaume de Machaut's *Dit de la fonteinne amoureuse* and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* weave didactic moments into literary narratives as part of a vision of what I will call "social instruction," which imagines educational relationships playing out in contexts other than the schoolroom or parent-to-child instruction. In taking up the interaction between superior and inferior, they also imagine the conditions in which such figures might develop an intimacy different from the exchanges their public roles allow. The poems show moments of private social instruction that modify or reverse the typical hierarchy of instruction typical in didactic literature. Whereas courtesy and conduct poems tend to depict a stable educational hierarchy, with wisdom moving from social superior to inferior, from parent to child, old to young, as a sort of heritage looking forward to the student's progress up the social ladder towards a future position of authority, the courtly visions I discuss in this chapter show instruction moving in the other direction as well. *La fonteinne amoureuse* breaks down the social distinctions between its narrator, Guillaume, and his noble patron, Jean, creating a common ground allowing for mutual social instruction between the two men. They share a communal experience made possible by special contexts—the dream world, the practice of *fine amour*, and above all creation of literary texts. Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* takes the social dynamic portrayed in Guillaume's poem further by emphasizing the poet Geffrey's role as instructor to his princely patron, the Black Knight, even as it plays up the social distance between the two. In both poems, scenes of social instruction offer solutions to problems that could not be solved while the characters occupy their ordinary social roles, even as the dream vision context

underscores the fact that these special, mutually productive relationships are possible only in momentary departures from the ordinary world—in dreams, in poetry.

Dream visions as a genre share an unexpected overlap with courtesy literature because scenes of instruction are so often central. For one reason or another, the dreamer needs to go back to school. Often there is some sort of lack or gap that the dreamer's previous education, formal or not, has not filled or cannot fill. An unusually literal example might be Will's incomplete education in *Piers Plowman*. Often the crisis is the result of grief or loss, as is the case in the two poems I discuss in this chapter. In these cases, dreamers' ordinary social and educational resources are temporarily insufficient, and their problems often push them to the edge (or beyond) of socially acceptable behavior and attitudes. The dream provides some sort of alternative instruction to fill in where the waking world cannot. In *La fonteinne amoureuse* and *The Book of the Duchess,* what I call "social instruction" becomes possible when poet and patron (who both need some kind of educational intervention) use the dream world as a site for stepping out of their ordinary social worlds to form a small, temporary community of mutual social instruction. The dreamer has something to teach his patron and social superior; on the other hand, the patron's problems give the dreamer a fresh perspective on his own and make possible a new poetic creativity and productivity.

La fonteinne amoureuse: Love, Secrecy, and Communication

In *La fonteinne amoureuse,* the poet-figure Guillaume helps his patron, Jean, to solve a problem caused by the disruption of his private, secret amatory life by his public life (he is going into exile without having the chance to declare his love to his beloved). The secrecy that in part makes *fine amour* precious and refined becomes a liability when Jean is cut off from

communication with his lady and isolated by his pain. He imagines as a solution a sort of educational process for his lady: by studying a love-dream the way a grammar-school student would study a school-text (seeing, memorizing, interpreting, and analyzing), she will learn to love him. Guillaume takes the place of his intended student when, overhearing Jean's love complaint, he processes it in the way Jean had imagined his lady doing. The two men form a relationship based on this shared secret and become a community of two. They share a dream vision that provides poetic and amatory instruction to both of them. Their social differences are temporarily collapsed because they share problems that remove them from ordinary society and because they share a common literary language and a language of *fine amour* (and the two shade into each other). Although the dream ostensibly heals Jean by solving his communication problem with his lady, the real solution seems to be the relationship of social instruction that he shares with Guillaume, by which they learn to think through problems using a shared language of narratives and poetry.

The poem marks the development of Guillaume and Jean's relationship, and the solutions to problems that it enables, through a structure characterized by movement back and forth between the quotidian social world and a separate, intimate dream-world. These transitions are often marked formally through transitions between poetic registers and structures: embedded lyric establishes a "literary" register, octosyllabic couplets indicate ordinary narrative, and the more complex "complaint stanza" marks off the dream world as a shared space where the two form their private community. Indeed, their shared recognition and deployment of conventional languages—the language of fine amour, of poetry, of exemplary classical narratives, and of education—is the foundation of their fellowship. Thus transitions between social contexts track both formal transitions and important shifts in the men's relationship. At the beginning of the

poem, Guillaume and Jean alike are melancholy and thus socially isolated; they are in adjacent rooms but have not officially met yet. From there, Jean's complaint begins, and Guillaume, fascinated, writes it down. This is a quasi-social interaction (without mutual recognition), and it takes place in quasi-dream space. While a literal dream does not take place, the "night watch" is intimate and dreamlike, set apart from the daytime world.[64] With dawn comes the end of the complaint and a return to the outside world; this transition is marked by Guillaume's morning rituals of dressing, washing, and crossing himself.[65] He and Jean then meet officially and gradually withdraw further and further into private communication. This movement towards intimacy is echoed by spatial progress into the park containing the Fountain of Love. The culmination of the men's growing intimacy and secret-sharing is the shared experience of the dream. After waking they reintegrate into society, rejoining Jean's knights, returning to the manor, and participating in public social rituals like Mass and dinner. Jean and Guillaume meet privately again, and Guillaume agrees to see Jean off. They both take comfort from what they have learned in the dream; Jean goes cheerfully into exile, and Guillaume remains behind, holding Jean's secrets, his land, and his wealth.

I have said that this poem offers social solutions to social problems—loneliness, melancholy, love. The major social problem in this poem is, ultimately, the problem of

[64]Ekirch describes the "night watch," the period of wakefulness between the first and second sleep common in Western societies before the Industrial Revolution, as a time removed from the rhythms of waking daylight hours, often reserved for conversation, marital intimacy, or contemplation. He cites evidence that night watchers experience "something approaching an altered state of consciousness not unlike meditation," characterized by physiological changes such as the increased production of prolactin (304). Ekirch even invokes the French word *dorveille* for "this ambiguous interval of semi-consciousness," the same word Guillaume uses to describe his state at line 63 (311). The parallels between this night watch and the later dream are underscored by the appearance in both of the complaint stanza; in fact, as I will discuss below, the end of the complaint stanza at line 2526 corresponds to the end of the dream. *At Day's Close*.

[65] This morning ritual is traditional and conventional. At the opening of *le Roman de la Rose*, the lover is described putting on his stockings, washing his hands, and sewing up his sleeves before he ventures out. The courtesy poem *Dame Courtesy* prescribes a morning ritual of crossing, washing of the hands and face, and mass-going (ll. 11-18). *Hugh Rhodes's Boke of Nurture* gives a particularly detailed account, covering prayer, the cleaning of the nose and "other filthy things," making of the bed, preparation of the day's clothes, hand- and face- washing, dressing, bidding one's friends and parents good morning, and mass-going (61-122). See Furnivall, *Caxton's Book of Curtesye*.

understanding and communication. Though Jean's immediate problem might seem to be one of physical absence—he must go far away from his beloved--he characterizes it as a failure in communication, the result of the hidden nature of *fine amour*. His imagined solution is a secret community of two, the hidden nature of which would allow unfettered communication between himself and his lady. The issue of communication is first foregrounded in Jean's complaint, which abounds in language of knowing, perceiving, and understanding. His central problem, as presented in the complaint at least, is not so much that he will be physically absent from his lady but that he has no way of communicating his feelings to her before he leaves:

> Car je m'en vois, et si n'est creature
> Qui ma dolour doie a ma dame pure
> *Ramentevoir*,
> Pour ce que nuls ne *scet* ce que j'endure.
> N'elle meismes ne *scet* pas la pointure
> Que mes cuers sent pour sa douce figure,
> Et que *vëoir*,
> *Ymaginer*, *penser*, ne *concevoir*
> Ne puis comment je puisse joie avoir. (284-92; emphasis, here and elsewhere below, is mine.)

[For I am going, and there is not a creature to remind my pure lady of my pain, because no one knows what I endure. Nor does she herself know the wound my heart suffers because of her sweet image or that I cannot see, imagine, think, or conceive how I might have joy.] [66]

[66] Quotations from *La fonteinne amoureuse* are taken from Palmer, *Guillaume de Machaut*.

This language of not knowing, and not being known or understood, continues throughout the complaint:

Mais de mon ester,
Ne que soiez ma dame souvereinne,
Ne *sara* nulls, einsois de fleur de greinne
Ecouvreroit une valee pleinne
Ou de genestre. (326-330)

[But unless you should be my sovereign lady, no one will know of my state sooner than an empty valley is covered with flowers from seed or broom.]

Mais ma dame ne puet *oïr* son plaint
Ne moy compleindre. (457-8)

[But my lady cannot hear [my heart's] plaint, nor me complaining.]

Jean comes upon a solution to this problem of communication by relating the story of Ceyx and Alcione, in which a dream serves to bridge the widest of communication gaps, that separating the living (Alcione) from the dead (Ceyx). He hopes that if Morpheus similarly intercedes on his behalf, enabling him to make himself known to his lady, his troubles will be over:

Tel qu'a briés mos
Le gentil corps qui n'a point de pareil
Sache mon cuer, ma tristece, mon dueil,
Et qu'il le tient par son dous riant vueil
Pris et enclose. (710-13)

[So that in a few words the gentle creature who has no equal should know my heart, my sadness, my pain, and that through her sweet smiling will she should hold it close and secret.]

Jean is confident that a few words and his lady's understanding his heart are all he needs to solve his problem. The obstacles here are not resistance, fear, shame, foul speech, or any of the other forces the Lover of *Roman de la Rose*, for instance, must overcome, but rather lack of knowledge and perception. Note also the shift in the status of knowledge in Jean's desired outcome: the isolation of harboring pain completely unknown to all others is replaced with the pleasurable sharing of a secret with his lady, "secret and hidden" from others. In other words, it is not that transparency is desirable in itself—what is valuable is the formation of communities of knowledge (in this case an erotic "community" of two plus companions such as Good Hope and Sweet Thoughts), set off from society as a whole by their secrets. The poem plays delicately with the contrast between clarity (within the community) and secrecy (without). Jean hopes that the words of Morpheus "Soit a m'amour clere com li biaus jours,/ Sans parabole" [Will be as clear to my love as the fair day,/ With no parables] (817-18). On the other hand, he is happy to keep his secret protected from his lady's potential rivals and anyone else on the outside:

Tant de biauté ou de richesse heüst,
Ou tant renardeue
Fust, que au garir assés ne me neüst,
Ne que jamais mon secret *perceüst*,
Ne que desirs en moy si fort creüst
Que maus feus arde!
Car je le porte et le çoile et le *garde*

Dedens mon cuer qu'on ne s'en *prengne garde*. (989-96)

[However beautiful or rich she should be, however cunning, she would still never be able to heal me, nor ever perceive my secret, nor cause my desires to grow strong enough to burn as a wicked flame. For I carry it and hold it close and guard it within my heart so that no one may take notice of it.]

The solution to the isolation that has resulted from Jean's commitment to a code of love is not to share his secrets to the world at large but to create a smaller, alternative community of love.

Ceyx and Alcione: Knowing for Certain

Jean imagines a literary solution to his problem: thinking through, and enacting, the story of Ceyx and Alcione will allow him to establish the communication he desires with his lady. The story is an odd model, though. Morpheus's intercession lets Alcione "see" Ceyx one more time in a vision, but the story makes clear that Alcione is in no way communicating with her lost husband: the figure who appears is Morpheus inhabiting Ceyx's form. What the dream gives her instead is information about Ceyx. This knowledge (what Jean sees as a success) leads to her death, for only in death can she actually be reunited with her husband. The lesson Jean takes from the story is a reaffirmation in Alcione's faith in specific, certain knowledge as a solution to the grief of separation from a beloved. In fact, the story sets him up for a slightly different solution than what he imagines: a literary solution (approaching problems through stories) and an indirect one. He does in fact establish a small alternative community, but it is a literary one that he shares with the poet Guillaume.

Jean deepens the resonance of this knowledge/communication dynamic with his retelling of the Ceyx and Alcione story. Alcione's trouble is presented primarily as a problem of not

knowing specific information and not knowing for certain. When she requests Juno's help, for example, she asks to learn specifics: "pour savoir ou, et pourquay, et quant/ Il fu peris" [To know where and why and how he died] (563-4). Juno echoes these words when she asks Iris to bring a message to the God of Sleep, "qu'il li moustre Ceÿs le roy/ Et la maniere/ Qu'il fu peris, ou, comment, et pourquoy" [so that he'll show her Ceyx the king and the way he died, where, how, and why] (581-3). When Morpheus does provide an answer to Alcione's prayers by appearing to her in Ceyx's form, the completeness of the revelation is emphasized: "Tout li revelle" [He showed her all] (666).

By this point in the poem, seeing (voir) has been established as another way to express understanding, and Morpheus's speech to Alcione (in Ceyx's form) is structured around the repeated injunction "see":

> Chiere compaingne,
> Vesci Ceÿs pour qui joie et delit
> As si perdu que riens ne t'abelit.
> Voy que coulour n'ay, joie, n'esperit
> Qui me compaigne.
> Resgarde moy, et de moy te souveingne.
> Ne pense pas, bele, qu'en vain me plaigne:
> Voy mes cheveus, voy ma barbe grifaingne;
> Voy mon habit,
> Qui de ma mort te moustre vraie enseingne!

[Dear companion, see here Ceyx, for whom you have lost joy and happiness so that nothing holds sweetness for you. See that I have no color, joy, no spirit to accompany me.

Look and me and remember me. Fair one, don't think that you mourn me in vain: see my hair, see my savage beard; see my clothing, which gives you a true token of my death.]

Alcione does not precisely "see" Ceyx, though: she sees Morpheus and his mimesis of Ceyx. What she actually gets from the vision is explicit and certain knowledge of Ceyx's death:

Si qu'einsi vit la belle clerement
Le roy Ceïs et sot certeinnement
La maniere de son trespassement. (683-5)

[So the fair one saw King Ceyx clearly and knew with certainty the manner of his passing.]

This is what she wanted, but it turns out to be so painful for her that Juno takes pity and metamorphoses Alcione and Ceyx into kingfishers. Note that the special quality this tale attributes to the birds is that they make sailors *certain*—for good or for ill:

Quant d'eaus voient ces oiseles prochains,
D'avoir fortune ou tempest certeins
Les font souvent. (696-8)

[When they see these birds close by them, the birds often make them certain of having good luck or a storm.]

As with dreaming (which can be informative but also unpleasant or dangerous, as it is for Iris around lines 600-625, and which can be clear or obscure, as in line 644), knowing is not *per se* either a good or bad thing here. Nevertheless, the upshot of the story for Jean is that he wants to imitate its example. He, like Alcione, is ready to claim knowledge as the answer to his problem, for all the risks of this approach.

Dreaming and Social Instruction

Jean proposes an "educational" process for his lady in his portrait of the lady as an exemplary dreamer. The stages of this process recall the structure of classroom practice. As a grammar school student learns a text by reading, memorizing, construing, analyzing, and imitating, the lady is to recall the dream, "gloss" or construe it, interpret it more deeply, and act on it. In his imagined scene of instruction, after Morpheus speaks to his lady, Sweet Thought will gain access to her heart and act as a sort of instructor, being well-instructed himself ("qui si bien sera duis/ Qu'il li dira…"), to tell her of Jean's love and suffering (727-8). She will then know and understand Jean's situation—and the clarity and certainty of her knowledge is stressed:

> Einsi porra *savoir* comment je l'aim,
> Comment son oueil a mon cuer pris a l'ain
> Par son resgart qui n'est fier ne villain,
> Se li dieus veut
> Et Morpheüs, qui fera tout *certain*
> Son cuer dou mien dt li dira *de plain*
> Comment toudis pour s'amour me complain… (731-7)
>
> [Thus she may know how I love her, how her eye hooked my heart through her gaze, which is neither proud nor base, if the god [of sleep] wishes, and Morpheus, who will make her heart completely certain of mine and will tell her plainly how every day I lament for her love.]

This speech picks up the word *certain* from the Ceyx and Alcione story, where it features prominently, and the way that Morpheus's telling the lady plainly echoes the theme of clarity

versus obscurity, highlighting the (perhaps counter-intuitive) lesson Jean has drawn from his classical source: he pins his hopes on the power of clear and certain knowledge.

After receiving instruction from Morpheus, the lady will wake from the dream and process the information she has gained. Jean's sketch of his lady's reaction to her dream offers one answer to the question of what to do with a dream on waking, in the form of a portrait of an exemplary dreamer who properly processes and applies her newfound knowledge. Here is how he describes her:

> Mais s'en son cuer tient secretement close
> De Morpheüs la parole et enclose,
> Et le matin,
> Au resveillier, l'en souveigne et la glose,
> Et qu'elle dongne a chascun mot sa glose,
> Certes je tien que mon fait se repose
> En dras de lin. (756-62)
>
> [But if she holds Morpheus's words in her heart, secret, close, and hidden, and on waking in the morning remembers and interprets them, giving each word its gloss, I am certain that my case will lie on linen sheets.]

This process starts with secrecy and enclosure, paralleling the language Jean has used earlier to describe his secret love: *secretement, close, enclose*. Upon waking, she goes from recall ("l'en souveigne") to understanding ("la glose"), to a more detailed interpretation ("qu'elle dongne a chascun mot sa glose"). She then continues to remember and reflect upon the dream after more fully returning to the waking world:

> Ja si crueuse

N'iert qu'a *penser* au songe ne s'adoint,

Et que *pensee* en cela ne se doint

Qui li sera, se bien au cuer li joint,

Delicieuse.

Si me seroit chose trop profitable

S'elle *pensoit* eu lit ou a la table

Et en tout lieu a *penser* couvenable,

Que tout d'un fait

Songier souvent ne doit mie ester fable,

Einsois chose dois estre veritable

Quant elle n'est muant ne variable. (774-85)

[She would never be so cruel as not to give the dream thought, and to find the thought, if well joined to her heart, delightful. It would be a very profitable thing for me if she should think of it, in bed or at table and in every place suited to thinking, for indeed dreams are often no fable, since a thing must be true when it is not unsteady or fickle.]

As dreams turn to daydreams, affording the lady more opportunity to reflect on what Morpheus has told her, her learning becomes so complete that "la parole…Soit a m'amour clere com li biaus jours,/Sans parabole" [[his] words…Will be as clear to my love as the fair day, / With no parables] (814-18).

Jean, then, endorses this clear communication and certain knowledge to which Alcione aspires. He expects that learning of his secret love-longing will, for the lady, also be learning to love. He also accepts the idea of the dream as instruction, a good way to obtain useful knowledge

(even though, as we saw, dreams are presented in the story as potentially horrible and deathly). A scene of instruction does turn out to be the solution to Jean's problem, though not quite in the way he has imagined. Guillaume enacts the role of student that Jean had envisioned for his lady, paving the way for a primarily literary community resulting in mutual instruction.

Through his complaint, Jean's love has in fact, unbeknownst to him, already been revealed and made clear—to Guillaume, sitting by the window and recording what he hears. Though seeing is the form of perception most frequently associated with knowledge in this poem, hearing is not far behind, and though his lady can't hear his complaint ("ma dame ne puet oïr son plaint/ Ne moy compleindre"), Guillaume can (457-8).

At daybreak, when the complaint ends, Guillaume sets out to find its speaker, and the two men establish a relationship. This relationship turns out to have several of the characteristics of Jean's desired *eclaircissement* with his lady. Guillaume's accidental overhearing of Jean's unburdening in the middle of the night—a time set off from the ordinary world of daytime, often reserved for secrets and intimacy—is only the first similarity. Recall that Jean envisions his lady reflecting on her dream after waking up and returning to the quotidian world. He sees her as a student, desiring and seeking out knowledge of him and her dream. Guillaume fulfills this role. As he goes through the traditional morning routine—getting dressed, crossing himself, washing his hands—he casts his mind to what he has heard in the night, reviewing it in a very literal and material sense by reading over his transcription of the complaint. His reaction is just what Jean wanted (albeit from his lady). Guillaume wants to learn more:

> Et puis j'issi hors sans attendre
> Pour *enquester* et pour *aprendre*
> Comment ne par quel tour saroie

Qui cils estoit qu'oÿ avoie. (1055-8)

[And so I went straight out to inquire and to learn by whatever means I could who he was whom I had heard.]

"Enquester" echoes Alcione's search for information about Ceyx as well as Jean's description of "searching" his heart: at the same time that Guillaume begins to fill the role of the absent lady, his experience begins to parallel Jean's despite the social distance between the two. Guillaume seeks Jean out, asking after his location until he reaches him. His curiosity causes him to observe Jean before approaching him, gathering information that allows him to sketch a portrait of the nobleman: his appearance, demeanor, and courteous behavior. Once Guillaume initiates contact, Jean responds with a corresponding desire to know more:

Me demanda dont je venoie
Et que la cause de ma voie
Voloit savoir sans couverture,
Et aussi tout l'encloüre,
Quant et comment, d'ou et pourquoy
Venus estoie en son pascoy
C'estoit a dire en sa maison. (1229-35)

[He asked me where I came from, and he wanted to know why I had come, with no concealment, and everything about it, when and how, whence and why I had come to his pasturage, which is to say his house.]

The series of question words, one coming after another (*dont, quant, comment, d'ou, pourquoy*), is reminiscent of Alcione's questions about the specifics of her husband's demise, and again Jean's questions also pick up the theme of clarity versus obscurity: he wants to know these

details *sans couverture*, without anything hidden. This mutual desire for knowledge—and private, secret knowledge, for Jean's separation from his entourage to talk to Guillaume is stressed—culminates in a sort of feudal contract, presented in terms of gift exchange. Guillaume offers to Jean "Cuer, corps entierement…Pour faire vo commandement" [all my heart and body/ To do what you command] (12666-7).[67] Jean responds in kind, playfully noting the Guillaume is in his power but also suggesting his indebtedness to the poet:

> Mais .Vc. fois vous remercy
> Quant vous me volez amer si
> Qu'a moy tout einsi vous donnez
> Et ligement abandonnez.
> Et par ma foy, se je pooie,
> Volontiers le desserviroie,
> Car je tien plus ce don a gent
> Que de .iiM. d'argent (1283-90)

> [But I thank you five hundred times for wishing to love me enough to loyally give and dedicate all to me. And by my faith, if I could I would gladly prove worthy of it, for I consider this gift nobler than two thousand silver marks.][68]

This is a decisive moment, establishing a special intimacy between Jean and Guillaume. The poem twice specifies that the two men walk hand in hand alone together, first at line 1291 ("main a main en alames" [hand in hand we walked]) and then in an even more intimate and significant formulation at 1299 ("Si me mena par la main nue" [And he led me by the naked [i.e., bare]

[67] The verb here is *bailler*, meaning "to give over" or "to entrust"; according to the *Anglo Norman Dictioinary* it is used in legal contexts of delivering seisin of property or bail. The legal undertones of the word underscore the quasi-contractual nature of the men's professed love. See *The Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, s. v. "bailler."
[68] For a discussion of Guillaume's and Jean's relationship in terms of social gift exchange see McGrady, "'Tout Son Païs M'abandonna'," 19–31.

hand]).[69] Jean sends away the last remaining knight who might interfere with their solitude, paving the way for the sharing of secrets. The contract paves the way for the private community Jean and Guillaume will build, one that provides resources for working through problems that they have not found in the larger society of their ordinary lives. As my colleague Thomas McSweeney has put it, "The contract is the place where you make your own law."[70]

This intimacy allows for an important transition, spatially and formally: Jean and Guillaume enter a beautiful park containing the fountain of love.[71] Jean acts as an instructor here, initiating Guillaume into the secrets of the place. He not only guides Guillaume to the park but teaches him about it, explaining its history, the reason for the fountain, and the fountain's special property of causing love in those who drink from it. In fact, he asks Guillaume to participate in a deeper initiation:

> Or vous ay dit le voir sans fable
>
> De la fonteinne delitable,
>
> Se vous pri que sus vous levez,
>
> Amis, et que vous en buvez. (1421-4)
>
> [Now that I've told you the truth without fable about the delightful fountain, I pray you to rise, friend, and drink.]

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[69] "*Main nue*" may suggest troth-plighting: according to J. A. Burrow, two individuals plighting troth would have sealed their faith by clasping *bare* hands, without glove or gauntlet. See Burrow, *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative*, 14.

[70] Private communication.

[71] The entry into the park at this socially crucial moment is no coincidence. William Calin describes the basic structure of most of Machaut's *dits* as a variation of the romance quest-pattern, one in which the narrator "leaves courtly society to enter a closed space, generally a garden or island," receives instruction and a boon, "often the boon of knowledge," as a result of which he is "initiated into the secrets of life and love, and made fit to return to the court, where he is accepted as a full-fledged member of his community." Calin, *A Poet at the Fountain*, 242. Entry into a particular kind of space (the garden) makes possible a particular kind of transformation, one resulting from social instruction, the revelation of secrets and knowledge. Howes, "Narrative Time and Literary Landscapes in Middle English Poetry Gainesville, FL Pagination." highlights the role of physical movement between the (public) manor and the (secret, private) pleasure-park in Machaut's favored narrative structure. She compares the narrator's perigrinations in *Remede de Fortune* to the possible pedestrian experience afforded by the residence of Count Robert II of Artois.

This is quite a serious request, given that Jean has just been telling his companion about how several of those who drank from the fountain died of their love; he means to take seriously Guillaume's oath of absolute loyalty. This high-risk proposition is also an intensification of intimacy; Jean wishes to initiate Guillaume into the elite community of lovers as a prelude to the further revelation of secrets. But Guillaume reveals that such an initiation is unnecessary, since he is already a lover. He then mirrors Jean's request ("Mais je li dis qui'il li pleüst/ Qu'il se levast et en beüst" [But I told him that if he pleased/ He should rise and drink])(1433-4). Since Guillaume knows full well the extent of Jean's lovesickness, this is almost certainly a gently tactful means of eliciting a confession from Jean to match his own, which Jean duly gives:

> Il respondit que non feroit
> Et que jamais n'en buveroit,
> Car il en avoit tant beü
> Qu'il s'en tenoit pour deceü. (1345-8)
>
> [He responded that he would not drink and never would, for he had already drunk so much that he considered himself ensnared.]

He proposes complete openness between the two, implicitly as a condition of their contract: "Y n'i doit rien avoir emblé,/ Mais qui scet bon mot se le die" [Nothing should be secret, but whoever knows a good word should say it] (1442-3). This further revelation of secrets (for he now reveals his whole situation to Guillaume) comes with a request for another gift:

> Pour ce amis, je vous vueil prier
> Que tant vueilliez estudier
> Que de m'amour et de ma plainte
> Me faciés ou lay ou complainte.

Car je say bien que la pratique

Savez toute, et la theorique

D'amour loial et de ses tours… (1501-7)

[And so, friend, I want to ask you to give thought to making a lay or complaint of my love and my lament. For I know well that you know all the practice and theory of true love and its nature…]

If the request to compose a complaint for him is a move towards greater intimacy, a way of acknowledging Guillaume as a fellow member of the community of lovers, Guillaume does him one better, immediately proffering the transcription he has made of Jean's nighttime complaint. Jean apparently finds this utterly delightful—he bursts out laughing and expresses wonder that Guillaume should know what he thought no one knew. Why should this please him so much? Couldn't he just as well be disturbed by such an invasion of his privacy as Guillaume's eavesdropping, extensive enough that he produces a transcript of what he overhears?[72] And privacy aside, what should be so delightful about being given one's own words back—is it really a gift? The point, I think, is that Guillaume is offering a sign of recognition. The transcribed complaint is proof that the two men already have a history, that they have had an intimate and secret experience even before their official introduction. Of course, this earlier stage of their relationship had been one-sided, but then so is Jean's intense "relationship" with his lady. The mutual recognition that ensues mirrors the desired outcome of his amorous love for the lady. The way that Jean expresses his surprise is telling. He uses the language of knowing versus not knowing, secrecy versus openness, that has so far been such an important framework for viewing social relationships in the poem: "Car je la tenoie si close/ Que penser ne puis ne savoir/ Que

[72] For a discussion of the social discomfort associated with eavesdropping see Burrow, "Politeness and Privacy," 65–75.

homs mortels la puis avoir" [For I held it so close that I cannot think or know how a mortal man might get to it] (1530-32). The "closeness" or hiddenness of his sorrow was one of its defining features, and so to find that it has not been completely impervious to revelation after all must change the way he thinks about his situation. As we have come to expect, he reacts to this revelation with a desire for further clarification: he says, "Qu'au vrai savoir le me couvient," that is, "I must know the truth" (1534).

Also striking is the role wonderment plays in Jean's reaction. Perhaps the most salient feature of Jean's speech stylistically is the use of *rime riche* involving the word *merveille* and its etymological neighbors, occurring at lines 1527-8 and 1541-2. The second occurrence of *merveille* is paired with the verb *esbahir*. Though Palmer renders it "is happy," a more literal translation would simply be "is amazed." The word even carries connotations of fear or terror, though Palmer is doubtless right to stress this wonder as a positive event here.[73] The point, I think, is the emphasis on Jean's and Guillaume's experience together as something special and out of the ordinary. Their bond is somehow closer than ordinary social bonds and humming with potential. As a result, Guillaume's handing over of the written complaint is elevated to an event of particular significance—and indeed, structurally it is perhaps the major turning point. Immediately following his wonderment at Guillaume's explanation of how he came by the complaint, Jean falls asleep on Guillaume's lap. When Guillaume joins him in sleep, their communal dream begins. Jean has already initiated Guillaume first into the park and then, deeper, into the secrets of its fountain. The dream brings their closeness to its highest pitch.

Parallels between Guillaume and Jean appear throughout the poem. Both are melancholic at the beginning, and both suffer from love-longing. Each desires to know the other better: their interactions give a striking sense of reciprocity. They tend to respond to things in similar ways;

[73] *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, s. v. "esbahir."

take, for example, the symmetry of their refusal to drink from the fountain of love, each saying that he has no need because he loves deeply already. The "I" of the poem even calls himself a "hostage" to the task of writing the poem (just as Jean is a literal hostage and a self-described hostage to love), though perhaps it is best to exercise caution in identifying the authorial voice that opens the poem and interjects from time to time with the character I have been calling "Guillaume" (41). The communal dream in the culmination of these parallels. It is true that we get only Guillaume's perspective of the dream, while Jean is repeatedly described as lying asleep until the very end of the dream (1611-12, 2145, 2195, 2512-3). On the other hand, Jean's account after waking suggests that his experience of the dream corresponded almost exactly with Guillaume's, and the dream equally and symmetrically addresses Guillaume's and Jean's desires.[74] Within the dream, Guillaume takes the role of a writer and story enthusiast, while Jean fills the role of the lover. Venus first makes a short speech to Jean, accusing him of cowardice and despair, and then addresses Guillaume, acknowledging his curiosity about the golden apple she holds. Two long speeches take up most of the rest of the dream, and this time the order is inverted, Venus first giving a history of the apple and the lady following with her consolation of

[74] With one exception, possibly. Guillaume says that he swore to Jean that his vision was just the same as Jean's, neither more nor less. But he goes on to say,

> Car Venus parla longuement
> De la pomme a moy seulement,
> Tant qu'elle dist comme senee:
> "Or as response a ta pensee." (2637-2640)
>
> [For Venus spoke a long time about the apple to me alone, until she wisely said: "Now your thought is answered."]

Are we to presume that some portion of her speech leading up to line 2144 was only part of Guillaume's dream? But Jean's account of Venus' story seems to be complete:

> Apres de la pomme doree
> Quide Paris li fu donnee
> Raconta toute la maniere,
> Sans rien laissier de la matiere. (2603-6)
>
> [Afterwards he told all about the apple that Paris had given [to Venus], without leaving out anything]

Perhaps Guillaume's confusing statement only means that Venus' story was intended primarily for his benefit, not that Jean wasn't privy to it; nevertheless, this seems to me to be a crux, to which I am not aware of a satisfactory solution.

Jean, creating a chiastic structure. Though Guillaume and Jean are presented schematically here as poet/clerk and lover/patron, respectively, the poem as a whole tends to collapse these differences. Guillaume is a lover, too, and falls asleep thinking of his own lady. Jean is a poet—he first appears in the poem composing a complaint and ends with a roundel—and takes an interest in the stuff of narratives, as evidenced by his attention to the tale of Ceyx and Alcione (an interest Chaucer reassigns to Geffrey, Guillaume's counterpart in *Book of the Duchess*). The sections of the dream addressed to Guillaume apply also to Jean's situation, and vice versa. Venus implies that the moral of her story of the golden apple is that her power is supreme, and she holds that Jean's primary problem is that he doesn't understand her power ("Il ne scet rien de ma puissance") (2149). By the same token, the consolation intended for Jean gives comfort to Guillaume, too, as suggested by his reflections after reminding Jean of the consolation: "Et ma pensee en ce fermay/ Que jamais ne me courseroie/ De ce qu'amender ne porroie" [[I resolved] in my mind that I would never worry about whatever I could not better] (2742-4).

The communality of Guillaume's and Jean's experience is perhaps most striking as they emerge from the dream:

> Et lors les dames
> Et leur grant biauté nompareille,
> A qui nulle ne s'appareille,
> Perdi dou tout, don't a merveille
> *Nous effraiames.*
> Car en l'eure *nous esveillames*
> Et tous .ii. un songe *songames,*
> Einsi com *nous le nous comptames*.

Si s'en merveille,

Car l'annel en son doy *trouvames*,

Et le rubis que moult *prisames*,

Dont plus de cent fois *nous seingnames*

De la merveille. (2514-26)

[And then we lost all sight of the ladies and their great unparalleled beauty, which none can equal, and we were marvelously shocked at this. For we awoke at the same time, and the two of us had had the same dream, as we recounted to each other. And he marveled that we found the ring on his finger, and the ruby that we so prized, and we crossed ourselves more than a hundred times because of that marvel.]

This is the end of the last stanza in the 16-line stanza "complaint" form before the switch back to octosyllabic couplets, a metrical manifestation of the transition from dream-world to waking-world. Most of the "B" rhymes are grammatical ones, based on first person plural verb endings. These prominent first person plural verbs produce an effect of almost seamless communality, of two dreamers acting as one. This marvelous union begins to disintegrate after the octosyllabic couplets resume, a necessary result of the process of waking and returning to the ordinary social sphere. We can see this happening at a grammatical level:

Quant *nous fumes* bien *desdormi*,

Bien *esveillié*, bien *destumi*,

Il se seingna, puis *se leva*;

Son visage et ses mains *lava*

Eu ruisselet de la fonteinne.

Je la vi bele, clere, et seinne,

Si que *je ne fis pas* le aver

De mes mains et mon vis laver. (2527-2534)

[When we were well roused from slumber and alert and awake, he crossed himself and rose; he washed his face and hands in the fountain's stream. I saw that it was fair, clear, and clean, so I wasn't reluctant to wash my hands and face there.]

There is one more first person plural, but after that Jean and Guillaume separate into *il* and *je*. They perform the same actions, but serially, much as they did before the beginning of the dream. Their union is unraveled, but slowly, in a reversal of the process of increasing intimacy that led up to it.[75] Their reintegration into society continues; a knight interrupts their solitude, they rejoin Jean's retinue, attend Mass, and go to dinner (2745-66). The poem ends with a touching farewell scene between Guillaume and Jean, in which Jean bequeaths his lands and money to Guillaume, in some way leaving the poet to take his place at home. Though he must go into exile, Jean is enriched by the dream experience. Even his exile is sociable, populated by a host of allegorical personages. When his hope falters, Guillaume instructs him to remember the dream:

Et il le fist, dont sans doubtance

Sens, maniere, avis, contenence,

Bonne esperence, et chiere lie

Li firent tantost compaignie… (2717-20)

[And he did [remember], so without a doubt sense, good manners, counsel, composure, good hope, and good cheer became his companions at once…]

Jean departs for England with a crowd of companions, real and ideal:

Si s'en ala par mer nagent,

[75] Note also that Jean's and Guillaume's first action upon waking, washing the hands and face, is an abbreviated version of the traditional morning ritual performed more fully by Guillaume earlier in the poem. In both cases the activity serves as a transition between the dream-world and the waking-world.

Venus, lui, s'ymage et sa gent,

Et son rubis, que point n'oubli,

Car pas ne doit estre en oubli.

Armez s'en va de toutes armes

Contre desir, souspirs, et larmes. (2841-46)

[And so they sailed off across the sea, Venus, himself, [his lady's] image and his company, and her ruby, which I certainly do not forget, for it should not be forgotten. He went armed with every weapon against desire, sighs, and tears.]

Guillaume then takes his leave, and we can assume that, although his friend is gone, he too has recourse to the same allegorical companions to keep at bay the melancholy that gripped him at the beginning of the poem. We have seen that his words of comfort to Jean after the dream serve to comfort himself as well. He also has the comfort of literary production, a story to tell, which is also a social activity, as the address to the reader ending the poem subtly highlights: Dites moy, fu ce bien songié?" [Tell me, was this well dreamed?] (2848).

The dream world and the world of poetry allow for Jean and Guillaume a communal experience of social instruction, temporarily equalizing their differences (noble/non-noble, lover/poet, literary patron/literary producer) for their mutual edification. This community is only possible outside of the larger society, in dreams and in poetry, and they may only temporarily sojourn there before returning to the ordinary world. Ideally, the education the dreamers gain from their brief communion will allow them to return to the ordinary world better equipped to deal with the problems they face there.

The Book of the Duchess: Grief, Confession, Instruction

I have argued that, in *La fonteinne amoureuse,* dreaming turns out to be a communal activity, a social answer to a social problem (of isolation and thwarted communication) made possible by a private alternative community. This shared experience allows a relationship between the two men, patron and poet, something both had previously wanted but had not been able to achieve. This dreaming has been the site of social instruction: Jean is able to initiate Guillaume into the dream world and the community of lovers that goes along with it; on the other hand, Guillaume's presence seems to make the dream possible in the first place, and the poet helps to make Jean's experience literarily productive. Beginning with his secret copying of the complaint, he converts Jean's outpouring of love and melancholy into a more stable, written, literary form, which facilitates his consolation and the "populating" of his exile.

Chaucer takes up essentially the same situation in his *Book of the Duchess,* so that, once again, the conventional courtesy-book situation of a courtier's encounter with a social superior comes to life as a narrative of intimacy and mutual social instruction. Chaucer's poem draws heavily on *La fonteinne amoureuse*—it is, in fact, built out of translations and paraphrases of that poem together with others by Machaut and Froissart.[76] Chaucer's dreamer (whom I will call "Geffrey") and his Black Knight fill roles parallel to those of Guillaume and Jean, respectively. Again, social instruction emerges as the solution to problems of melancholy and isolation shared by poet and prince. Chaucer, however, differs from Machaut in tipping the balance of social instruction: while courtesy books show the superior as instructor to inferior and Machaut gives us superior and inferior mutually and symmetrically instructing each other, in *Book of the Duchess* the role of instructor falls more heavily on Geffrey, who guides the Black Knight,

[76] See the preface to Windeatt, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry*.

initially paralyzed by grief, through alternative modes of literary performance in a therapeutic and productive process.

The Book of the Duchess emphasizes Geffrey's role as social instructor in his interaction with the Black Knight. He acts as a confessor, teaching the Black Knight by guiding him from the genre of complaint through other poetic modes, a sort of literary pastoral care. He replaces as an instructor the Black Knight's lady Blanche, who had been his "teacher," as in *La fonteinne amoureuse* Guillaume filled the role of a student of dreams that Jean had imagined for his lady. Social instruction within a literary community is the solution when ideals of erotic social instruction are frustrated.

Geffrey may, at first, seem to be an unlikely instructor. He is the first iteration of Chaucer's self-deprecating persona, bumbling, socially inept, agog at his surroundings.[77] In particular, his series of questions about the precise nature of the Black Knight's loss seems obtuse (given the Knight's statement at line 479 that his lady is "fro me ded and ys agoon") and has been a crux since at least the time of Kittredge.[78] Like many others who have discussed this crux, I argue that the dreamer is not a bumbling naïf and that his apparently clueless questions

[77] Cf the famous descriptions of this persona given by the Eagle in *House of Fame*

> Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon
> And, also domb as any stoon,
> Thou sittest at another book
> Tyl fully daswed ys thy look;
> And lyvest thus as an heremyte,
> Although thyn abstynence ys lyte. (655-60)

and by Harry Bailey in the prologue to *Sir Thopas*

> Thou lookest as thou woldest fynde an hare,
> For evere upon the ground I se thee stare…
> This were a popet in an arm t'enbrace
> For any womman, smal and fair of face.
> He semeth elvyssh by his contenaunce,
> For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce. (696-704)

All quotations of Chaucer are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*.

[78] For a list of solutions scholars have suggested, see Benson's note to line 479 .

serve a purpose. Specifically, I see his line of questioning as a confessor's examination, the interaction between the two men (among other things) a sort of *confessio amantis*. Consider the structure of his conversation with the Black Knight: Geffrey exhorts him to moderate his grief, giving him exempla (one positive, several negative) to instruct his behavior; asks for a thorough, complete "confession" of the particulars of his experience with Blanche; and guides the Black Knight through his narrative by asking questions.

The idea that Geffrey takes the role of a confessor has been put forth before, by R. A. Shoaf. Shoaf examines confessional imagery in the poem, comparing it with images from *Le Livre de Seyntz Medecines* as well as medical texts, bestiaries, the *Glossa Ordinaria*, and Chaucer's *ABC*. He concludes that the "new life" made possible for the Black Knight by confession and penitential change "also marks the beginning of a new poetry in English: a poetry which transcends the conventions of amorous rhetoric as it strives to recover the reality of Love."[79] However, where Shoaf considers the confessional imagery throughout the poem, I focus on the social dynamics of the exchanges between the Black Knight and the Dreamer and argue that, as a confessor, the dreamer provides social instruction to the Black Knight—guiding his discourse toward forms that will allow him to emerge from his mourning with greater insight, culminating in direct, "naked" words. This seems strange not only because the dreamer is a social inferior and apparently a stranger, but also because the Black Knight's competence as a rhetorician is on display from the beginning, when Geffrey hears his complaint. What has the humble dreamer to teach this knight? For starters, many of the same things the Guillaume teaches Jean in *La fonteinne amoureuse.* Geffrey recognizes that it will give the Knight pleasure to respond to questions about Blanche. More so than is the case in *La fonteinne*, though, Geffrey

[79] Shoaf, "Stalking the Sorrowful H(e)art: Penitential Lore and the Hunt Scene in Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*," 324.

pushes the Knight to different kinds of rhetorical performance of grief—from his initial complaint to *descriptio feminae* to a narrative account of his wooing and enjoyment of Blanche.

In both poems, the interaction between poet and patron begins when the former overhears the latter's complaint. Jean, like the Black Knight, is first established with this form, and he will eventually come in for criticism because of his insistence on the sentiments of complaint, which bring him dangerously close to the sin of despair. However, as a performer of poetry Jean is from the beginning more flexible and versatile than the Black Knight. His complaint incorporates some narrative explication of his situation, a recounting of the tale of Ceyx and Alcione, and even the seeds of his own consolation at the end. Chaucer transfers the Ceyx and Alcione story to Geffrey (who presents it as a summary of his bedtime reading material). Any other instances of narrative poetry, consolation, and other forms are either likewise put into Geffrey's mouth or are coaxed out of the Black Knight by Geffrey's prodding. This coaxing, by which Geffrey pushes the knight into reframing his experience in new ways, is what ultimately frees him from his grief.[80] Geffrey, too, benefits from his own cure, for, like Guillaume, he is transformed from a sleepless melancholic into a productive poet. Chaucer's emphasis on poetic productivity as the answer to both men's problems strengthens the connections between prince and poet, love and literature, and the social and the didactic which together make up social instruction.

A clue that Geffrey will play an instrumental role as an instructor and confessor can be found at the beginning of his encounter with the Black Knight. Like Guillaume, he accidentally (but with pleasure) overhears a grieving knight's complaint and is spurred to further acquaintance. However, the Black Knight (unlike his counterpart in Machaut) is not completely

[80] While Stevenson, "Readers, Poets, and Poems Within the Poem." likewise argues that the Black Knight's generic flexibility moves him away from his "toneless concentration of grief" (8), she comes to almost the opposite conclusion about Geffrey's role. She characterizes the Black Knight as "a more confident and self-conscious author than the narrator, at least in his two polished lyrics" and asserts that his speeches, a "series of generic experiments," are prompted in part by his frustration at Geffrey, the inept reader (5-6). I see Geffrey's role in this experimentation as instrumental, not passive or unwitting.

in control socially when he meets Geffrey. Though at first Geffrey seems to intentionally hide himself, at the end of the knight's complaint he does the right (that is, socially correct) thing and approaches the knight with his cap doffed, waiting to be acknowledged. It takes a while for the Black Knight to realize that he's there at all, though at last he redeems himself with a graceful apology, prompting Geffrey to exclaim approvingly, "Loo, how goodly spak thys knyght,/ As hit had be another wyght" (529-30). After this beginning, it is not so surprising that Geffrey presumes to counter the knight's complaint with an exhortation to moderate his grief—essentially, to take a more Boethian attitude towards Fortune, which makes this his first generic intervention. Like a good confessor versed in pastoral care manuals, he gives the knight some exempla for guidance (ll. 714-41). When the knight gloomily brushes aside his little sermon, he moves to questioning, asking for a complete explanation of the details of the case in a way reminiscent of Alcione's desire to know the whys and hows of her loss in explicit detail in *La fonteinne:*

> Good sir, telle me al hooly
> In what wyse, how, why, and wherfore
> That ye have thus youre blysse lore. (746-8)

He seems to share the confidence of Machaut's Alcione and Jean that understanding—complete, certain, and detailed—has healing power, and as in Machaut this understanding depends on social communication. His approach is, apparently, well chosen, for this is one of those key moments allowing for intimacy and secret-sharing such as were so important, structurally, in *Fonteinne.* The Black Knight suddenly opens up to Geffrey. To Geffrey's request, he responds, "Blythely"—Geffrey seems to have judged correctly that such a recitation can actually be pleasurable to the knight (749). The necessary component, what the Black Knight was missing,

is the social context. Significantly, as a prerequisite for his confession, he requires a contract, an oath of "trowthe," much like what was sworn between Guillaume and Jean (750-59). Geffrey echoes his language in declaring that he will agree to the terms "gladly" and "blythely." What follows is a new genre for the Black Knight, a narrative account of his experience with his lady, Blanche. This includes not only a conventional *description feminae* or blason, as Stevenson points out, but also a moral portrait of Blanche similar in perspective and terminology to the genre of conduct literature. Her virtues correspond to some of the essential tropes of courtesy books, in particular the control of the body, the gaze, and the tongue. Her eyes, for example, are not merely well proportioned; they are also well-behaved, not looking askance and not glancing wildly around. (Compare to the frequent insistence of courtesy books on control of the gaze—one is not to look around too much, and one is to look straight at an interlocutor, not off to the side.) Speech is another important locus of self-control in conduct literature, and here too Blanche's behavior accords with its advice: she does not mock or scorn those around her (a frequent injunction) and keeps her speech pleasant and reasonable. In fact, he holds Blanche up as an example of eloquence—this is a key issue in the poem, combining as it does the performance of speech with social and instructional bonds. In short, Blanch possesses "esy, atempre governaunce"—the self-governance so important to ideals of courtesy—and also takes the Black Knight "in hir governaunce" (1008, 1286). Geffrey continues to goad the knight with leading questions. For instance:

> "What los ys that?" Quod I thoo;
> "Nyl she not love yow? Ys hyt soo?
> Or have ye oght doon amys,
> That she hath left yow? Ys hyt this?

For Goddes love, telle me al." (1139-43)

The Black Knight continues to respond, partaking in various genres as he goes, including comparison by way of classical allusion (e.g. ll. 1056-87) and embedded lyric (ll. 1175-1180). But perhaps in the end the most important "genre" Geffrey pushes him toward—as a sort of distillation of everything that has gone before—is that of naked statement. The Knight resists it, but Geffrey at last brings him to this point with his unrelenting questions:

"Sir," quod I, "where is she now?"

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"Allas, sir, how? What may that be?"

"She ys ded!" "Nay!" "Yis, be my trouthe!"

"Is that youre los? Be God, hyt ys routhe!" (1298-1310)

Geffrey answers the knight's bald statement with an appropriately bald response: "hyt ys routhe." There really is nothing left to say, and so at this point the hunt ends and the Black Knight rides away—certainly a more sudden transition than we got in Machaut. Nevertheless, the effect of social instruction is the same. The knight is freed from his melancholy, represented by a lonely confinement to a single genre, and Geffrey ends up with a generically complex book to write.

CHAPTER 4

"I, CONSCIENCE": LANGLAND'S ROMANCE OF COURTESY

> Conscience is, perhaps by definition, inconvenient. The individual visited by conscience usually feels, at least initially, that he or she was doing fine without it. Moreover, if conscience is variable with respect to its location or its content, some elements of what might be called its 'personality' remain distressingly the same. Wherever and whenever encountered, its characteristic habit is to goad, prick, wheedle, denounce, and harass rather than to mollify or assuage.
>
> Paul Strohm, *Conscience: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 2

> I lay doun longe in þis þoȝt and at þe laste I slepte,
>
> And as crist wolde þer com Conscience to conforte me þat tyme...
>
> *Piers Plowman* B.13.21-22

The Paradoxical Comfort of Conscience

Piers Plowman has no shortage of prickly personalities, yet Conscience is not one of them. Many of the allegorical characters in the poem exhibit to some degree the various qualities that, as Strohm points out, are traditionally attributed to conscience; from Holy Church in the first passus to Elde in the last, they correct, tease, contradict, interrogate, and berate Will, call him names, drive him to tears.[81] Conscience, however, more than nearly any other character, is courteous, tactful, and gracious.[82] The word "courtesy" and its derivatives are applied to

[81] Strohm, *Conscience: A Very Short Introduction*.

[82] Compare the depiction of Synderesis, "the Worm of Conscience," in *The Pilgrimage of the Soul*: "He was wonder hidous for to loke vpon and cruel of semblaunt...And whanne I hadde aspied her, I was ful sore abasshed, for he was wonder lothe and foul to loke vpon. For he hadde vpon hirself no flessh at al, ne no body hadde he vnder this hede,

Conscience more frequently in the B text than to any other character (after Conscience, God/Christ is most frequently linked with courtesy). Why should this be?

I argue that through Conscience Langland portrays a transformation of the notion of courtesy. Scholars including Wendy Scase, Andrew Galloway, Fiona Somerset, and Curtis Gruenler have observed that Langland's poem explores an expansive notion of "clergie" (learning) extending beyond the domain traditionally denoted by the word (the university and the monastery).[83] Conscience does something similar with courtesy by taking it beyond the court. Through Conscience, Langland imagines a meeting point between the academic discourse of logic, debates, and distinctions; the ethical problems of government and administration; and the ethos of courtly culture. Though Conscience's various dimensions and concerns often seem to be at odds with one another, he offers a compelling vision of an expanding conception of the intersections of these realms of society.

I will examine Conscience's development in the three episodes in which (in the B text) he is a major character: the Trial of Meed, the dinner with Patience, and the Siege of Unity. These three episodes, in contrast to the most of the rest of Piers Plowman, prominently feature courtesy and draw on romance conventions, and the courtly register produced is tied to Conscience's development as he struggles with questions of how a person, and a community, might "do well." Conscience's character is at its most conventional in the Trial of Meed episode, when he acts as an accuser. In this episode words related to "courtesy" are associated with a court that is too accommodating of Meed, and Conscience stands in contrast to this atmosphere. The courtesy associated with the court's welcome of Meed is a worldly value system that leaves the court

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but only a tayl, which semede the tayl of a worme and was despitous of length and gretnesse." See McGerr, *The Pilgrimage of the Soul*.

[83] See Scase, Piers Plowman *and the New Anticlericalism*.; Galloway, "The Rhetoric of Riddling in Late-Medieval England"; Gruenler, "How to Read Like a Fool."

morally compromised, and Conscience proposes to replace it with a more rigorous ethos of justice. However, while Conscience is not overtly marked as "courteous" as other members of the court are, he is not wholly distanced from the romance register; Langland portrays him as something of a knight errant, and depictions of Conscience rushing about on horseback are set off by a heavier use of alliterative romance vocabulary than Langland typically uses. This wide-ranging quality of Conscience's nature accords with the broad array of registers he is capable of employing--he speaks variously as a knight, a clerk, even an advocate for the commons.[84] His resistance to stasis prompts his first change of mood at the end of the Meed episode, when his confidence in accusing Meed gives way to a more cautious attitude. He has moved further from the conventional, goading Conscience when he next appears in B passus 13; this episode brings a return of romance conventions and focus on courtesy, but this time Conscience is explicitly and repeatedly marked with words related to courtesy, and the romance conventions evoked are specifically those of "King in Disguise" romances. The allegorical figure Patience (or Christ appearing in the guise of Patience, as he later appears in the "arms" of Piers the Plowman) fills the role of the disguised king, and Conscience's courteous reception of Patience enacts one possible answer to the question of how to do well: doing well means welcoming, feeding, and comforting Christ in the form of the poor. Courtesy as practiced by Conscience here means something different than the morally perilous version of courtesy of the Trial of Meed: it is Dowel in its most socially conscientious form, looking toward the kingdom of heaven by caring for the most vulnerable inhabitants of earthly, human society. His is also a paradoxically egalitarian courtesy in that it insists on treating beggars like kings and rejects the mutually beneficial exchanges that make the courtesy of the first passūs self-serving rather than heedlessly

[84] Galloway notes, "Conscience is able to navigate a wide range of languages and levels of style, perhaps (in C especially) the widest of any figure in the poem..." Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on* Piers Plowman, 127.

generous. The final passūs take Conscience's courtesy to its logical conclusion, what I will call "patient courtesy." At the heart of this courtesy is "soffraunce," as Conscience defers judgment in hopes of rehabilitating and converting his enemies, looking to the transformative power of grace. Once again, Conscience plays the role of courteous host, welcoming outsiders into his court (in this case the barn/fortress Unity), and again Langland draws on romance conventions, representing the assault on Unity in terms of siege warfare (with a glance at the *Roman de la Rose* as "Hende Speche" helps to secure a fair welcome for Friar Flatterer). Concomitant with Conscience's patient courtesy is a willingness to suspend previous judgments, and through the course of the final vision Conscience makes three key reversals: he calls off Kynde's lethally effective attack, he welcomes the friars to Unity after initially refusing their offer of assistance, and he accedes to Contrition's request to admit Friar Flatterer as a physician after insisting that there is no need to replace Shrift, the doctor he has chosen. Each of these reversals is marked by language of courtesy, and in each case courtesy is an inclusive force, prompting Conscience to let in characters whom his first impulse was to keep out.

I will also argue that the development of courtesy is implicated in the poem's interrogation of "clergie," that is, learning as the domain of the clerical estate as well as learning or literacy more broadly, including in an extraclergial context. Courtesy is, of course, associated with the estate of knights and kings, as its derivation from the word "court" would suggest, but it is also associated with learning and, specifically, the process of education. I have discussed in previous chapters the relation of courtesy to wisdom literature (frequently portrayed as a father or mother's instructions to a child), to grammar school education (since courtesy and conduct books like the *Distichs of Cato*, the *Facetus*, and *Stans Puer ad Mensam* were used as schoolbooks), and to what in Chapter Three I describe as "social instruction." In the B Text of

Piers Plowman, derivatives of "courtesy" are applied to members of the clerical and noble estates with equal frequency. Conscience more than any other character brings together the realms of the clerical and knightly estates, of government, law, and learning. He is a knight and a counselor to the king, and eventually he himself rules as king of Unity. He is also distinctly learned; he employs academic discourse, sermon rhetoric, and legal argument, construes and explains scripture like a schoolmaster or a good parish priest, and presides over an academic feast.[85] Both Will and Piers the Plowman name Conscience as an early teacher, and in passus 18 Will looks to Conscience for instruction much as he looked to Holy Church in the first passus.[86] He is not only a teacher but also educable: aside from Will, he is the figure most markedly shown learning, changing, and developing in the course of the poem. This is what makes the language of courtesy particularly appropriate to him, for courtesy is particularly associated with elementary education, the age of learning grammar as well as the language of courtly behavior, the age of forming one's character while making an entrance into society and public life.

Conscience as Accuser: The Trial of Meed

Mary Carruthers writes, "Langland never demonstrates any real trust in courtesy, and the good manners and tenderheartedness which Conscience shows on many occasions serve only to

[85] For a discussion of Conscience's use of sermon rhetoric, see Wood, "*Ecce Rex*: *Piers Plowman* B.19.1-212 and Its Contexts." Traugott Lawler speculates that Conscience may be a bishop in Lawler, "The Secular Clergy in *Piers Plowman*."

[86] Conscience takes over the role fleetingly filled by Holy Church before she disappears from the poem for good; I take this as an instance of the phenomenon of male personifications replacing female ones in *Piers Plowman* that Raskolnikov, "Promising the Female, Delivering the Male" discusses, arguing that Langland disrupts the traditional gender dynamics of allegory in presenting a vision of homosocial communion. I see a similar pattern of invoking and then disrupting literary conventions in the development of Conscience from the more conventional accuser to an unexpectedly "comfortable" and forbearing character. I see the gender dynamic Raskolnikov describes involved in this development as well: Conscience's acceptance and attempted rehabilitation of the friars in passus 20, in contrast to his uncompromising rejection of Meed in the earlier passūs, is consistent with his development as Conscience toward patient courtesy, but it is made possible by the replacement of the female Meed (whom Conscience cannot countenance marrying) with the male friar figures (whom Conscience can potentially accept as brothers).

get him into trouble."[87] I will argue that Langland's relationship with courtesy is ultimately more complicated, but it is true that Langland's initial depiction of courtesy is ironic and rather damning.

Just over half of the occurrences of "courtesy" (and words derived from "courtesy" such as "courteous" and "courteously") occur in the three episodes prominently featuring Conscience: the Trial of Meed episode, Conscience's Dinner, and the invasion of Unity. Conscience himself is described with the word "courtesy" or its derivatives seven times in the B Text, more than any other character.[88] However, Conscience himself is not described as "courteous" (or behaving "courteously," *et cetera*) until the dinner episode at B passus 13. In the Trial of Meed episode, the word does seem to be part of a satirical portrayal of courtliness, in line with Carruthers's assertion.[89] The a-verse formula "curteisliche þe [x] [þanne]" appears several times describing the actions of the king or a clerk, part of a broader formula "[courtly adverb] [character] [þanne]," variations of which are mostly concentrated in the "stretch of courtly adverbs" that Andrew Galloway describes in the *Penn Commentary*, when Mede is received at court with much courtesy and deference. (Variations of the formula include, for example, "Mildely Mede þanne..." at B.3.20 and "Hendiliche heo þanne..." at B.3.29.) The welcome Meed receives is symptomatic of an atmosphere that allows her easily to gather allies and build influence, even when her situation seems vulnerable. Even Clergie authorizes the Justices to comfort Meed, and

[87] Schroeder, "The Character of Conscience in *Piers Plowman*," 19.
[88] "Courtesy" and its derivatives are in the B Text applied to God/Christ six times, to kings and knights (including the emperor Constantine) five times, and to learned/clerical characters (including Cato, Clergie, assorted clerks, and Friar Flatterer) five times as well. See s.v. "curteis, adj.," "curteisie, n," and "curteisly, adv.," in Wittig, *Piers Plowman*, 156.
[89] She writes, "Everyone including the king bends over backwards to be nice to her...That is much too nice a way to handle someone like Lady Meed." Schroeder, p. 23. Andrew Galloway writes in his notes on "Meed's bower at Westminster," "The invocation of romance conventions is clear in a stretch of courtly adverbs unparalleled elsewhere in the poem, describing the fashion in which [Meed] is treated and behaves: Cortesliche (9, 130), Genteliche (14), Myldeliche (21, 39, 77), hendeliche (30), Solempneliche and softlyche (54), Loueliche (55)...The fleeting evocation of the style of romance in other alliterative poetry is lethally exact." See Galloway, *The Penn Commentary on* Piers Plowman.

they promise to help her get her way "For al Consciences cast and craft" (B.3.19). Conscience stands alone in refusing to offer Meed a gracious welcome.

It is not that Conscience is churlish; he is simply not marked as courteous in this episode. He states his mind in plain, direct language rather than "fair speech," but he shows a rather serious, respectful decorum, emphasized in (sometimes pleonastic) descriptions of his gestures: "Knelynge, Conscience to þe kyng louted," "'Nay,' quod Conscience to þe kyng and kneled to þe erþe" (B.3.116, 230). His comportment is courteous in the sense that it accords with courtesy book directives to be moderate, restrained, and dignified in speech, gestures, and bearing, and to speak truthfully, avoiding flattery as well as coarseness. This is the context of the word "courteous" when Reason calls "Caton his knaue, curteis of speche," "Caton" here referring to the *Distichs of Cato*, a conduct manual as well as elementary school book (B.4.17). Nevertheless, Langland does not overtly mark Conscience's actions with the language of courtesy here as he does later, and Conscience appears here in the role of an accuser, stern and uncompromising in contrast to the rest of the court--what we might expect conscience to be like.

As Galloway points out, the courtly atmosphere is fleeting, and the dynamic of Conscience standing in opposition to the sort of courtesy that would welcome Meed ends with the trial. By the end of the episode everyone is calling Meed a "mansed sherewe" and a whore (B.4.160, 166). (Conscience may have called her "tikel of hire tail," but he never uses terms quite this baldly crude (B.3.131).) Again, Conscience's mood is in contrast with everyone else's. More than at any point previously, he expresses doubt.

Up to this point, he has expressed his judgments confidently, and in direct, straightforward language. For example, when the king asks him if he would be willing to marry Meed, he emphatically refuses consent and presents his initial case as a series of factual

statements about Meed's nature: "She is frele of hire feiþ...She makeþ men mysdo...She is tikel of hire tail...She dooþ men lese hire lond...she is fauorable to fals...Clergie and coueitise she coupleþ togidres" (122-165). He concludes in a similarly declarative vein: "This is þe lif of þat lady, now lord ȝyue hire sorwe" (166). He is not afraid to tell the king "no," respectfully but firmly, once when the king says Meed seems worthy of having dominion and again when the king, in frustration, demands that Conscience and Meed kiss and make up: "'Nay, by crist!' quod Conscience; 'congeye me raþer!/ But Reson rede me þerto raþer wol I deye'" (B.4.4-5). His knowledge is frequently portrayed as reliable and a sound basis for his counsel, and Langland plays on the etymology of *conscientia* (*con-* + *scire*) with phrases about what and who Conscience knows. For example, Theologie warns Civil against holding with False by invoking Conscience: "Yet be war of þe weddynge; for witty is truþe/ For Conscience is of his counseil and knoweþ yow echone" (B.2.138-9). He knows the truth behind Peace's complaint against Wrong: "The kyng knew [Peace] seide sooþ, for Conscience hym tolde/ That wrong was a wikked luft and wroȝte muche sorwe" (B.4. 61-2). There is a sense that he sees everything, including things that fall outside the experience of the king and the ruling estate: "Conscience and þe commune knewen wel þe soþe…" (80). Meed even attempts to trade on Conscience's knowingness when she justifies herself, saying things like "þow knowest, Conscience, I kam noȝt to chide" and "Wel þow woost, Conscience, but if þow wolt lie,/ Thow hast hanged on myn half elleuene tymes" (B.3.178, 180-1). Conscience is able to counsel even Reason, when he warns his companion about Waryn Witty and Wisdom: "Ac Conscience knew hem wel, þei loued coueitise,/ And bad Reson ryde faste and recche of hir neiþer" (B.4.32-3).[90] As these examples indicate, Conscience's knowledge is the basis of a system for ensuring that royal policy operates

[90] The a-verse phrase of line 32 is a formula, "Conscience [knowen] [pronoun] wel," that is repeated in each of Conscience's three major episodes, with various and telling implications for the nature of Conscience's knowledge, as I will discuss below.

justly.[91] If Conscience knows whether any given person is allied with Truth or with False, then he can counsel the king accordingly so that, ideally, the just are rewarded and the wicked punished on earth as in heaven. This system is sketched out when Soothness sees False plotting for influence:

> Sothnesse seiȝ hem wel and seide but litel,
> And priked forþ on his palfrey and passed hem alle
> And com to þe kynges court and Conscience tolde,
> And Conscience to þe kyng carped if after. (B.2.189-92)

Conscience functions as an important intermediary, with access both to "soothness" (that is, truth not functioning as a name for God) and to the king. The phrase "Sothnesse seiȝ hem wel" is a parallel to the repeated formula "Conscience [knowen] [pronoun] wel" and contributes to the picture of Conscience as seeing everything that happens both in and out of court, whether in person or through informants. Soothness observes but holds his peace (a policy repeatedly recommended to Will, e.g. by Holy Church at B.2.47-47, Reason at B.11.376 ff., and Patience at B.13.86 ff., which Will sums up as "To se muche and suffer moore" at B.11.412).[92] Soothness can afford to say nothing because Conscience is there to speak for him and has influence at court. Indeed, Conscience's speeches in the early passūs suggest an awareness of both his authority

[91] See Galloway's assertion that Conscience stands in for royal policy.

[92] The injunction to watch and hold one's peace is common in courtesy books, and the *Distichs of Cato* has a similar injunction at Book I, couplet 3: "Uirtutem primam esse puto, conpescere linguam: /Proximus ille deo est, qui scit ratione tacere." The description of Reason's servant Cato as "curteis of speche" probably refers to this guardedness of speech, particularly since Reason orders him to saddle a horse called "suffer-til-I-se-my-tyme" (B.4.20). Later on Reason quotes a didactic couplet of the sort found in courtesy books when he admonishes Will:

> French men and fre men affaiteþ þus hire children:
> *Bele virtue est suffrance; mal dire est petite vengeance.*
> *Bien dire et bien suffrir fait lui suffrable a bien venir.*
> [Patience is a fair virtue; to speak ill is small vengeance. To speak well and be patient will bring success to the patient one] (B.11.384-6)

(based on his access to truth and to the court) and the responsibilities that come with his role as a "truthteller."

Thus his newly skeptical attitude is surprising. He would seem to have won the debate now that public opinion has turned against Meed and the king himself is angry with Mede and swearing to hold with Reason and Conscience against Wrong. However, his response to the king's declaration that he will have "leaute in lawe" sounds a note of caution and doubt in contrast to his previously confident moral judgments:

> Quod Conscience to þe kyng, "but þe commune wole assente
> It is wel hard, by myn heed, herto to brynge it,
> And alle youre lige leodes to lede þus to euene. (B.4.182-4)

No one seems to be paying attention to Conscience's caution. Reason wholeheartedly agrees to the king's plan for reform ("But I rule þus youre Reaume rende out my guttes...So Conscience be of youre counseil kepe I no bettre") and the king responds emphatically "Als longe as I lyue lyue we togideres" (186, 193, 195). Missing, however, is a similar vow, or any kind of assent to this plan, from Conscience to match the king's and Reason's vows. In fact, we hear nothing more from him--after his word of warning he is silent for the rest of the scene, and in the B Text will not appear again in person until he invites Will to dinner in passus 13.

Conscience's last speech suggests one reason for his change in attitude: he is pointing out that the small, self-contained center of justice the king proposes, with Reason and Conscience staying put forever after at the king's court, is not sufficient to enact this new era of justice. The king gestures toward inclusion of the clerical and noble estates—"Be my counseil comen of clerkes and of Erles"—but does not acknowledge the role of the commons despite Conscience's attempt to see it addressed (B.4.189). It is already becoming clear that Conscience's nature

brings together the roles of the various estates. He is a knight, but a distinctly clerkly one, and while he does not ever appear in the guise of a commoner, he has much more contact with the commons than Reason or the king. Just as his identity is more inclusive and wide-ranging than that of most other characters, his nature seems inclined to motion, allowing him to stay put only temporarily. The "lewed vicar" at passus 19 may wish to see "þow Conscience [remain] in kynges court, and shouldest neuere come þennes," an echo of the king's wishes at passus 4, but this only draws attention to the fact that Conscience can no more stay put at court than can a romance hero (424). The king first introduces him to Meed as "a knyȝt…cam late fro biyonde," and his characteristic mode is to sojourn in a given place and then depart (B.3.110). He is, like a knight in a French romance, always taking his leave or "congie."[93] Though we do not see him depart from the king's court at the end of the Trial of Meed episode, his impulse at the thought of serving the king alongside Meed is to take his leave—"congeye me raþer!"—and he welcomes the chance to ride out in pursuit of Reason. If earlier he has not been a part of the string of courtly adverbs surrounding Meed's welcome, here his tendency toward motion is reminiscent of chivalric romance and draws on the vocabulary of alliterative romance more than is usual in *Piers Plowman*:

> 'I am fayn of þat foreward', seide þe **freke** þanne,
> And **riȝt renneþ** to Reson and and rouneþ in his ere;
> Seide hym as þe kyng sente and **siþen took his leue**.
> (B.4.13-15, emphasis mine here and below)

[93] The word "congien," from the Old French expression *prendre congé* (AND s.v. "prendre congé," 1) appears in *Piers Plowman* only in connection with Conscience.

Thanne Consicence on his capul **caireþ forþ faste**… (24)[94]

…And **bad Reson ryde faste** and recche of hir neiþer…

And þanne Reson **rood faste** þe riȝte heiȝe gate

As Conscience hym kenned… (33, 42-3)

His eagerness is such that Reason has to ask him to stay put for a moment: "'I shal arraye me to ryde', quod Reson, 'reste þee a while'" (B.4.16). In short, Conscience's change of heart is characteristic and is the first of a series of such changes. As Carruthers points out, he is very much educable and developing, and it is difficult to imagine that he will stay put in the king's court for long after the close of passus 4, just as it is unsurprising after all that by the end of the Trial of Meed episode he is already beginning to depart from the traditional role of Conscience the accuser.[95]

Conscience the Host: Conscience's Dinner as a King in Disguise Romance

Conscience reappears in his guise of courteous host in response to Will's crisis of *clergie*. At the beginning of passus 13, Will is in bad shape, "witlees nerhande," in large part because in the course of the previous dream he has had doubts about his own salvation, and in particular about whether his learning is ultimately an impediment to that salvation. Early on, Holy Church and then Conscience have addressed the question of how one might be saved by citing Psalm 14: *Domine quis habitabit in tabernaculo tuo?* (in Conscience's translation, "Lord, who shal wonye in þi wones?") (3.235). Conscience says that David "assoileþ" this question, that is, explains or unpacks it as one would explain a riddle or as a clerk would expound a problem or question: *Qui*

[94] *Cairen* in particular is very much characteristic of alliterative romance and unusual in *Piers Plowman*: see Turville-Petre, *The Alliterative Revival*, 74.
[95] See Schroeder, 19.

ingreditur sine macula & operatur Iusticiam: "Tho þat entren of o colour and of one wille/ And han ywroght werkes wiþ right and wiþ reson" (238-9). His translation is a sort of gloss on the verse: a more literal version (here, the Douay-Rheims) would read, "He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice." In Alford's opinion he renders the verse more obscure, not less.[96] Certainly Will finds it difficult to determine what sort of life will render him spotless, "of one color and of one will," and how best to work according to right and reason. For him, the Psalm remains a riddle, and he fears that his clerical learning, far from allowing him to solve it, may keep him out of God's tabernacle. He has seen clerks devote themselves to covetousness and pursue learning for the wrong reasons while, in his memorable translation of Augustine, "lewed Iuttes/ Percen wiþ a Paternoster þe paleys of heuene" (B.10.467-8). Scripture's sermon on the text "many are called but few chosen" (Matthew 22:14) increases his confusion, and Imaginatif's defense of *clergie* seems not to completely remove his doubts.

This is his state at the beginning of passus 13, when Conscience manages to do what the others have not, that is, to comfort Will. Conscience as a courteous knight is hosting a dinner at his court, and Will seems to find solace in being invited to this feast, even if he does not feel confident that he will be invited to God's feast. In the end, Conscience will offer more comfort than Will at this point realizes, in that his actions as a host will provide another, more satisfactory gloss on the text *Domine quis habitabit?*

Conscience is well placed to examine the problems of both the knightly and clerical estates, which are so often intertwined in this poem. In passus 13 the guests of honor at Conscience's court (at least technically) are clerical, the doctor of divinity and Clergie himself, but Conscience appears mainly in his knightly aspect, leaving the riddles and grammatical

[96] *Piers Plowman*, 6.

metaphors to others. He moderates a sort of intellectual game (or as Curtis Gruenler reads it, a riddle contest) centering on the definition of Dowel but does not give an answer himself. However, his actions during the feast, and particularly his reception of Patience, provide their own answer to the question. I will argue that Conscience's dinner is a sort of king in disguise narrative, and that by welcoming Patience (in his poor pilgrim's clothes) to his court, providing him warm hospitality, and at last honoring him above the doctor and even Clergie, Conscience passes a kind of test and acts out a gloss on *Domine quis habitabit* in the form of Matthew 25:31-46, where Jesus defines the "just," those who will be saved, as those who give food, drink, and comfort to the needy: *amen, dico vobis quamdiu fecistis uni de his fratribus meis minimis mihi fecistis* [Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me] (Matthew 25:40).

The King in Disguise narrative

The "King in Disguise" narrative is very old and very widespread. It features in many folktales; it occurs in Genesis when Abraham unwittingly provides hospitality to God and in the Odyssey when Odysseus returns home in disguise (as Elizabeth Walsh points out in her article on the subject).[97] Middle English literature has its own version of the king in disguise narrative in a group of romances including *King Edward and the Shepherd*, *King Edward and the Hermit*, *John the Reeve*, and *Rauf Coilyear*, in which a "churl" figure provides hospitality to a king, endures some discomfort when the king returns the favor, and is eventually richly rewarded. Rachel Snell describes the particular features that these romances share in her article "The

[97] Walsh, "The King in Disguise."

Undercover King."[98] The churl is usually a trickster figure and typically puts on a show of serving simple fare until he decides to let the king in on his secret bounty and feeds him a remarkably sumptuous dinner, usually involving poached game. The churl has rough manners and offers rough entertainment (often a drinking game, in one case a kicking game), but the king enjoys his brush with "churl's courtesy" and promises to return the churl's hospitality, usually claiming to live at court with various comic equivocations: "my son is a favorite of the queen; my father was a Welsh knight, etc." The churl finds himself out of place at court and is petrified when it becomes evident that his guest has in fact been the king (particularly since poaching is a capital offense); however, after a little fun at his expense, the king rewards the churl with wealth and sometimes with a title.

Are Conscience and Patience then playing the parts of churl and king? Conscience is a knight and a clerk, but he is certainly no churl in any sense of the word. In passus 13 he follows all of the rules of courtesy and dinner etiquette and manages his guests with some subtlety and tact. (In fact, Will and the doctor between them fill the role of the unruly churl.) He shares none of the sources of the churl's embarrassment at court: rough manners, lack of acquaintance with courtly courtesy and protocol, or a record of poaching. Instead, Patience's disguise here puts courtliness itself to the test. The question is not whether Patience's host knows the language of courtly dinner etiquette or whether he has broken poaching laws, but whether he can prove that he honors God above earthly lords. As for Patience, I follow Traugott Lawler's reading of him as Christ in his article "Conscience's Dinner."[99] I would add that in earlier passus the poem hints

[98] Snell, "The Undercover King."

[99] Lawler points out that the C-Text version of this episode, which gives some of Patience's lines to Piers Plowman, hints that Patience is Christ. He posits that when Piers seems suddenly to appear and then, just as suddenly, disappear, it is in fact Patience speaking in the guise of Piers, and his argument turns on the word "properliche" in the line "Pacience properliche spak, tho Peres was thus ypassed" (153): "Why 'properliche'? I think the only meaning it can bear is that Patience has just spoken in the person of Piers the Plowman, and is now speaking in his

that we will see a version of the dinner in Emmaus, preparing us for Patience as Christ in disguise. More specifically, passus 10 contains three references to Christ appearing in the guise of the poor couched in language of feasts, pilgrim's clothing, and patient poverty that suggests that Christ visits Conscience in the guise of Patience (who appears in the guise of a poor pilgrim). They come after Trajan has declared love's supremacy over law and clergie: "Law wiþoten loue…ley þer a bene!/ Or any science vnder sonne" (171). The first instance explains why we should particularly love the poor:

> For oure Ioye and oure Iuel, Iesu crist of heuene,
>
> In a **pouere mannes apparaille** pursueþ vs euere,
>
> And lokeþ on vs in hir liknesse and þat wiþ louely chere
>
> To knowen vs by oure kynde herte and castynge of oure eiȝen,
>
> Wheiþer we loue þe lords here before þe lord of blisse. (185-89)

Then follows a translation of Luke 14: 12-14:

> *Cum facitis conuiuia nolite inuitare amicos.*
>
> 'Ac calleþ þe carefulle þerto, þe croked and þe pouere;
>
> For youre frendes wol feden yow, and fonde yow to quyte
>
> Youre festynge and youre faire ȝifte; ech frend quyteþ so ooþer.

---

proper person… Piers, that is, equals Patience" (98). (He points out that Donaldson has argued that Piers and Patience are the same in *C-Text and Its Poet* 179.) Petrus id est Christus, and Lawler suggests that Patience here is Christ in his suffering aspect, Christus patiens (99). He compares Patience to the *eiron* figure of Greek literature and mentions the dinner on the road to Emmaus of Luke 24 (in which the risen Jesus dines, unrecognized, with two disciples) as being in the background of this episode. See Lawler, "Conscience's Dinner."

Ac for þe pouere I shal paie, and pure wel quyte hir trauaille

That ȝyueþ hem mete or moneie and loueþ hem for my sake.' (191a-196)[100]

Later, as part of a discourse in praise of poverty, Langland invokes the dinner at Emmaus:

Why I meue þis matere is moost for þe pouere;

For in hir liknesse oure lord lome haþ ben yknowe.

Witnesse in þe Pask wyke, whan he yede to Emaus;

Cleophas ne knew hym noȝt þat he crist were

For his **pouere apparaill** and **pilgrymes wedes**

Til he blessed and brak þe breed þat þei eten.

So bi hise werkes þei wisten þat he was Iesus,

Ac by cloþyng þei knewe hym noȝt, so caitifliche he yede. (233-9)

The lesson, says the speaker, is that everyone, however wealthy or learned ("though he moore latyn knowe"), should be humble, loving, and "pacient as pilgrymes for pilgrymes are we alle" (242). He then reiterates his point:

And **in þe apparaille of a pouere man** and **pilgrymes liknesse**

Many tyme god haþ ben met among nedy peple,

[100] The Vulgate reads, "dicebat autem et ei qui se invitaverat cum facis prandium aut cenam noli vocare amicos tuos neque fraters tuos neque cognates neque vicinos divites ne forte et ipsi te reinvitent et fiat tibi retribution. sed cum facis convivium voca paupers debiles claudos caecos. et beatus eris quia non habent retribuere tibi retribuetur enim tibi in resurrection iustorum."

Ther neuere segge hym seiȝ in secte of þe riche. (243-45)

In Passus 13, Conscience holds a feast. Among his guests are the learned and the powerful, but also a poor man, Patience, dressed "in pilgrymes clothes" and asking for food "pur charite, for a a pouere hermyte" (B.13.29-30). This is the king in disguise, and Conscience will be tested through his reception of him, his kind heart and the "casting of his eyes."

Conscience's Fair Welcome

At first glance, Conscience's reception of the doctor of divinity, the first guest Will sees, suggests troublingly that Conscience might not pass the test. Will reports, "Conscience knew hym wel and welcomed hym faire" (27). Conscience "knows" the doctor. Often in Conscience's scenes, "knowing" in the sense of interpersonal acquaintance or relationships refers allegorically to the "knowledge" (of right and wrong) attributed to Conscience as a faculty, as in the case of the first instance of the formula "Conscience [knowen] [pronoun] wel" when Conscience warns Reason about Waryn Wisdom and Witty. Here the repetition of the verse "Conscience knew him wel" is particularly disturbing paired with the new b verse, "and welcomed hym faire" (as opposed to "þei loued coueitise" earlier). However, his reception of Patience is ultimately more important. It is not clear that he recognizes him at this point, but he welcomes him as courteously as he has done the doctor: "Conscience called hym in and curteisliche seide/ 'Welcome, wye, go and wash; þow shalt sitte soone'" (31-2). Whereas the doctor's social identity is apparently visible in his clothing (though Will says he doesn't recognize him, he knows he is a "maister") Patience's identity is concealed by his "pilgrim's weeds." Conscience does not know him by his clothing because he goes "so caitifly," like Jesus at Emmaus, but he gives him fair welcome as

well. He feeds him well: though Will does not realize that the dishes he and Patience share (made up largely of penitential psalms) are far better than the doctor's unwholesome food, Patience declares his approval: "Here is proper seruice…þer fareþ no Prince better" (13.52). Patience is in fact rehearsing one of the motifs common to the Middle English King in Disguise romances, in which the churl's food is said to be fit for a king. Compare Alan the Shepherd's words as he gives his guest wine in *King Edward and the Shepherd*: "Iwisse, he drank no bettur wyne/ Of alle this seven yere!" (474-5), or the words of the king's companion the earl, who in *John the Reeve* says, "John, you serve us royallye…if king Edward where here,/ he might be apayd with this supper" (476-9), or the king's words in *King Edward and the Hermit*: "The kyng hymselve, so mote I the,/ Is not better at es than we" (306-7).[101] Perhaps Conscience begins to recognize who Patience is, for he is soon singling him out for special favor, sending more dishes just for Patience and Will, and "comforting" them with "murye tales" (58). He is apparently in Patience's confidence by the time that Will starts trying to make trouble with the doctor, because he and Patience work together to try to restrain Will, communicating by exchanging a series of private non-verbal gestures such as winks and glances. Most of all, he singles Patience out when he moderates the game of defining "Dowel." Lawler (in "Conscience's Dinner") points out that Conscience deliberately asks Patience last knowing that he will "win" and even sets up Patience's victory in his introduction: "Pacience haþ be in many place, and paraunter knoweþ/ That no clerk ne kan. pacientes vincunt" (134-5). Lawler notes that both the doctor and Clergie paraphrase or cite Psalm 14 in their definitions of Dowel (in arguing that the doctor's answer is not necessarily bad *per se*). Conscience, though, is the only one who understands that they are all being tested for their fitness to dwell in God's tabernacle, and that how they respond to Patience will determine that fitness. Patience lets his humble disguise slip further when he gives his

[101] In Furrow, *Ten Bourdes*.

answer, though again only Conscience fully understands this. Belying his humble appearance, Patience gives as clerkly a definition of Dowel as anyone present. Andrew Galloway and Curtis Gruenler have both demonstrated that Patience's answer draws on various types of learning while also surpassing clerical discourse, explaining things that clerks cannot.[102] In fact, Patience resembles a grammar school master in his answer: his opening, "Disce…doce, dilige inimicos./ Disce and dowel, Doce and dobet, dilige and dobest" suggests to me a classroom, with Patience construing and commenting on a Latin text. Some of his pupils are more apt than others. He challenges the clerics to answer his riddle--"Vndo it; lat this doctor deme if dowel be therinne" (157)—but Conscience is the only one who has unraveled it, and he gives his final demonstration that he knows Patience in the most important sense of the word when he leaves his own court to follow him.

The Question of Clergie: The Riddle Contest and Patience the Schoolmaster

King in Disguise narratives offer a commentary on courtesy by opposing differing conceptions of courtesy, inclusive versus exclusive, and inclusiveness is increasingly integral to Conscience's version of courtesy. In King in Disguise narratives and at Conscience's dinner, language becomes a marker of inclusion and exclusion. The speaking of English versus Latin (or French) is in the King in Disguise romances a class marker that excludes the churls from court culture and makes them uncomfortable. John the Reeve addresses this discomfort with characteristic assertiveness when he calls out his guests for speaking Latin at the table:

> "In fayth," quoth John, "and yee greeve mee mare,

[102] Galloway, "The Rhetoric of Riddling in Late-Medieval England"; Gruenler, "How to Read Like a Fool."

Full deere itt shalbe bought.

Speake English everyche one,

Or else sitt still, in the devilles name:

Such talke love I naught.

Lattine spoken amongst lewd men--

Therin noe reason doe I ken;

For falshood itt is wrought. (491-9)

Again, this behavior (though marking the king and his companions as having received an aristocratic/clerical education) violates John's own more egalitarian notion of courtesy, which values openness and honesty and condemns exclusion. (This is one of the cases where John's sense of courteous behavior is likely to match that of the modern reader.) For Adam the shepherd, who finds himself cowed at the king's court, conversation in Latin and French is one of the many elements of the dinner that leave him alienated and unsure of himself:

When he French and Latyn herde,

He hade mervell how it ferde,

And drow hym ever alone.

"Jhesu," he seid, "for thi gret grace,

Bryng me fayre out of this place.

Lady, now here my bone." (1025-30)

In this scene, not understanding French and Latin is one of a series of ways Adam finds himself at a loss, along with not removing his hood, not surrendering his weapons on entering the hall, being alarmed at the sound of the waits, draining his wine in one gulp, and not knowing to mix the spices into his after-dinner wine rather than consuming them separately. The customs of dinner are, like Latin and French, a language he does not understand. Interestingly, the poem describes the "passilodion" game as a foreign language as well, one that Adam taught the king when he was in his home court and in which he tutors the king's son. When the king asks his son if he would like to learn "passilodion" and "berafrende," he responds, "what may þat be?/ I know it not, be Goddis tre!/ It is a new language" (923-5). The king continues the comparison:

> "I leve thee well," seid the kyng,
>
> "Thou may not know al thyng:
>
> Thou therto ne has non age.
>
> Ther is a mon in this town
>
> That will it preve gode reson
>
> To kyng, squyer, and page.
>
> And gif thou wille gif any mede,
>
> I shal do thee to hym lede,
>
> Unto his scole a stage." (938-46)

The use of Latin and French versus English (and the language of exclusively aristocratic courtesy versus a more inclusive courtesy) is largely a class marker in *King Edward and the Shepherd* and

John the Reeve. In Piers Plowman, it is part of the distinction between "lered" and "lewed," that is, clerical and non-clerical, so that even the king protests that Conscience's Latin-derived grammatical terms are beyond his understanding ("for English was it never"). (John the Reeve's opinion that there is no reason for *lewed* folk to speak Latin does gesture toward the division that *Piers Plowman* makes. However, despite his sense that the speaking of Latin *versus* English *should* be divided according to distinctions between clerics and non-clerics, he encounters it as falling along class lines.) The status and value of learning have been very much at issue just before Will attends the dinner. He has been engaged in debates on the subject with Wit and Studie, Clergie and Scripture, and has agonized over whether learning is in fact a hindrance to salvation when "lewed" men "pierce heaven with a paternoster." He is eager to come to Conscience's dinner once he finds that Clergie will be there; there is a sense that he wants to pursue unfinished business from the previous vision, which left him in tears and then "witless nerehande" on waking. The gluttonous, hypocritical doctor does not offer a good example of the clergy, and Will is clearly itching for a fight with him, though still in the language of learning, cleric to cleric (which is perhaps why he does not come off well here, either). Will's criticism of the doctor highlights the deceptive potential of learning, not unlike John the Reeve's own position. The doctor deliberately cherry-picks his text when preaching to the people, leaving out the verse that can be taken as a criticism of friars, Will says:

> Holi writ bit men be war---I wol noȝt write it here
>
> In englissh on auenture it sholde be reherced to ofte,
>
> And greue þerwiþ þat goode ben—ac gramariens shul rede:
>
> *Vnusquisque a fratre se custodiat quia vt dicitur periculum est in falsis*

fratribus.

Ac I wiste neuere freke þat as a frère yede before men on englissh

Taken it for his teme and telle it wiþouten glosyng. (71-5)

The narrator makes a point of declining to translate the verse he cites into English, a decision that stands out because the poem often does translate such verses—a notable example is the parable about calling beggars to one's feast. Will is specifically criticizing friars who leave out the verse in question when they preach "on English" (74) as an example of how the learned lead the *lewed* (those who can't understand Latin) astray, but at the same time the narrator acknowledges the potential danger of the alternative, making the verse more widely available by translating it into English. The risk, he says, is that it might be repeated too often and thus "grieve those who are good." He says that grammarians (meaning here people who know Latin, have been to grammar school) can have access to the verse, and he quotes it in full without translation. However, the world of "grammarians" is not as neatly bounded as he might imagine, and Patience begins to reveal a clerkly side. Conscience will call on Patience as an alternative to clerkly knowledge: "Pacience haþ be in many place, and paraunter knoweþ/ That no clerk ne kan" (134-5). The point, though, is not that Patience is not a clerk but that he is not *only* a clerk--Conscience's comment emphasizes above all the breadth of Patience's knowledge, and given his own resistance to confinement it is no surprise that he ultimately leaves his own court to go on pilgrimage with Patience. Like Reason in the Meed episode, Clergie is inclined to stay put, and he tells Conscience that he will stay behind to attend to his duty of providing formative education ("And confermen fauntekyns ooþer folk ylered") (B.13.214). Patience, though, is a sort of double of Clergie-as-schoolmaster, and in departing with him Conscience sets himself to school.

We get a hint of how pivotal this experience is to the development of Conscience when he explains his decision to leave the dinner (and his own court) to join Patience as a pilgrim: "Ac þe wil of þe wye and þe wil of folk here/ Haþ meued my mood to moorne for my synnes" (B.13.190-91). To be "moved in mood" in Middle English is to be troubled in one's mind or heart. Though Patience himself will not appear again in person, Conscience's actions for the duration of the poem are informed by the spirit of conquering patience that Patience describes:

> ...and þow wilt þiselue
>
> Do kyng and quene and alle þe comune after
>
> Yeue þee al þat þei may yeue, as þee for best yemere [guardian];
>
> And as þow demest wil þei do alle hir dayes after:
>
> Pacientes vincunt. (B.13.168-71)

Henceforth Conscience might be thought of as Conscience *patiens*.

Conscience's Patient Courtesy: the Siege of Unity

The siege of Unity episode features the final iteration of Conscience's courtesy after his education by Patience. Once again, a focus on Conscience is accompanied by the return of alliterative romance conventions: now Conscience is a king defending his stronghold against siege warfare. Again he remains in his court temporarily before characteristically going out into the wider world. While he has a responsibility to assume a kingly stability and hold to his position in Unity, he is not able to keep Unity closed off, and he opens his gates again and

again.[103] His patient courtesy demands such inclusiveness, particularly after passus 18 and its example of the Four Daughters of God, which flirts with universal salvation as another courteous knight, Jesus, opens heaven to his "bloody bretheren" in Hell.[104] Conscience has three major reversals of policy, in each case choosing inclusiveness and reconciliation over defensive exclusion. He is up against an enemy with a seemingly limitless capacity to convert good to evil, evident in the episode's profusion of doublings and verbal instability. Sinister doubles spring up (Tom True-Tongue is replaced with Tom Two-Tongue), and words and concepts that have appeared *in bono* reappear *in malo*, or *vice versa*. Vices dress as virtues, sleight is "good," *spiritus fortitudinis* and Covetise alike are "bold and [a]bidynge," and "confort," a cornerstone of Conscience's identity, takes on a new significance *in malo*. It is left to Conscience to push the limits of his capacities in an effort to counter Pride's destructive transformative power with a rehabilitative, grace-infused kind of transformation. This means that he must continue to enact his variety of patient courtesy lest it fall back again to the corrupting courtesy of the Trial of Meed episode, or worse.

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[103] His duty as the king of Unity runs up against his knight-errant/pilgrim nature; he now occupies a role somewhat like that of Arthur in Arthurian romance, who remains at court while his knights go out into the wide world where adventures happen. He makes an effort to perform his role by holding Unity:

> Quod Conscience to alle cristene þo, "my counseil is to wende
> Hastiliche into vnitee and holde we vs þere." (B.19.355-6)
>
> "I conseille," quod Conscience þo, "comeþ wiþ me, ye fooles,
> Into vnite holy chirche and holde we vs þere." (B.20.74-5)
>
> [Conscience] called in alle freres,
> And seide, "sires, sooþly welcome be ye all
> To vnitee and holy chirche; ac o þyng I yow preye:
> Holdeþ yow in vnitee... (243-6)
>
> In vnitee holy chirche Conscience held hym... (297)

Even his repeated exhortations to hold to Unity come in the context of his welcoming various groups into his stronghold.

[104] See Hill, "Universal Salvation and Its Literary Context in *Piers Plowman* B.18."

"Would that Covetise were Christian"

A rather odd little moment in which Conscience imagines what it would be like if Covetise were fighting on the side of good illustrates how far Conscience has moved toward an ethos of conversion and reconciliation. Covetise has come to the court as a baron, setting himself up as a rival counselor against Conscience --a darker and more chaotic rehearsal of the Meed episode. Conscience had steadfastly refused to join with Meed, despite the king's desire to rehabilitate her through the union. Now, though, Conscience wishes at least for a moment that he could do just that when he reflects that if only Covetise would come over to his side, they would be a much stronger army:

> 'Allas!' quod Conscience and cryde, 'wolde crist of his grace
>
> That Coueitise were cristene þat is so kene to fighte,
>
> And boold and bidynge while his bagge lasteþ.' (B.20.140-42)

Barney in his volume of the *Penn Commentary* reads the lines as a joke on Conscience's part; I agree that Conscience is being sardonic, but there is wistfulness in the reflection as well, and it mirrors the real desire for conversion and rehabilitation evident in Conscience's approach to the battle with Pride's forces.

Conscience is impressed by Pride's and his allies' power and seems keenly aware of the weakness of his own side's position. A rehabilitated version of Covetise allied with Conscience is impossible and grotesque to think of, more so than the union of Meed and Conscience would have been, but Conscience is impressed by Pride's (and his forces') tremendous powers of conversion. Antichrist's power to subvert truth is nearly boundless: "In ech a contree þer he cam

he kutte awey truþe/ And gerte gile growe þere as he a god weere" (B. 20. 56-7).[105] When Covetise comes to court, he turns a justice to his side with a few words and transforms Civil into Simony. Applied to conversion, the phrase "would Christ of his grace" is not to be taken lightly. While he cries out to several entities for help in the final two passūs, Conscience's appeals to Grace have special prominence. The appearance of Grace as a personification (summoned by Conscience's cry "help vs, crist, of grace!") marks the foundation of Unity, and Conscience's "gradding" after Grace marks the close of *Piers Plowman* (B.19.212). When Conscience sees the strength of Pride's army, he names Grace as his side's ultimate hope: "For witterly, I woot wel, we beþ noȝt of strengþe/ To goon agayn Pride but Grace weere wiþ vs" (358-59). If anything could convert Covetise's force to good it would be Grace. Also significant is the phrase "boold and bidynge while his bagge lasteþ" in Conscience's description of Covetise. Earlier on in the poem, a phrase like this would be uncomplicatedly pejorative. "Bold" is more often than not a negative term in Piers Plowman, repeatedly used to describe false beggars and others enjoying false gain, as in the case of "Bolde beggeris and bigge þat mowe hir breed biswynke" or the description of the sinful Haukyn as "Boldest of beggeris" (B. 6. 213, B. 13. 302). However, Conscience's phrase echoes one that has appeared *in bono* in the previous passus to describe *spiritus fortitudinis*, one of the cardinal virtues with which Grace endows Unity at its foundation:

> And whoso ete of þat seed hardy was euere
>
> To suffren al þat god sente, siknesse and Angres.
>
> Might no lyere wiþ lesynges ne los of wordly catel

[105] Barney in his commentary points out that Antichrist's crops "invert Jesus' work, "And now bygynneth thy gyle agayne the to turne/ And my grace to growe ay gretter" (C. 220.399-400 [B.18.361-62]), "þat grace gile destriue (B.18.347)." See Barney, *The Penn Commentary on* Piers Plowman, *Volume 5*, 206.

Maken hym, for any mournynge, þat he nas murie in soule,

And bold and abidynge bismares to suffre;

And pleieþ al wiþ pacience and *Parce michi domine*.

(B. 19. 290-95, emphasis mine)

The a-verse in question is nearly identical here and in Conscience's speech in passus 20. The difference is in the b-verse. Here, "bismares to suffre" suggests that *spiritus fortitudinis* is patience in (paradoxically) its most active form, in line with the depiction of Christ's suffering as chivalric exploits; compare Abraham's characterization of God as "a ful bold bacheler" at B. 16. 179. Conscience has called *spiritus fortitudinis* the chief among the cardinal virtues, and "soffraunce" as a conquering virtue is key to the notion of patient courtesy. In passus 20, on the other hand, the b-verse "while his bagge lasteþ" reveals Covetise's strength as the debased and ill-founded double of *spiritus fortitudinis*, another manifestation of Pride's threat to pervert virtue and cover vice with sophistry.[106] Though Conscience is sarcastically noting the distinction between fortitude and Covetise's perverse bluster, his language of conversion is of a piece with his serious efforts to turn his enemies to his own side, evident in his series of reversals.

Though Conscience's commitment to transformative grace is most dramatic during the siege of Unity, he has been prophesying such transformation from the start, often by invoking "leaute," which he seems to define as law infused with grace. He explains *leaute*'s power to Will when he allegorizes the gifts of the Magi: "Gold is likned to leautee þat laste shal euere/ For it shal turne tresoun to riȝt and to truþe" (B. 19. 89-90). Antichrist's transformation of truth into

[106]This can be seen already in the speeches of the Brewer, lord, king and Need at the end of passus 19 and beginning of passus 20 and described by the lewed vicar's complaint at 19.457-8 that "Ech man subtileþ a sleiȝte synne to hide/ And coloureþ it for a konnynge and a clene lyuynge."

guile is, in contrast, an inversion of *leaute*, as the fools who join Conscience's side recognize when they see that "Leute was so rebuked" (B.20.63). Conscience first foretells a new society, transformed by love, grace, and *leaute*, when he argues that Meed is destined to lose her influence to love, humility, and *leaute*:

> I, Conscience knowe þis for kynde wit me tauȝte
>
> That Reson shal regne and Reaumes gouerne...
>
> Shal na moore Mede be maister on erþe,
>
> Ac loue and lowenesse and leautee togidres;
>
> Thise shul ben Maistres on moolde trewe men to saue.
>
> And whoso trespaseþ to truþe or takeþ ayein his wille,
>
> Leaute shal don hym lawe and no lif ellis...(B. 3. 284-294)

Here *leaute* is figured as part of a triumvirate that replaces Meed's dominion, bringing about a reversal of everything in society that works against truth. The language of transformation continues, with Kind Love and Conscience "mak[ing] of lawe a laborer" and transforming all estates into "laborers" of some sort, "Ech man to pleye with a plow, Pykoise or spade" (300, 309).[107] At the end of his dinner at passus 13 he declares to Clergie that Patience is instrumental

[107] The source for this vision of utopian conversion is Isaiah 2:4, cited at line 308a: "*Conflabunt gladios suos in vomeres &c*" [their swords will be melted down into ploughs] (translation mine).

in transforming the world: "If Pacience be oure partyng felawe and pryue with vs boþe/ Ther nys wo in þis world þat we ne sholde amende" (206-7).[108]

Patience invokes *leaute* as a means of gaining entry into heaven (another commentary on *Domine quis habitiabit*):

> Ac if ye riche haue ruþe and rewarde wel þe poore,
>
> And lyuen as lawe techeþ, doon leate to hem alle,
>
> Crist of his curteisie shal conforte yow at þe laste... (B.14.145-7)

Patience's lesson on *leaute* reiterates the notion of helping the poor as the test dividing the just from the unjust, the test that Conscience has passed in the previous passus by welcoming Patience himself to his dinner. His account additionally emphasizes the miraculous excess of heavenly wages, emphasizing the inclusiveness and generosity of divine courtesy. Those who care for the poor are not merely paid at a one-to-one rate ("mesurable hire" in Conscience's phrase at B.3.256) but are paid twice: once in advance and then again at the end of the "day's work" as a bonus (or "bountee") (150). This generously disproportionate reward is made possible by grace, which Patience here describes as Christ's "courtesy," a courtesy of the most transcendent sort that allows otherwise impossible generosity. Though it is Christ's courtesy to offer, people on earth gain access to it through *leaute*, the divine law of love that bridges earthly existence and transcendent grace.

[108] Note Conscience's use of the term "amenden": the fact that Meed is the daughter of Amendes prompts Theologie to insist that Meed is legitimate (in contrast to Conscience and Holy Church, who call her a bastard), and this side of her lineage is probably what leads the king to hope that she might be reformed by a union with Conscience.

Conscience's Reversals

Conscience's first reversal comes when he calls off Kynde's attack on Pride's followers. Unity has been in desperate need of help, and Kynde is lethally effective; for a moment it seems that Conscience may be able to outmatch his enemy. However, on seeing the toll Kynde takes he calls off the attack:

> Conscience of his curteisie þo kynde he bisouȝte
>
> To cesse and suffre, and see wher þei wolde
>
> Leue pride pryuely and be parfite cristene.
>
> And kynde cessede sone to se þe peple amende. (B. 20. 106-9)

These lines provide a neat summary of how patient courtesy works by bringing together some of the key terms. First of all is "courtesy," the basic motivation for Conscience's decision, signaling the incident's place within the larger context of Conscience's development. "Suffren" is a word loaded with significance by this point, indicating that Conscience is acting according to the lessons of Patience and associating him with the conquering *soffrance* of the chivalric Jesus of passus 19. "Amenden" points to Conscience's hope to rehabilitate those who have chosen the wrong side, an ambition to go beyond his initial role of identifying who is on the side of False and who follows Truth by transforming the one group into the other. Further illuminating the spirit of Conscience's "courtesy" here is the echo of Piers the Plowman's decision to call off Hunger, who has all too effectively answered Piers's cry "Awreke me of wastours":"Thanne hadde Piers pite and preide hunger to wende/ Hoom into his owene erd and holden hym þere euere" (B.6.173, 199-200). Piers's "pite" parallels Conscience's "courtesy," and the rationale he

proceeds to give Hunger offers insight into what motivates Conscience to persist in his attempts at rehabilitation when they repeatedly put him at a disadvantage. Piers goes in with his eyes open:

> "Ac I preie þee, er þow passe," quod Piers to hunger,
>
> "Of beggeris and bidderis what best be to doone.
>
> For I woot wel, be þow went þei wol werche ille...
>
> And it are my blody breþeren for god bouȝte vs alle;
>
> Truþe tauȝte me ones to louen hem ech one,
>
> And helpen hem of alle þyng after þat hem nedeþ." (B.6.202-209)

He knows that the wasters will relapse when Hunger leaves (just as Pride's followers will attack more fiercely than ever when Kynde holds back), but he feels that he must dismiss Hunger all the same for two reasons: first, an inclusive acceptance of every inhabitant of the fair field of folk (as "bloody brethren" in Christ) takes precedence over distinguishing wasters from winners, and second, he must do as he has been taught and help the needy. The echoes of these lessons are still resonating as Conscience defends Unity. The call to love everyone indiscriminately as "bloody brethren" is powerfully reiterated in the Harrowing of Hell episode when Jesus declares that he will release "alle mennes soules" from Hell because "to be merciable to man þanne my kynde it askeþ/ For we beþ breþeren of blood"--a strikingly inclusive account of salvation and a model of kingship that Conscience emulates as the ruler of Unity (B.18.372, 375-6). Piers's glancing account of receiving instruction in helping the needy will be fully dramatized in the episode of Conscience's dinner, which demonstrates how such an education takes place. This background

helps to explain why Conscience's particularly inclusive, patient notion of courtesy becomes so important to his education. The lesson about helping the needy will have particular bearing on his second reversal, the decision to admit the friars to Unity.

The second reversal comes when the battle intensifies after the retreat of Kynde. Conscience has been suffering from severe attacks from corrupt churchmen and calls on Clergie for aid. Clergie does not come in person, but the friars respond to the cry as though coming as representatives of Clergie. They consider themselves the repository of learning, but Conscience disagrees: he refuses them because "þei kouþe noȝt wel hir craft" (231).[109] Need then appears and convinces Conscience to let in the friars by arguing for the opposite course of action, keeping them out. He puts his argument in terms of feeding the poor, which cuts straight to what Conscience holds sacred and reframes the discussion so that refusing entry to the friars means refusing to welcome the poor, something Conscience will never do. In fact, the friars are described as coming to help Conscience; Need is the one who makes it about helping and feeding the friars versus letting them starve. I have argued that what matters most in passus 13 is not that Conscience welcomes the proud doctor (which might be seen as a mistake) but that he welcomes Patience in his poor pilgrim's guise, and that by doing so he passes a basic test of righteousness (the same lesson in helping the needy that Piers learned from Truth). In light of this criterion for righteousness, Conscience's decision is entirely unsurprising. More aware than ever of the human limitations of his knowledge, he chooses to risk welcoming the bad rather than turning away Christ himself in the guise of one of the least of his brethren (*uni de his fratribus meis minimis*)--even if that brother is a friar. Furthermore, Need's wording sets Conscience up to forbear rather

[109] What is their craft? Is it learning, or preaching and instructing people, or praying and loving? Barney says their craft is "a gift of grace...specified below (250-52) as the special quality of Francis and Dominic, nameley love, the same craft Will needs to learn" (227).

than judge: he advises Conscience "Lat hem [the friars] chewe as þei chose and charge hem with no cure," echoing the stern injunction of Rightwisenesse in the Four Daughters of God episode, "lat hem [those in Hell] chewe as þei chosen" (B.20.237, 18.201). The Four Daughters of God episode gives the victory to Peace, who argues for the position opposite that of Rightwiseness, and Conscience in particular has a strong motivation for emulating her, since Peace is associated with Patience both by repeated references to her being clothed in Patience and by the fact that, like Patience, Peace say that she has received instruction from a "lemman" called Love. Finally, Need's argument seems designed to incline Conscience toward rehabilitation by suggesting that the friars are tempted to Pride's side because of their poverty: "And for þei are pouere, parauenture, for patrymoyne hem failleþ,/ They wol flatere...For lomere he lyeþ þat liflode moot begge..." (234-38). That this line of reasoning influences Conscience's decision is suggested in his declaration at the end of the poem to go on pilgrimage seeking Piers Plowman "þat freres hadde a fyndyng þat for nede flateren/ And countrepledeþ me, Conscience" (B.20.383-84). Conscience is echoing Need's words about friars flattering because of poverty.[110] I would argue that Need is not sincere in his approval of keeping the friars out and that the effect of his counsel on Conscience is deliberate: a characteristic sleight. Nevertheless, his manipulation turns to good counsel in spite of himself. Conscience's laughter as he decides to welcome the friars in after all has a knowing quality. Perhaps he recognizes some of his own more severe judgments parodied in Need's sarcastic condemnation of the friars and rehearsal of Rightwiseness's judment.

At any rate, the result of his change of heart is that he once more plays the courteous host: "And [Conscience] curteisliche conforted hem and called in alle freres,/ And seide, 'sires,

[110]However, he rephrases Need's point in a way that implies Need's own culpability. The phrase "for nede flateren" carries a double meaning: the friars flatter because of need (their poverty), but they also flatter for the sake of (or out of allegiance to) Need.

sooþly welcome be ye alle..." (B.20.243-4). Language of courtesy is by now established as a stylistic marker of Conscience's lessons in *soffraunce*. The word "conforten" (subtly emphasized by its stressed position in a hyperalliterative half-line) has already been associated with Conscience's departure from traditional portrayals of conscience, and its role here bears further discussion because it is one of the words whose meaning is at issue in this episode. The word has been used almost wholly *in bono* up to this point and has been repeatedly associated with God as well as with Conscience. With the attack of Pride and his forces, the word appears *in malo* and carrying a new, inherently negative significance.

"Conforten" is a particularly apt word for Conscience because it includes a range of senses relevant to the roles that Conscience plays, including "To strengthen (sb.) spiritually, inspire with fortitude or courage"; "To encourage, urge, or exhort (sb. to do sth.), spur on"; "To cheer (sb.) up, console"; "To minister to or succor"; "to refresh (sb. with food or drink)"; "to aid or support"; "to entertain or amuse".[111] In addition to senses related to support and consolation (similar to current usage of the word "comfort"), the Middle English word includes senses related to hospitality: to "confort" guests means feeding, entertaining, or more generally welcoming them, actions that are important to Conscience's courtesy. Anima uses "confortatif" in this sense when he compares charity to a well-taught youth at table:

> For charite is goddes champion, and as a good child hende,
>
> And þe murieste of mouþ at mete where he sitteþ.
>
> The loue þat liþ in his herte makeþ him liȝt of speche,
>
> And is compaignable and **confortatif** as crist bit hymselue:

[111] *Middle English Dictionary* s.v. "conforten (v.)," 1, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a, 5b, 6.

Nolite fieri sicut ypocrite tristes &c. (B.15.216-19, emphasis mine)

This passage is one of Langland's most positive portrayals of courtliness. To my mind it rivals Holy Church's image of love as lighter than "leef vpon lynde" for sweet and poignant lyricism (B.1.153-8). Particularly significant for Conscience's courteous "comforting" of guests is the way Anima's image highlights specifically the courtesy proper to youth, a time of learning and humility. The "good child hende" who comforts his fellow diners with pleasant speech is recognizable as one of the cheerful, well-mannered pages portrayed in courtesy books like *Stans Puer ad Mensam* that would have figured in the early education of any of Langland's literate audience members.[112] Anima's explanation of how love is "a childissh þyng" likewise reads like a courtesy book in its portrayal of cheerful humility and mildness:

> Corseþ he no creature ne he kan bere no wraþe,
>
> Ne no likynge haþ to lye ne laughe men to scorne.
>
> Al þat men seyn, he leet it sooþ and in solace takeþ,
>
> And alle manere meschiefs in myldenesse he suffreþ. (B.15.171-4)

For Langland, courtesy at its most sublime is the courtesy of peace and patience that is supposed to accompany early education, and this is the sort of courtesy that Conscience learns when he sets himself to school with Patience as his teacher. In fact, Patience, when he is giving Haukyn

[112] Though the Anglo Norman Dictionary does not list the sense "to amuse, to entertain," under *conforter*, I believe the word carries this sense in a passage from the Harley 2253 *Urbain le courtois* instructing pages in service at table:

> soue(n)t lur deuez conforter
> p(ur) gruschure ne seruez
> qe tu ne seiez mauloseez
> confortez petitz e g(ra)ntz...

[You should frequently entertain [those at the table]; don't serve grudgingly, lest you be blamed; entertain great and small...] (243-6, my translation)

lessons in charity, provides another example of courteous and hospitable comfort, when he assures Haukyn that the rich need not despair of salvation, for if they help the poor in *leaute*, "Crist of his curteisie shal conforte yow at þe laste" (B. 14. 147). The image of a Christ who courteously "comforts" the faithful in generously admitting them into heaven is surely not lost on Conscience, particularly since the amplification of this image into the story of Jesus the Jouster, whose comfort of the souls in Hell is so impossibly generous, has been so important just prior to the Siege of Unity episode.[113] The other major example of "conforten" in the sense of hospitality is another, previous instance of Conscience himself doing the comforting, and in this case Conscience's literal action of comforting in the sense of entertaining carries an allegorical significance of comforting in the sense of strengthening or encouraging. This is in passus 13 when Conscience entertains Patience and Will: "And Conscience conforted vs and carped vs murye tales:/ *Cor contritum & humiliatum deus non despicies*" (B.13.58). Conscience is portrayed as telling stories to amuse his guests, though the Latin tag indicates that Conscience's "stories" are not the sort that a minstrel might perform but encouragement to penitents from Psalm 50: " a contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (tr. Douay-Rheims). The substance of Conscience's "tales" points to other senses applicable to Conscience's actions: in that Conscience points his guests toward contrition and penance and reminds them of God's mercy, he strengthens and encourages them and offers them the solace of healing penitence.

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[113] Conscience's *vita* of Jesus in passus 19 frames the early life of Christ as the education of a prince, emphasizing the period of training and *soffraunce* that even God incarnate must complete before attaining full kingship:

> Ac for alle þise preciouse presentȝ [the gifts of the Magi] oure lord prynce Iesus
> Was neiþer kyng ne conqueror til he comsed wexe
> In þe manere of a man and þat by muchel sleighte,
> As it bicomeþ a conquerour to konne manye sleightes,
> And manye wiles and wit þat wole ben a ledere.
> And so dide Iesu in hise dayes, whoso dorste telle it.
> Some tyme he suffrede, and som tyme he hidde hym... (B.19.96-102)

Barney emphasizes the chivalric register of Conscience's infancy gospel: "Here he introduces Jesus' iuuentee, as it were his enfances; both this term an dfauntekyn (118) may suggest the youth of a romance knight, a child "prince" in the sense of "royal heir apparent" (*Commentary* 119).

Langland plays with the paradox that the something Will experiences as sharp and trying can be described as a "comfort." Patience explains this paradox to Haukyn not long after: "Riȝt as contricion is confortable þyng, conscience woot wel,/ And a sorwe of hymself and solace to þe soule..." (B.14.282-3). (In fact, the paradox of painful comfort will become central as the occasion for Conscience's third reversal, when some of his followers begin complaining that the confessor's "plasters" hurt their wounds too much.)

In short, "confort" has largely positive connotations up to the Siege of Unity, and it is particularly associated with God's charity and "courtesy," and with Conscience as he pursues his training in patient courtesy. Thus it is shocking when the last vision provides a version of comfort *in malo*, with a heretofore unprecedented, inherently negative sense: an earthly comfort that allows sinners to escape the rigors of contrition and penance that Conscience enjoins. This happens when the "lord þat lyued after lust" responds to Kynde's onslaught by seeking "Confort a knyght" as his standard bearer (B.20.90-91). Likewise, when Kynde's associate Elde attacks, Life flees to the manor Revel, "The compaignye of confort men cleped it som tyme," a haven where he can persist in scorning Conscience and his counsel and his attempts at conversion (182). Just as there is now a Tom Two-Tongue to counter Tom True-Tongue, there is a version of comfort on Conscience's side and one on the opposing side as well. This disturbing new meaning of "comfort" is an indication of just how vulnerable Conscience's position is, but it also drives home how important it is for Conscience to persist in enacting his own version of comfort lest Pride's forces overturn it completely.

These are the stakes of Conscience's welcoming "comfort" of the friars. The other side to his welcome is the characteristic attempt at rehabilitation, which he tries to effect by remedying their straightened circumstances and reestablishing their rule. He makes a vow to provide for

them: "And I wol be youre boruȝ: ye shal haue breed and cloþes/ And oþere necessaries ynowe; yow shal no þyng lakke..." (B.20.248-9). He is effectively removing the conditions of privation that would ally them with Need --and the excuses that, according to Need in his speech to Will at the beginning of passus 20, would justify taking things "without counsel of Conscience or cardinal virtues." Need has named food, drink, and clothing as the three necessities that the needy may take for themselves, and these are the things Conscience promises to provide for the friars (if we assume drink to be implied in line 249). He even removes one of the extenuating circumstances Need names in this speech. Need says that they may take what they need who have no money and "Ne wight noon wol ben his boruȝ"; Conscience declares to the friars that he will be their "boruȝ," that is, their surety, further eroding their grounds for claiming exemption from the law (B.20.13). Conscience is trying to reclaim the friars from Need by severing their ties to and claims on him. Not content with removing incitements to sin, he also tries directly to reform the friars by making his acceptance provisional: he will do these things, he tells the friars, on the condition that they "hold themselves in Unitye" (that is, remain within Unity rather than wandering as mendicants but also practice unity with their fellow Christians, rejecting envy and division) and agree to regulation. Like Piers, who knows that the wasters may relapse when he dismisses Hunger, Conscience is aware that the friars he welcomes as brothers are far from knowing their craft as they should. However, he acts in a hope that he may convert them from mercenaries and scavengers to legitimate, registered soldiers for his cause (in his analogy at lines 257-263).

Langland never shows the friars actually agreeing to Conscience's terms, except tacitly by accepting his hospitality, and, predictably, they fail to amend as Conscience hopes. Instead, their relapse paves the way for further corruption from Antichrist's side, setting the scene for

Conscience's final reversal. Rather than gaining loyal soldiers, Conscience finds his position further weakened, and even clerics who have taken his side fall as casualties to Hypocrisy:

> Ypocrisie at þe yate harde gan fighte
>
> And woundede wel wikkedly many a wys techere
>
> That wiþ Conscience acordede and Cardynale vertues. (B.20.301-3)

Desperate to rehabilitate the wounded clerics within his forces, he once more decides to open his doors in hopes of compromise and reform. Conscience has provided a capable physician, Shrift, to treat those wounded by Hypocrisy, but some of them complain that his "plasters" (confession, penance, and restitution) are too painful and wish for treatment from Friar Flatterer instead. Shockingly, Contrition intercedes on their behalf with Conscience. Conscience first protests but then changes his position suddenly, apparently without further persuasion beyond his own reflections:

> "We han no nede," quod Conscience; "I woot no bettre leche
>
> Than person or parisshe preest, penitauncer or bisshop,
>
> Saue Piers þe Plowman þat haþ power ouer alle
>
> And Indulgence may do but if dette lette it.
>
> I may wel suffre," seide Conscience, "syn ye desiren,
>
> That frer flaterere be fet and phisike yow sike." (318-23)

Though Conscience is only relenting as he has done before, his turnaround is still surprising in its abrupt shift in tone and content. It is a sort of miniature version of his gradual change in the course of the poem from confident judgment to *soffraunce* and compromise, dizzying in its swiftness. He starts his speech with a direct, succinct rejection of Friar Flatterer's help and then goes on to give good reasons for his position. His abrupt conclusion authorizing Contrition to get Friar Flatterer thus comes across as a *non sequitur* (even if by now we expect to see Conscience "moved in his mood"). However, the phrase "but if dette lette it" gives a clue as to Conscience's change of heart. If he is thinking through Contrition's suggestion aloud, he could be stating his initial reaction and then going through the options and conditions for shriving his wounded followers; reflecting on the one type of case where Piers does not have the power to give indulgences (cases of debt); realizing that this situation applies to many of the wounded of Unity; and finally conceding that there may be a "need" for Friar Flatterer given the difficult circumstances. His phrasing here lacks the certainty he showed just a few lines earlier. In contrast to his brief, direct statement ("we have no need"), he draws out his assent to let in Friar Flatterer with dependent clauses ("syn ye desiren," "That frere flaterere be fet"), with the "may well" and the subjunctive and passive construction ("suffre...That frere flaterere be fet") producing an impression of concession and deferral of judgment.

Ultimately Conscience has let in Friar Flatterer by agreeing to Contrition's request, but the friar must still get past the porter Conscience has placed at the gate, Peace, in a scene that reiterates the logic of Conscience's "fair welcome." Peace is reluctant to admit the friar at first, and in an effort to gain entry Friar Flatterer, ominously, gives Conscience's name: "Conscience knoweþ me wel and what I kan boþe" (B.20.337). This is the final iteration of the "Conscience [knowen] [pronoun] wel" formula, and it is the most disturbing version yet. As before, the a-

verse remains more or less stable (apart from tense and pronoun person) while the b-verse varies, and this time it indicates that Conscience knows the friar and also what he can (or knows how to) do (i. e. as a physician). If we take his words at face value, the implications for the state of Conscience's knowledge are disturbing. Friar Flatterer's words are explicit in naming two objects of "knoweþ," suggesting that to recognize Friar Flatterer is to understand what he is able to do: according to the friar's self-representation, heal the inhabitants of Unity, in actuality, render them helpless. His pairing of recognition and insight is an ironic rehearsal of the similar pairing at B passus 4 when Conscience "knew" Waryn Wisdom and Witty, particularly since previously Conscience's reason for denying entrance to the friars was "for þei kouþe noȝt wel hir craft" (231). It looks as if Conscience cannot really understand how much potential to damage Unity the friar has. He thinks letting him in is a lesser evil (compared to letting the wounded leave their plasters unchanged), and he is surprised later when he finds that Contrition and other have been drugged.

Peace initially refuses entry to Friar Flatterer for the same reason that Conscience initially refused the friars earlier: "But þow konne any craft þow comest nouȝt herInne" (342). He relents for reasons similar to Conscience's: a mediating figure (in this case Hende Speche) intervenes and raises the hope of rehabilitation and conversion, prompting an abrupt reversal. Hende Speche dangles the tantalizing possibility that the friar might bring Life over to Conscience's side:

> Lat in þe frere and his felawe, and make hem fair cheere.
>
> He may se and here here, so may bifalle,
>
> That lif þoruȝ his loore shal leue coueitise
>
> And be adrad of deeþ and wiþdrawe hy fram pryde

And acorde wiþ Conscience and kisse hir eiþer ooþer. (B.20.349-53)

We have previously seen Life laughing scornfully at Conscience's wish that Covetise could be a Christian; reckoning Conscience a fool; riding in Pride's army; and seeking refuge with Comfort. He has proved himself hardheaded and perverse in the face of whatever might convince him to follow Conscience, and Peace has little reason to hope that this time he will reform. Nevertheless, it is in his nature, as it is in Conscience's, to want to try bringing Life over from Pride and Covetise. Hende Speche goes out of his way not to make anything like a promise ("hende" here seems effectively to mean duplicitous, in stark contrast to the loving speech of Anima's "good child hende"): he piles "may bifalle" on top of "may" to render extremely contingent the statement "That lif...shal leue coueitise..." He recognizes that the possibility that he raises is enough to divert Peace's suspicions, particularly the irresistible image of Conscience and Life kissing each other in reconciliation (a dark parody of the Four Daughters of God and their kiss of peace, and an echo of the king's demand that Conscience and Meed kiss and make up, which Conscience had vehemently rejected). Peace responds not only according to his own nature (which wants to make peace) but with the hope of conversion with which Conscience would have (and has before) responded. From there Unity is swiftly taken, and Conscience goes questing once more.

I have argued that *Piers Plowman* legitimizes Conscience's courtesy by portraying him as following unimpeachable examples, Patience and Christ. Still, the effects of his policies as ruler of Unity remain shocking. Conscience's development has been tied up in the question of how a community might "do well," and what sort of ethos should guide the way its members learn and teach, govern and protect and love one another. There is no getting around the fact that within the space of the poem patient courtesy is not able to keep a community stable for any length of

time. The progress of his education stretches the limits of his identity; what does conscience mean when it moves away from making distinctions, when it goes from accepting and refusing to simply accepting, when it defers judgment to "see and suffer"? To return to the initial portrait of Conscience, if he holds his peace and forbears, who will speak for Soothness and the Commons? Nevertheless, Conscience cannot remain simply the accusing conscience of tradition, any more than Will can undo his education so as to pierce heaven with a paternoster like a "lewed iutte." Staying confined in the king's court, and within his traditional role, was never viable if he is to keep law, learning, love, and courtesy (in its most exalted form as an image of God's courtesy on earth) from stultifying, or degrading into self-serving "virtues" as the cardinal virtues do at the hands of churlish brewers and unscrupulous lords. As the hero of a Langlandian romance, Conscience must keep the doors open for Grace, and he must with each episode become anew the "good child hende" beginning his education.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In his 1881 novel *The Prince and The Pauper*, Mark Twain has his beggar hero Tom Canty commit the same sort of stock blunders that mark the peasant characters of the King in Disguise romances as fish out of water. At his first dinner, he eats with his fingers, rejects a proffered napkin for fear of soiling it, and drinks the water with which he is supposed to wash his hands. However, he knows that there is a set of "rules" he is supposed to be following, and much of the humor and pathos of the scene come from his struggles to divine them. When he fills his pockets with nuts from the table, he realizes immediately that he has done something wrong, "for this was the only service he had been permitted to do with his own hands during the meal, and he did not doubt that he had done a most improper and unprincely thing."[114] An itchy nose presents a conundrum that stumps even his courtiers when he appeals, "'I crave your indulgence; my nose itcheth cruelly. What is the custom and usage in this emergence?'"[115] (In the end he scratches his nose, but only reluctantly, sure that this cannot be right.) Twain's precocious protagonist, a natural statesman, might be said to understand the structure or grammar of courtly behavior, even if he does not know the "vocabulary" of objects, actions, and gestures that make up the dinner ceremony. Deliverance comes when he gets his hands on a courtesy book (in English, plausible enough since this story takes place in 1547). In a sense he is ideally situated to benefit from it, since, rather like a Percival or Fair Unknown character, he seems to have an innate sense of courtliness despite his humble upbringing and simply needs to pick up a few specific pointers. He ends up performing the part of a prince exceedingly well, while the real Prince Edward

[114] Twain, *The Prince and the Pauper*, 41.
[115] Ibid., 41–42.

cannot make sense of Offal Court's codes of conduct and makes a rather dismal if well-meaning Tom Canty.

Twain is clearly having a lot of fun satirizing the elaborate and arbitrary etiquette of the court, and in a more serious vein he is championing pity and mercy over ruling "by the book"—the counterpart to the absurdity and excess of court protocol is the cruelty and inflexibility of the legal code, which fuels the book's many scenes of pathos. The past (in this case, the early modern period) serves for Twain as a foil for a more humane, less rigid age, and in that respect he is subscribing to the same historical narrative that paints medieval courtesy as crude and rigid. Nevertheless, he gives us a hero who appreciates the uses of courtesy as a dynamic thing, not just the specific "customs" recorded in his book of etiquette but the whole *habitus* of the court, which he absorbs early on in order to rule wisely and well. This social acuity allows him to "read" his dazzling new world and to exercise his talents as a young statesman within it. What Twain shows us—the way courtliness is like one language among others, useful and intelligible in some places (a court dinner) more than others (Offal Court or a peasant's cottage); the way that someone like Tom can make strategic use of it rather than simply following it—is not so different from what is already there in medieval texts, just as the structures of his story—the king in disguise, the Fair Unknown—hark back to older romances.

This dissertation posed the question "what was courtesy literature good for?" While outside of fiction no courtesy poem would have provided such a clear-cut solution to such an urgent social problem as did Tom Canty's book, the circumstances surrounding this book in Twain's romance are not so wholly removed from what I believe to be the reception of medieval courtesy literature and associated genres. Courtesy literature was good for education, for language learning and reinforcing *habitus*; furthermore, citing or alluding to courtesy books as a literary

move was good for evoking and complicating problems surrounding the educational process it stood in for as well as problems surrounding self, community, and society. I have attempted to restore some of the context that shows courtesy literature to be more than just the formulaic, sententious side that shows most readily, to bring in voices that have not been attended to, not only by studying didactic poems in conversation with other kinds of literature, but by including areas of the corpus that have not received the attention that they deserve—Latin and French texts, unedited texts or variants.

There is still, of course, much work to be done, particularly with regards to the Latin poems. I regret that I was not able to give *Urbanus Magnus* and other Latin courtesy poems their due here. There is more to understand about the tradition and how it echoes through later works, as is demonstrated by how much light it sheds on the Harley scribe's version of *Urbain* and his composition/translation process. We need an updated, more readily available edition of this poem, with a translation. The situation has historically been similar with the Anglo-French texts, which received more attention in this dissertation, though I am encouraged to see that that is changing. As of this writing, TEAMS has released the second volume of its edition of Harley 2253, with the first and third forthcoming. Manuscripts, too, are becoming more accessible thanks to digitization, and projects like the *Piers Plowman Electronic Archive* are making it easier to attend to the complexities of textual tradition. Such an archive of courtesy poems would be an invaluable tool for those tracing the relationships between texts as I have done with *Urbain le courtois* in my second chapter. I have been able to focus on only a small piece of a rich tradition that I believe we still do not fully understand. Nevertheless, if this work prompts those who write on courtesy and didactic literature, on Chaucer, Langland, and other medieval authors, to listen for the voices that are so often silent; if it helps to chip away at the narratives that distort

and oversimplify medieval courtesy and social relations; it if prompts anyone to read and write about works like *Urbanus Magnus* and *Urbain le courtois*, then it will have answered its purpose.

APPENDIX

An Edition of *Urbain le courtois* (Harley 2253 item 79) with Translation and Notes, based on the Facsimile by Ker

Vn sage houme de grant valour

qe longement vesqui en honour

vrban estoit apelee

en son temps mult fust amee

de son enfant mult se purpensa.

e son bon sen ly mostra

e dit ben fiz ore escotez

ce qe ie dy sy lentendez

noreture vous vueil aprendre

tant come vous estes dage tendre

qar pur verite le vous dy

celi est hony qe nest nory

ore escotez mon cher fitz

coment ie vueil qe seiez noris

je vueil tot al premour

qe sages seiez e plein de doucour

Seiez debonere e corteis

e qe vous sachez parler fraunceis

qar molt est langage alosee

de gentil houme e molt amee

vous devez amer dieu puissant

tenyr sa ley e son comaunt

volenters alez a mostier

Si escotez le dieu mestier

qar de le seruice dieu oyr

ne puet nul mal auenyr

Seiez de grant debonerete

e touz iours gardez verite

mes iamez a vostre voil.

ne seiez vencu dorgoil.

qar celi quest orguillous

yl del tot est a rebours

qe vnqe ly noble rodlaund

ne valsist le demy tant

Come il fet a son quider

e si ne valt il mye olyuer

e plus quide estre beals

qe absolon ly iuuenceals

ou ypomedes estoit

qe tote beautes auoit

e plus estre corteis e seyn

que ne fust sire gaweyn .

Ou que nul autre ne fu.

e si est ledement descu

apre vueil que seiez sage

e qe ne facez nul outrage

ne procurez nulli de malfere

ne losenge ne mensonge crere

de tote rien que fere deuez

a comencement vous purpensez

a quel chief vous le poez trere

Si il est bon bien fet a fere

Sil est mauois le lessez

e de mieu fere vous prenez

de yueresse vous gardez auxi

qar ly yures sachez defy

sil eit mal vice al cors

meintenant le mettreit hors

ce ne qeynit mie plusours

Si vous volez auer mes amours

Seiez totdis bon crestien

e amez dieu sur tote rien

dotez dieu e seinte eglise

Si vous delitez en son seruice

a tote gentz fetes honours

le mieux vous auendra touz iours/

e a femmes nomement

ce est droit afeytement

qar ce prent vm molt a gree

e ce vous serra mult alowee

de femmes vienent hautesses

honours e multz prouesses

les biens/ ioies a vn mot

dont me semble il est sot

qe de eux se fet hayer

ia ly ne verrez bien cheuer

mes de vne chose vous gardez

e si fiez que senez

prendre femme tost ne hastez

ne ia femme ne prenez

pur sa valour ou son pris

santz consail de vos amys

Si pur tei meismes prese lauiez

de lur aie bien faudrez

ne prenez nulle pur sa beautee

ne qe soit en lyvre lettree

qar souent sunt decevables

e relement sunt estables/

mes prenes vne qe soit sage

sauntz malice ou outrage

e si fis engendrez

touz mester les aprenez

ceux qe a mester mis sunt

relement a hounte vount

Ta femme espouse ben amez

en nul autre ne delitez

qar de dieu hay serrez

e de ton prome poi amez

amez sen e leaulte

lessez folie e pechie

e si ne parlez mie trop

qar ganglour en tenu sot

qant vous deuez parler

e vostre resoun mostrer

veiez qe vous eiez resoun

santz mesdire e tencoun/

ensi serrez plus prysez

qe si touz iours ganglez.

acointez vous a bone gent

e parlez debonerement

seruez petitz e grauntz

aprenez les nounsachanz

entre lez bonz pur tot alez

e corteysement vous portez

qar iames ce vous affy/;

ne serrez de vn court/

bien norry ----------

amez armes e chiuals

si les eiez bons e beals

e les donez si vilement

Cum sil valsissent nyent

mes si terre deuez doner/

pensez de le bien emploier

metez cet en vostre cuer

aprenez richement a doner

vous dorrez a comencement

manger e beyure leement

a touz ceux de le pais

issi crestra vostre pris

Ce que vm vous doine ne le obliez

mes de le rendre purpensez

e pur dieu vous gardez bien

qe vous ne promettez rien

qe vous ne valez fere ou doner

qar ce fet le fol conforter

e si est ce grant vileynye

grant pechie e grant folie

e hounte de mult promettre

e la promesse en obli mettre

qy tiele chose ad en vs

serra faus souent tenus

gardez qe ne seiez losengour

vers amy ne seignour

e sil desirent lur deshonour

ou lur mal com font plusour

e vous savez lur penser

e les deuez counsiler

ne pensez mie de eux payer

pur lur gree donqe aver

ne pur nully pleyser

ne lur deuez losenger

mes a mieux qe vous sauez

lel counsail lur donez

e si a cele foiz corocer

se vueillent ou tempester

autre foiz vous sauerount gree

pur vostre fei e lealtee

ou dieu qe ne oblye rien

le vous guerdonera bien

pur dieu ne vous acostumez

descharnyr nul qe vous veiez

tot seit il poure ou bosoynous.

ou il ne seit si bel com vous/

si riche ne si auenaunt

si corteis ne si sachant

pur ce ne ly escharnyes

mes mult bel le saluez

qar pur escharn ce sachez

ne serrez ia bien alosez

mes serra al chief de tour

escharny ly escharnisour

Si ascun home vous velt mesdire

ne sailez mie pur ce en yre

lessez ly dire ces volenteez

qar mieux venqe ne ly poez

e q(u)ant il aura tot tencee

yl serra pur fol clamee

e vous sage tenuz

le mieux ame e cremuz

qant vous passez pur le pais

le vel chemyn tenez totdis

amez vostre viel compagnoun

e ce tieng ie greyndre resoun.

de vn amy tener

qe de dis gayner

de nulle rien vous auauntez

mes tot coy vous tenez

qe tous ceux del pays

parlent bien de vos dys

vos meynz vos pies en parlant

ne les mouez tant ne qant

mes la lange soulement

respoigne mult cortoisement

qe nully ne eyt poer

de vous en nul point blamer

ne vous dire vyleynye

mes tote corteysie

entre les bonz souent alez

e mauois fuer deuez

qar des bons bienz vendrount

e de mauois mals serrount

de ta viaunde ne seiez escars

mes cortois seiez de tote partz

donez a ceux qe bien vous fount

e qe ton doun bien rendrount

Ie ne di mie qe dorrez a tous

mes a ceux qe fount pur vous/

e si le vostre ferm tenez

dautrui doun rien aurez

a autry table ne ianglez trop

qe tu ne seiez tenu pur sot

qant ton congie auez pris

escharny serrez pur vos dys

Pur fol serrez ileque tenu/

e dirront vous estez enbu/

Si tu soiez enchiminaunt

e encontrez petit ou grant

volenters li saluez

le mieux serras de li amez

Sil vous salue a premour

responce donez on doucour

si vous ne fetez en cele manere

donqe dirra le fitz al piere

le deable ly dust saluer

yl ne velt respounz doner

sil auient a chef de tour

qe vous seiez grant seignour

ne seiez trop simple a tes gentz/

ne soffrez trop lur talentz

si trop eunt lur volentee

a vous ne tornera a bountee

ne seiez trop simple ne trop haut

ne trop nice ne trop baud/

Si entre gestez seruyr deuez

gardez qe soiez auisez

ore vous dirroi de seruise

qant le naper serra mise

metez salers e squilers

pur tronchours e payns enters/

e pur vin ou cerveise/

e priez qe se facent a eyes/

quei qel eient a manger

souent lur deuez conforter

pur gruschure ne seruez

qe tu ne seiez mauloseez

Confortez petitz e grantz

e aprenez les nounsachantz

cest le dieu comandement

daprendre nonsachaunte gent/

si nul mesfet petit ou grant

ne li tencez tant ne qant

mes diez ly preuement

ce fu malfet deuant gent

autrefoiz seiez garny

qe tu ne seiez de gent hony

Cely diez entre vous deus

ne ly facez autre maus

pur estranges qe ileque sunt

qe mal los ne vous porterunt

qant ton congie deuez prendre

Ie vous faz bien entendre

Si robe vous doint ou cointise

Cel iour pur vostre seruice

volenters le receuez

e molt al seigneur merciez

pur la donez on bel semblant

a ascun tu en seriant

Son doun ne refusez mie

e ne le metez en oblie

quil ne pust aillours dyre

cest vn estout syre

de noreture siet il rien

ne corteysie plus qe vn chien

e pur dieu vous purpensez

qe yures ne seiez

bon enfant a manger

deuant son seignur deit ester

bone aprese escoter

sa vewe bien garder

al pareie ne deit muser

a post ne se doit puer.

Sa nue char ne deit grater

ne doit ryre ne schyner

ne a nully mosker

meurement se doit porter

issi porra seignurs payer/

Si clerc seiez com bien puet estre

totdis amez vostre mestre

lessez puteynz e hasardrie/

la tauerne ne hauntez mie

si lem vous doint petit ou grant

le receuez en merciant

qant vous estes auaunce

pensez de humilite

honorez ceux qe fyrent vous/

e lur fetez tous honours

honorez piere e mere

vostre suere e vostre frere

e les autres de vostre lyn

Si en averez bon fyn.

Si vm vous mesdit de nule part/

gardez bien cet art

respounce a ly ne donez

mes la place voidez

Si vous responez al ianglour

le pis auerez saunz retour

pur vostre pais combatez

en tous lyws ou vous serrez

poiez de ly si bie[116] noun

qe tu ne le defendez par resoun/

Si counter deuez a nully

qant il sa resoun ad fyny

responez amiablement

sanz mesdire e serement

pies ne meynz ne mouez

qant resoun parler deuez

tot eiez vous la victorie

eiez ce en memorie

a nully deuez manacer

ne malfere ne mauparler

mon ami ie vous defent

[116] "bien"—the scribe has omitted the suspension.

ne diez rien derere gent

si vous ne le poez auawe/

e a bon fyn torner/

nencusez nully par derere

nest pas tot leals qe lange lere

desouz cel na tresoun sy fere

com faus lang on bele chere/

prenez femme de honours

e qe soit de bons mours

e veiez qe ele seit sage

qe tei ne peyse la mariage

seiez de bele porture

e cortois saunz ordure

quei qe vostre femme vous die

trop ne la croyez mye

si ele ne seit profitable

saunz mensonge ou fable/

ie vous defend sur tote rien

iames ne ferez autrui chien

qar le chien a qy quil soit

poez feryr mal en froit

amenez ensi vostre vie

qe vous ayme le fitz marie

E priez dieu omnipotent

qe soffry peyn e torment/

qe vous eiez lamour de ly/

e de sa douce mere ausi

E nous doint la sue grace

e vewe de sa douce face

Amen

Translation

A wise man of great worth

who had long dwelt in honor,

was named Urbain;

he was well loved in his time.

He gave a great deal of thought to his son

and showed him his good sense

and said, “Good son, listen now

and understand what I say;

I want to teach you manners

while you are of tender age,

for in truth I say to you

he is shamed who is not well-bred.

Now listen, my dear son

since I want you to be well-bred.

I want first of all

for you to be wise and gentle,

refined and courteous

and for you to know how to speak French,

for it is a language much esteemed

by gentle men and much loved.

You should love almighty God,

hold His law and His commandment;

go gladly to services

and listen to God's office,

for no ill can come

of hearing God's service.

be gentle

and truthful always;

but never allow yourself

to be overcome by pride,

for he who is proud

is so misguided

that in his estimation

the noble Roland is scarcely

half as worthy (as he),

nor is Oliver half as worthy,

and he considers himself more beautiful

than the young Absolon

or Hippomedes

who had every beauty,

and more courteous and wise

than Sir Gawain

or anyone else ever was,

and so he is foully deceived.

Furthermore, I wish for you to be wise

and to commit no transgression,

nor come by anything wrongfully

nor believe flattery or lies.

Whenever you intend to do something,

first of all give thought

to what end you can bring it:

if it is good, it is good to do it,

if it is bad, give it up

and begin to do better.

Keep yourself also from drunkenness;

indeed, know how to defy drunkenness,

for if there is any wicked vice in someone,

immediately it comes out.

Many people do not think of this at all.

If you want to have my love,

always be a good Christian,

and love God above all things.

Fear God and holy church,

and delight in His service.

Honor all people--

you will always fare the better—

and especially women.

This is correct behavior,

since it is very agreeable to people,

and you will be greatly praised thereby.

From women come all things noble,

honorable, worthy,

good—in a word, every joy.

Thus I consider him a fool

who hates them;

you will never see him do well.

But concerning one thing take heed

and act wisely:

do not hasten to take a wife,

and marry no woman

for her value or worth

without the counsel of your friends.

If you have chosen a wife by yourself,

you will indeed miss their support.

Don’t marry any woman for her beauty

or for her learnedness,

for often such are deceitful,

and they are rarely constant;

but marry one who is wise,

without wickedness or wrongdoing.

And if you have sons,

teach them all a trade:

those who are trained in a trade

rarely come to shame.

Love your wedded wife well;

delight in no other,

or you will be hated by God

and little loved by your neighbor.

Love wisdom and loyalty,

shun folly and sin,

and moreover don’t talk too much

or you will be considered a foolish jangler.

When you are going to speak

and show your reason,

see that you are in the right

without slander or contention.

Thus you will be more esteemed

than if you jangled all the time.

Acquaint yourself with good people

and speak mildly.

Serve great and small.

Instruct the ignorant.

Always go among good people

and comport yourself courteously,

for I promise you,

you will never be well bred

outside of a court.

Love arms and horses

when you have good and fair ones,

and give them with as little regard

as if they were worth nothing;

but if you intend to give land,

think to bestow it to good purpose.

Keep this in mind:

learn to give richly.

First of all give

food and drink freely

to everyone in the country:

thus your renown will grow.

Don’t forget about what someone gives you

but think about how to return it,

and for God’s sake make sure

not to promise anything

not in your power to do or give,

for this is a fool’s solace,

and great boorishness,

great sin and great folly

and shame to promise much

and forget what you have promised.

Whoever does such a thing

will often be considered false.

Take care not to be a flatterer,

towards friend or lord,

and if they desire what is to their dishonor

or evil, as many do,

and you know their thoughts

and intend to counsel them

don’t at all think of gratifying them

to have their favor thereby.

Nor should you flatter anyone

in order to please them,

but as best you can

give true counsel;

and even if in the moment

they may become angry or storm at you,

later they will thank you

for being faithful and true;

or God, who forgets nothing,

will reward you well for it.

For God’s sake don’t be in the habit

of mocking anyone you see

even if he is poor or needy,

or not as beautiful as you,

as rich or charming

or courteous or well instructed.

Don’t mock him because of it

but greet him very nicely,

for know that you will never be praised

for mockery,

but in the end

the mocker will be mocked.

If any man should speak against you,

by no means rush out in anger because of it.

Let him say what he wants,

for you can have no better revenge,

and when he has finished scolding

he will be called a fool

and you will be considered wise,

and loved and respected all the more.

When you go through the country

always take the old road;

love your old companion.

I put more stock in

keeping one friend

than gaining ten.

Don’t boast about anything

but keep quiet,

so that everyone around you

speaks well of your words.

Don’t move your hands and feet

at all while speaking

but only your tongue.

Respond very courteously,

so that no one will be able to

blame you in any point.

Don't speak of boorish things,

but only courteous ones.

Always go among good people

and shun the bad,

for good things come from good people

and there will be bad things from bad ones.

Don’t be stingy with your food

but be generous on all sides.

Give gifts to those who are good to you

and who well return your gift.

I do not indeed tell you to give to everyone,

but to those who do so for you,

for if you hold tight to what is yours

you will have no gifts from other people.

Don’t chatter too much at someone else’s table

lest you be considered an idiot;

when you have taken your leave,

you will be mocked for your words.

You will be considered a fool,

and they will say that you are drunk.

If you are out riding

and encounter anyone, great or small,

greet him gladly:

he will love you the better for it.

If he greets you first,

respond pleasantly.

If you don’t do this,

he will say to his father,

“The devil can greet him,

he doesn’t wish to give a response.”

If in the end it happens

that you are a great lord,

don’t be too simple with your people

nor suffer their desires too much;

if they have their way too much

it will not turn out well for you.

Be neither to lowly nor too haughty,

neither too simple nor too arrogant.

If you are to serve among guests,

make sure you are prepared.

Now I will tell you about service.

Once the cloth is spread,

place the salt-cellar and spoons

clean carving-knives and whole loaves of bread

and pure wine or ale.

and invite them to partake

of what there is to eat.

You should attend to them frequently;

don’t serve grudgingly

lest you be blamed.

Attend to great and small.

Instruct the ignorant;

it is God’s commandment

to instruct ignorant people.

If anyone, great or small, does something wrong

don’t by any means scold him

but say for his instruction

“That was done wrong in front of people.

Next time, be forewarned

so that you are not shamed by people.”

Say this between the two of you,

and don’t do him any other harm,

on account of the strangers who are there

lest they carry a bad report of you

when you have taken your leave.

Understand this,

if someone gives you a robe or insignia

this day, for your service,

receive it gladly

and thank that lord very much

and graciously for the gift.

by no means refuse anyone serving you

his gift,

and don’t forget about it,

lest he be able to tell others

“that is an obstinate lord;

he knows no more of good breeding

nor of courtesy than a dog.”

And for God’s sake make sure

that you are not drunk.

A good child at the table

should stand before his lord

to learn good behavior

and should control his gaze.

He should not stare at the wall

or lean against a post;

he shoudn’t scratch his bare skin,

nor should he laugh or grimace

or mock anyone.

He should carry himself soberly:

that will please his lord.

If you are a clerk, as you may well be,

always love your schoolmaster.

Shun whores and gambling;

do not haunt the tavern.

If someone gives you something, great or small,

receive it with thanks.

When you have advanced,

think of humility.

Honor those who do so for you,

and do them all honors.

Honor your father and mother,

your sister and your brother,

and the others of your lineage:

thus you will have a good end.

If someone maligns you anywhere

practice this skill:

don’t respond,

but leave the place.

If you respond to the jangler

you'll have the worst of it, beyond recall.

Fight for your country

wherever you are;

you may have thereby a better name

than if you didn't rightly defend it.

If you have to argue against anyone,

when he has finished his speech

respond pleasantly,

without slander and oaths.

Don't move your hands or feet

while you speak your piece.

You will have all the victory.

Remember this:

you shouldn't threaten anyone

or injure or speak ill of anyone.

My friend, I prohibit you.

Nor should you say anything beyond people's backs

if you cannot stand behind it

and make good on it.

Don’t accuse anyone behind their backs.

Not everything that the tongue [releases?] is trustworthy;

There is no treason so cruel

as a false tongue in a fair countenance.

Marry an honorable woman

and one of good habits.

See that she is wise

so that marriage is not a burden to you.

Comport yourself well

and courteously, without filth.

Whatever your wife says to you

don’t put too much stock in it

unless it is profitable,

without lies or fables.

I forbid you above all:

never strike someone else's dog

for to strike the dog

is to strike the owner badly.

Thus lead your life

so that the Mary's Son will love you,

and pray to almighty God,

who suffered pain and torment,

that you may have his love,

and that of his sweet mother as well,

and that he give us his grace

and the sight of his gentle face.

Amen.

Notes

1-20: These lines match the first 20 lines of Parsons's "Early Version." She notes that variants in lines 2, 5, and 7 divides the MSS into two groups: "longe tens," "enfant," and "beau" in DOU are replaced with "jadis," "fiz," and "chier" in GC. Harley shares the DOU readings, except that Harley has "longement" for "longe tens."

Harley does not differ from the texts of Parson's "Early Version" significantly in these lines; there are some minor changes in word order (e.g., Harley has for line 16 "Qe sages seiez" for PE "Que tu seez sages"; the PE MSS have slightly different wordings but preserve the verb + adjective order reversed in Harley), and Harley has an extra "mult" at lines 4 and 5.

Note that these lines end with an exhortation to learn French; one version of *Urbain,* S, appears together with a treatise on French, and another, T, has an interlinear English translation. The poem may have been used as a language-learning text as well as a courtesy manual.

21-26: As in PE 25-30, found only in D. *Urbanus Magnus* discusses churchgoing near the beginning.

29-44: These lines correspond to PL 61-80.

29 is more or less the same as in the other versions, but 30 has "ne seiez vencu dorgoil" where T has "Ne avez en cuer ascun orgoil" and the others have "Ne vous lessetz ventre orgoil."

Harley, like S, does not include PL 63-6, which lines characterize pride as the greatest of evils.

Harley 31-44 corresponds loosely to PL 67-80, a passage appearing only in S. Harley 31-36 is reasonably close to S, except that Harley 32 has "yl del tot est a rebours" in place of S's "Il

quide tantost crestre tous" and Harley 34 has "demy" in place of S's "meité." H 37-40 then skips forward to S's 77-80, replacing the romance hero Horn in S with Absolon. H 41-44 corresponds to S 74-77, but only loosely; the comparison to Gawain is the same, but S has different rhyme words.

Harley in general follows S in lines 29-44, both in omissions and inclusion of material not found elsewhere. Particularly notable is the passage whose literary allusions imply an expectation of an audience familiar with chivalric romance.

45-6: Correspond to PL 27-8

47-8: Do not appear in other versions

49-54: Correspond to PL 85-90, returning to the sequence of PL after a brief departure at lines 45-8 (above). H agrees with S and T in giving "rien" for "chose" at H 49. At H 54 Harley has "prenez" where U repeats "purpensez" from four lines earlier. T omits the last four lines of this passage, and S has for H 54 "Si freetz qe pruz et qe senetz."

55-60: H again briefly departs from the sequence of PL. 55-9 correspond loosely to PL 21-4, with different rhyme words at H 55-6. H 59-60 do not correspond to PL.

61-76: These lines return to the sequence of PL (after the brief departure at 55-60), corresponding to PL 91-108. Two lines appearing only in S (exhorting one to love one's neighbor, however needy) are omitted in H. At 63 H agrees with T in reading "dotez" rather than "ametz." At 76 H reads "cheuer" for "finer," agreeing with T and similar to S "achevir."

71-6 are from *Le dit des femmes*, which together with *Le blasme des femmes* appears in in Harley 2253 shortly before *Urbain*. The courtesy poem *Edward* in Bodley 425 also incorporates these lines.

77-84: After the lines in praise of women, H skips over several lines corresponding to PL 109-118. Of these, 109-10 appear only in T; 111-12 are omitted in S; 113-14 appear only in S; and 115-18 are omitted in T.

PL 119-22, the lines corresponding to Harley 77-84, do not appear in S. The Harley version is somewhat different from the versions informing PL: Harley has (at 80) "ne ia femme ne prenez" where the PL versions all have something approximating "Ke ja en femme ne affiez." Harley has four additional lines not found in the other versions, H 78-79 and 83-4; 78-79 appear between the first and second halves of what is a couplet in the other versions, giving four lines on the same rhyme ("gardez," "senez," "hastez," "prenez"). This is likely amplification on the part of the Harley scribe (or his exemplar). 83-4 expand on the sentiment of the passage.

These lines warn against choosing a wife without consulting one's friends, "amys." Presumably "ami" (which appears in all versions containing these lines) has the sense of "kinsman."

85-90: Harley continues its advice on marriage with material corresponding to PE 151-155. The first four lines of this passage are, in PE, found only in O. The Harley version is not significantly different from O. Harley 89 is common (in some form or another) across the PE versions, but Harley 90 gives "saunz malice ou outrage" where the other versions have some form of "ke vous ne poise la mariage." However, Harley does include an approximation of the couplet as it appears in the other versions later on—see lines 331-2.

91-98: These lines continue to follow the same PE passage, with a change in the sequence and additional lines. 91-2 correspond to PE 159-60 (not found in O), with slight differences—"fils" for "enfaunz" and "touz mester" for "bone mesteres." Harley, though, follows with a different couplet justifying teaching one's children a trade: where PE has "Qe il puissunt par leaute/ Lur vie defendre de poverte," (161-2), Harley has "Ceux qui a mester mis sunt/ relement a hounte vount." The passage is probably based on the *Distichs of Cato* I.28:

> Cum tibi sint nati nec opes, tunc artibus illos
>
> Instrue, quo possint inopem defendere uitam
>
> [If you have sons but not wealth, teach them trades by which to ward off a life of poverty.]

One Anglo-Norman translation of these lines is similar in wording to the *Urbain* passage:

> Si tu ne es riches assez/ E plusiors fiz auez/ Face les dunkes aprendre.
>
> Ki il pussent de lur mester/ Si lur auenge encumbrer/ Lur pouerte vie
>
> defender.
>
> [If you are not very wealthy and have many sons, then set them to learn so that, if they encounter hardship, they may ward off a life of poverty by their trade.][117]

Urbain agrees with the Anglo-Norman *Livre Catun* in rendering *ars* by *mester* (another version replicates and glosses *artibus* by "art u menestrautie") and *instruere* by *aprendre*. PE *Urbain*

[117] Stengel, "L'afaitement Catun."

further agrees with *Livre Catun* in replicating "defendere" with the French "defendre" and "vitam" with "vie" and translating "inopem" as "poverte."

95-6: Harley returns to the subject of wives: 95-96 correspond to PE 157-8, "Ta femme demeine amerez,/ E nule autre desirer devez." Harley adds a unique couplet promising that if the son does not heed this advice, "you will be hated by God and little loved by your neighbor." In these lines Harley offers a religious motivation for marital fidelity and also a social one, once more alluding to reputation (and perhaps suggesting that desiring other people's wives or daughters leads to neighborly strife).

99-189: These lines correspond very roughly to PL 131-167.

99-116: Correspond to PL 131-46.

PL 131-2 appear only in S; these lines are much the same as in Harley except that 132 has "eschiwetz" for "lessez." Where H 107 has "prysez," the PL versions have "dute," except for U which reads "le meuch ame." S has "preise" in the next line as a rhyme for "dute." H omits PL 140 ("et pur sage alosee").

Of PL 141-2, which appear only in S, H has the first line (H 108, corresponding to PL "kar si tute jour jangletz") but not the second ("dunc serretz plus aviletz").

At 110, Harley agrees with S in reading "deboneremen" rather than "curtesyment," as in the other PL versions.

PL 145-8 appear only in S. Harley 111-2 agrees with the first two lines of this section, but Harley does not include the next two, "Et sur tute rien vous en pri/ ke vous ne mesdietz nulli."

H113-14 are rather different from PL 149-50, "Aletz partout entre la gent,/ Si orrez de plusours afaitment," "Go everywhere amongst [noble?] people, thus you will have more manners." Note that Harley has "lez bonz" for "la gent," perhaps echoing "bone gent" at line 109. Harley substitutes an exhortation to carry or conduct oneself courteously for PL's assertion that good manners come from being among good people.

H 115-17 correspond to PL 151-2. Where Harley reads, "ne serrez de un court bien norry," PL has "altrement [than walking among "la gent"] nurrie." S, however, agrees with Harley in reading "court." Though the other versions imply that one must be among gentle people to learn good manners, Harley and S more emphatically assert the court as origin of "courtesy." The lines are metrically a couplet but are written out as three lines and are more heavily punctuated than the rest of the poem. The scribe ran out of space for line 116 and had to continue it below, filling out the rest of the space with a line filler. The intention behind the punctuation is less clear. Line 115 ends with both a virgule and a *punctus elevatus* (the only one he uses in this poem); 116 also ends with a virgule. These marks may simply have served to flag the irregularly lineated section so that someone reading aloud would not stumble over them; elsewhere in this poem the scribe uses a virgule at the end of the line preceding a hypometrical line or lines, possibly for the same reason. The specific use of punctuation is not typical, however. Elsewhere in the manuscript, when lineation does not correspond to metrical lines the scribe uses a virgule to mark the end of a line. In English poems, he marks the caesura with a *punctus elevatus* (or, rarely, a virgule and *punctus elevatus*).[118] He sometimes uses the *punctus elevatus* to mark refrains or bobs written to the right of stanzas (e.g. item 25, *The Execution of Sir Simon Fraser*). To mark the end of a line with a *punctus elevatus* and to point out a line that (metrically) continues below is the reverse of

[118] See Solopova, "Layout, Punctuation, and Stanza Patterns in the English Verse."

his typical use of punctuation, at least where he uses punctuation to mark metrical divisions. As Solopova notes, when the scribe writes verse in columns (so that lineation corresponds to major metrical pauses), he uses punctuation only occasionally, and his reasons may "syntactic and rhetorical rather than metrical" (384). The punctuation may, then, indicate pause or emphasis. The line filler is somewhat unusual as well. Certainly the line would have a conspicuous amount of blank space without it, but other short lines are not filled in this way (e.g. 178, 184-5). Generally the Harley scribe uses line fillers only at the end of poems (see, e.g., item 61, "Iesu for þi muchele miht"). He may have used it here to separate the poem into sections; the material up to this point loosely corresponds to the first section of *Urbanus Magnus* (general moralistic and Catonian advice), and the material that follows loosely corresponds to the following three sections of *Urbanus Magnus* (table etiquette, "mirrors" for various estates, advice on marriage, family, neighbors, and specific social situations).

H 117-128 correspond to PL 157-68. PL 163-4 (corresponding to H 123-4) appear only in S. H 124 has "richement" where the corresponding line in S has "bien." H 126 reads "leement" where PL has "franchement" (with F reading "largement"). H 128 is different from the other versions, though it preserves the rhyme word "pris": PL has "e les beux chivauls de pris," though F approaches Harley's sentiment with "…gardra votre pris."

H 129-30 are unique, though similar in content to PE 81-4, "Pensez de vous bienfesours,/ Si les rendez en honours;/ Quanque vous soiez de poer/ Vous le devetz remembrer."

H 131-34 correspond to PL 185-90. H does not have PL 187-8, which appear only in T. H 133 is different from PL 189, "Qar mult promittre et rien doner," but S's version, "Si vous nel voilletz doner," is similar to H.

H 135-6 continue on the subject of not promising what one cannot give. H 135 corresponds to PL192, "Certes ceo est grant vileinie," found only in U, and H 136, "grant pechie e grant folie," has the same rhyme word as PL 194, "Vous gardez bien de tote folie," again found only in U. The content, aside from the rhyme word, does not appear in the other versions, but the "pechie e…folie" construction is reminiscent of H 100, above.

H 137-40 concludes the section on baseless promises with lines not found in any other version. The characterization of this failing as "hounte" and the statement that one who practices it will be "faus…*tenus*" are consistent with this version's particular emphasis on reputation and public image.

141-58 correspond to PL 199-208, at places very roughly. These lines advise the son not to be a "losengour," a liar or flatterer; even if such behavior might please his friend or lord, he should give honest counsel. Even if he risks angering his friends or lord, in the end they will be grateful for his honesty ("autre foiz vous saverount gree").

141-2 are fairly close to PL, except that Harley has "gardez" for "veez."

143-4 bear some resemblance to the corresponding PL lines, "E s'il desirent qe vous diez/ Tote le male qe vous savez"; the rhyme words are different, but the first half of each line—"Et sil desirent," "tote le male qe/ ou lur mal com"—bear some similarity across versions. Note that the Harley version of 143-4 keeps the rhyme from the previous couplet, on "losengour"—this is a common feature of material unique to Harley, suggesting scribal amplification.

145-150 have in common with PL only line 247, corresponding to PL 203, "Ne pensez my pur eus paiere." These six lines all keep to the same rhyme, again suggesting scribal amplification. Also suggesting amplification is the repetition of key words from lines shared with PL:

"counsiler" at line 146 reflects "counsail" at 152, "gree" at line 148 reflects "gree" at 155, and "losenger" at line 150 reflects "losengour" at 141, spelled this time to rhyme with "paiere."

151-56 are somewhat like PL 205-8, found only in U. Harley 151-2 are fairly similar to the corresponding lines in U, except that at 151 Harley reads "savez" where U reads "poez" and at 152 reads "lel counsail" where U reads "Plus beal counsail." The next couplet in U is broken up into two couplets in Harley. Harley 153 corresponds to PL 207, "Et s'il crusent a cele foez," but Harley switches the positions of "corocer" and "foiz" and provides a rhyming line not in the U version, "se vueillent ou te prester." Harley 155 corresponds to PL 208, only reading "autre foiz" for PL "Pus apres," and again fills out the couplet with a line not in U, "por vostre fei e lealtee." Finally, Harley ends this section with a unique couplet, offering a slightly less sanguine addendum to the promise that "vous saverount gree," providing for the possibility that one's friends or lord may not appreciate honesty over flattery: "or God, who doesn't forget anything,/ will reward you well for it."

159-171 correspond to PL 209-22. H164-5 reads "si riche ne si avenaunt/ si corteis ne si sachant" where PL 213-14 reads "ne si prodome, ne si sachaunt,/ ne si curteys, ne si vaillaunt," preserving "corteis" and "sachant" from Harley, but with a different sequence. There is significant variation among all of the mss here, though. F agrees with Harley at H 164. F and T agree with Harley at H 165 in reading "sachant" for "vaillant," but F has "queytez" (i.e., "queyntez") where Harley has "corteis." H 167, "mes mult bel le salvez," "but greet him very nicely," does not appear in the other versions; Harley, however lacks three lines, PL 218-20, "Mes haie et rebutez./ Et moult soleit Dieu haier/ Ceux qe ament l'escharnir." H 170-71 correspond to PL 221-2, but with the positions of "chief de tour" and "escharnisour" reversed.

H 172-79 correspond to PL227-234. H 174-5 rhymes on different words than PL 229-30, which read, “Lessez les dire tout lour voler,/ Kar meutz ne li poetz hunir.” Harley has “venque,” from “veintre,” “to vanquish,” where PL has “hunir”; U has the rather similar-looking verb “venger,” “avenge.”

180-185 correspond to PL 260-67 (appearing only in S), loosely. 180-81 is fairly close to PL 260-61, except that Harley has “passez” where S has “aletz.” H 182 matches PL 264; H rhymes on “resoun” like PL, but for H “e ce tieng ie greyndre resoun” PL has “Si fretz sens e reison.” For PL 166-7, “Plus est mestrie de garder/ Un amy qe del purchacer,” has the strikingly hypometric “de un amy tener/ qe de dis gayner.” The *punctus* at the end of H183 may be related to the hypometric lines that follow, either as a flag to warn the performer of their approach or to indicate an emphatic pause to set off the short couplet.

186-89 correspond to PL 244-7, again appearing only in S. Where Harley 187 reads “mes tot coy vous tenez,” PL 245 reads “mes pes eez e taunt facez.” H 189 has “parlent bien de vos dys” where PL 247 has “Parougent bien de vous tutdis”; the absence of “tut” changes the meaning from “speak well of you always” to “speak well of your sayings.”

From 190, Harley diverges from the other texts of *Urbain*. Scattered throughout are lines corresponding to PE, but the material is largely unique.

190-97: These lines concern proper speaking, in contrast, perhaps, to the boasting condemned in the immediately preceding section. They instruct the son to keep his hands and feet still while speaking, moving only his feet. This is a common precept in courtesy books (probably ultimately deriving from *Urbanus Magnus* 98-103): PL has a similar sentiment at 43-6: “En my le frount les regardez./ Vous peez ne voz meyns ne crouellez,/ Mes sagement et sanz mesdist/ Respounez a

touz lour dist." The wording of this passage is not particularly similar to the corresponding precept in Harley, though both share the basic structure "vos meyns" + "vos pies" [ne movez] + "respounez." However, the S reading does agree with Harley: "Dunc responetz si sagement/ Ke vous ne blame nule gent/ Vos pietz vos mains tant ne quant/ Ja ne movetz en parlaunt/ Mes de la lange soulement/ Respounez e ceo brevement." This is quite close to the Harley version, though Harley does not include the instruction to speak "brevement," reading "courtoisement" instead. The S line "ke vous ne blame nule gent" is similar to Harley's "qe nully ne yet poer/ de vous en nul point blamer." True to its particular concern with social condemnation, Harley expands these lines further, pairing the antithetical "vyleynye" and "corteysie" to contrast the good people will speak of the one who responds "cortoisement" with the ill they will speak of the one who does not.

198-201: This passage begins with a repetition of H 113 and expands on it with the assertion that bad things will come from going among bad people and good things from going among good people.

202-209: H has this passage on gift-giving in place of one that appears in the other PL versions, PL 163-184. The latter starts, like Harley, with instructions to give food freely: "Vous durretz au comencement/ Mangier e boire franchement" (166-7). From there, it lists various gifts appropriate to different sorts of people: knights, squires, ladies, damsels, etc. (S has a particularly long list, with 10 lines not found in other versions.) Harley's treatment of gift-giving is comparatively brief and general. Its unique lines on giving to those who give to you are probably based on the Catonian monostich "Mutuum da."

210-215: This passage warns against talking too much at the table, lest one be branded as foolish or drunk. The first two lines are rather like PL 133-4, "E si ne parletz mie trop,/ Ke janglour tient home a sot." The remaining four lines do not correspond to any other *Urbain* versions. The passage is the first of a series that takes the concern with being the subject of gossip almost to the level of paranoia, warning of the various things people will say behind one's back. The sentiment and structure ("if you do x, they will say y") of these sections echoes item 75 of Harley, the fabliau *Le jongleur d'Ely et le roi d'Angleterre*, which is apparently the scribe's own adaptation of *La riote du monde*.[119] I believe that these passages are the scribe's own composition, perhaps meant to revisit the *fabliau*'s commentary on the dangerous instability of words and speech from a different perspective.

216-225: This passage concerns greeting people in public. 216-17 are fairly close to PE 85-6, and 218 matches PE 87 in the O version. The PE version warns that if you do not do thus, people will speak ill of you: "Si vous en alez coy avaunt/ E ne responez meyntenaunt,/ L'em vous dirra deshonours/ E ke vous estez dedeignours,/ E ke vous estez maunori" (90-93). The corresponding lines in Harley match this sentiment, with rather vivid language: "If you don't act in this manner, then the son will say to the father, 'The devil ought to greet him, he doesn't want to give a response." Here Harley gives an example of the sort of "viloynie" or "deshonours" people might speak of you if you don't heed its advice. As in the previous passage, this addition evokes *Le jongleur d'Ely.*

226-33: This passage addresses the conduct of a powerful lord: "If it comes about that you become a great lord, do not be too simple with your people, nor trust too much to their desires. If they have their way too much, it won't turn out to your benefit. Be neither too simple nor to

[119] See Nolan, "Anthologizing Ribaldry."

haughty, too innocent nor too forward." Compare to PE 143-48: "Si riche homme devenetz,/ Belement vous portes;/ Ne vos portez ja trop baud,/ Ne trope simple, ne trop haut,/ Mes vous portez menement,/ Cum a mesure appent." H 232-3 are quite close to PE 145-6, but the emphasis in Harley's unique lines is much less on moderation than on avoiding being too familiar or easy with one's people. Harley takes a more authoritarian attitude toward lordship. *Le jongleur d'Ely* has a similar passage: "Si vus vostre estat vueillez bien garder/Ne devez trop encrueler/Ne trop simple vers ta gent/ Mes vus portez meenement" [If you want to keep your estate well, you should be neither too cruel to your people nor too simple, but carry yourself with moderation] (388-91).[120]

234-45: This passage gives advice for serving at table. PE 47-68 is broadly similar in subject matter, but the language of the two passages is not particularly similar, except that H 240-41 and PE 54-5 (only in G) rhyme "cerveise" with "eise." Harley's advice on service includes the basic table setting—tablecloth, salt-cellar, spoons, carving-knives, bread, wine or beer—an admonition to be pleasant with the guests, and a warning that grumbling service will cause one to be spoken ill of ("mauloseez").

246-9: This is a repetition (with expansion) of H 111-12; here the first lines reads "confortez petitz e grantz" rather than "servez p. e g."; possibly the scribe has picked up "comforter" from H 243 above, "sovent lur devez conforter."

250-61: This passage gives instructions on tactfully correcting one's fellow. The source is probably *Urbanus Magnus* 1159-60. Again Harley echoes *Le jongleur d'Ely* in warning about what people will say "qant ton congie deuez prendre."

267-73: Cf. *Le jongleur d'Ely* 332-5: "donqe dirra vostre veysyn/ cesti ne vaut plus qe vn mastyn…cesti ne valt plus qe vn chien" [Then your neighbor will say, "He is worth no more than a mastiff…he is worth no more than a dog."].

278-284: This passage incorporates material from PE 35-6 (H 278-79) and PE 39-42 (H 281-4).

285: Cf. *Le jongleur d'Ely* 391: "Mes vus portez meeurement."

289-90: These lines correspond to PE 117-18, which repeat the Catonian monostichs "meretricem fuge" and "aleam fuge."

301-6: These lines are similar to H 172-9.

307-10: These lines are unique and probably adapt the Catonian monostich "Pugna pro patria."

311-17: This passage is akin to PE's instructions for lawyers: "Si vous seez en assise,/ Ou en court ou en justice,/ Si l'em counte ver tei,/ Responez bien solum la ley;/ Saunz manace u serement/ Devez counter devant la gent./ Mein en autre ne ferrez/ Taunt cum vous od la gent parlez.[var.: Piez ne mains devez mover/Taunt cum devez as genz parler.] [If someone pleads against you, respond well according to the law; you should plead before the people without threats or oaths. Don't put one hand in the other while you speak to the people [var. You shouldn't move your hands or feet while you speak to the people]] (193-200). The Harley passage repeats the instructions for holding the hands and feet still appearing at H 190-97.

335-8: This may be a negative rephrasing of *Distichs of Cato* 3.23: "Uxoris linguam, si frugi est, ferre memento,/ Namque malum est, non uelle pati nec posse tacere" [Take heed to bear your wife's tongue if it is profitable, for it is bad to be unwilling to suffer and unable to hold your peace]. In spirit it is akin to the monostich "Nihil temere credideris."

339-42: These lines warn against beating a neighbor's dog and conclude the precepts related to living in peace with one's neighbors. They apparently translate *Urbanus Magnus* 437-8: "Tu pecudes pariterque canes a uerbere serues,/ Lesio nam talis inimicam nuntiat iram" [Refrain from beating [your neighbor's] beasts and likewise dogs, for such an attack conveys hostile anger]. One manuscript of *Urbanus Magnus*, Dublin, Trinity College 97, glosses these lines with the maxim "Ki le chen deshonur le seynur deshonur" [Who dishonors the dog dishonors the master].

345-50: The scribe ends with a flourish. 345-8 begin a new column (what would be the second of three in this version's layout) and are bracketed in a way similar to the scribe's treatment of stanzas in poems with refrains or bobs. The middle two lines are punctuated with virgules. 349-50 are written to the right of the bracketed lines (again, like a refrain or bob), and these lines are joined in turn with a curved bracket. To the right of that is "Amen." Arranged thus, these last lines take up two column's worth of space (out of three).

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