

The First Old French *Vie des Pères*: Texts and Contexts

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

Adrian Philip Tudor B.A., M.A.

December 1998

Table of Contents

PART ONE

Acknowledgements (p. 4)

Note on References and Abbreviations (p. 5)

I. Introduction (pp. 6-12)

II. A Chronological Survey of *Vie des Pères* Scholarship (pp.13-56)

II.i Anthologies, General Histories and Collections of Old French Literature

II.ii Books, Chapters and Articles Devoted to the *Vie des Pères*

II.iii Conclusion

III. Background Survey (pp. 57-109)

III.i The Religious Climate

III.ii The Sermon and *Exemplum* Traditions

III.iii The Literary Tradition

III.iv The 'Branche' Tradition

III.v Conclusion

IV. The Anonymous Author and his Audience (pp.110-127)

V. Names and Functions (pp. 128-156)

V.i Names, Functions and the Notion of the Outsider

V.ii Case Study: *Mouvance* of Nomenclature in *Juitel* and in the Legends of the Jewish Boy by Adgar and Gautier de Coinci.

V.iii Conclusion

VI. Sex, Sin and Salvation (pp.157-204)

VII. The Demon Drink (pp.205-224)

VIII. Conclusion (pp. 225-226)

IX. Appendices to Part One (pp. 227-245)

IX.i Modern Editions of Tales from the Old French *Vie des Pères*

IX.ii *Conte* order

IX.iii Evidence of Contemporary Reception

Plates

PART TWO

X. Commentaries to Individual Tales (In order of A) (pp. 246-247)

248-251	The 'General' Prologue
252-258	Fornication imitée
259-267	Juitel
268-283	Sarrasine
284-296	Renieur
297-306	Copeaux
307-324	Thaïs
325-336	Miserere
337-343	Jardinier
344-363	Haleine
364-379	Fou
380-399	Impératrice
400-410	Meurtier
411-425	Sacristine
426-435	Ave Maria
436-443	Queue
444-457	Crapaud
458-472	Image de Pierre
473-480	Baril
481-491	Abbesse Grosse
492-499	Noël
500-506	Malaquin
508-519	Vision d'Enfer
520-529	Vision de Diables
530-538	Ermite Accusé
539-548	Brûlure
549-558	Crucifix
559-568	Païen
569-576	Goliard
577-584	Colombe
585-599	Sénéchal
600-612	Prévôt d'Aquilée
613-620	Saint-Paulin
621-630	Nièce
631-639	Ivresse
640-643	Rachat
644-652	Usurier
653-658	Feuille de Chou
659-666	Demi-Ami
667-675	Inceste
676-686	Image du Diable
687-699	Merlot

XI. Bibliography (pp. 700-732)

Acknowledgements

During the various stages of my doctoral research there have been many kind and helpful people who deserve mention here. First and foremost is my supervisor, Dr Brian Levy, a constant source of support and direction. Erudite comments, unending encouragement and often terrible Jewish jokes have been my staple diet since well before I began my PhD: thank you, Brian. Thanks also to the French Department at the University of Hull, in particular to its head, Dr Alan Hindley. These were difficult times for me personally and I should like to acknowledge the considerable help and support from close to home; it made life so much easier. Sue and Barbara in Document Supply always seemed to track down my cryptic and unusual requests; Anna Mason at the Kennedy Memorial Trust was always concerned to make things as easy as possible for her oldest scholar; Professor Derek Pearsall at Harvard University provided me with valuable new perspectives and a healthy dose of common sense; Per Nykrog was extremely generous with his time in the year he became Emeritus Professor; Evelyn Birge Vitz of New York University made me feel one of the family, introduced me to new and useful contacts and showed great interest in my research; Brian Patrick Maguire gave me valuable information about the Cistercians; Claire Lewis, Helle Sachse, Amelia Moser and Kathryn Karczewska were willing and uncomplaining sounding boards at Harvard; Janine Kopp and Laurent Semichon fulfilled the same role in Hull and kept my feet firmly on the ground; Michel Zink helped with references to older sources and indicated possible new directions; Masami Okubo came up with many obscure references for me to follow up; and my family was always there for me, through thick and thin. It was also a privilege to meet Félix Lecoy towards the beginning of my research and to be infected by his tremendous passion for the *Vie des Pères*. Finally, this thesis owes its existence to Sonia, who supported and sustained me and persuaded me to continue when I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis.

Note on References and Abbreviations

All quotations are taken from:

La Vie des Pères, ed. F. Lecoy, Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, I, 1987, II, 1993.

References to Gautier de Coinci and Adgar are from:

Gautier de Coinci, *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame*, ed. V.F. Koenig, Geneva: Droz, I, 1955, II, 1961, III, 1966, IV, 1970.

Adgar, *Le Gracial*, ed. P. Kunstmann, Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1982.

Biblical quotations, unless otherwise stated, are taken from:

Biblia Sacra Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem, Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1969-75.

The following frequently cited works are referred to in abbreviated form:

Bretel	P. Bretel, <i>Les Ermites et les moines dans la littérature française du Moyen Age (1150-1250)</i> , Paris: Champion, 1995.
Garnier	F. Garnier, <i>Le Langage de l'image au Moyen Age</i> , Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1982.
Morawski	J. Morawski, <i>Proverbes français antérieurs au XVe siècle</i> , Paris: Champion, 1925 (CFMA 47).
PL	<i>Patrologia Cursus Completus, Series Latinae</i> , ed. J. Migne, 221 vols., Paris, 1844-1901.
Schwan	E. Schwan, 'La Vie des Anciens Pères', <i>Romania</i> , 13 (1884), 233-63.
Spencer-Ellis	P.D. Spencer-Ellis, <i>La Vie des Pères: A Reappraisal of Manuscript Branches and Their Contents</i> Hull: Hull University M.Phil thesis, 1986.
Payen	J.-C. Payen, <i>Le Motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale</i> , Geneva: Droz, 1971.
Tubach	F. Tubach, <i>Index Exemplorum</i> , Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia Akademia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981 (FF Communications no. 204).

Full bibliographical details are given when a work is first cited. Subsequent references are given with short titles.

Introduction

The *Vie des Pères* is not a translation of the *Vitae Patrum*, although many of its tales do have their roots in patristic sources. Guy Phillipart specifies that ‘par l’expression *Vitae Patrum*, on désigne communément des recueils de biographies des “Pères du désert”, ainsi que des collections d’anecdotes qui les mettent en scène, et de propos sentencieux qu’on leur attribue’.¹ Paul Meyer remarks that ‘sous le titre *Vitae patrum*, ou, moins correctement, *Vitas patrum*, on désignait au moyen âge les histoires de plusieurs saints personnages ayant mené dans la Thébaïde la vie ascétique [...] En un sens plus large, on donnait le même nom à [...] d’autres écrits édifiants relatifs aux anachorètes du désert [...] Ces divers ouvrages se rencontrent très souvent groupés dans les manuscrits du moyen âge. [...] Ici nous devons mentionner en passant le long poème connu sous le nom de *Vie des Pères* ou *Vie des anciens Pères* [...] qui, à s’en tenir compte au titre, semblerait être une traduction des *Vitae patrum*. Mais le titre fait illusion.’² This final point was taken up by Basil O’Connor who noted that there was a ‘practice prevalent throughout the Middle Ages, of vaguely describing anything relating to the desert fathers as *Vitae*, or *Vitas*, *Patrum*’.³ Brigitte Cazelles is right to point out that for thirteenth-century hagiographers ‘who endeavoured to borrow some of the themes and compositional practices of secular romance, the collection of the *Vitae Patrum* represented a textual source of considerable interest, given the abundance in these stories of such romantic motifs as threat of marriage, threat of rape, cross-dressing, imprisonment and miraculous escapes’.⁴ The *Vitae Patrum* was a rich source for *exempla* which flourished during this period. This led to considerable confusion amongst modern scholars, and it can be argued that the nineteenth-century scholars who labelled the *Vie des Pères* ‘fabléaux dévots’ or ‘fables pieuses’ were in fact not too far

¹ G. Phillipart, ‘*Vitae Patrum*. Trois travaux récents sur d’anciennes traductions latines’, *Anelecta Bollandiana*, 92 (1974), 353-65, p. 353.

² P. Meyer, ‘Versions en vers et en prose des vies des pères’, *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 33 (1906), 252-56, pp. 254, 256.

³ *Henri d'Archi's Vitae Patrum. A Thirteenth-Century Anglo-Norman Rhymed Translation of the "Verba Seniorum"*, ed. B.A. O'Connor, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1949, p. xvii. The variety of names and redactions leads to ample scope for error and confusion.

⁴ B. Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint: A Collection of French Hagiographic Romances of the Thirteenth Century*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991, p. 35.

wide of the mark. Whether the *Vitae Patrum* are real and sincere documents or not is not relevant to the present study, and had little significance in the Middle Ages: many religious leading or attempting to lead an ascetic way of life saw in the *Vitae Patrum* the ideals of a perceived golden age of Christianity. This can clearly be seen in William of Saint-Thierry's words when writing about St Bernard: *Mansi autem indignus ego cum eo paucis diebus, quocunque oculos vertebam, mirans quasi coelos me videre novos et terram novam et antiquorum patrum Aegyptiorum monachorum patrum nostrorum antiquas semitas, et in eis nostri temporis hominum recentia vestigia.*⁵

There is a fairly close Old French translation of the *Verba Seniorum*, Henri d'Arce's *Vitae Patrum* of around 1250, but the *Vie des Pères* differs greatly in source, subject matter and treatment. It is in fact a collection of 41 pious tales and miracles, twice added to in the thirteenth century, hence the names first, second and third *Vies*; but only the first *Vie*, dating from around 1215-1230, has any real claim to the title *Vie des Pères*, since the 2nd and 3rd *Vies* are mostly Miracles of the Virgin. The first *Vie* is an important, popular text, intended for an audience of laymen and clerics, men and women, young and old. These edifying narratives, composed shortly after Lateran IV and designed to move the reader to confession, are written in accessible and entertaining form. Consequently, the action is often *fabliau*-like and, as with the *fabliaux*, concerns recognisable character types from many sections of contemporary society. It is, I believe, an attempt to offer an alternative to the *fabliaux*; the *fabliaux* have often been described as negative or anti-*exempla* - the tales of the first *Vie des Pères* are, as it were, anti-*fabliaux*. They share themes and motifs with the *fabliaux* that range from the overbearing wife and long-suffering husband to the duper duped and to word-play. It is vital to note what an early response the tales of the first *Vie* represent: of our extant *fabliaux*, only those of Jean Bodel are categorically early thirteenth century (ie. *ante* 1209). Although in large part nominally set 'long ago in Egypt', the stories are very much the product of the thirteenth century, often set in towns and played out by *borjois*, and spending a perhaps inordinate amount of time describing the things of interest and concern to an urbanized audience. However, every one of the tales sets up a sacred model to follow, finding a more or less happy balance of the ideological and the aesthetic. The author of the 1st *Vie*, almost certainly a Cistercian, has a remarkable eye for detail and a lightness in style that makes his tales easy to read: much of the

⁵ PL, 185, col. 247c.

sermonising is restricted to the often substantial prologues and epilogues that enclose each tale. More than 50 extant manuscripts preserve the *Vie des Pères* in whole or in part.⁶

This thesis has for its aim a survey of the first *Vie* and an exploration into some of the issues arising from that survey. This dual function gives it a dual nature: both expository and analytical. It is expository in that the first *Vie* has been studied very little, and there is a lot of ‘ground work’ to be done; most of the previous scholarship has been concerned with the ‘Text’, the capital letter placing the emphasis solidly on manuscript tradition and affiliation. There has been next to no scholarship that centres principally on artistic content, narrative technique, themes and motifs. So, in the brief commentaries on each tale that make up Part Two of this thesis, much is necessarily descriptive in nature, representing a kind of an unearthing of material for future scholars. In particular, there is much material that will be of interest to students of popular theology, to lexicographers concerned with proverbs and to those studying ‘popular’ thought; these are all fields outside my own expertise. The thesis is analytical in its concentration on some of the topics of immediate interest to this reader - outsiders, sex, drink. Even in these fields, it does not claim to be exhaustive. No single work could hope to do more than scrape at the surface of such a vast, significant and rich text. Parallels with the *fabliaux*, frequently suggested in the course of this study, extend to the text’s ‘physical’ appearance: there are 41 tales in the first *Vie*, all interesting and all of more-or-less high quality. The *recueil* in its fullest form comprises some 74 tales; the 2nd and 3rd *Vies* are of less interest to this reader, but are not to be dismissed as subjects unworthy of scholarly attention. This corpus may not stretch to the 130-or-so narratives generally accepted as *fabliaux*, but its 30,000-plus lines of text, its 50-plus manuscripts, its enduring medieval popularity, the varied artistic techniques employed

⁶ Can the number of extant MSS indicate contemporary popularity? Most medievalists would certainly accept this as one of the factors indicating the success of a text in the absence of other, more precise methods. For example, writing about the *Vie des Pères*, S. Svendqvist notes that ‘de la grande popularité du recueil au moyen âge témoignent les nombreux manuscrits qui le conservent.’ (*Revue de Linguistique Romane*, 59 (1995), 627-30, p. 627). However, the survival of texts such as the Oxford *Roland*, *Aucassin et Nicolette*, *Guillaume de Dole* and the *Roman de l’Escoufle* all serve as an important and cautionary lesson to those wishing to attribute too much importance to this method of gauging popularity. This is, to some degree, the criterion upon which Spencer-Ellis based his study of *conte* order. It does, however, support with some credibility that *Gueule du diable* is not part of the text and it is upon that basis that the tale has been omitted in the present study: ‘A significant number of the total manuscripts which all offer the same order of *contes* with little variation is more likely to offer the original correct order of the collection than any smaller group that is equally homogeneous or than any other large group which is considerably less uniform.’ (p. 43)

by its authors, its many different themes, some very old, some apparently new, all add up to making this a large, unwieldy text, parts of which will interest scholars of one field, other parts of which will interest other scholars. Not unlike the *fabliaux*.⁷ No-one would pretend to be in a position to write a definitive account of the *fabliaux*; after close on two hundred years of modern, scholarly attention, there is still sufficient interest in, and more importantly, enough work to be done on the *fabliaux*, to merit, for example, the mammoth *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux* and the annual publication of *Reinardus*, the yearbook of the Société Internationale Renardienne, established for the study of beast epic, fable and *fabliau*. Unlike the *fabliaux*, whose generally ribald nature and usually succinctly told jokes make them attractive and accessible, the tales of the first *Vie des Pères* do not all enjoy instant, universal appeal, but they do fall into a similar category of narrative. This text is a rich repository that preserves precious details of everyday speech, thought and deed. It is also largely unexploited by the modern scholar.

The first *Vie* is a text of vital and conventional contrasts: good and evil, city and desert, chastity and sex, purity and impurity, pride and humility, honesty and corruption, shame and honour, Christian and non-Christian, transgression and fidelity, salvation and damnation. The defining act of the text is the element of choice in the process of composition and also that exercised by the characters themselves. The text may not be considered to be ‘unified’, if modern critical theory is applied, since the absorption of medieval tradition, of ancient and modern sources and the influence of a society alien from that which we know today are factors that serve to identify the text and at the same time distance us from it. It should be borne in mind that in exercising choice, selection and interpretation, the author immediately and unwittingly brings to the text its essential *senefiance*. It is on this level that unity needs to be sought, in intention rather than in expression. The very fact that the work was identified as ‘a text’ by those who produced it and by those for whom it was produced is enough to justify the modern scholar’s acceptance of a unity of purpose (even if different manuscript and reading contexts meant that the text’s reception could never be anything but individual). Eugene Vinaver has asked: ‘Pourquoi, en effet, les grands maîtres des études romanes - Gaston Paris, Bédier, Jeanroy et tant d’autres - avaient-ils si peu d’égard pour les textes

⁷ J. Morawski notes that a miracle (in our case we can read ‘a pious tale’) ‘très souvent, n’est qu’un fabliau dévot qui ne diffère du vrai fabliau que par son intention et l’élément merveilleux’, ‘Mélange de la littérature pieuse’, *Romania*, 61 (1935), p. 158.

conservés qu'ils se sont occupés uniquement de leurs sources?'⁸ Robert Guiette noted that 'ce qui a toujours, ou presque toujours, attiré les commentateurs, c'est la tradition (et donc l'origine) plutôt que les oeuvres elles-mêmes, et pourtant, que serait la tradition sans les oeuvres?'⁹ With reference to Bédier's *Tristan*, he adds: 'reconstruire un vase avec des fragments empruntés à des vases, des ivoires, des tapisseries et des miniatures est une opération dont le comique échappe ou a échappé aux philologues. Qu'ils remarquent les différences entre les récits, fort bien, mais qu'ils prétendent réussir, entre les divers récits, une concordance, est une gageure vouée à l'insuccès [...] Ce qui importe à quiconque examine les poèmes et les *Romans du Graal*, ce ne doit pas être l'origine des thèmes [...] mais bien ce que ceux-ci peuvent représenter pour les lecteurs ou les auditeurs des oeuvres. Celles-ci ne constituent pas un ensemble, mais diverses réalisations littéraires.'¹⁰ It is with Vinaver's and Guiette's sentiments acting as a constant, common-sense warning, that I undertake my own investigation of what the first *Vie des Pères* might have meant to its author and contemporary audience.

A study of the symbols, images, metaphors and motifs of the first *Vie* reveals a real, living and vibrant world: the 20,000 lines of text contain references to animals; colours; characters from every social station; biblical exegesis; contemporary secular texts and legends; commentaries on Church practices (from almsgiving to marital relations, from contemporary Church politics to ancient tradition); the role of women; the wandering quest; magic; family values and duties; food and drink; sex; *dém mesure*; commentaries on an author's trade and on the place of the *jongleur*; social duty and reflexions on feudal society; the state of urban, rural and court life; the outsider; foreign travel; poverty and wealth; the professions; the madman; medicine; and many more. This is indeed a repository of contemporary commentary since the image and the symbol are such an integral part of medieval reality.¹¹ What is more, since the tales are generally contritionist in nature, the sins committed and the solutions to the character's predicaments can be thought of as models for the faithful to copy. So, the text as a whole, without ever setting itself up as such, is an idealized manifesto of popular religion, beliefs and behaviour. The first *Vie* dramatizes and explores a 'doctrinal' point through its narratives. It might also be argued that it refines such an exploration given

⁸ E. Vinaver in his introduction to Robert Guiette, *Forme et senefiance*, Genève: Droz, 1978, p. ix.

⁹ R. Guiette, 'Pour une nouvelle approche des textes du moyen âge', pp. xii-xiii in *ibid.*, p. xii.

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ One needs only take the example of marriage and salvation to illustrate this: both are tripartite in nature: initiation - ratification - consummation / repentance - contrition - confession.

that the text is resolutely humanist. Authority is given in a perfunctory way but its men and women are witnesses who are tempted, fall into sin and need to undergo penance. There is little theological discussion offered by the author, but his characters are seen to *experience* the doctrine. Saints and mythical Christian figures are described in human and familiar settings; there would be no barrier for a contemporary audience commensurate to our own, often invoked alterity with the Middle Ages. These mythical characters are certainly held as models for the audience of the text but they also talk and act like the audience's neighbours. Paul Bretel has remarked that 'ces textes méritent notre attention car ils confrontent les mérites de la vie érémitique avec ceux d'autres modes de sanctification.'¹² This is certainly true, but it is only part of the picture. Jean-Claude Payen notes that it is the contritionist nature of the first *Vie* that sets it apart from the *Vitae Patrum*: 'Celle-ci [ie. the older text] ne méconnaît certes pas le motif des larmes, mais ces larmes sont celles de l'émotion affective et mystique et non celles de la contrition bouleversante'.¹³ Tears shed in the *Vie des Pères* are 'à l'occasion de confessions particulièrement exemplaires' and not simply a devotional tool or an accompaniment to prayer; 'il est peu d'oeuvres en effet qui soient aussi réalistes que certains récits de la *Vie des Pères*'.¹⁴ Payen insists upon the exceptional richness and uniqueness of the *Vie des Pères* and upon its place as a faithful witness to the time and society that produced it: 'L'essentiel n'est-il pas d'avoir montré que cette littérature était capable d'un réalisme puissant, et ne cherchait pas à "truquer" une réalité sur laquelle les *exempla* jettent un cruel jour, sans rien édulcorer, au contraire de ce qui se passera aux époques de "piété plus éclairée"? Que le péché le plus troublant soit la luxure, que le plus grave soit le désespoir, que bien des clercs soient menacés par l'ivrognerie et bien des ascètes le soient par l'orgueil, tout cela va de soi.'¹⁵

The thesis is structured in two parts. Part One begins with a bibliographical survey of works pertaining to the first *Vie*. The very fact that these pages can boast to be

¹² Bretel, p. 56.

¹³ Payen, p. 517. On the other hand, tears in Henri' d'Arci's translation of the *Verba Seniorum* are similar to the old *Vitae Patrum*: 'elles n'ont [...] pas la valeur rédemptrice qui est la leur dans le contritionnisme, et ne sont qu'une modalité entre autres de l'expression du repentir. [...] les larmes ne sont qu'un élément entre autres de cette rédemption douceuse.' (n. 5)

¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 518, 519.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 533. This is in response to Petit de Julleville's comments that 'Ce sont ceux-là [ie. pious tales] qui ont le plus étonné, disons le mot, scandalisé la piété plus éclairée d'une autre époque. Certes, le repentir est une si belle chose qu'il n'en est même pas de plus belle; et l'Evangile nous l'apprend. Mais, dans les recueils de miracles, les repentis sont quelquefois de bien étranges pénitents', Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature françaises*, Paris: Armand-Colin, 5th ed., 1935 (1st ed. 1896), I, p. 43.

almost exhaustive is indicative of the very small amount of critical attention that has been paid to the text. A four-part background survey follows: an examination of The Religious Climate creates an essential framework for this pious *corpus*^{and} is followed by a brief study of the Sermon and *Exempla* Traditions. These traditions set the scene for our narratives since they owe much of their form and performance to the pulpit.

Consideration is then given to the Literary Tradition, which will lead into an analysis of what may be labelled The '*Branche*' Tradition, namely, an attempt to define and explore the collectivity of the *Vie des Pères*. Following these introductory sections, four chapters will be devoted to analyses of matters that arise from reading the whole text.

First, the important issue of authorship and the equally vital (but more thorny) question of reception will be explored. Three themes and motifs are subsequently examined: the author's treatment of the Jews suggests a wider conception of 'the outsider'. This chapter will also highlight the author's skillful manipulation of nomenclature and epithets. Sex - an issue that appears almost omnipresent in the tales - is discovered to be a motif rather than a theme. Finally, The Demon Drink is examined as a successful tool in the devil's armament. These are followed by a number of appendices to complete Part One. Part Two comprises commentaries on the individual tales of the *corpus*; a comprehensive bibliography completes the thesis.

A Chronological Survey of *Vie des Pères* Scholarship

Si j'avois vécu il y a un siècle ou deux, j'eusse craint peut-être, en imprimant toutes ces historiettes ridicules, qu'on ne m'accusât de vouloir insulter à la religion. Aujourd'hui je publie tout ceci hardiment, persuadé que tout esprit sensé distinguera, comme moi, la religion qui toujours est respectable, de la superstition qui ne peut jamais que la déshonorer.¹

Lorsqu'on consulte les bibliographies générales des études médiévales, la littérature "didactique", "édifiante", "moralisante" en ancien français fait figure de parent pauvre.²

Although by comparison to almost every other medieval literary genre the *conte dévot* has received very little attention, there is still a certain amount of scholarship to be found on the subject; and although some modern scholars bemoan the fact that so few have studied the Old French *Vie des Pères*, it has proved difficult and time consuming to thoroughly sift through two hundred years' worth of, albeit spasmodic, interest. The following survey does not, therefore, claim to be exhaustive, but it is certainly at present the most comprehensive study of its type. It is divided into two main parts. The first part concerns 'Anthologies, General Histories and Collections of Old French Literature'. These studies often provide the reader with a first view of Old French literature and, as such, form opinion amongst the majority; they are easily accessible and usually highly readable; they look to choose a representative selection of works and genres; and they can be seen to reflect the author's attitude towards the entire medieval literary tradition. They are, as it were, a snapshot of attitudes and scholarship of a particular period, school or country. I have attempted to select some of the more popular and easily available general works written on Old French literature in order to see what place the

¹ Legrand d'Aussy, *Fabliaux ou contes, fables et romans du XIIe et XIIIe siècle*, V, Paris: J. Renouard, 1829, (reprint of 1st ed. 1779), p. 55.

² K. Ueltschi, *La Didactique de la chair. Approches et enjeux d'un discours en français au Moyen Age*, Geneva: Droz, 1993, p. 9.

Vie des Pères has in the minds of several generations of scholars. Are also included in this part of the survey several modern works, more specialized than those mentioned above, but which do not fall into the category that defines the second part of the survey, namely those 'Books, Chapters and Articles Devoted to the *Vie des Pères*'. This section is, naturally, longer than the first part. It is also unavoidably cumbersome and is complicated by the fact that reviews of Bornäs (1968) and Chaurand (1971) were printed over several years. (Even technical problems can hardly explain a book review appearing seven years (!) after the publication of the reviewed volume³). I have decided to respect the chronological approach, even when dealing with the said reviews, but it has proved difficult to be just as precise within a given year, and I have therefore not even attempted to do so. Any inaccuracies that arise through this policy can only be minor.

Of course, a chronological survey of scholarship, as opposed to a thematic approach, apart from being less 'exciting' also reveals more about the scholars concerned than about the *Vie des Pères* itself. This is inevitable but not wholly regrettable, since it could be argued that it is the scholar who is largely responsible for shaping the tastes of his audiences and, as a result, for their critical opinion. If, as a by-product, this survey can help to explain the limited interest shown in such an important text as the *Vie des Pères*, then so much the better, but this is not the present work's principle aim, and no concerted attempt has been made to resolve this conundrum.

Also included are lists of editions of individual *contes*, since it is unsure as to when the SATF will finally publish the long-awaited third volume of Félix Lecoy's complete edition of the *Vie des Pères*.⁴ These lists are, to my knowledge, a comprehensive record of the editions of *contes* taken from the collection, and are to be found in Appendix Xi.

³ R. Guiette's review of Chaurand appeared in *Revue Belge de Philologie et Histoire* 56 (1978), 214 - 15); Chaurand's edition of *Fou* was published in 1971.

⁴ The manuscript was in the publisher's hands before the editor's death in 1997.

II.i

Anthologies, General Histories and Collections of Old French Literature

The first great modern anthology of Old French literature was arguably that of Legrand D'Aussy, published in 1779, and immediately we find, amongst the 'fabliaux ou contes, fables et romans', four tales in Old French taken from the *Vie des Pères*, and some 16 modern versions.⁵ Most of the tales are taken from the first *Vie*, and no commentary is provided, but, at the beginning of what we may call the modern period, the *Vie des Pères* is very much present. In 1815, Roquefort-Flaméricourt⁶ referred to 'les vies des pères, hermites et miracles' as 'fabliaux dévots/pieux',⁷ attesting to both a confusion between the literary traditions - which is quite excusable, given that still today there is much argument over medieval literary genres, and even the words 'literary' and 'genre', which I use here simply for ease - and also a desire to properly classify these 'fabliaux dévots'. The *Vie des Pères's* realistic narratives were seen by early commentators as more relevant to classification than their devotional aspect, a point emphasized by the fact that Roquefort makes no mention of them in his section on religious works; he was, I believe, quite accurate in his appellation, although the modern scholar might not be able to get away with such terms as 'fabliaux dévots'! He notes that 'le joli conte de Zadig est en grande partie tiré du fabliau de l'ermite',⁸ before including editions of two *contes* from the *Vie des Pères* in what is a fairly short anthology of medieval works. As we shall see, Roquefort, by showing interest in the *Vie des Pères* for whatever the reason, is already at odds with later scholars. Soon afterwards was published the great collection of medieval texts edited by Dominique Méon, the *Nouveau recueil*.⁹ These volumes are still precious tools for scholars, even if the texts established do not respect the modern editing apparatus. Indeed, they were the standard edition of many *fabliaux* until the recent publication of Noomen and Van den Boogaard's *Nouveau Recueil*

⁵ op. cit.

⁶ B. Roquefort-Flaméricourt, *De l'Etat de la poésie françoise dans les XIIe et XIIIe siècles* Paris: Fournier, 1815.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 189.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 194.

⁹ D. Méon *Nouveau Recueil de fabliaux et contes inédits des poètes français des XIIe, XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles*, Paris: Chasseriau, 1823.

Complet des Fabliaux.¹⁰ Méon's second volume of 'fabliaux et contes' is almost entirely devoted to tales taken from the first *Vie*: 17 *contes* published in Old French. If the question of genre is still left unresolved, the importance of the first *Vie* has been clearly acknowledged, as has the tales' literary merit, for, in his title, Méon speaks of 'poètes français'. Even with the publication of the first volume of Félix Lecoy's full edition of *La Vie des Pères* in 1987, five of the tales found their only edition in Méon's collection of 1823.

These three early scholars provided a sound basis for the study of various genres, and found it natural to include the *conte dévot* / *Vie des Pères* in the developing 'main' corpus of medieval literature. But, if regular interest in the *Vie des Pères* was to continue for a hundred years, the *conte dévot* was to gradually lose its place alongside other literary types in anthologies and general literary histories. It continued to attract some attention, though, as a result of the *fabliaux*'s popularity, and in 1872 Montaiglon felt the need to differentiate between the two: 'Il convient forcément d'être plus sévère au point de vue du genre, et, si l'on s'occupe des fabliaux, de s'en tenir à ce qui est le vrai fabliau, c'est-à-dire un récit, plutôt comique, d'une aventure réelle ou possible, même avec les exagérations, qui se passe dans les données de la vie humaine moyenne' and he adds that 'tout ce qui est pieux [...] n'est à aucun titre un fabliau.'¹¹ Few scholars have argued with this definition of the *fabliau* and many have concentrated their attention on this genre; but after 1872, studies of the *fabliaux* rarely make any mention of the *conte dévot*.

In 1885, Gaston Paris had reason to mention the *Vie des Pères* in his study of medieval poetry when discussing the tale *De l'ange et de l'ermite*.¹² He stated that '[il] se trouve dans divers manuscrits où il est adjoint à un grand recueil de légendes pieuses qui porte le titre général de *Vie des Pères*; mais l'ouvrage primitivement composé sous ce nom ne comprend en réalité que 42 récits, dont le nôtre ne fait pas partie; les manuscrits qui le contiennent ont ajouté à ce fonds primitif, en plus ou moins grand nombre, des contes du même genre, mais d'autre provenance'.¹³ In this short commentary there are several points of note: first, Paris considers not only an individual

¹⁰ W. Noomen & N. Van den Boogaard (eds.), *Nouveau Recueil Complet des Fabliaux*, (NRCF), Assen: Van Gorcum, I, 1983, II, 1984, III, 1986, IV, 1988, V, 1990, VI, 1991, VII, 1993, VIII, 1994, IX, 1995, X, 1998.

¹¹ A. Montaiglon, *Recueil général et complet des fabliaux*, Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1872, I, pp. vii-viii.

¹² G. Paris, *Poésie du moyen âge*, I, 9th ed., Paris: Hachette, 1922 (1st ed. 1885).

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 154.

conte but its context, that is the collection from which it is drawn, and also its sources; second, he states his belief that the *Vie des Pères* consisted of 42 tales and that others were added later. Finally, Paris, one of the greatest scholars to have worked in the field of Old French literature, is showing interest in the collection beyond his short note to Schwan's article of 1884 (see below) and as such may in some part be responsible for the first 'golden period' of *Vie des Pères* scholarship. In 1888, he returned to the subject of the *conte dévot* and its sources: 'Il faut se garder de confondre ces fabléaux, souvent irrévérencieux, avec les contes dévots.'¹⁴ This is as clear a warning any reader might need. A little further on he speaks of 'les vies des pères du désert, écrites d'abord en copte ou en grec, puis mises en latin par St Jérôme, Rufin et d'autres' and is careful to avoid confusion between these and the Old French verse collection that is the subject of the present study: 'sous le nom *Vie des Pères*, on a en français du XIII^e siècle un recueil de 42 contes (une suite en comprend 32 de plus) qui ne sont pas toujours pris dans le recueil latin, lequel est d'ailleurs souvent allégué comme source de légendes qui ne s'y trouvent pas.'¹⁵ The risk of confusion was obviously real and significant enough to require such a plain statement, although Paris does not speak of the *Vie des Pères*'s artistic merit. Still further on, he attempts to classify the *conte dévot*, and whilst the new category is by result something of a literary dustbin, this apparently positive move is underpinned by the adjacent discussion of *exempla* which, according to Paris, were often themselves known as *contes dévots*. If he had been able to establish a clearer link between his definition of *exempla* and *conte dévot*, even more progress would have been made. (He had already alluded to a more profound understanding of the genre than most modern commentators). As it is, his general readership would have read the following, alongside like discussions of the epic, *roman*, fable, and scientific and hagiographic texts: 'Nous réunissons sous ce titre [conte dévot] les récits de piété qui ne rentrent précisément pas dans aucune des catégories précédents, quoique à vrai dire la ligne de démarcation soit souvent assez difficile à tracer, certaines vies de saints n'étant que des contes dévots amplifiés, et plus d'une légende où la Vierge figure n'ayant été [...] rapportée à elle que subsidiairement.'¹⁶

It is clear that throughout the nineteenth century the general reader of Old French literary history would have come across the *Vie des Pères* and the *conte dévot*,

¹⁴ G. Paris, *La Littérature française au moyen âge*, Paris: Coulommiers, 1888, p. 125.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 241.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

albeit not necessarily in any great detail. Still, when vying for attention with all other emerging genres, a few pages in any general work is quite a positive sign. In 1893 Joseph Bédier published a work destined to become a landmark in medieval studies; in his work on the *fabliaux*, he was anxious to establish the genre's (rightful) place in the medieval literary tradition, and in doing so pointed to the worth of similar contemporary genres: 'La moitié des oeuvres littéraires du XIII^e siècle sont animées du même souffle que les fabliaux.'¹⁷ Petit de Julleville, three years later, produced a more general history of French literature, in which the section dealing with the *conte dévot* ran to 13 pages.¹⁸ He made passing mention of the *Vie des Pères*, recognizing that the title was in fact inaccurate and that over 30 manuscripts, plus fragments, were known.¹⁹ He did, however, clearly point to the importance of both the *Vie des Pères* itself and the genre as a distinctive whole. He even yearned for a complete edition of 'les contes pieux' in typically nineteenth-century and unquestionably sincere terms: 'Bien des pages sembleraient un peu fades, j'en conviens; et les sentiments, trop bizarres, auraient quelquefois peine à nous intéresser, mais d'autres passages sont exquis, et recèlent la plus fine et la plus pure poésie du moyen âge. Enfin, nous n'avons pas de témoignage plus naïf de l'état du sentiment religieux dans les âmes simples au XII^e et au XIII^e siècle. Tout ne nous y plaît pas, mais la valeur de ce document historique est indéniable.'²⁰ Some of the greatest French literary scholars of the nineteenth-century had prepared the ground for further study of the *Vie des Pères*, but with the turn of the century came also a loss of interest in the *conte dévot*.

Although the *Vie des Pères* and *conte dévot* were to lose their place shoulder-to-shoulder with other medieval genres, the twentieth century actually began quite well for them. In E. Faral's study of *Les Jongleurs en France au moyen âge*, the *Vie des Pères* are peripheral to the book's central theme but the author notes that they were very similar in intention, if not in form, to the *Vies des Saints*. They are, he adds, 'histoires [...] écrites évidemment pour le grand public' whose author was the rival of the *jongleurs* and those authors of *dits*.²¹ In such a work, it is in recognition of the the *Vie des Pères*' artistic import that Faral then quotes lines from the Prologue and concluded

¹⁷ J. Bédier, *Les Fabliaux*, 5th ed., Paris: Champion, 1925 (1st ed. 1893), p. 359.

¹⁸ Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la Langue et de la littérature française*.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 175.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ E. Faral, *Les Jongleurs en France au moyen âge*, 2nd ed., Paris: Champion, 1964 (1st ed. 1910), p. 175.

that 'vraisemblablement c'est à un clerc qu'il faut attribuer l'idée d'avoir mis à la portée des auditeurs laïques, du public vulgaire, les légendes que seuls les clercs pouvaient connaître'.²² The significance of these few words is not to be underestimated,²³ for the question of authorship, until now confined to notes in academic journals, had been brought nearer to the mainstream of medieval literary scholarship. Paris, Petit de Julleville, Faral and others had pointed to the importance of the *Vie des Pères*, and at the same time, there was quite some activity taking place on the subject in the journals. In 1909, E. Langlois, in his work on fourteenth-century *nouvelles*, refers to the thirteenth-century prototypes to his texts in the following, glowing terms:

Ces contes, dans le texte du XIII^e siècle, se lisent encore aujourd'hui avec plaisir, non seulement parce que la langue en est à la fois simple et expressive, mais parce que le poète a donné du mouvement à sa narration, de la chair et du sang à ses personnages, qu'on entend parler, qu'on voit agir, dont les actions, les paroles sont celles de la vie réelle. Les traits de mœurs contemporaines y abondent. Aussi est-ce la forme et non le fond qui en fait, pour le lecteur d'aujourd'hui, le principal attrait. Tel n'était pas sans doute le but que le poète visait, celui qu'il a atteint en son temps; la forme était pour lui un moyen, non une fin; mais un moyen qu'il jugeait justement nécessaire.²⁴

However, as far as works destined for a wider readership were concerned, the *Vie des Pères* had already had their day, and the *conte dévot* seemed to disappear as a literary genre.

Some of the above works were re-issued into the 1920s and beyond, a time when Karl Voretzsch's *Introduction to the Study of Old French Literature* went into several editions, including an English translation published in 1931.²⁵ This is an ambitious volume of 532 pages, some four of which are given over to *contes dévots / miracles, dits*. A short section, granted, but a presence nonetheless. Speaking of the types of literature mentioned in his subtitle, the author says that 'narratives of this kind were written to edify and entertain the public. The *Vie des Pères* or *Vie des Anciens Pères* forms a collection of 42 such contes. The name of this collection is borrowed from the *Vitae Patrum*. Only a part, however, of these *Vie des Pères* is borrowed from the *Vitae*

²² *ibid.*, p. 176.

²³ Indeed, by substituting '*Vie des Pères*' and 'scholars' for 'légendes' and 'clercs', a home truth about subsequent *Vie des Pères* scholarship almost comes to light!

²⁴ E. Langlois, *Nouvelles françaises inédites du XVe siècle*, Paris, 1908, pp. vi-vii.

²⁵ K. Voretzsch, *Introduction to the Study of Old French Literature*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1931 (transl. of 3rd ed. of 1925).

Patrum.²⁶ He accepts the findings of previous scholars without question, regurgitates them in four brief sentences, and quickly moves on. One suspects that it is in this way that the *Vie des Pères* was to disappear almost completely from this type of study. (In an interview with Félix Lecoy at the Collège de France in 1996, the *maître* suggested to me, without any hint of irony, that he was sure that scholars cited the *Vie des Pères* as a point of reference without going into detail because none of them had read it. Given its 30,000 lines and only very recent edition, and even then only of the first *Vie*, there is surely much truth in these remarks.) These findings are given another voice, one of quite some authority, by Urban T. Holmes in 1937. His *History of Old French Literature* is a solid work of reference in which a section entitled ‘Hagiographic, Biblical and Moral Literature’ is to be found.²⁷ It is here that the author speaks of the *Vie des Pères* - classification again proving a problem - and again this is quite a brief mention, but enough to suggest the importance of the collection. He summarizes research on the *Vie des Pères*, stating that there had been two poets working after 1241 and making two groupings of pious tales based upon varied sources which included the *Historia Monachorum* of Rufinus of Aquileia. These two collections were joined together and called the *Vie des Pères*; the second poet was probably one Ernoul de Langy. Readers of P. Groult and V. Emond's 1942 anthology of Medieval French literature were not given any such details, since all 300 pages are devoted to lyric poetry, fable, *roman*, epic and drama; there is no mention of the *conte dévot*.²⁸ The confusion over what the *Vie des Pères* actually is was added to by the text's entry in Bossuat's vitally important *Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française du moyen âge*. In the chapter ‘Littérature de caractère religieux’, the entry reads as follows:

La collection latine des *Vies des Pères du Désert* a inspiré de nombreuses versions en langue vulgaire, en vers et en prose.

References are then given to Meyer and to Migne, followed by:

Traduction en prose exécutée pour Blanche de Navarre, comtesse de Champagne, MS BN fr. 1038.

It is only at this point that our text is explicitly mentioned:

²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 385.

²⁷ U.T. Holmes, *A History of Old French Literature*, New York :Crofts, 1937.

²⁸ P. Groult & V. Emond, *Anthologie de la littérature française du moyen âge*, Gembloux: Duculot, 1964 (1st. ed. 1942).

This entry does not clarify a confusion of which Bossuat himself, one presumes, was unaware.

Fleeting references to our text are to be found, though, in Paul Zumthor's highly influential *Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale*, first published in 1954.³⁰ The author hints and points without ever grasping; the closest he comes to acknowledging this important corpus of material are two brief statements that do not really clarify the classification issue: 'le *Vitae Patrum* [...] devint la source d'une abondante littérature de contes pieux, en latin et en français', whilst 'les contes moraux [...] sont souvent [...] très proches des fabliaux'.³¹ Two years later, in 1956, J. Crosland's general survey of Old French literature contained a section on didactic literature, in which it is suggested that the author of the *Poème Moral* drew largely from the *Vie des Pères*. Crosland also says that the *Vitae Patrum* were translated *en masse*.³² Here, we have returned to the confusion so carefully avoided by scholars in the last century and it is clear that the *Vie des Pères* was becoming seen as obscure and peripheral. There has already been some indication in our survey that the collection was generally considered as a source rather than an end-product, and the lack of a critical edition did not help to change this point of view. Bossuat's *Histoire de la littérature française: Le Moyen Age*, published in 1962, does indeed, as one would expect, find a place for the *Vie des Pères*. Bossuat notes that the text is a 'compilation d'origine orientale, enrichie, dans l'état où elle se présente, de contes pieux et de récits souvent agréables à lire, parce que la langue en est souple et précise, la narration lestement enlevée, les personnages vivants et réels, solidement plantés sur la scène où ils se meuvent'.³³ Bossuat equally notes that the *Vie des Pères* was one of the sources for William of Waddington's *Manuel des Péchés* and that a copy of the work was owned by Louis X.³⁴ The place of the text in Bossuat's work is not central but it does seem to be taken as read that this is an important part of the medieval canon. In the 1965 *Manuel d'histoire littéraire de la France*, produced partly under the direction of J.-C. Payen, the *Vie des Pères* is mentioned only briefly, which, with

²⁹ R. Bossuat, *Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française du moyen âge*, Melun: Librairie d'Argences, 1951, p. 322.

³⁰ P. Zumthor, *Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale du XIe - XIVe siècle*, Paris: P.U.F., 1954.

³¹ *ibid.*, pp. 122, 240.

³² J. Crosland, *Medieval French Literature*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1956, pp. 19, 22.

³³ R. Bossuat, *Histoire de la littérature française: Le Moyen Age*, Paris: del DUCA, 1962, p. 128.

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 188, 208.

hindsight, is somewhat surprising.³⁵ A resurgent interest in medieval literature was not accompanied by a resurgent interest in the *Vie des Pères*; in A. Mary's anthology of Old French poetry - of which there were two substantial volumes - the *conte dévot* is completely ignored.³⁶ (Gautier de Coinci fares better, since one of his *Miracles* is included.) In 1970, Bordas published the first, sumptuous volume of *La Littérature française* which studied the Middle Ages and the Baroque era.³⁷ The authors, A. Lagarde and L. Michard, dedicate about half of the 637 pages to the medieval period, but there are no references to *Miracles of the Virgin*, Gautier de Coinci, the *conte dévot* nor, of course, the *Vie des Pères*. This is a splendid and accessible volume designed for popular appeal and which undoubtedly opens up the subject to a new audience; what a pity it is also limited in its range and unable to break much beyond the now traditional canon of texts.

1970 also saw the publication of the first recent general work to dedicate any real time and space to the *Vie des Pères*. This was J.-C. Payen's contribution to Arthaud's series *Littérature française*, a volume which was, essentially, restricted in scope, being subtitled 'des origines à 1300'.³⁸ This is still, of course, an enormous time-scale, but is also a more practical and manageable project. Payen manages to give all literary genres, including the *conte dévot*, a fair-handed treatment. Discussion of the *Vie des Pères* is to be found in the section entitled 'La littérature religieuse et morale' (pp. 185 - 98) which opens with some general comments on sermons and *exempla*. Payen then turns to our collection and reiterates the accurate sentiments of those nineteenth-century scholars: 'Entre un fabliau et un récit de la *Vie des Pères*, la différence de matière et de style n'est pas toujours très évidente.'³⁹ Classification again becomes a major issue, and again proves to be problematic. Payen is able, however, to draw on recent research - Bornäs's *Trois Contes* was published in 1968 - and is writing at a time we could label as the *Vie des Pères*'s 'second golden age'. He notes that the first version of the collection, finished around 1230, was written by the mysterious Ernoul de Lagny and enriched after 1250. The lack of scholarly attention received by the *Vie des Pères* is perhaps partly explained by Payen's indication that 'le texte est généralement mal écrit;

³⁵ J.-C. Payen & H. Weber, (dir.), *Maunuel d'histoire littéraire de la France, I: Origines à 1600*, 2nd ed., Paris: Les Editions Sociales, 1971 (1st ed. 1965).

³⁶ A. Mary, *Anthologie poétique française - moyen âge*, 2 vols, Paris: Flammarion, 1967.

³⁷ A. Lagarde & L. Michard, *La Littérature française. t.1: Du moyen âge à l'âge baroque*, Paris: Bordas-Laffont, 1970.

³⁸ J. -C. Payen, *Littérature française t.1 Le Moyen âge (origines à 1300)*, Paris: Arthaud, 1970.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 186.

il accumule les formules toutes faites qui gâtent ce genre de littérature; il allonge le prologue et la conclusion dogmatiques; il se caractérise dans ses anecdotes par la sécheresse de ses rares descriptions, par la médiocrité de ses courts dialogues; et par l'abus de monologues bien rhétoriques. Mais la *Vie des Pères* est très intéressante par la variété de ses thèmes romanesques et la richesse de son idéologie.⁴⁰ If the *Vie des Pères*'s artistic merit is limited, the collection is nonetheless worthy of attention. Payen finds interest in the fact that 'la *Vie des Pères* ne considère pas le bonheur et la sainteté comme des finalités incompatibles',⁴¹ and points to *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, which rehabilitates the profession of *jongleur*, to illustrate that the collection underlines the dignity of the *ordo laicorum*. He laments the lack of a complete edition and suspects that this is due to the number of manuscripts and interpolations. Before his conclusion that the tales are moral rather than religious, he notes that the fact that there are a small number of variants in certain sections of the texts is not without significance: 'Dès que commence une partie dogmatique, l'oeuvre exprime une *auctoritas*, et le nombre de leçons divergentes s'atténue.'⁴² In just two pages, Payen gives his reader - again, the general reader - a succinct and fair *aperçu* of the *Vie des Pères*, without giving it any special treatment, within the context of a wide-reaching history of Old French literature.

Reacting in 1972 to Chaurand's *Fou*, the *Bulletin critique du livre français* recognized the importance of the *Vie des Pères* in calling for more such works: 'On se réjouira de voir cette excellente édition attirer l'attention sur la *Vie des Pères*, [...] document de premier ordre sur la piété 'moyenne' du XIIIe siècle.'⁴³ This call was unfortunately to fall on deaf ears for many years. John Fox, in his sound contribution to *A Literary History of France* in 1974, does not mention the *conte dévot*, the *Vie des Pères*, Gautier de Coinci nor Miracles of the Virgin;⁴⁴ Philippe Ménard uses *Fou* and other texts to illustrate the complexity of the treatment of the theme of madness in medieval literature, but makes no comments further to those of Chaurand.⁴⁵ In 1981, Pierre Kunstmann published a series of Virgin Miracles in the form of excellent modern French translation; none are taken from the *Vie des Pères* but, on a number of occasions,

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 192.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 194.

⁴³ *Bulletin critique du livre*, Paris: Association pour la Diffusion de la Pensée française (A.D.P.F), 1972, no. 314, item 83802, p. 173.

⁴⁴ J. Fox, *A Literary History of France*, I, London: E. Benn, 1974.

⁴⁵ P. Ménard, 'Les fous dans la société médiévale. Le témoignage de la littérature du 12e et du 13e siècle', *Romania* 98 (1977), 433-59.

the editor makes reference in his introduction to the *corpus*.⁴⁶ Daniel Poirion's *Précis de littérature française du Moyen Age* contains a brief reference to the text by Michel Zink (p. 55).⁴⁷

And so we come almost up to date. This summary has attempted to compare like with like, and the late 1980s and early 1990s have provided numerous paperback and popular histories and compilations, arguably similar in intention, if not in circulation, to those examined from the nineteenth century, plus some more specialized works that have relevance to the present study. Livre de Poche published *Poètes du moyen âge* by J. Cerquiglini in 1987, and this broad cross-section of medieval literature includes 6 pages - of 254 - dedicated to 'la poésie religieuse', but nothing on the *conte dévot*.⁴⁸ In the same year, E. Baumgartner's *Histoire de la littérature française: moyen Age, 1050-1486* made a brief mention of the *Vie des Pères* in her section entitled 'Moraliser'. Baumgartner places the first *Vie* around 1230, noting that 'la volonté d'édifier emprunte des voies [...] ambiguës dans des contes pieux'.⁴⁹ Also in 1987 was published a neat and very readable compilation of *Fabliaux et contes du Moyen Age*, including *Le Chevalier au barisel* and, by so doing, making the important step of placing *fabliau* and *anti-fabliau* side-by-side.⁵⁰ A useful study of the medieval *conte merveilleux* by Jacques Berlioz et al in 1989 makes passing reference to *Ame en gage* and *Merlot*, but adds nothing new to the scholarship of our particular text.⁵¹ In *The Lady as Saint* (1991), Brigitte Cazelles publishes an English translation of most of *Thaïs* (from γ) but shows herself to have little knowledge of the *Vie des Pères* as a whole; she remarks, after Schwan, that the tale was 'translated' from the *Vitae patrum* by 'a priest of Champagne' and dates the work from after 1250.⁵² Cazelles suggests that MSS preserving hagiographic romance, including *Thaïs/Vie des Pères*, are 'composite manuals lacking thematic coherence'.⁵³

⁴⁶ P. Kunstmann, *Vierge et merveille. Les miracles de Notre-Dame narratifs au Moyen Age*, Paris: Union Générale d'Édition, 1981 (Collection 10/18, 1424).

⁴⁷ D. Poirion, *Précis de littérature française du Moyen Age*, Paris: PUF, 1983.

⁴⁸ J. Cerquiglini, *Poètes du Moyen Age*, Paris: Livre de Poche, 1987.

⁴⁹ E. Baumgartner, *Histoire de la littérature française: moyen Age, 1050-1486*, Paris: Bordas, 1987, p. 149,

⁵⁰ *Fabliaux et contes du Moyen Age*, préface de J. Joubert, choix, traductions, commentaires et notes de J.-C. Aubailly, Paris: Livre de Poche, 1987.

⁵¹ J. Berlioz, C. Brémond & C. Velay-Vallantin, *Formes médiévales du conte merveilleux*, Paris: Stock, 1989, p. 61.

⁵² Cazelles, *The Lady as Saint*, p. 290. Cazelles' translation is not always reliable but some of her introductory remarks make for an interesting feminist reading of female hagiography.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 4.

The 'tradition' of ignoring the *Vie des Pères* in general works was continued, most unexpectedly, by Michel Zink in *Le Moyen âge - littérature française*, a work republished by Livre de Poche in 1993 as *Une Introduction à la littérature du moyen âge*.⁵⁴ In what is a very general work, nothing is to be found relating to hagiography, Lives of Saints, *contes dévots* or *exempla*; given Zink's interest and expertise in such areas, this is something of a surprise and, unlike many other such works, is certainly a conscious omission on the part of the author. A year later, in the 1991 supplement to Bossuat's *Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française du moyen âge* by F. Vieillard and J. Monfrin, special care is taken to note the placing of the *Vie des Pères* with *contes dévots* rather than with the *Vitae Patrum*, indicative of confusion even at this late stage.⁵⁵ The same year saw P. Jonin's thematic anthology - a worthwhile and interesting approach - miss out Gautier and the *Vie des Pères*, even in the section 'Vierge', along with the not uncommon themes of confession and penitence.⁵⁶ Jonin tries to make a representative selection, basing his work on 'plus de 60 thèmes, près de 300 textes poétiques'.⁵⁷ Even when an author can choose some 300 Old French texts, the *Vie des Pères* is absent.

The weighty and authoritative study of the *fantastique* by Francis Dubost, which concentrates on literature from the 12th and the 13th Centuries and appeared in print in 1991, again indicates the old confusion concerning genre: indexed references to the *Vie des Pères* refer the reader to passages on *la Vie de St Antoine*, *la Vie de Saint Paul l'Hermite* and, perhaps inevitably, the *Vitae Patrum*.⁵⁸ Dubost shows interest in *Coq* - edited by Bornäs - and the *séduction diabolique*; however, many other tales include material relevant to his (admittedly already substantial) study. The *Vie des Pères* is well represented, however, in the excellent new edition of Grente's *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises: le moyen âge*, published in 1992.⁵⁹ Geneviève Hassenohr mentions of the first *Vie* that 'l'ensemble présente une grande unité de ton et d'inspiration', but that this

⁵⁴ M. Zink, *Le Moyen âge - Littérature française* Nancy: Presse Universitaire de Nancy, 1990; id., *Introduction à la littérature du moyen âge*, Paris: Livre de Poche, 1993.

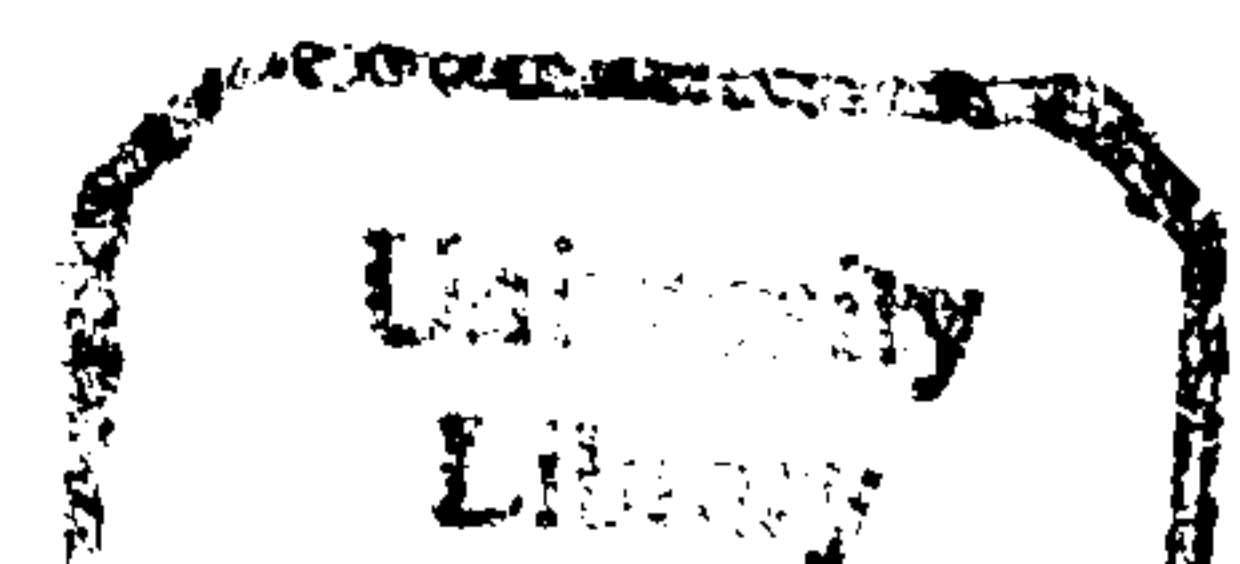
⁵⁵ F. Vieillard & J. Monfrin, *Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française du moyen âge*, first editor R. Bossuat, 3rd supplement, Paris: CNRS, 1991.

⁵⁶ P. Jonin, *Anthologie thématique de la poésie française du moyen âge*, Paris: Champion, 1991.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁸ F. Dubost, *Aspects fantastiques de la littérature narrative médiévale (12e - 13e siècles) - l'Autre, l'Ailleurs, l'Autrefois*, 2 vols, Paris: Champion, 1991.

⁵⁹ G. Grente, *Dictionnaire des Lettres françaises - le Moyen âge*, ouvrage préparé par R. Bossuat, L. Pichard & G. Raynaud de Lage, édition entièrement revue et mise à jour sous la direction de G. Hassenohr, & M. Zink, Paris: Fayard, 1992, pp. 1476-77.



unity is lacking in the second and third *Vies*. She names the *continueur* as Ernoul de Langny and comments that, whilst the first *Vie* is situated in a ‘passé mythique’, the second and third *Vies*, influenced by Gautier, are set in ‘un temps historique et proche’.⁶⁰ The entry lists those relatively few works to be found on the *Vie des Pères* and is informative and objective. One of the most recent anthologies of medieval literature is that of Philippe Walter, which covers a large time period and concentrates on more traditionally popular literary genres than the *conte dévot*.⁶¹ Finally, it seems relevant to point out that, in 1994, the confusion between the very name of this text with patristic texts has not disappeared. In a review of Szkilnik, P.E. Bennett notes: ‘This interesting edition presents a set of texts from the tradition commonly known as “la vie des pères”.’⁶² Only the lack of a capital ‘V’ makes any distinction between the *Vitae Patrum* and the present text.

Why have other types of medieval literature proved more popular? It would be ridiculous to suggest that there has been a conspiracy against the *Vie des Pères*, but the work has undeniably suffered from i/ the lack of a critical edition, and ii/ the difficulty in placing it into any one accepted, modern category. A general lack of awareness of the text is a direct consequence of a vicious circle that evolved at some time in the twentieth century and would still appear to exist: the lack of interest in the work might suggest that, at some time, an eminent scholar has justifiably rejected the *Vie des Pères* as worthless, and that subsequent scholars, after some considered argument, have concurred. This is not the case. In the nineteenth century, the collection was never given any special treatment but was simply set alongside other works from other traditions in the ‘mainstream’ of scholarship. It was also categorized first as *fabliau*, then as hagiography. In the twentieth century the *Vie des Pères* has become marginalized, and despite the new category described by Payen as ‘la littérature religieuse et morale’ and a mushrooming of interest in the *exemplum*, it has struggled to find a proper place in our ever-more compartmentalized literary repertoire. Its worth over the great classics of the French medieval canon cannot and should not be claimed, but it is equally regretful that the reader of Livre de Poche-style histories of Old French literature, often an undergraduate, might be destined to remain ignorant of the *Vie des Pères* for some time

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1476.

⁶¹ P. Walter, *Naissances de la littérature française IXe - XVe siècles - une anthologie*, Grenoble: Ellug, 1993.

⁶² P.E. Bennett, review of M. Szkilnik (ed.), ‘*L’Histoire des moines d’Egypte*’ suivie de ‘*La Vie de saint Paul le simple*’, Geneva: Droz, 1993 in *Medium Aevum*, 63 (1994), 342-43 (p. 342).

to come. However, with the recent passing away of Félix Lecoy, and the publication of the edition of the text that he with some justification called ‘ma *Vie des Pères*’, scholarly interest may increase and rehabilitate the *conte pieux*.

Books, Chapters and Articles devoted to the *Vie des Pères*

The scholarship specifically devoted to *La Vie des Pères* is of rather more immediacy to the present study, revealing, arguably, less about the individual scholar and more about the work itself. It has already been suggested that the *Vie des Pères* was once part of 'mainstream' medieval literature, neither particularly well-considered nor badly-considered, and that this general acceptance did not, for some reason, result in a great deal of scholarly attention. It is perhaps debatable whether the detailed research of scholars leads to a wider interest in a particular work, or vice-versa, but it appears evident that, by chance, a vicious circle came into being with regard to our text, and that the treatment of the *Vie des Pères* in the more general works discussed above has had at least some bearing on an apparent lack of scholarly interest. It was not always so, however, and the following survey illustrates that *Vie des Pères* scholarship had what may be described as two 'golden ages', some 85 years apart, that centered around an article by Edouard Schwan in 1884, and then the Bornäs / Chaurand editions of more recent times.

The earliest references I have discovered to a more-than-passing interest in the *Vie des Pères* in the modern period date back to 1838. The first of these, by G.A. Matile, is an edition of *Jardinier* from A, the other a contribution to the *Histoire Littéraire de la France* by Amoury Duval.¹ Duval was writing at a time of science and prudishness, and the era perhaps dictated the tone of his contribution to the volume dedicated to the years 1256-1285. He is scathing about the *Vie des Pères*, claiming that it contains nothing moral or pious, and that its authors suffered from 'une ignorance complète de vrais principes de la morale et de la religion.'² There is very little difference between the *conte dévot* and the *fabliau*, since both are scandalous and cynical. Quoting Legrand D'Aussy, he states his belief that the tales were thought up by monks in a sincere but misguided attempt to promote a relic or monastery, or to praise God by rhyming the

¹ G.A. Matile, 'Du jardenier qui donnoit la moitié de son gaing pour Dieu', *Revue Suisse*, 2 (1838), 246-50, 297-306; A. Duval, 'La Vie des Anciens Pères par un anonyme', *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 19 (1838), 857-61.

² *ibid.*, p. 839.

sottises they had heard. The tales are not wholly without significance, though, since ‘on [y] trouve de l'imagination, une sorte d'art, et jusqu'à de l'intérêt même’!³ Duval felt sure that, in fact, it was not only monks but also *trouvères laïques* that wrote and propagated *contes dévots*, a notion to which later scholars would return; he also equated superstition with stupidity and spoke of ‘tant de déplorables ouvrages du genre dévot, [...] tant de fables monstrueuses dont, pourtant, les auteurs osent nous attester l'authenticité.’⁴ This is not poetry, being trivial and in bad taste, but Duval nonetheless devotes four pages (pp. 857-61) to the *Vie des Pères*, even if only to call the tales ‘puériles aventures de personnages obscurs’ whose author copied from the Miracles of Gautier de Coinci, a crime of mitigated proportions since ‘le plagiat était [...] alors plus toléré qu'il ne l'est de nos jours.’⁵ Amongst the hostile invective are, however, perceptive points, especially with reference to the author: Duval believed that he was not a monk because in the *contes* he gave his intention to enter Holy Orders; and although he had the cheek to criticize the *fabliaux* when ‘son poème n'est qu'un tissu de fables grossières,’⁶ it was right to include the tales in the *Histoire Littéraire de la France* ‘parce que, mieux peut-être que les grands poèmes sur Arthur et Charlemagne, ils donnent une idée de l'esprit et des mœurs de la société, comme de l'état de la littérature au temps où ils furent composés.’⁷

In 1840, two years after Duval's article, Adelbert Keller published an edition of *Sarrasine* and *Brûlure* taken from N, and in 1850 an edition of *Vision d'enfer* (from i) appeared in the *Annuaire de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, erroneously attributed to a certain Dumortier in all works prior to the present thesis, but in fact the work of the editor of the journal, Baron de Reiffenberg.⁸ Both scholars believe the *Vie des Pères* tales to be *fabliaux*. The latter justifies his work in the following terms: ‘Il n'est pas moins utile de recueillir les éléments d'une littérature qui prépare et explique celles qui l'ont suivie.’⁹ *Ave Maria* was the subject of an edition by A. Caron in 1854, and was taken from the Arras fragment.¹⁰ The existence of these three editions attests to quite some interest in the *Vie des Pères* and, moreover, when added to the editions of Legrand

³ *ibid.*, p. 841.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 842.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 858.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 859.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 861.

⁸ A. Keller, *Zwei fabliaux aus einer Neuenburger Handschrift*, Stuttgart, 1840; Baron de Reiffenberg, ‘Fragment d'un ancien fabliau’, *Annuaire de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, 11 (1850), 31-36.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁰ A. Caron, ‘Petites pièces de vieille poésie’, *Mémoires de l'Académie d'Arras*, 28 (1854), 286-341.

D'Aussy, Méon and Matile, mean that about a third of the collection had been published by the mid-nineteenth century.

In 1856, Victor Leclerc followed in Duval's footsteps by examining the *Vie des Pères* in the series *Histoire littéraire de la France*.¹¹ He chose to discuss the collection in the section on the *fabliaux* rather than *poésies morales*, perhaps a judicious choice, but not necessarily made for the right reasons; *Noël*, he argues, is one of the few medieval tales not to be wholly condemnable since it has 'du moins la faible excuse de finir par la punition des coupables.'¹² Several tales actually merit their translation into the vernacular, including *Sacristine*, *Abbesse grosse* and *Ange et ermite*. He looked for sources, suspecting the Orient, and notes that *Malaquin* is 'moins languissant et moins diffus' than, for example, *Sacristine*, a tale 'surchargé de longs et fastidieux discours.'¹³ To his credit, he does suggest that this text was used by preachers, and one suspects a latent affection for the tales behind the criticism; for example, of *Merlot* he notes that 's'il était de Gautier de Coincy, [il] serait certainement son chef-d'oeuvre'.¹⁴ Interest in particularly the sources of the *Vie des Pères* was maintained by Alfred Tobler's exploration of the history of the legends of the *contes*, although he studies only the first *Vie*.¹⁵

Momentum in the study of our text was slowly being gained, and 1876 saw the publication of two pieces on the *Vie des Pères* in perhaps the first 'scientific' studies of the text, those by Alfred Weber.¹⁶ An edition of *Copeaux* (from A) and part of *Crucifix* are accompanied by a commentary in which Weber confirms that the original collection comprised only 42 tales, the other 32 being added later, from time to time, and presumably by the same author. He describes 14 manuscripts and attempts to group them. He dates the collection from textual evidence - a reference to the death of Louis VIII (1226) in *Renieur* (*conte* 48) (B); a reference in *Confession* to Gautier, Archbishop of Sens, who died in 1250 - and concludes that the text must have been written shortly before 1250. Like Duval, he believes that the author was not a member of a religious order, but he refuses to accept that he and Gautier de Coinci had known the work of the

¹¹ V. Leclerc, *Histoire Littéraire de la France*, 23 (1856), 145-46.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 145.

¹³ *ibid.*, pp. 132, 124.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 206.

¹⁵ A. Tobler, *Jahrbuch für Romanische und Englische Literatur*, 7 (1866), 401-37.

¹⁶ A. Weber, 'Zu den Legenden der Vie des Pères', *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 1 (1876), 357-65; *id.*, *Untersuchungen Über die Vies des Anciens Pères*, Fraunfeld: J. Huber's Buchdruckerei, 1876, (Handschriftliche Studien auf dem Gebiete Romanischer Litteratur des Mittelalters, I). For a more detailed study of Weber's important work, see Spencer-Ellis, pp. 22-24.

other. Another German scholar, Eugen Wolter, obviously saw his own edition of *Juitel* (from *A*, published in 1879) as a contribution to an important field of research, since he gives a commented, if slightly inaccurate, list of published tales that include those by Méon, Matile, Keller, Legrand D'Aussy and Weber.¹⁷ He knew of 20 MSS, of which 16 contained his particular tale, and he gives a detailed table of their contents, before concluding that tales 43 - 74 were by a different author, thus confirming Weber's theory of a division after *Merlot*.

1880 saw the publication of *Image de pierre* by F. Castets, an edition so inaccurate and badly researched that it led the same year to a scathing review in *Romania* by an indignant Paul Meyer.¹⁸ With hindsight - ~~as~~ as many modern politicians would agree - bad publicity is often better than no publicity. Meyer, though, saw Castets' work as damaging to scholarship and was merciless in his criticism of such an amateurish effort. Here is a clash between a newer, more scientific generation of scholars and the old antiquarian school. Certainly, Meyer was at the forefront of Old French literery studies for many years, always setting high standards of thoroughness. It was quite probably through his influence that *Romania* was to print a majority of the most important studies concerning the *Vie des Pères*, continuing into the 1930s. In 1882, *Romania* published a short note by R. Köhler which summarizes *Sénéchal* and other English / Persian versions of the legend, but he does not mention that the French version was only one part of a longer work.¹⁹ Two years later, in 1884, the singularly most important study of the *Vie des Pères* to date was published, again in *Romania*, by Edouard Schwan.²⁰

‘Je publie maintenant cette étude, non que j'en sois tout-à-fait satisfait, mais pour qu'elle puisse servir de base à de nouvelles recherches.’²¹ With these words Schwan clearly set out his intentions and acknowledged that his conclusions would inevitably be altered in time (and so it has proved, although the time scale involved has surely been much different than Schwan may have imagined). His study applies a ground-breaking, analytical methodology to the study of the collection that could be described as 'scientific', and the following summary of its central points concentrates only on its

¹⁷ E. Wolter, *Der Judenknabe*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1879 (Bibliotheca Normantica, 2).

¹⁸ F. Castets, ‘Le Romant de la Vie des Pères’, *Revue des Langues Romanes*, 17 (1880), pp. 53-75; P. Meyer, *Romania*, 9 (1880), 620-21.

¹⁹ R. Köhler, ‘Le Conte de la Reine qui tua son Sénéchal’, *Romania*, 11 (1882), 581-84.

²⁰ E. Schwan, ‘La Vie des Anciens Pères’, *Romania*, 13 (1884), 233-63.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 233, n. 1.

central findings, not its philological data. Schwan knew of 31 MSS, commenting that this is not the only proof of the popularity of the *Vie des Pères* in the Middle Ages: Louis X's widow, Clémence of Hungary - amongst other distinguished personages - had a copy of the tales. Schwan then sets about describing the MSS tradition²² and briefly discusses the findings of Duval and Weber (pp. 250-51), considering self-evident Weber's hypothesis that neither Gautier de Coinci nor the author of the *Vie des Pères* imitated the other's work. He then sets about a close examination of the tales themselves. The first lines of the Epilogue are cited by Schwan:

Je qui ai cest romant tretié
Par essample ai tant exploitié
Que je dou monde me demet
Et mon voloir en autrui met.
Se je di bien et je nul faz

in evidence of a misunderstanding by Weber: 'l'auteur annonce bien dans ces vers qu'il va soumettre à la règle monastique, mais cela ne prouve nullement qu'il fût laïque: de clerc séculier il devenait clerc régulier, ce qui arrivait très souvent au moyen âge.'²³ He finds in his own classification of the MSS proof that tales 43-74 could not have belonged to the '*Vie primitive*', commenting that it was not out of the question that the original author then added 'peu à peu' two other series of tales. But the following remark, quoted on p. 253 from the end of *Merlot* in S, plus the prologue to *Enfant pieux*, threw new light onto the question of composition:

Ci faut li romanz de la vie des pères. Quiconque voudra trover aucun conte en cest livre, il le trouverai par le nombre qui ci est; quar autel nombre cum tu verras après ces encommencemanz si desoz escriz, torne ariers, si le troveras en marge.

Schwan points out that in tales 1-42 every tale had its own prologue, whereas in the 2nd *Vie* there is only a general prologue, and this in every MS known to him. This is proof enough for the 2nd *Vie* to be a new collection of *contes dévots* (with, he added, a series of misplaced tales in the middle). The prologue to the 2nd *Vie* affirmed its source as a Latin book that had been translated into French for 'nos gens laies' (in B) and Latin sources were also invoked for several tales in their introductions, leading Schwan to

²² Cf. Spencer-Ellis, pp. 24-27, 49-50.

²³ Schwan, p. 251.

comment that ‘un poète qui traduisait du latin doit avoir été clerc, ce qui nous fait répudier la leçon de S, qui en ferait un laïque, et on pourrait même supposer, d'après l'expression “nos gens laies”, qu'il était curé d'une paroisse.’²⁴ As for the author of the 1st *Vie*, he was certainly not a layman, ‘cela est suffisamment prouvé par sa profonde connaissance de l'Ecriture.’²⁵ He speaks badly of *jongleurs* but, unlike the author of the 2nd *Vie*, never mentions a Latin source, but rather oral and other written sources.²⁶ The character and style of the two *Vies* are, he argues, very different. Schwan's argument from (pp. 255-56) is perhaps best summarized in tabular form:

<u>FIRST VIE</u>	<u>SECOND VIE</u>
contes dévots	
contemplative prologue	no individual prologues
Biblical quotations	less familiar with Scripture, almost no quotations
epilogues contain moral	epilogues give general exhortations to worship Jesus / Virgin, not a particular moral to be found in the tale (eg #50, <i>Confession</i>)
well told	
not excessively pious	
sometimes humorous	
no great devotion to Virgin	a strong reverence of Virgin, usually equal to that of Gautier
simple paraboles	miracles and legends rather than paraboles
"D'agréables petites histoires où la vertu triomphe et le vice est puni, avec des peintures de moeurs charmantes"	
often set in Egypt	recent past, set in France, Germany etc., rather than Egypt

Schwan believed the 2nd *Vie* to have been written after 1241, the year of the death of Archbishop Gautier Cornu, mentioned in *Confession*, and he regrets the lack of similar textual evidence to help the dating of the 1st *Vie*. The only - slim - clues he finds are in several rhymes found in the tales (eg. *ie* : *e*) that indicate a date after 1250, ‘mais

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 254.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 255.

²⁶ Schwan gives examples on p. 255.

pas beaucoup plus tard, car ces rimes sont encore rares.’²⁷ The linguistic (and some textual) evidence leads Schwan to conclude that the author of the 2nd *Vie* came from western Picardy, whilst the first ‘paraît avoir écrit aux bords de la Marne, non loin de Paris.’²⁸ The rhyming evidence excludes Normandy and Picardy and suggests rather Champagne or Burgundy. The textual evidence comprises references to *Marne* and *Mons Valerien* in *Juitel*. As for the coming together of the two collections, Schwan suggests that they were first copied next to each other then, subsequently, their similar titles and form led to their being recopied together as one whole. Although he does not recognize tales 51-63 as a distinct 3rd *Vie*, he does see in these *contes* a 3rd series. His article was indeed a solid base for future research and, considering that he did not know all of the MSS that have now come to light, it resulted in sound conclusions: ‘En résumant nos recherches, nous croyons avoir démontré qu’il y a deux Vies des Anciens Pères différentes, composées par deux auteurs différents, dont l’un était picard, l’autre probablement champenois de la région de la Marne qui confine à l’Ile-de-France. Ces deux recueils d’un titre semblable ou même identique ont été réunis à la fin du XIIIe siècle dans six manuscrits.’²⁹

In an initialled footnote to Schwan's article, Gaston Paris also made a significant contribution to *Vie des Pères* scholarship; in order to ‘faciliter les choses’, he gave the tales thumbnail short titles by which they are still known, a most practical move since *conte* order and rubrics vary considerably from MS to MS.³⁰ Both Schwan and Paris perceived their contributions as establishing a foundation for future research, and both explicitly expressed their expectation that other scholars would continue their work; there was no reason for them to suspect that Schwan's study would remain the most significant contribution to the field of *Vie des Pères* scholarship for over 80 years.³¹

In the same year as Schwan's article, J. Le Coultre published an edition of *Miserere* and *Saint Paulin* (from A) and argued that the 2nd *Vie* was a continuation of

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 257.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 259.

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 260.

³⁰ *ibid.*, initialled footnote to p. 240.

³¹ It is important to note, however, that however important Schwan's work may be, it does contain errors in addition to certain interpretations that can now be modified with the knowledge of more manuscripts and with new scholarly techniques. So, already by 1910, Herbert warns his reader that ‘Schwan is mistaken in saying that two printed editions appeared in the fifteenth century. The *Vie des anciens pères* printed by Vérard at Paris in 1495 [...] is not the present work at all, but a French prose translation of the *Vitae Patrum*; and the *Vies des saints pères du désert* at Arras [...] is an earlier edition of the same’, J.A. Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, III, London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1910, p. 337.

the first, although doubtless by another author.³² Le Coultre suggests that the author of the *Vie des Pères* was addressing a monastic audience. A year later, A. Van Hamel published a note on MS k, A. Mussafia a note on n in which he affirmed that eight tales in BN fr 818 were not by Gautier de Coinci but belonged to the *Vie des Pères*, and Paul Meyer a note on two fragments.³³ There was obvious interest in the *Vie des Pères*, or at least in the discovery of new MSS that contained it. Another individual tale was published in 1889: J.J. Salverda da Grave, like many other editors, chose A as base MS for an edition of *Feuille de chou*.³⁴ This careful edition is preceded by a short attempt to classify the manuscripts. Paul Meyer's continued interest in the *Vie des Pères* led to two more *notices* in 1891, the first concerning MSS held in Cheltenham that included the *Vie des Pères* MS r, the second elaborating on his note of 1885 and suggesting a date of the 2nd quarter of the thirteenth century for the collection.³⁵ He believed, very plausibly, that the author was 'un de ceux qui se sont proposés de faire une concurrence pieuse à la littérature profane et légère des fabliaux.'³⁶ The stories were borrowed from the *vies des pères du désert* and they had enjoyed 'un succès peu ordinaire', given that over 30 MSS versions and fragments were extant. Meyer also saw the need to list the work of other scholars in the field, including editions. In 1895, G. Reynaud listed the contents of MS y, and a further edition - this time of *Jardinier* - was to be published in 1899 by O. Schultz-Gora, sustaining interest in the *Vie des Pères* right up to the end of the nineteenth century.³⁷

In 1900, E. Galtier's interesting study of Byzantine legends included brief mention of *Crucifix* and the two versions of *Renieur*.³⁸ Paul Meyer, in 1906, again made two contributions to this field of scholarship: in a work studying Old French prose versions of the Lives of the Desert Fathers, he briefly indicates that the verse collection belongs to a different tradition and has only borrowed certain elements from the *Vitae*

³² J. LeCoultre, *Contes Dévots tirés de la Vie des Anciens Pères*, Neuchâtel, 1884.

³³ A. Van Hamel, 'Encore un manuscrit de la Vie des pères', *Romania*, 14 (1885), 130-31; A. Mussafia, 'Sulle Vies des Anciens Pères', *Romania*, 14 (1885), 583-86; P. Meyer, initialled note at end of Mussafia's 'Sulle Vies...', 585-86.

³⁴ J.J. Salverda da Grave, 'De la nonain qui manga la fleur du chol', pp. 109-21 in *Feestbundel ter Gelegenheid zijner veertigjarige Amtsbediening op den 28. November 1889 aangeboden aan Matthias de Vries*, Utrecht, 1889.

³⁵ P. Meyer, 'Notices sur quelques manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Phillips à Cheltenham', *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, 34 (1891), 149-258; id., P. Meyer, 'Notice sur 2 anciens manuscrits français', *Notices et Extraits*, 33 (1891), 66-70.

³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 66.

³⁷ G. Reynaud, 'Le dit du cheval à vendre', *Romania*, 24 (1895), 446-51; O. Schultz-Gora, *Zwei Altfranzösischen Dichtungen*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1899.

³⁸ E. Galtier, 'Byzantina', *Romania*, 29 (1900), 501-27, pp. 513-17 (*Crucifix*), 524-27 (*Renieur*).

Patrum;³⁹ and in another article concerning MSS fragments he realises the enormity of the task of classifying all those MSS known to contain the *Vie des Pères*: ‘La tentative de Schwan, toute méritoire qu'elle est, n'aboutit qu'à des résultats provisoires. Il appartiendra à un futur éditeur de la *Vie des Pères* de la recommencer et de la mener à bon fin.’⁴⁰ (It might be noted here that it was only with the work of Bornäs, Chaurand and Spencer-Ellis that this task was subsequently undertaken). 1907 saw an impressive edition of *Impératrice* by A. Wallensköld in a meticulous study of the legend,⁴¹ and three years later J.A. Herbert, in the *Catalogue of Romances*, made detailed notes on the contents of MS v.⁴² The latter knew of 33 MSS to contain the *Vie des Pères*, adding that ‘Schwan is mistaken in saying that two printed editions appeared in the 15th Century. The *Vie des anciens pères* printed by Vérard at Paris in 1495 [...] is not the present work at all, but a French prose translation of the *Vitae Patrum*; and the *Vies des saints pères du désert* at Arras [...] is an earlier version of the same.’⁴³ Partly in order to rectify this confusion, Herbert gives a list of published tales (26 of 74), summarizes previous scholarship, and briefly describes every one of the 35 tales in his particular MSS.

It was at this point that *Vie des Pères* scholarship would appear to have gone into decline. In fact, the collection seemed to be of interest to only one scholar, the Pole J. Morawski, until the end of the 1960s. His six contributions to *Romania* between 1921-39,⁴⁴ plus brief references to the *Vie des Pères* by three other scholars, represent the total published scholarship in the field that I have been able to find between the years 1911-1965, that is, for nearly 50 years, and even then the *Vie des Pères* was not always central to Morawski's work. In 1921, Morawski's interest lay primarily in the authorship of the 2nd *Vie*, although he also announced his intention to produce a full edition of the *Vie des Pères*, that never materialized. In *Patience* (MSS A B C S) the author names

³⁹ P. Meyer, ‘Versions en vers et en prose des Vies des Pères’, op. cit.

⁴⁰ P. Meyer, ‘Fragments de manuscrits français, II: Fragments de la Vie des Pères’, *Romania*, 35 (1906), 31-47, p. 32.

⁴¹ A. Wallensköld, *Le conte de la femme chaste convoitée par son beau-frère - Etude de littérature comparée*, Helsingfors (Helsinki): Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae (34), 1907. The edition of the *Vie des Pères* tale, on pp. 134-49, is not of Arsenal 3516 (fol. 133r a - 136r a) as indicated by Wallensköld, but of Arsenal 3518 (Q).

⁴² J.A. Herbert, pp. 337-46 in *Catalogue of Romances in the Department of Manuscripts in the British Museum*, III, London: Trustees of the British Museum, 1910.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 337.

⁴⁴ J. Morawski, ‘L'Auteur de la seconde Vie des Pères’, *Romania*, 47 (1921), 381-82; ‘Fragment de la première Vie des Pères’, *Romania*, 56 (1930), 257-59; ‘Mélanges de littérature pieuse I’, *Romania*, 61 (1935), 145-209; ‘Mélanges de littérature pieuse II’, *Romania*, 61 (1935), 316-50; ‘Mélanges de littérature pieuse III’, *Romania*, 64 (1938), 454-88; ‘Mélanges de littérature pieuse IV’, *Romania*, 65 (1939), 327-58.

himself as *Ernoul de Laigny*, probably the Laigny in the Aisne region. Since this name is to be found in every known version of the tale, it must be the name of the author. Morawski takes for granted that Ernoul was a religious and, transcribing the end of the tale, adds that ‘reste à savoir à quel ordre appartenait ce frère.’⁴⁵ The *Vie des Pères* had some relevance to Robert Guiette's study of the *Légende de la Sacristine* in 1927, a work in which the author is especially interested in the sources and traditions of the legend in the ancient and modern worlds.⁴⁶ Guiette describes the tales of the *Vie des Pères* as ‘de petits chefs d'oeuvres de l'ancienne poésie française’, an opinion that he will repeat in his review of Chaurand almost sixty years later.⁴⁷ Guiette also takes care to point out that the relationship between the Old French collection and the *Vitae Partrum* is much less rigid than the titles suggest.

Morawski described a fragment containing parts of *Fornication imitée* and *Sarrasine* in 1930, and also referred to his future edition of the tales.⁴⁸ Two years later, A.P. Ducrot-Granderye had cause to describe MSS A, C, D, d, e, i, k, l, and s in the course of her seminal *Etudes sur les Miracles de Gautier de Coincy*.⁴⁹ Then, in 1935, Morawski began his series of articles entitled ‘Mélanges de littérature pieuse’, which were especially geared towards Miracles of the Virgin. In his first part he examines sources and form rather than meaning, and speaks of ‘la troisième *Vie des Pères*’, dividing the tales up thus: *1st Vie* = 1 - 42; *2nd Vie* = 43 - 50, 64 - 74; *3rd Vie* = 51 - 63.⁵⁰ He believes *Frère Ernoul* and the author of the 3rd *Vie* to be Cistercians, and that the *Mestre Hernaut* mentioned in *Femme aveugle* was probably the same as Ernoul de Laigny. He also states that the *Vie des Pères* were destined to be read by religious, and that miracle collections were usually unordered: ‘Ce n'est qu'exceptionnellement qu'on constate un effort de classement.’⁵¹ But even if the author of the 3rd *Vie* had not consciously ordered his miracles, he had most certainly made the distinction between

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, (1921), p. 381.

⁴⁶ R. Guiette, *La Légende de la Sacristine*, Paris: Champion, 1927.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 90.

⁴⁸ Cf. note 41.

⁴⁹ A. Ducrot-Granderye, *Etudes sur les Miracles de Gautier de Coincy*, Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, series B, vol. 25, no. 2, 1932, 74-104. Note that this is volume 25 and not 35 as indicated by Félix Lecoy in his edition, I, p. xv.

⁵⁰ *art. cit.*, p. 146, n. 1. In another footnote on, p. 150, he refers to R. Gröber in *Grundriss der romanische Philologie*, II, 2, p. 1166, in which Gröber believed *Guido me scripsit*, found at the end of one version of the *Vie des Pères*, as referring to the same Guiot, author of miracles. Morawski notes that, in *Romania*, 31 (1902), p. 61, Gaston Paris had already refuted this notion.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 154.

them in nature, that is, 'corporal' and 'spiritual' tales; he quotes the following verses of *Ame en gage* from A by way of evidence:

Cist miracles esperiteus
Si est graindre que corporieus
Miracles fet en esperit
Est si grant chose, au dire voir
Nus ne porroit dire le voir...⁵²

Their form and style, and the author's taste for realism, reminded Morawski of the *fabliau* tradition, even if the author of the 3rd *Vie* protests against that genre; Morawski goes on to note that 'le miracle, très souvent, n'est qu'un "fabliau dévot" qui ne diffère du vrai fabliau que par son intention et l'élément merveilleux.'⁵³ It was, as a consequence, hardly surprising that earlier commentators had classified miracles, *contes dévots* and *fabliaux* together. In fact, the merveilleux element linked miracles closer to *contes bretons* - eg. *Lanval* - than to other genres. Morawski is in no doubt as to the talent of the author of the 1st *Vie* - the collection's success was largely due to this factor - and in tabular form gives a list of later prose versions whose source is the Old French verse tales. Finally, he includes an edition of *Renieur* (*conte* 48) from u.

Morawski's second article in the series published four miracles from the *Rosarius* (B.N. fr. 12483), two of which are similar to tales from the *Vie des Pères* (*Prêtre pécheur* and *Renieur* [*conte* 48]). The third part was published in 1938, and one notes that it is taken as read that the *Vie des Pères* is both well-known and important. He only touches on the collection, though - he supplies variants from *Pain* for the text of an edition - concentrating rather on those miracles found in various Paris MSS (and their sources). His final addition to the series, in 1939, refers to the *Vie des Pères* only as a source for later *dits*, his proposed edition, presumably, long since abandoned. *Romania* did publish another short article on the *Vie des Pères* during the war in which F. Bar comments on MS w, a fragment containing part of *Haleine* and *Fou*.⁵⁴ He examines various motifs found in the fragment and transcribes the texts, comparing them to Méon's edition. Another MS containing the *Vie des Pères*, amongst many other works, was the subject of an article by S. Solente in 1953,⁵⁵ and in 1966 an Italian academic

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 156.

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 158, n. 3.

⁵⁴ F. Bar, 'Un fragment de la *Vie des Pères*', *Romania*, 67 (1942-43), 513-27.

⁵⁵ S. Solente in *Scriptorium*, 7 (1953), 226-34.

published the text of the tales, written in Italian, that can be found in Bologna Bibl. Universitaria 2650. He also gives literal transcriptions or abridged extracts from the corresponding texts - *Fornication imitée, Sarrasine, Goliard, Brûlure, Ave Marie, Feuille de chou, Baril, Abbessse grosse, Noël, Fou, Vision d'enfer, Malaquin* - from A.⁵⁶

After the activity of the period 1876-1910, the above paragraphs, summarizing subsequent interest in the *Vie des Pères*, are notable for their brevity. There was, however, a second 'golden age' of scholarship that, arguably, began in 1967. In the late 1960s Félix Lecoy gave a series of lectures on the *Vie des Pères* at the Collège de France, and in 1967 he published a study of *Ame en gage* which examined the tale's differing Latin versions, its roots and its sources.⁵⁷ His study also includes a long résumé of the tale, but does not concentrate on the *Vie des Pères* as a whole. The same year saw the publication of J.-C. Payen's monumental *Le Motif du repentir dans la littérature française médiévale*, in which some 40 pages are devoted to the *Vie des Pères*.⁵⁸ Payen was obviously enthusiastic about the collection and believed some of the tales to be examples of the most realistic literature of the Middle Ages. He himself certainly understood the distinction between the Old French tales and the Latin versions, although this is made none too clear in the introduction to the section entitled *Les Miracles et les exempla*: 'Au début du 13e siècle se constituent de véritables recueils de ces récits légendaires: traductions plus ou moins fidèles de la *Vitae Patrum* ou des *Verba Seniorum*, puis adaptations enrichies d'éléments nouveaux, qui vont constituer la *Vie des Pères* médiévale, assez différente de sa source lointaine; Miracles de la Vierge, dont les versions sont assez nombreuses; 'fabliaux' édifiants enfin, souvent inspirés d'un conte de la *Vie des Pères*, et je pense ici à l'émouvant *Chevalier au Barisel*.'⁵⁹ Payen was, of course, particularly interested in the contritionist element of medieval literature, and he points out the frequent motif of the *péché monstueux* - eg. murder, infanticide, suicide, incest, despair - to be found in the *Vie des Pères*. The moral of the collection, he argues, is that no sin is too great to be forgiven: 'La *Vie des Pères*, malgré son caractère réaliste et brutale, est une oeuvre optimiste: la miséricorde de Dieu est sans limites, pour peu qu'on y ait recours.'⁶⁰ He doubts the justification of certain miraculous interventions

⁵⁶ A. Del Monte, 'Volgarizzamento senese delle Vie des Pères', pp. 329-383 in *Studi in Onore di Italo Siciliano*, II, Florence: Biblioteca dell' 'Archivum Romanicum', 1966.

⁵⁷ F. Lecoy, 'A propos du conte 56 de la *Vie des Pères*', in *Mélanges [...] offerts à Pierre Le Gentil*, Paris: S.E.D.E.S., 1967.

⁵⁸ J.-C. Payen, *Le Motif du Repentir dans la littérature française médiévale*, Geneva: Droz, 1967.

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 516.

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 522.

by the Virgin, though, - such as that in *Sénéchal* - because of the lack of prior devotion / repentance, and it is for this reason that Payen places the tales with the *exempla*. The *Vie des Pères* offers stark evidence of man's weakness, since the characters trapped into sinning are often nuns and hermits well on their way to earthly perfection: 'nul n'est à l'abri d'une défaillance.' The gravest sins are lust and despair, not infrequently committed out of drunkenness or pride. Payen is at pains to underline the fact that these penitents are most often 'de très grands coupables, qui reviennent de loin et ont besoin d'une grace exceptionnelle.'⁶¹ It is somewhat frustrating that Payen does not elaborate on his theory that the unity of the *Vie des Pères* is 'dans une certaine conception de la vie religieuse,' especially since he points out that some of the tales are conservative rather than realistic.⁶² He accepts that Frère Ernoul was the scribe or author of the collection and supposes him to be a Franciscan who managed to temper the tales' edifying aspect with a 'je ne sais quoi de bon enfant.'⁶³ His conclusions suggest that the *Vie des Pères* represents something new in medieval didactic literature: 'A plusieurs reprises, Ernoul de Lagny (?) va même jusqu'à affirmer que les hommes qui restent dans le siècle ont plus de mérite que les moines. En un sens, c'est là une affirmation révolutionnaire, et nous serions posté à dire qu'un conte comme le *Prévôt d'Aquilée* apparaît dans son contexte comme une oeuvre d'avant garde. [...] Pour une fois, n'est plus affirmée la supériorité de la vie monastique par rapport à la vie séculière; pour une fois est même reconnue la grandeur de l'état laïque.'⁶⁴ Payen finishes the section hinting at a future study of 'ces oeuvres dont on n'épuisera jamais les richesses et les singularités.'⁶⁵ His contribution to the field is substantial; he studied the collection in the light of the contemporary literary tradition and social context - 'literature with a mission' - rather than as single tales of limited interest, or as a single collection of *contes dévots* divorced from the world that had brought it into being.

In 1968, the publication of Göran Börnas' *Trois Contes de la Vie des Pères* represented, to my knowledge, the first new edition of any of the tales since 1935.⁶⁶ In

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 534.

⁶² *ibid.*, p. 553.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 555.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 555-56. These important words, despite Payen's previous statements to the contrary concerning the author of the *Vie des Pères*, could also be seen to reinforce Börnas' future belief that the author was a layman. It is unclear as to whether these remarks suggest that Ernoul de Lagny was the author of the first and second *Vies*.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 557.

⁶⁶ G. Börnas, *Trois Contes de la Vie des Pères*, Lund: Gleerup, 1968. The sleeve even announces a second, similar volume, in the same series, by Anders Zetterberg - *Renieur, Image de Pierre, Noël*: 3

his introduction, Bornäs quickly clarifies the *Vie des Pères / Vitae Patrum* confusion and indicates that the collection is far from being homogenous. After briefly summarising the work of Weber and Schwan, he sets about explaining his own theory that a new hand appears at the beginning of *Image de Notre-Dame*, folio 104 of MS A, coinciding with a new quire, and that exactly three quires later, at the end of *Vilain*, the first hand returns. Therefore, folios 104-27, exactly three quires and 13 tales - numbers 45-63 - are not on the correct place. He argues that these tales should in fact appear at the end of the collection, as in MSS m and u, giving a revised, correct order of 1 - 43, 44, 64 - 74, 45 - 63, of which Bornäs confidently says: 'C'est selon toute vraisemblance, l'ordre original.'⁶⁷ The codicological evidence suggests that the insertion of tales 64 - 74 in their place in A: i/ was not a mistake, ii/ was done at the time of putting the MS together, before (contemporary) pagination, and iii/ was a direct consequence of two copyists working on the same collection at the same time. Bornäs goes on to stress that the author of the 2nd *Vie* - his primary interest, since all three of his tales are drawn from that *corpus* - would have chosen his material himself, that it is unlikely that any Latin book with the tales in this form had ever existed, and that the author repeatedly insists that he has heard a tale recently. Bornäs believed that since tales 51 - 63 were to be correctly positioned at the end of the collection, they were likely to have been written last, a notion that found a parallel in the contemporary and growing popularity of the Cult of the Virgin. Unlike Morawski, Bornäs does not accept that these tales constituted a third *Vie*, but there is a difference in form and style that leaves little room for doubt that the 1st and 2nd *Vies* were composed separately: 'Tout porte à croire que les contes de la deuxième *Vie* n'ont pas été écrits pour faire suite à ceux de la première et qu'ils y ont été rattachés plus tard dans certains manuscrits à cause de l'identité du titre et du sujet.'⁶⁸

Bornäs views with caution Morawski's assertion that *Ernoul de Lagny* and *mestre Hernaut* were one and the same, and also that this was the author of the collection: perhaps he - or they - is mentioned rather as a tribute or dedication? He disagrees with Schwan over the provenance of the collection, finding nothing dialectal in his lengthy study of language forms, and also over the author's status as a priest: by

contes français du 13e siècle tirés de la Vie des Pères (édition) - that was, according to Félix Lecoy, never to be published due to the tragic suicide of the author.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 15.

re-punctuating *A nos gens laies* to *A nos, gens laies, qui l'orrons*, he believes himself to be able to prove the author to be a layman.⁶⁹ For Bornäs, the author was a layman who had strong links with the mendicant orders and who composed the *Vie des Pères* after a cleric had translated the Latin sources into the vernacular. As for the date of the 2nd *Vie*, it can be ascertained from textual evidence: the now familiar reference in *Confession* and in the past tense to Gautier Cornu, who died in 1244, provides a *terminus post quem*, and 1252, the year of Blanche de Castille's death - she is mentioned in the present tense in *Anges* - suggests a *terminus ad quem*. Bornäs gives a résumé of each of the three edited tales, studies their sources and parallel versions, and examines in detail the language of MS C (his chosen base MS) and the MSS tradition (the latter occupying 52 pages of his 87 page introduction). Bornäs' contribution to *Vie des Pères* scholarship is an important one, even if his conclusions are not always reliable and his edition has been shown to suffer from many weaknesses.

L.-F. Flutre and J. Dufournet's reviews of Bornäs appeared in the same year as the edition. Dufournet is brief and non-committal, Flutre very complimentary; the latter also looks forward to a similarly scholarly edition of the complete collection.⁷⁰ The following year saw further reviews by R. Arveiller, P. Zumthor and F. Lecoy:⁷¹ Arveiller's review is positive but brief; Zumthor comments that the *Vie des Pères* shows a 'manque d'homogénéité thématique et stylistique';⁷² not surprisingly, Lecoy shows a real interest in the edition and - somewhat ominously for the author, who had attended Lecoy's lectures on the collection at the Collège de France - suggests plentiful corrections. He at first deplores the lack of interest in the *Vie des Pères* and the fact that the few published *contes* were not always easy to locate, suggesting reasons for this: i/ the work is too long, ii/ that there are so many MSS versions of the tales. As for Bornäs' work, Lecoy accepts the theory of a second hand but not the rejection of the notion of a 3rd *Vie*; for the reviewer, *contes* 52 - 63 constitute a third collection added to the 2nd *Vie* at a later stage. (Lecoy revises this view in his 1987 edition, although he still recognizes that 51 - 63 are a different series). He has no doubts that *Ernoul* and *Hernaut* were *not* the same person, but suspects that, despite Bornäs' reservations, *Ernoul* was

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 18.

⁷⁰ J. Dufournet, Review of Bornäs in *Revue des Langues Romanes*, 78 (1968), 197-99; L.-F. Flutre, Review of Bornäs in *Revue de Linguistique Romane*, 32 (1968), 390-92.

⁷¹ R. Arveiller, Review of Bornäs in *Le Français Moderne*, 37 (1969), 267; P. Zumthor, Review of Bornäs in *Neophilologus*, 53 (1969), 217-18; F. Lecoy, Review of Bornäs in *Studia Neophilologica*, 61 (1969), 413-18.

⁷² Zumthor, *ibid.*, p. 218.

probably the author of the second *Vie*. Bornäs' dates are accepted on one level, although they only have any real meaning if, as Bornäs believes, a 3rd *Vie* does not exist. And there is another problem: 'le conte 67 (*Infanticide*) est manifestement inspiré d'un récit des *Vitae Fratrum* de Gérard Frachet dont Jourdain de Saxe est le héros; or, les *Vitae* sont généralement placées aux environs de 1256, ce qui obligerait à faire descendre la seconde *Vie* au dessous de 1252, et il y a ainsi contradiction avec le repère fourni par la mention de Blanche de Castille dans le conte 61.'⁷³

Lecoy returned to the subject of the *Vie des Pères* in 1970 for the occasion of his public address to the Institut de France.⁷⁴ He explains that the *conte dévot* was less well-known than the *fabliau* because 'il a moins bien résisté que le fabliau à l'usure du temps et aux changements de goût ou de la mode',⁷⁵ and goes on to give a résumé and study of *Sénéchal*. His conclusion are that Christian sincerity and piety pervaded medieval thinking and, as a consequence, pervade these *contes*, and, in order to understand their edifying nature, it is necessary to accept that our ancestors were not the same as us: 'Leur raison acceptait sans peine les combinaisons parfois extravagantes auxquelles se complaisait leur imagination, baroque avant la lettre; leur sensibilité y trouvait de qui s'exercer, et, par voie de conséquence, on peut penser qu'ils étaient capables de tirer les leçons pratiques que les récits proposaient.'⁷⁶

In 1970, G. Royer completed his thesis for Ottawa University - a critical edition of *Pied guéri* and *Ecoliers*⁷⁷ - and also saw three more reviews of Bornäs: P. Wunderli spends some time describing the work, but in fact questions little and adds nothing new to the field;⁷⁸ R. Dubois's praise is mitigated, although he does recognize the importance of the *Vie des Pères* and would like to see more similar editions become available;⁷⁹ P. Gallais, on the other hand, positively relishes the task and seizes the opportunity to bring *Vie des Pères* scholarship up to date, listing earlier editions of *contes* (now numbering 30) and yearning for the complete critical edition announced by Félix

⁷³ Lecoy, Review of Bornäs, p. 416.

⁷⁴ F. Lecoy, 'Une légende Pieuse du Moyen Age', pp. 417-27 in *Mélanges de Philologie et Littérature romanes*, Geneva: Droz, 1988 (orig. Institut de France, séance publique annuelle des cinq académies, Paris, 1970).

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 392.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 422.

⁷⁷ G. Royer, *Edition critique des contes 51 et 52 extraits des Vies des Pères*, Ottawa: Master's thesis, University of Ottawa, 1970. I have not been able to consult this work.

⁷⁸ P. Wunderli, Review of Bornäs in *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 86 (1970), 238-46.

⁷⁹ R. Dubois, Review of Bornäs in *Revue Belge de Philologie et Histoire*, 48 (1970), 583-84.

This review is wrongly attributed to S. Ullmann in *Manuel Bibliographique de la littérature française du moyen âge*, 3rd supplement, F. Viellard & J. Monfrin, Paris: CNRS 1991 (item 4842).

Lecoy.⁸⁰ Gallais appears to delight in the freshness and liveliness of the *Vie des Pères* when compared to the *Miracles* of Gautier de Coinci; these are tales about real life, told in a realistic way. So why has so little attention been given to them? 'Pas d'autre explication qu'une immense incurie, un coupable manque de curiosité, un très condamnable manque de direction et d'organisation de nos études de philologie romane.'⁸¹ It is postulated that the relative care taken by copyists not to introduce major textual variations suggests that they knew that they were dealing with the recognised composition of some particular author. Although influenced by the 1st *Vie*, the author of the 2nd *Vie* was not as talented as his predecessor, and the influence of Gautier is discernible.⁸² Nevertheless, Gallais welcomes Bornäs' edition with open arms, concluding that 'des textes d'un intérêt aussi fondamental devraient être immédiatement accessibles à tous.'⁸³

Reviews of Bornäs's *Trois Contes* continued into 1971, in *Revue Romane* by B. Olsen and in *Romania* by J. Monfrin.⁸⁴ The latter occupies some 13 pages and includes a very detailed study of Bornäs's base MS that finds it largely homogenous. Although unsure about Bornäs's theory of two different hands, Monfrin concurs that there has definitely been a *reprise* and he provides a detailed correction of the text established by Bornäs. Monfrin is none too convinced by Bornäs's authorship hypothesis, but acknowledges that no definitive answer is available. He recognizes the importance of the *Vie des Pères*, announcing Félix Lecoy's forthcoming edition and suggesting that it is merely down to luck - or bad-luck - that the present system of numbering the *contes* was established according to a MS that does not respect the original order. In the same year, several other scholars produced independent studies of individual *contes* drawn from the *Vie des Pères*: E. Herpin's unpublished thesis, *Copeaux, conte 5 de la Vie des Pères* is, according to A. Gier, superior to Weber's version of the text because it was

⁸⁰ P. Gallais, Review of Bornäs in *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 13 (1970), 239-46. In a footnote to Gallais's bibliographical material, he mentions that 'ne sont pas encore publiés les 2 contes (dont 1 inédit) préparés par M. Bo. Rönngardh (en 1958, travail polycopié), ni 3 (dont 2 inédits) édités en 1964 par notre ami A. Zetterberg.' (p. 240). I have not been able to trace the former and have no evidence of a subsequent publication; I have already commented on the fate of the latter.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 240.

⁸² Cf. also Bornäs, pp. 239-40, n. 21.

⁸³ *op. cit.*, p. 242.

⁸⁴ B. Olsen, Review of Bornäs in *Revue Romane*, (1971), 223-28; J. Monfrin, Review of Bornäs in *Romania*, 92 (1971), 267-80.

produced using 19 MSS.⁸⁵ Herpin's introduction is uneven but useful. He makes a common complaint - 'l'étude de ce recoin de notre littérature ancienne ne fait guère que démarrer', pointing to 'tant de siècles d'incompréhension'⁸⁶ - but also indicates, with some accuracy, that '*Copeaux* [the object of his study] plus encore qu'aucun des autres contes du recueil, est un conte dévot.'⁸⁷ Another thesis, that by J. Royer (see above), led to the publication of an edition of *Pied guéri* in a short article in which the author suggests that 'la compilation des *Vies des Pères* ne paraît plus recéler de secret quant à sa composition, sa date de formation (ca.1250) ou même sa langue'; the only problem remaining is that of authorship, and Royer hints that the author may have come from Orléans.⁸⁸ There were also two pieces by Pierre Kunstmann, one of which studies an interpolation in the *Vie des Pères*, the other publishing an edition of *Prêtre pécheur* from A.⁸⁹ Kunstmann is particularly interested in the sources of the miracle rather than in the collection of the *Vie des Pères*, and as such describes the different versions of the story and the transformation of the legend.

1971 was a busy year for *Vie des Pères* scholarship, for it also saw the publication of another major edition, that of Jacques Chaurand. His important work, a critical edition of *Fou*,⁹⁰ is remarkable first for its size: Bornäs's volume had been put together in a rather confused way, is not always easy to follow, and dedicates a perhaps inordinate amount of the introduction to MSS tradition and linguistic considerations; now, Chaurand publishes an edition of 252 pages, of which only 24 are the text itself. Of course, as far as the *Vie des Pères* is concerned, all of these pages were welcome, but, with hindsight, Chaurand's edition - and, for that matter, Bornäs's edition - lacks a little balance and may have put off the more casual reader. Chaurand attests to the popularity of the tales and to the immediacy of the eremitical way of life in the Middle Ages. He refers to the author of the *Vie des Pères* as a Cistercian monk (although elsewhere he appears to put this notion into doubt) and believes that the tales, read by

⁸⁵ E. Herpin, *Copeaux, Conte #5 de la Vie des Pères*, Caen: Thèse de 3e cycle, 1971; A. Gier, 'Quel est l'apport des *Vies des Pères* à la connaissance du lexique de l'ancien français?', *Medioevo Romano*, 4 (1977), 301-11, pp. 302 ff.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, p. 1.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 2.

⁸⁸ J. Royer, 'Un miracle de la Vierge - extrait de la *Vie des Pères*', *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 41 (1971), 495-507.

⁸⁹ P. Kunstmann, '*La Bourgeoise de la Chanoine*, conte inédit extrait de l'interpolation de la *Vie des Pères*', *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 41 (1971), 237-44; Id., '*La Légende de St Thomas et du prêtre qui ne connaissait qu'une messe*', *Romania*, 92 (1971), 97-117.

⁹⁰ J. Chaurand, *Fou - Dixième conte de la Vie des Pères*, Geneva: Droz, 1971.

secular clergy and laymen, surely enjoyed such great success because of their varied and realistic nature. He is, naturally enough, especially keen to examine the themes and sources of *Fou* and, as a consequence, the first *Vie*, briefly commenting that the second and third *Vies* lack the unity of the first. Parallel versions of *Fou* are studied in some detail, although the question of cross-contamination remains unresolved. (Chaurand feels sure that the author of *Fou* and Gautier de Coinci worked independently but from a similar or identical source.) A study of the tale's real names and a detailed examination of the author's language are used to support Chaurand's dating of the tale - around 1215 - and he also tries to categorize the *conte*, insisting that although heavily influenced by sermons, the genre is different to the *exempla*. He goes on to state that 'prédication et littérature édifiante sont à l'époque si voisines qu'un mélange des rôles et des styles n'entraîne aucune disparate, et finit par être enrichissant pour le récit'.⁹¹ As for MSS affiliation, he comes to similar conclusions to those of Schwan, although his own classification is based rather on common errors.

Despite its occasional self-contradiction and general concentration on singular aspects of one *conte*, Chaurand's *Fou* is an important contribution to the field and was met with overall approval by its critics, although its first review, by P. Gallais - still in 1971 - was less than kind.⁹² Gallais criticizes the balance of the volume and would, presumably, have preferred to have more text and less commentary, 'mais telle est "la règle du jeu"', puisque ce travail a servi à M. Chaurand de thèse complémentaire de doctorat ès lettres.⁹³ Gallais also points out that the work had been completed in 1961, hence requiring 10 years to reach the publication stage, and that there are now 31 published tales, of which only 4 are easily accessible to the reader of 1971. Gallais's other criticisms are directed towards Chaurand's assertion, presented with insufficient proof, that the author was a Cistercian monk, and the fact that Chaurand has not given the author of the *Vie des Pères* sufficient credit when he accepts that the collection postdates the Latin version of *Fou* in the Vendôme MS, adding that 'si il y a un créateur dans l'affaire, c'est le conteur de la *Vie des Pères*'.⁹⁴ But, Gallais's tone does not hide his obvious pleasure that the *Vie des Pères* is, albeit at a snail's pace, becoming more widely known.

⁹¹ *ibid.*, p. 84.

⁹² P. Gallais, Review of Chaurand in *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 14 (1971), 363-66.

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 363.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 366.

In 1972 there appeared three further reviews of Chaurand: K. Baldinger is brief and descriptive, and although C. Lévy is positive if a little distant, D. Kelly notes plenty of errors and confusion in the volume and describes it as ‘an all too disappointing editorial performance’, although his interest lies entirely in the text of the *conte*, rather than in the accompanying explanatory material.⁹⁵ A year later, Jacques Monfrin's short review was neutral, likewise that of A. Menichetti.⁹⁶ As for C. Storey in *Medium Aevum*, he misleadingly refers to the *Vitae Patrum* at the beginning of his review and never really clears up the confusion he has caused.⁹⁷ He nonetheless signals the unfortunate lack of interest in the *Vie des Pères*, which he takes to be a collection of 42 *contes*. In 1974, Félix Lecoy considered Chaurand's edition to be ‘méritoire’, if in balance; William Rothwell recognized an ‘important contribution to our knowledge of that edifying literature so characteristic of the Middle Ages and abundantly represented in surviving manuscripts’;⁹⁸ and J.-C. Payen looked forward to Lecoy's forthcoming edition of the collection, whilst also commenting that ‘la *Vie des Pères* est un ensemble capital, non seulement pour l'histoire des mentalités, mais aussi pour l'étude des motifs folkloriques. J'ajoute que la valeur littéraire de ces contes n'est pas négligeable.’⁹⁹ Commentators appeared to be united in recognizing the value of the *Vie des Pères* and in their excitement at the prospect of a full critical edition of the text. Indeed, distinguished scholars such as Lecoy and Payen had already made considerable contributions to the work of others in the field - Bornäs, Chaurand, Herpin - as research supervisors, all of which begs the question: why did the ‘2nd golden age’ of *Vie des Pères* scholarship end here?

Not that there were no more contributions to *Vie des Pères* scholarship after 1974; some works, as we shall see, were most significant. An important article, published by Albert Gier in 1977, examines the lexical interest of the collection, and also gives a bibliographical record of the 36 *contes* that the author has discovered in print since the beginning of the nineteenth century; Gier appears resigned, however, to the fact that publication of Lecoy's edition was not imminent.¹⁰⁰ It would appear that

⁹⁵ K. Baldinger, Review of Chaurand in *Zeitschrift für Romanische Philologie*, 88 (1972), 684-5; C. Lévy, Review of Chaurand in *Studi Francesi*, 48 (1972), 434-35; D. Kelly, Review of Chaurand in *Speculum*, 48 (1972), 737-38.

⁹⁶ J. Monfrin, Review of Chaurand in *Le Français Moderne*, (1973), 73-74; A. Menichetti, Review of Chaurand in *Studi Medievali*, 14 (1973), 518.

⁹⁷ C. Storey, Review of Chaurand in *Medium Aevum*, 42 (1973), 66-68.

⁹⁸ W. Rothwell, Review of Chaurand in *French Studies*, 28 (1974), 309-10.

⁹⁹ J.-C. Payen, Review of Chaurand in *Le Moyen Age*, 80 (1974), 552-53, p. 553.

¹⁰⁰ A. Gier, art. cit.

numerous mistakes in the transcription of the *contes* had either already been made or were waiting to be made, although, perhaps surprisingly, 'le texte de Méon mérite, *grosso modo*, notre confiance.'¹⁰¹ Gier also notes that Tobler-Lommatsch and Godefroy took into account the editions of Méon, LeCoultré, Weber and Wallensköld, on occasion making reference to them; Tobler-Lommatsch, naturally, is the more reliable. Gier attaches a short list of words with new glosses and suggests certain changes to entries in Tobler-Lommatsch and Godefroy. Finally, he suggests the potential of a study of the proverbial sayings found in the *Vie des Pères*, since the collection is 'une vraie mine, à peine exploitée jusqu'ici, de proverbes et dictons', citing the example of *la quinte roue du chariot*, found in *Brûlure*, that had never previously been found in MSS dating before the fifteenth Century.¹⁰² Chaurand was still receiving reviews as late as 1978, R. Guiette - still! - looking forward to a full edition of the collection.¹⁰³ Two years later, F. Romanelli studied the theme of repentance in the *Chevalier au Barisel*, making passing allusion to *Baril*.¹⁰⁴ There was also the completion of another unpublished thesis, *L'Ermite dans les contes de la Vie des Pères au XIIIe siècle et dans la tradition islamo-hispanique médiévale* by S. Cornut,¹⁰⁵ and in 1983 that of D. Bois, which consists of an edition of five contes.¹⁰⁶ C. Michi published her edition of *Feuille de chou* (from *d*) in 1983; this is preceded by a brief and perfunctory introduction in which she insists that the *Vie des Pères* is a collection of only 42 *contes*.¹⁰⁷ In the same year, G.A. Ciotti spoke at some length of two fragments that contained the *Vie des Pères*, and a year later Gernot Gabel confirmed that the only two theses on the *Vie des Pères* between 1885-1975 were those of Herpin and Chaurand.¹⁰⁸

A major new development in the field of *Vie des Pères* scholarship was the unpublished 1986 Hull M.Phil Thesis by Paul Spencer-Ellis in which the author is

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 305.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 311.

¹⁰³ R. Guiette, Review of Chaurand in *Revue Belge de Philologie et Histoire*, 56 (1978), 214-15.

¹⁰⁴ F. Romanelli, 'Le Chavalier au Barisel - L'acculturazione dei cavalieri tra lo spazio dell' *aventure* e il tempo della confessione', *Medioevo Romano*, 11 (1980), 27-54.

¹⁰⁵ S. Cornut, *L'Ermite dans les contes de la Vie des Pères au XIIIe siècle dans la tradition islamo-hispanique médiévale (contes et récits)*, Avignon: Thèse de l'Université d'Avignon, 1980. I have not been able to consult this work, but am confidently assured that it has little direct relevance to the present study.

¹⁰⁶ D. Bois (née Bruxelles), *Cinq Miracles de la Vierge tités de la Deuxième Vie des Pères*, Paris: Thèse de 3ème cycle, Paris IV, 1983.

¹⁰⁷ C. Michi, 'Edition du conte 38 de la *Vie des Pères*: *De la nonain qui menja la fleur du chol...*', *Médiévales*, 3 (1983) 111-135.

¹⁰⁸ G.A. Ciotti, 'Due frammenti delle *Vie des Pères*', *Quaderni di Filologia Romanza*, 5 (1983), 5-28. G. Gabel, *Répertoire Bibliographique des thèses françaises 1885-1975 concernant la littérature française des origines à nos jours*, Köln, 1984.

particularly interested in manuscript affiliation, establishing a new and definitive series of *sigla* and defining an ‘original’ *conte* order.¹⁰⁹ The author argues that, although no precise MSS branch diagrams can be based upon the findings, a new, logical and reliable *conte* order can be established. Spencer-Ellis uses the order of *contes* in the first *Vie* in various MSS to formulate his compelling hypothesis: 12 MSS begin 1, 24, 25 and 28 MSS offer 23, 27, but only 20 (of 40) contained *conte* 29. This leads the author to consider A, the most widely known manuscript and the only one to contain all 74 tales of the *Vie des Pères*, as an oddity rather than the MS that contains the tales in their original order. Taking into account *conte* length, common interpolations and Chaurand's work, he renumbers the tales of the first *Vie* according to H, I and cc, arguing that the new order is that contained in the highest number of MSS and is logically, if not the original order, at least the most widely known order. *Conte* 29 - *Gueule du diable* - according to considerations of length and subject matter and its absence in the above MSS, does not belong to the first *Vie*, whose ‘corrected’ order should read: 1-23, 28, 29, 39, 24-27, 30-38, 40-42 (see below). He also believes that ‘no manuscript with the correct order of *contes* can have been copied from a manuscript which had a less perfect *conte* order,’ before moving on to study the second and third *Vies* in the same way.¹¹⁰ The structure of the second *Vie* is 18 alternate miracles and *exempla* (with one out of place parable), the incipit preceding *conte* 43 - *Sel* - being a suitable title for the correctly re-ordered collection. (Renumbered after m, r and u: 43, 44, 64 - 74, 45, 47 - 50 not included = 46). MSS m and u also provide the correct order for the third *Vie*, ie. *contes* 53 - 61, with 51, 52, 62 and 63 only questionably added to the series. The third *Vie* is, therefore, a series of only 9 miracles (and possibly interpolation A) that hardly merits the name *Vie des Pères*. Spencer-Ellis's re-organised *Vies* read as follows:

First *Vie*

- i. Fornication imitée (1)
- ii. Juitel (2)
- iii. Sarrasine (3)
- iv. Renieur (4)
- v. Copeaux (5)
- vi. Thaïs (6)
- vii. Miserere (7)

¹⁰⁹ P.D. Spencer-Ellis, *La Vie des Pères: A Reappraisal of Manuscript Branches and their contents*, Hull: M.Phil thesis, Hull University, 1986.

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 74.

- viii. Jardinier (8)
- ix. Haleine (9)
- x. Fou (10)
- xi. Impératrice (11)
- xii. Meurtrier (12)
- xiii. Sacristine (13)
- xiv. Ave Maria (14)
- xv. Queue (15)
- xvi. Crapaud (16)
- xvii. Image de pierre (17)
- xviii. Baril (18)
- xix. Abesse grosse (19)
- xx. Noël (20)
- xxi. Vision d'enfer (21)
- xxii. Malaquin (22)
- xxiii. Vision de Diables (23)
- xxiv. Païen (27)
- xxv. Goliard (28)
- xxvi. Colombe (30)
- xxvii. Sénéchal (31)
- xxviii. Ermite accusé (24)
- xxix. Brûlure (25)
- xxx. Prévot d'Aquilée (32)
- xxxi. S. Paulin (33)
- xxxii. Nièce (34)
- xxxiii. Ivresse (35)
- xxxiv. Rachat (36)
- xxxv. Usurier (37)
- xxxvi. Feuille de chou (38)
- xxxvii. Demi-ami (39)
- xxxviii. Inceste (40)
- xxxix. Crucifix (26)
- xl. Image du Diable (41)
- xli. Merlot (42)

not included : Gueule du diable (29),

Second Vie

- I. Sel (43)
- II. Enfant jureur (44)
- III. Coq (64)
- IV. Mère (65)
- V. Patience (66)
- VI. Infanticide (67)
- VII. Piège du diable (68)
- VIII. Anges (69)
- IX. Sac (70)
- X. Image du diable (71)
- XI. Ange et ermite (72)

- XII. Pain (73)
- XIII. Sermon (74)
- XIV. Image de N-D (45)
- XV. Crâne (47)
- XVI. Renieur (48)
- XVII. Deux morts (49)
- XVIII. Confession (50)

not included - Frères (46),

Third *Vie*

- I. Enfant pieux (53)
- II. Brandons (54)
- III. Prêtre pécheur (55)
- IV. Ame en gage (56)
- V. Ave Maria (57)
- VI. Fenêtre (58)
- VII. Femme aveugle (59)
- VIII. Nom de Marie (60)
- IX. Enfant sauvé (61)
- ? Pied guéri (51)
- ? Ecoliers (52)
- ? Purgatoire (62)
- ? Vilain (63)

This renumbering is convincing but confusing, and it still remains easier and more accurate to refer to the tales by Paris's perfectly suitable short titles rather than a new (or old) number. Unlike Spencer-Ellis, I believe these one or two word titles to be quite accurate and adequate and certainly the most useful way of identifying the numerous tales of the text. Furthermore, accurate or not, these are the titles that have generally (but not consistently) been adopted by the world of scholarship and there is a compelling argument that they should be maintained simply to avoid confusion. As Spencer-Ellis himself pointed out, 'the adoption of a new order of contes, while affording the possibility of an assessment of the real first *Vie des Pères*, has the disadvantage of instantly rendering all previous critical work incompatible with this study'.¹¹¹

Pages 40-134 of the thesis offer detailed and persuasive proof for the above conclusions which, if accepted by the world of scholarship, are destined to change the course of *Vie des Pères* studies. Spencer-Ellis also examined the three *Vies* according to

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 47.

four categories: connections with religious orders; stated origins; moral content and intent; and topography and proper nouns. This part of the thesis, less exhaustive than that outlined above, still offers some valuable information. For example, in the first *Vie* nuns and monks are major or minor figures in 29 tales, hence justifying the title and giving an indication of the concerns of the author/compiler; elsewhere, (eg. *Thaïs*) membership of religious orders is indicated and details of initiation to be found. The evidence leads Spencer-Ellis to conclude that the author of the 1st *Vie*, and of a long *Prière à la Vierge* common to his base MSS (and transcribed on pp. 205 - 13 from f) probably embraced the Cistercians' 'disdain for the degenerate Benedictines[...] It is [...] very probable that the author was actually a Cistercian monk.'¹¹² In the second *Vie*, every *conte*, except *Infanticide*, contains a holy man, whilst there is criticism of regular clergy (*Ange et ermite*, *Pain*) and praise for the preaching orders. The moral content is perhaps of a Dominican flavour, offering populist rather than academic instruction. The third *Vie* has a general prologue and epilogue but lacks any evident didactic content. Spencer-Ellis's admirable study of the *Vie des Pères* ends on a tone not unfamiliar to so many previous similar works: 'One of the disadvantages of what was considered the *Vie des Pères* was its considerable length and apparent lack of coherent form. The redefinition of the three collections, only one of which really meriting that old title, should make them more accessible and so open to further and more advanced research than mine in the future.'¹¹³ It remains to be seen whether Spencer-Ellis' hopes will be fulfilled quicker than those of his illustrious predecessors.

1987 was an important year for the *Vie des Pères*, since the long-awaited and excellent edition of the collection (from f) by Félix Lecoy was finally published by the SATF, albeit only the first volume (tales 1 - 20, 24).¹¹⁴ The *conte* order again poses problems in the introduction, and although Lecoy agrees with Bornäs's observations, he insists that the displacing of the quires was not accidental and, as a consequence, the order of A is quite intentional. He goes on to comment that 'on a, en effet, l'impression qu'après le succès de la première *Vie* et, peut-être, à un degré un peu moindre, de la deuxième, on a tenté une troisième fois de prolonger ce succès, mais ce coup-ci sans grande réussite. A marque sans doute le point final de ces développements.'¹¹⁵ Lecoy

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 150.

¹¹³ *ibid.*, p. 307.

¹¹⁴ F. Lecoy, ed., *La Vie des Pères*, Paris: S.A.T.F., I, 1987, II, 1993.

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. xiv.

suggests dates of around 1230 for the first *Vie* and 1241 for the second, rejects the hypothesis of a third *Vie*, presumes the authors to be from the Paris region whilst admitting that there is very little evidence, and points to ‘un ton de sermonnaire très prononcé.’¹¹⁶ His second volume was published in 1993 and includes the rest of the tales from the first *Vie* - *Gueule du diable*, absent in f, is published from B - the *Prière à la Vierge*, an extensive glossary and a not terribly useful *Table de noms propres*. The third volume is still waiting to go to print but will, once published, remove the major obstacle to further interest in the *Vie des Pères*, namely the lack of a complete critical edition.

In 1988, M. Szkilnik considered the possible links between the prose *Vie des Pères* and romance,¹¹⁷ and in 1991 P. Kuntsmann published an edition of 52 miracles from the *Rosarius*, four of which have analagous versions in the *Vie des Pères*.¹¹⁸ Paul Bretel, in 1993, examined *Fou* and *Image de pierre* in an article concerned with *péchés réservés*, believing these tales to illustrate ‘en quelque sorte [...] une limite de l'institution [de la papauté] qui se révèle impuissante à résoudre des cas dont le caractère marginal accuse encore la gravité.’¹¹⁹ This gives rise to a need for hermits of exceptional piety and virtue who can intercede for certain sinners, even if it means a deviation from Canon Law. Pamela Gehrke published a potentially fascinating thesis that, unfortunately, promises more than it delivers, although her methods are interesting. She proposes that MSS contents were decided according to reader needs, making the audience also the function. The scribe was the link between two parallel traditions - vernacular verse texts transmitted and composed in writing (although intended for oral recitation), and traditional oral poetry - and the tales contained in the *Vie des Pères* were relevant to both. Gehrke examines two MSS containing the *Vie des Pères* - r and u - and establishes that u at least was a constructed document in three sections, the second of which being the second and third *Vies*. (The first was a Life of St Francis, the third a collection of texts not instantly coherent.) ‘Rather than collecting specific texts or types of texts, it appears that the scribe sought material to serve a particular function and

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, p. xxiii.

¹¹⁷ M. Szkilnik, ‘Vie des Pères et romans en prose, une filiation?’, pp. 214-24 in *La Littérature d'inspiration religieuse. Actes du colloque d'Amiens de janvier 1987*, ed. D. Buschinger, Göttingen: Kummerle-Verlag, 1988.

¹¹⁸ P. Kuntsmann, *Miracles de Notre-Dame tirés du Rosarius (BN f.fr 12483)*, Ottawa: Presses Universitaires, 1991.

¹¹⁹ P. Bretel, ‘Des "Péchés Réservés": Droit canonique et pratique littéraire’, pp. 269-79 in *Et c'est la fin pour quoy sommes ensemble - Hommage à J. Dufournet*, I, Paris: Champion, 1993, p. 277.

included whatever he found suitable to that function, regardless of genre.’¹²⁰ This obviously poses many more questions than those already tackled by previous scholars of the *Vie des Pères*, but it certainly adds a new dimension to the field, even suggesting a new definition of the rapport between the three *Vies*. Gehrke briefly examines the contents of individual *contes*, studies their authorship and gives a fairly comprehensive list of editions, but her major contribution to *Vie des Pères* scholarship is rather the opening out of interest to other neighbouring fields of research.

The only review of Lecoy’s edition of which I am aware is that by Sven Sandqvist, appearing in 1995.¹²¹ It notes that the first *Vie* was composed around 1230 but, citing vv. 18899-904, states that the author does not exclude a continuation of his work since there remains much material of great value. Sandqvist is confident that the author ‘vivait dans une ambiance cistercienne’ but, with regard to the geographic provenance of the text, ‘on ne peut pas en effet se prononcer avec certitude sur le pays de l’auteur qu’après une minutieuse étude de la langue’, although he goes on to postulate that ‘après avoir fait un examen rapide des rimes du poème, je serais plutôt tenté de le localiser vers l’Ouest de la France.’¹²² The reviewer repeats Félix Lecoy’s view that the only real shortcoming of his base manuscript (f) is that it lacks *Gueule du diable* (a lacuna that might not in fact be a defect at all if Spencer-Ellis’s work is to be accepted) but regrets that its language ‘ait tant de graphies particulières’.¹²³ Some of the more common forms and variations are listed on p. 628 along with a useful summary: ‘On peut l’exemplifier encore par le produit de melius qui apparaît au moins dans neuf variantes: *muex* 1338, *muez* 2405, *miex* 6105, *mex* 10885, *melx* 11099, *mielx* 11560, *mielz* 11728, *miels* 14057, *muelz* 15769.’¹²⁴ Svendqvist suggests that many rejected readings from the edition’s base manuscript are in fact perfectly acceptable, adding that ‘il est dommage que l’éditeur n’ait pas justifié ses choix dans les notes.’¹²⁵ There is some criticism of some of Lecoy’s readings, of his punctuation and of the *toilette du texte*, much of which is justified and, with an even closer reading of the text, the reviewer might have been harsher in his appraisal of the published edition’s precision.¹²⁶

¹²⁰ P. Gehrke, *Saints and Scribes: Medieval Hagiography in its Manuscript Context*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, p. 162.

¹²¹ *Revue de Linguistique Romane*, 59 (1995), 627-30. I am indebted to Masami Okubo for referring me to this review.

¹²² *ibid.*, pp. 627, 628.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 628.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 629.

¹²⁶ There are, for example, a number of lines that are misnumbered and defective running heads.

Svendqvist would have liked to have seen Lecoy include explanatory notes and a study of the text's numerous proverbs but can, of course, be excused his apparent unawareness of the considerable length of time that it took for even the first volume of the edition to be published. His review is fairly short but very careful, obviously with a linguistic agenda but also sensitive to the needs of the reader of the text. He ends by noting that 'il est très satisfaisant de pouvoir constater que, grâce à l'admirable travail du grand maître de notre discipline, nous disposons maintenant d'une excellente édition de cette oeuvre'.¹²⁷

A most recent work by Paul Bretel, studying monks and hermits in medieval French literature, places the *Vie des Pères* - in particular (and for obvious reasons) the first *Vie* - at the centre of its literary *corpus*, alongside romance and the epic.¹²⁸ The 810 pages of this weighty book come from the fact that it is a published thesis, and, true to the nature of that academic exercise, it remains firmly fixed on its scholarly objective. It does not so much discuss the genesis, sources, contexts and influences of the *Vie des Pères* (and of its other literary texts) but rather what they can show about the precise object of scholarly attention. This does not alter the fact that Bretel's work is an important one and one that is liberally cited throughout the present study.

¹²⁷ op. cit.

¹²⁸ P. Bretel, *Les Ermites et les moines dans la littérature française du Moyen Age (1150-1250)*, Paris: Champion, 1995. A *Présentation de thèse* - more substantial than the present survey - can be read in *Perspectives Médiévales*, 20 (1994), 80-82. Note that even a work such as Bretel's, that uses the *Vie des Pères* as one of the central texts of the *exposé*, refers readers to very few secondary studies.

Conclusion to Chapter II

This brief but comprehensive examination of *Vie des Pères* scholarship illustrates that all but a few scholars in the field of Medieval French literature have, for some reason, and despite the interest of some extremely eminent names, neglected or remained unaware of the collection as a whole. We still know very little more than Schwan did over a century ago, although the prospect of a complete edition is no longer fantasy, and those interested parties patient enough to wait for the SATF to publish the remaining volume of Félix Lecoy's invaluable work will, finally, be able to confer with colleagues in neighbouring fields of scholarship on more of an equal footing. Until then, I can signal that there are now, to my knowledge, 51 tales - of 74 - in modern edition. The *Vie des Pères* has already proved to be of an interest beyond the purely literary: in this chapter there are also references to historians, lexicographers, codicologists, linguists and theologians. But the very fact that a survey of this type is possible - imagine the bulk of a similar survey of Miracle or *fabliau* scholarship - is a frustrating and exciting indication that the *Vie des Pères* has yet to give us its best.

III

Background Survey

[Dans les contes pieux les motifs du repentir, de la confession et de la penitence sont traités] d'une relative rigueur théologique, mais les modalités assez diverses selon lesquelles ils se présentent trahissent le caractère un peu disparate de ces récits dont les origines remontent à des époques différentes. Quant à la forme, il ne fait pas de doute que c'est à la littérature profane qu'ils doivent le style dans lequel ils sont développés.¹

III.i

The Religious Climate

The moment in history in which the first *Vie* was composed is today considered to be a key stage in the history of the western Church. In more precise terms, it was a period of crisis between 'popular religion and the institutional church'.² Innocent III, who began his pontificate in 1198, had recognized that the Church of Rome was facing problems of very serious import: although the more immediate issues were the crusades and the Imperial succession, the growing number of heresies and unorthodox movements represented, it has been argued, a fundamental challenge to Christian doctrine and, potentially, to its supremacy: 'There were signs abroad that many [people] were beginning not just to question the political authority of the Roman Church but were turning away from it in spirit. Criticism of the lax morals and avarice of the clergy was general, and in many parts heretical sects had appeared.'³ More worrying still was the inability of the local ecclesiastical authorities to deal with this unrest. Historians do not always agree that the threat of heresy was a danger to the established Church itself,⁴ but

¹ Payen, p. 557.

² D.L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1985, p. 25.

³ M. Keen, *The Pelican History of Medieval Europe*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968 (repr. 1984), p. 136.

⁴ P. Zumthor, for example, has argued that the only heretical sect that represented any real danger were the Cathars, a group that, like many others, drew popular support for their 'pureté évangélique, [leur] spontanéité dans l'esprit, de liberté et de foi pure', *Histoire de la littérature française médiévale*, p. 99. Zumthor's is a somewhat rose-tinted image that nonetheless serves to illustrate that, more often than not,

all paint a picture of a crisis (or at least of an imminent crisis) important enough to warrant the formation of the Inquisition and a crusade within Christendom itself. Heresy grew partly out of the return from the Second Crusade of dissatisfied groups with an excess of religious fervour, partly out of widespread anti-clericalism caused itself by the feeling that the clergy might not be meeting the needs of the community. There were moves to increase the authority of the clergy, which by definition meant a reduction in the rôle of the layman; and yet, despite concerted and widespread unrest, this was also a time of great acts of faith: the flourishing of the Gothic cathedrals, the formation of the preaching orders, an increased emphasis on penance and confession and, as something of a consequence of all of these, crusade and pilgrimage.⁵ In order to understand the inspiration behind and the reception of works such as the first *Vie*, it is helpful to examine some of these issues a little more closely.

There was a growing complexity to society in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that, on the face of it, seems to present a picture of contradictions. The received view that 'the clergy were educated, the rest were not' and that absolute belief and religious simplicity are the hallmarks of a naïvely backward society is still prevalent; it is a view, however, that a growing number of scholars are proving to be erroneous. Of course, 'popular religion' was - and to some extent still is - an amalgam of orthodox dogma, magic and superstition and, as J. Sayers points out, 'the Church had struggled against the continuation of certain pagan practices. But it had by no means won on every point'.⁶ There are numerous examples of a conscious adoption of pagan myths and thinking, the most commonly cited being the Breton menhirs re-sculpted into crosses, the 'fairy-like' qualities of the Virgin and Aquinas's christianization of Aristotle, but, as can be seen from a close examination of the tales of the first *Vie*, other instances abound. Today we tend to equate such beliefs as 'simple' and ally them to the severe, difficult conditions of life in the Middle Ages. However it would be an error to accept that 'medieval man', whoever that might be, possessed an unquestioning mind that was

the lines between orthodoxy and heresy were not clearly defined. However, given the references to heresy in the first *Vie*, it is clear that the author took this to be a serious problem.

⁵ The crusades themselves led to a new abundance of relics in the West and opened up new pilgrim routes.

⁶ J. Sayers, *Innocent III*, London and New York: Longman, 1994, p. 127.

ever-open to the dogma of the Church, even though he lived in what is commonly described as an 'unscientific' age. Neither was 'medieval man' a necessarily rustic creature, for increasing commercial activity had led to a move towards urbanization that was well advanced by the turn of the thirteenth century; this, again, is in evidence in the settings and choices of characters, and their concerns and vices, in the tales of the first *Vie*. As a consequence, literacy spread on both a 'need-to know' level (lawyers, commercial classes) and, as lay prosperity developed, on a cultural level. As D'Avray has indicated, there appeared a class of literate laymen who expected a high standard of pastoral care - including preaching - from the supposedly educated clergy.⁷

Urbanization, increasing education and literacy, the influence of the liturgy on literature and the closing of the gap between text and reader,⁸ closer links with the worlds of the Eastern Church and of the Saracen, a stronger acceptance of the need for penance and confession from a rediscovery of devotion to Christ as a man, daily reminders of man's weak grip on life,⁹ a Church organized on a secular basis and permeating every aspect of life and an immediacy of 'pagan' myths and legends are just some of the aspects that render this period so very complex for the modern commentator.

Pope Innocent III is generally seen to be one of the greatest leaders of the Middle Ages, largely because he not only recognized that problems existed but assessed their potential threat to the Church and acted accordingly. D'Avray sees in him a man of political genius, willing to take risks in order to keep the faithful from heresy, and with a real desire to spread the Word, pointing to his treatment of the *Humiliati* as an example not only of political expediency but also of Christian piety.¹⁰ The Fourth Lateran Council, held in 1215, symbolizes Innocent's firm authority in ecclesiastical and secular affairs. The council was the product of the pope's great reforming zeal and his desire to combat Islam, heresy and the increasing decadence and worldliness of both

⁷ op. cit., p. 29.

⁸ Payen (p. 98) recalls the refrain of the foolish virgins in the *Sponsus: Dolentes, Chaitivas, trop i avem dormiz* and notes this is a standard formula for the beginning of repentance laments, eg. : *Dolenz! Chaitis! Co est granz torz que jo sui vis* (*Roman de Thèbes* ed. R. Constans, Paris: SATF, 1890, II, p. 489). This influence is evident in some of the laments in the first *Vie*.

⁹ Apart from the common presence of death, one thinks here of the Moslem and Christian authorities who pointed to the dawn of a new era - eg. Joachim of Flora and 'The Kingdom of the Holy Ghost' - that was to begin in 1260.

¹⁰ op. cit., p. 26.

society and the clergy. Realising that ‘popular devotion tended to be non-conformist’,¹¹ he planned for greater centralization, even if local differences in religious practices could never be truly eradicated. Bishops, the mainstay of the Christian establishment and upon whom widespread knowledge of orthodoxy was largely dependent, could only be confirmed by the pope himself. They were to choose suitable men to assist them with preaching in their dioceses,¹² and it was recognized that there were too few popular sermons. Innocent insisted on organized and better education for the clergy and gave priests clearer and greater responsibilities for the salvation of the faithful: preaching was the obvious way to prepare this. The council re-addressed the issues of popular devotion and personal salvation, aware that ‘there was a race between the institutional church and its rivals to direct the unstable piety of the towns’.¹³ Of particular relevance to the present study is its re-affirmation of penance as a pre-requisite for salvation and second only in importance as a sacrament to Baptism. Inextricably linked to preaching, penance was already central to popular devotion. J. Longère suggests that the council was aware of this since it conferred ‘[une] importance mieux perçue de la fonction enseignante dans l'Eglise; réorganisation et encadrement de l'activité apostolique pour une plus grande efficacité; souci de vérifier la compétence, la valeur morale et l'orthodoxie des prédicateurs’.¹⁴ Indeed, Lateran IV drew up ‘a new constitution of the faith’,¹⁵ *De fide catholica*, which stressed the sacraments and decreed that each diocese should establish a programme for preaching and that confession for the faithful - all men over 15 and all women over 12 - be obligatory at least once a year, this to their own priests.

The New Testament sets up the basis for Christian repentance and establishes that a sin can be forgiven. It introduces the notion that tears, signifying remorse, are a necessary step to paying off the individual's debt to God and, therefore, to salvation.

According to the *Liber Exemplorum ad usum Praedicatorum saeculo XIII compositus*

¹¹ Sayers, op. cit., p. 129.

¹² ‘In stating that bishops needed help with preaching, Lateran IV was restating an idea that had been around for a very long time,’ D’Avray, op. cit., p. 17. Cf. below, Chapter III.ii.

¹³ D’Avray, ibid., p. 26.

¹⁴ J. Longère, ‘Le pouvoir de prêcher et le contenu de la prédication’, pp. 165-77 in *Prédication et propagande au Moyen Age*, ed. G. Makidisi, D. Sourdél & J. Sourdél-Thomine, Paris: P.U.F., 1983, p. 170.

¹⁵ B.J. Levy, *Nine Verse Sermons by Nicholas Bozon*, Oxford: Medium Aevum Monographs, 1981, p. 8.

preachers should seek healthy weeping as a sign of fear of the punishments that await those who stray from the right path.¹⁶ In the Middle Ages the Apocrypha were still widely read, and they contained some of the most vivid scenes of the Harrowing of Hell. That the period is marked by an eschatological fixation is, therefore, hardly surprising, and this is visible in iconographical patterns of the Last Judgement, in literature and sermons. Payen indicates that St Benedict had recommended in his Rule 'une pratique systématique de l'oraison larmoyante',¹⁷ and by the eleventh century confession had become a public, if often aristocratic, affair. Without wanting to fall into the trap of over-simplification, one notes also the motives of those crusaders - usually of the lower-classes, who hardly saw the crusades as simple *évasion* - whose aim was the remission of their sins as promised by the Church. To undertake such a perilous task certainly required strong and clear convictions: a sinner receiving the order to join the crusades as penance required the conviction of faith to see it through. E. Delaruelle reminds us that there was little difference between a pilgrim, crusader and penitent: 'Un pèlerin est un pénitent qui s'est mis en route pour s'acquitter de sa pénitence; un croisé est un pénitent pour lequel le risque de la mort à la guerre sainte s'ajoute à ceux du pèlerinage; un ermite est un pèlerin qui s'est plus ou moins fixé. Mais il s'agit toujours de la même institution de pénitence.'¹⁸ The crusades also provide reliable evidence for the modern historian of the central role played by penance and confession in the medieval psyche; for example, it is documented that before a battle there was a general confession and mortification of the crusaders. This was no new practice, though, since absolution had been sought by the warriors of the *Chanson de Roland*, and given by Turpin, before engaging the heathen:

¹⁶ ed. A.G. Little, Aberdeen: British Society of Franciscan Studies, 1918, pp. 63-4, 116.

¹⁷ Payen, p. 38.

¹⁸ E. Delaruelle, in *L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI et XII* (Atti della Settimana di Studio, Mendola, 1962), Milan: Societa Editrice Vita e Pensiero, 1965, p. 225. This important point reminds the modern reader of the 'true life' parallel to the motif of the quest in literature. There are frequent passages of doubting, then the doubt is overcome as the penitent/pilgrim/crusader begins to link to the notions of the contract/honour/etc. Repentance is the one quest/contract that must not be broken since the quest fulfills destiny and Christian destiny is inevitably salvation or damnation. This literary/religious motif is repeatedly stressed throughout the first *Vie*: the quest must be followed through to the end. If advice is taken it must be acted upon, a notion that links the religious ideal of repentance and the literary motif of characters such as the hermit (who propels the hero to the next stage of the quest, such as in *Fou* and numerous romances).

Seignurs baruns, Carles nus laissat ci,
 Pur nostre rei devum nus ben murir:
 Chrestientet aidez a sustenir !
 Bataille avrez, vos en estes tuz fiz,
 Kar a vos oilz veez les Sarrazins.
Clamez vos culpes, si preiez Deu mercit !
Asoldrai vos pur voz anmes guarir.
Se vos murez, esterez seinz martirs,
Sieges avrez el greignor pareïs.

(Laisse 89, vv. 1127-1135, my italics¹⁹)

It is important to note, though, that even in the twelfth century, sacramental absolution remained a prayer rather than an affirmation, 'le prêtre en effet demande à Dieu de pardonner au pécheur, mais la formule *ego te absolvo* n'apparaît qu'au XIIIe siècle'.²⁰

In the eleventh and twelfth centuries there had been a noticeable rise in affective piety, a popularisation of devotional practices and customs, and a significant evolution in the conception of Christ's Passion. All three tendencies led on, logically, to more eschatological concerns. Anselm - then Bernard of Clairvaux and Francis of Assisi - stressed the idea of Christ as a man and especially his suffering (which itself enhanced the image of Mary as his mother). It was argued that human beings had disobeyed God and were unable to make adequate amends: only God was in a position to do this. The notion of *Contemptus mundi*, where you cannot love both earthly and eternal riches at the same time, was still widely preached in the twelfth century:

Quia, si nimis esset picturata, videretur nimio studio excogitata, et elaborata ad favorem hominum quam ad utilitatem proximorum, et ita minus moveret animos auditorum.²¹

Before the twelfth century, devotion to the crucified Christ - relics of the cross, pilgrimages to the holy places of the Passion, iconographical motifs - seemed to glorify Christ in Majesty rather than heighten sensibility towards his human sufferings. Anselm and Bernard thus contributed to the transition 'from the patristic era to an age of a more accessible and therefore more personal spirituality'. This prepared the ground for 'a

¹⁹ *La Chanson de Roland: an analytical edition*, 2 vols, ed. G.J. Brault, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State U.P., 1978 (rep.1981).

²⁰ Payen, p. 49.

²¹ Alain de Lille, *Summa magistri*, 53, I (PL 210, col. 111). An interesting parallel to the theological teaching can be found in P. Zombory-Nagy and V. Frandon, 'Pour une histoire de la souffrance: expressions, représentations, usages', *Médiévales*, 27 (1994), 5-14.

certain kind of miraculous experience'.²² By extension, Anselm's concentration on Christ's humanity - from childhood to crucifixion - led to greater identification with his mother: 'Mary begins to take on a rôle previously reserved to the saints as dispenser of miracles.'²³ Here are the roots of two common movements in thirteenth-century society that are witnessed in the first *Vie des Pères*, namely the centrality of penance and the Cult of the Virgin.²⁴

Traditionally, the institutional Church had left to others such matters as the control, regulation and provision of penance: 'Au début du VIII^e siècle, la déchristianisation était arrivée à son point le plus bas; la Réforme carolingienne, pour redresser les mœurs, redécouvrit la pénitence, mais seulement d'abord au point de vue canonique et comme un retour à l'Antiquité; il fallait que cette institution, remise en service et en honneur, fût ressourcée à l'Evangile, en retrouvât l'esprit et les exigences morales et spirituelles, et non seulement juridiques; ç'aurait été le rôle des ermites.'²⁵ Innocent III realised that this was a fundamental flaw in the running of the Church, and was to make changes of far-reaching import. Penance came to be understood to have three parts: contrition, confession and satisfaction and all three must be present for the sacrament to take place. Contrition is the feeling that makes the sinner hate his sins and want to free himself from them; confession is the admission of sin to an ordained minister of the Church; and satisfaction is evidence of an amended life (ie. fasting, prayer, almsgiving, etc).²⁶ Canon 1 of Lateran IV ends by stating that a 'real penance' is required for absolution, a term that is frequently used in the first *Vie*. In our text, there is a spiritual authenticity given to sincere confession that may not be sanctioned by Canon Law but there is never really any question of what is proper and what is not - confession

²² S.J. McEntire, *The Doctrine of Compunction in the West: Theology and Literary Implications* Cornell: D.Phil thesis, 1987; Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1987, pp. 121,123.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 120.

²⁴ One is very aware in reading the tales of the first *Vie* that we are dealing with an indulgent author. Not only does he appear to be more 'reasonable' in tone than Gautier de Coinci - a sign, surely, of a concession to 'humanity' - but, as we shall see in the commentaries in Part Two, very few of his characters are actually damned.

²⁵ E. Delaruelle, 'Les ermites et la spiritualité populaire', pp. 212-247 in *L'Eremitismo in Occidente nei secoli XI e XII. Atti della Settimana di studio*. Vol. II, Mendola, 1962. Miscellanea del Centro di Studi Medioevali, IV, Milano, 1965, p. 219.

²⁶ Cf. B. Poschmann, *Penance and the Anointing of the Sick*, translated & revised by F. Courtney, New York: Herder and Herder, 1964, chapter 3.

per se is seen to be desirable, not a particular sort of ‘mechanics’ of confession. The first *Vie* is not a ‘manual for the faithful’ in that regard.

Payen has described the twelfth century as ‘l’âge d’or du repentir’, when the Church demanded tears from the penitent and St. Bernard’s contritionist theology was dominant.²⁷ He points to repentance as being ‘un sentiment spontané qui se manifeste volontiers chez tout homme qui ressent la conscience douloureuse de sa faute et cherche à la réparer’, noting that ‘à partir du 13^e siècle, s’il faut en juger par la multiplication de nouveaux livres pénitentiels, la confession a cessé d’être le cri du coeur. Elle s’accomplit au cours d’un interrogatoire qui, s’il se justifie par le souci d’extorquer au pénitent l’aveu exhaustif de toutes ses fautes, n’en retira pas moins à cet aveu beaucoup de sa spontanéité.’²⁸ Bretel notes that ‘la seconde moitié de XII^e siècle introduit, dans la doctrine pénitentielle, la notion d’attrition, qui se distingue de la contrition: on entend par attrition “une douleur sincère du péché, mais non suffisante à sa rémission parce qu’elle ne comporte pas [...] le propos de la confession ou la volonté de ne plus commettre le péché”. Alors que l’attrition est un regret du péché qui a des motifs simplement humains (peur de châtement, par exemple), la contrition est un regret de la faute par amour de Dieu, une disposition intérieure qui inspire, avec le dégoût du péché, le désir de s’en libérer par l’aveu, de s’en purifier par la pénitence et de s’en tourner; proche de la componction, elle s’accompagne généralement de larmes, et suffit à procurer le pardon.’²⁹ On a more practical level, penance also informed the confessor of the sins and the state of mind of the penitent, thus giving the former increased authority over the latter. Less cynically, M. Zink has noted that, around this time, ‘l’abandon de la pénitence tarifée suppose une analyse plus fine de la notion de responsabilité’, and it is certainly true that, in the first *Vie*, there are a number of categories of sinners: those who commit faults intentionally; those forced to sin through injustice; characters who fall

²⁷ Payen, p. 19.

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 19. The tales of the first *Vie* contain many ‘cris du coeur’, the insistence being upon ‘true’ repentance. The change signalled by Payen could, however, put a new gloss on an old tale such as *Impératrice*, given its emphasis on *all* sin being confessed - rather, arguably, than the ‘quality’ of the repentance - before the sinner can be absolved. Cf. also *Thaïs*.

²⁹ Bretel, p. 578.

into sin through weakness; victims of devilish sorcery; sinners through ignorance; those who will confess later; etc.³⁰

It has been argued that confession was 'by far the most effective control system elaborated by the Catholic Church', and that when Lateran IV decreed that the faithful should confess at least once a year to their local priest it was 'one of the most, if not *the* most, important step taken in order to enforce the Christianisation of hearts and minds'.³¹ This also reflects the centrality of the notion of penance in the thinking of the Middle Ages.³² There had been a movement from the time of the Gregorian reforms towards investing the priest with the rôle of intermediary between God and the sinner, rendering the manner of confession more important and as a consequence, confession to a layman less frequent. Annual confession, as decreed by Lateran IV, also confirmed the practice of cataloging the penitent's sins; this practice had been in increasing use during the transition to frequent confession towards the end of the twelfth century. This formalization was, of course, an entirely intentional way of increasing the authority of the clergy,³³ but Payen believes that, in practice, the faithful continued to confess to monks and hermits - who had a special place in the *familia* of the clergy and operated largely outside the authority of the Church, and with great popularity, both as confessors and as preachers - amongst others, more or less regularly until Lateran IV.³⁴ As for

³⁰ M. Zink, *La Prédication en langue romane avant 1300*, Paris: Champion, 1976, p. 440.

³¹ L. Milis, *Angelic Monks and Earthly Men*, Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1992, pp. 81-82.

³² As has been noted above, penance is not just a religious but also a literary motif. The centrality of the theme of *conseil* in pious tales, epic and romance is a clear indication of the vital importance given to *consilium* in the Middle Ages. There is a perpetual *topos* of false counsel, reflexions on the concept of kingship (the good king usually being flanked by counsellors), penalties due to not following through good counsel (a transgression of 'contract'/agreement) and a constant significance given to oath-making (such as in *Renieur*). In Marie de France's *Deuz Amanz*, the boy does not follow the good advice of either his aunt in Salerno nor his girlfriend, hence he does not deserve amorous salvation; in the first *Vie* - especially tales such as *Brûlure* - those sinned against might give good advice to the perpetrators of their suffering, only for this advice to be ignored and the sinner to be damned. Repentance and forgiveness is a sort of contract between the sinner and God that demands restitution. In *Renieur*, the man will not break his 'contract' with the Virgin and is rewarded for this; this is a greater contract than that he holds with the saints, one that he breaks but a contravention for which he will not be punished. Cf. also *Copeaux* and *Vilain* (63) for the motif of a greater contract being preserved.

³³ The nub of the later dispute between the mendicant orders and the regular clergy was the former's tendency to hear confessions.

³⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 51. This is a practice witnessed in the first *Vie*, probably postdating Innocent's great council but, as with much medieval literature, reflecting fashions and movements with something of a time-lapse. This also recognises the age and tradition of most of the legends recounted in the first *Vie*. Payen has noted that sermons up to and even after 1250 stressed the fear of Hell and death, only then becoming contritionist; thus he argues that sermons reflect doctrine and popular belief even later than literature.

individual confession, this is a clear sign of an intellectual climate in flux, a climate that is now ‘ancré dans l’examen de conscience du pécheur et son introspection privilégiée au tournant du XIIe au XIIIe siècle’.³⁵ In narrative literature it is often hermits who administer the sacraments, especially confession, ‘alors que dans le même temps, à l’exception de quelques collaborations sollicitées au moment de la réforme grégorienne en particulier, l’Eglise s’est toujours montrée soucieuse de défendre les prérogatives des curés de paroisses contre les empiétements des moines et des ermites.’ Tales such as *Fou* legitimise transgressions of Church practice such as confession to a hermit: ‘ils légitiment [...] cette transgression en lui donnant la caution du pape, voire de Dieu lui-même, qui suscite pour le héros des rencontres providentielles ou qui le guide en se manifestant par son Verbe.’³⁶ In the thirteenth century, the important point (in popular understanding) seems not to hide anything from the confessor and to follow his advice: ‘La pénitence proprement dite, sans se réduire à quelques *Pater* et *Ave*, n’est plus qu’une formalité mineure’.³⁷ So, as long as a hermit could be consulted, people were not wholly dependent on the clergy for salvation. What is more, the practice of taking the sacrament of penance only in old age or near death seems to have continued up to and beyond Lateran IV.

There was in the twelfth century a new contritionist conception of penance, although the idea of weeping in this world rather than the next was far from new. The new thinking has been described by Payen:

Le contritionisme est une doctrine de la pénitence selon laquelle la rémission des péchés s'opère de la manière suivante : le pécheur consent à l'infusion de la grâce divine, qui suscite chez lui des larmes de repentir. Ces larmes sont le signe visible d'un pardon divin déjà acquis, et cette ‘contrition vraie’ (le terme de ‘contrition parfaite’ n'apparaît que plus tard) a pour effet de lever immédiatement la sanction du châtement éternel. Mais il reste au pécheur à lever la sanction du châtement limité qu'il doit subir en réparation de sa faute : la pénitence terrestre a donc pour effet de conjurer la menace d'une expiation plus sévère *post mortem*. D'autre part, à cause de son état de péché, le pécheur s'est séparé de l'Eglise visible avec laquelle il ne peut être réconcilié que par l'absolution sacerdotale.³⁸

³⁵ J. Le Goff, ‘Le temps de l’*exemplum* (XIIIe siècle)’, pp. 99-102 in *L’imaginaire médiéval*, Paris: Gallimard, 1985, p. 101.

³⁶ P. Bretel, ‘Des “péchés réservés”’, p. 279.

³⁷ Payen, p. 550.

³⁸ Payen, p. 54.

This was an expressive, if excessive, way of feeling remorse and was heavily dependent on tears and the idea of one, massive 'turning point' in a sinner's life: as such, it lent itself to mysticism and an emphasis on marvels, so very suited to the romanesque fear of sudden death. Delaruelle speaks of this time as one of 'une prise de conscience de la responsabilité personnelle devant le salut', meaning that the time of the composition of the first *Vie* was one when the emphasis was increasingly placed on the motives and circumstances of the individual sinner.³⁹ However, the first *Vie* does not truly give examples of individual motivation and penance, although there is some interest in the circumstances that lead an individual to sin.⁴⁰ The importance of tears in the thirteenth-century text is heavily influenced by the rôle of tears in penance in the early Middle Ages: Gregory the Great had written about compunction, as had the early Church Fathers; Ambrose had seen the penitential nature of tears as a purification of the sinner; in later times, views ranged from those of St. Anselm, who recognized the importance of tears as a sign, and Gratien, who took this thinking one step further, to those of Abelard, who believed tears to be a pre-requisite for forgiveness and hence salvation. His contemporary St. Bernard was not a contritionist but the Cistercians did place a heavy emphasis on repentance in their writings. (This important point is to be especially noted when reading the first *Vie*, given the text's strong Cistercian sympathies.) Contritionist confession was also to be at the heart of Aquinas's thinking. Although very influential figures were at odds with one another, it is clear that penance and the form it took were central to the thinking of the period preceding Lateran IV - where Petrus Lombardus' definition of penance as a sacrament was adopted - and although the debate was conducted on a high level, well beyond the experience of the vast majority of the people, it is also clear that the matter finally trickled down to lower levels of society; the tales of the first *Vie* do not debate the question but, again with a certain *décalage*, reflect this important issue of the time.

Lateran IV emphasised the rôle of the priest in confession and recommended confession to a layman only when the penitent was in mortal danger: 'The emphasis now was not on contrition but on absolution, which could only be given by a priest.'⁴¹ Permission was needed to confess to a priest other than one's own, and communion was

³⁹ E. Delaruelle, 'Les ermites et la spiritualité populaire', p. 220.

⁴⁰ In the first *Vie* conversions might be due to a number of different reasons: argument, miracle, example, fear, etc.

⁴¹ Sayers, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

to be taken each Easter, the feast of Christ's Passion. Braswell notes that, after Lateran IV, 'because penance was now a pre-requisite for the eucharist, the most important of the sacraments, its satisfactory performance was essential to the well-being of every Christian'.⁴² That is to say, annual penance - presumably in the prescribed form - is now compulsory for eternal salvation. These decretals are therefore imbued with the idea of confession and penance, notions intrinsically linked to preaching. One notes also the obvious link between poverty and penance - the sanctioning of the Franciscans at Lateran IV despite their almost revolutionary rejection of worldly possessions - and the equally obvious idea that penance was spurred on by witnessing clerical abuse. André Vauchez notes that, after Lateran IV, a distinction is made between 'religion prescrite et religion vécue'.⁴³ This is what we find in the first *Vie*: orthodox practices and teachings are occasionally shadowed by less canonically correct but undoubtedly more popular (and often more humanistic) religious dogma.

The most self-evident testament to the weight accorded to eschatological matters, and by definition penance, in the Middle Ages, is the wealth of manuscript illustrations and, especially, sculptural patterns representing The Last Things. Notre-Dame de Chartres, whose rebuilding is contemporary with the composition of at least some of the first *Vie*, and the cathedrals of Reims and Amiens all proudly display graphically-detailed Last Judgement scenes portraying the Saved and the Damned, underlining Payen's assertion that this was a time 'd'une superstition assez grossière et d'une croyance aiguë en un Satan toujours présent derrière tous les méfaits des hommes'.⁴⁴ Menache comments that 'the catechism of Fear and the Cult of Death strengthened the Church's predominance in this world and turned repentance into the leitmotif of everyday life'⁴⁵ and Payen makes the point still more transparent: 'La confession est [...] au centre de la vie chrétienne médiévale [...] elle a tendance à faire du sacrement de pénitence l'acte essentiel de sa vie religieuse. Et ceci est probablement dû

⁴² M.F. Braswell, *The Medieval Sinner, Characterization and Confession in the Literature of the English Middle Ages*, London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1983, p. 29.

⁴³ A. Vauchez, *Les Laïcs au Moyen Age. Pratiques et expériences religieuses*, Paris: Editions du Cerf, 1987, p. 123.

⁴⁴ Payen, p. 44. The role of the 'active' devil in the first *Vie des Pères* is quite fascinating and has been highlighted in the commentaries. The sub-text 'devil/women' and 'demon/drink' is also noted. Taking the first *Vie* as a whole, however, the reader is struck by the very personal nature of the texts and of the message: in general, salvation is in the hands of the individual, even if tempted by the devil. When possessed by the demon, the individual needs the grace of God to overcome evil, but even then the author underlines the personal choices involved.

⁴⁵ S. Menache, *The Vox Dei: Communication in the Middle Ages*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, p. 97.

à la puissante crainte d'Enfer qui obsède les consciences. La confession est l'arme la plus efficace contre le diable et le péché. Elle est même l'arme par excellence contre la plupart des épreuves, puisqu'elle peut avoir une valeur curative en cas de maladie. Mais ce qui est nouveau, à partir du XIII^e siècle, c'est l'importance rattachée non plus à la réparation douloureuse ni même à la repentance, mais à l'aveu lui-même, qui tend à devenir le moment essentiel du sacrement.⁴⁶ The faithful could not avoid the terrifying scenes of damnation as they entered the House of God, only to have the images reinforced by a preacher whose sermon called on them to repent. Even if the irony of the situation, taking place in or next to the earthly embodiment of the New Jerusalem, was not recognized by the congregation, they would have had little difficulty in understanding the temporary nature of our time on Earth. In such a context, where the faithful were constantly reminded of the frailty of humanity and surrounded by death in the shape of war, disease and the millennial visionaries predicting the end of the world, the penitential sermon was a powerful tool that provided something of a sledgehammer argument, and it was recognized by the Church as such.

Confession leads to the joy of the saved, as can be witnessed in the *La Vision de Bérangier*:

Ja de tous lor pechiés n'aront contristement,
Ains en aront grant joie, que par repentement
Et par confession et par amendement,
Les aront tous vaincus et remis a nient.⁴⁷

Churches and sculptural patterns do not only preach through fear: visions and images of the saved, although more difficult to capture the imagination of the faithful - as can be seen in *Vision d'enfer* - also abound. Repentance is vital for salvation and for joy, and this needs to take place not just by word but in the heart. Confession is useless if the person is not repentant and sincere and the first *Vie* insists upon the heart as the instrument of salvation. This is why confession is the defining moment: of so many of the tales of the first *Vie*. In the thirteenth century theologians introduced a new concept into repentance, confession and penance that will reduce the harshness of the latter: 'Dieu ne regarde pas tant les oeuvres que le coeur et [...] il ne fait pas tant attention aux

⁴⁶ Payen, p. 549.

⁴⁷ *Deux versions inédites de la légende de l'Antéchrist*, ed. K. Walberg, Paris: Champion, 1928, p. 79, vv. 499-502.

pratiques extérieures de la pénitence qu'à la sincérité de la contrition.'⁴⁸ Payen

succinctly brings together these two strands:

La confession est, avec l'instant des pleurs, le moment crucial de la plupart des récit édifiants. Elle n'est pas encore une pratique régulière; elle illustre la conversion bouleversante d'un pécheur qui vient de traverser de longues années d'impénitence, ou bien le repentir d'un ermite qu'une faute grave a mis en péril; mais elle n'a pas le caractère d'un exercice habituel et fréquent auquel seraient astreints les fidèles. Il n'y a rien d'étonnant à cela: le sujet même des *exempla* semble appeler le récit de longues années de vie sans repentance; leur élaboration remonte souvent à des temps très anciens où la confession restait réservée à de très grands pécheurs ou n'était cultivée que dans l'ombre des cloîtres; leur diffusion coïncide avec celle d'un contritionnisme qui est par nature contradictoire avec le fréquent recours à la pénitence. Mais en vantant les vertus de ce sacrement, les prédicateurs qui recouraient à des *exempla* des recueils latins n'en incitaient pas moins à leur auditoire à user sans tarder et le plus souvent possible de ce remède spirituel si efficace; et les auteurs des contes édifiants en français contribuaient à leur manière à ce "propagande" ecclésiastique dont le but était certainement d'imposer par persuasion la décision du concile de 1215.⁴⁹

One of the most reliable windows on contemporary attitudes to penance is in the comic literature of the age. The *Roman de Renart* contains a number of parodies of confession: in *Branche I* there is Renart's confession to Grimbert in which the confessor dissuades Renart from retiring to a monastery. Renart repents in a bitter way but still receives 'absolution'. In *Branche VIII* Renart confesses to a hermit and such are Renart's misdeeds that the hermit sends him to see the Pope; however, Renart never gets there. *Branche VII* mirrors the cruel comedy of the *fabliaux* when Renart eats his confessor, confession merely being a ruse. A trap is set for a confessor in *Branche V* but he manages to escape; in *Branche VI* there is Renart's confession *in extremis* before he is to be hanged. When he is reprieved, he does penance in a monastery before reverting back to his old ways. This episode supports Payen's hypothesis that 'on a quelquefois le sentiment, à lire certaines pages médiévales, que la confession y intervient parce qu'elle est un moyen de nouer ou de faire rebondir une intrigue'.⁵⁰ Authors seem to be aware of the 'dramatic' potential of confession, not only in texts such as *Branche VI* but also, in a different way, *Thaïs* (after witnessing her sinful life) and other 'great sinners' such as the woman in *Inceste*. In *Branche XI*, before the combat with the 'pagans', Bernard the archpriest confesses all of the warriors. Payen continues: 'On sait que le terme même "confession Renart" qualifie, au Moyen Age, non point une confession insincère qu'une

⁴⁸ A. Teetaert, *La Confession aux laïcs dans l'église latine depuis le VIIIe jusqu'au XIV siècle*, Louvain: Dissertationes, Series 2, XVII, Wetteren, I. de Meester et fils, 1926, XXVIII, p. 240.

⁴⁹ Payen, p. 547.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 552.

confession qui n'a aucune suite sur la vie du pénitent.'⁵¹ So, confession was not safe from parody and satire - it may have been important, but it could still be laughed at, as could almost any subject in the Middle Ages. *Du chevalier qui fit sa femme confesse* (NRCF 4/33) serves as a further illustration of this. The serious point of these comic / parodic instances of confession is that they show how quickly people in the Middle Ages would confess if circumstances went against them. It is essential to read pious tales that promote confession alongside texts such as the *fabliaux* and *Renart* in order to gain a balanced view of the institution. Again, Payen can clarify the issue: 'Le fabliau nous montre un autre monde que celui des récits édifiants, un monde probablement plus vrai où l'on perçoit bien des contradictions: une croyance réelle et profonde, chez la femme, en un au-delà redouté dont elle veut conjurer les tourments par une confession dont le repentir est bien formel; une totale absence de scrupule chez l'homme qui n'hésite pas à tourner en dérision le sacrement de pénitence, avec il est vrai des circonstances atténuantes [...] Croyons [...] à la fois et les fabliaux et les récits édifiants: la réalité médiévale est assez complexe pour inspirer les uns et les autres.'⁵²

Brief mention need also be made of the Cult of the Virgin, since the first *Vie* does include a number of Virgin miracles. Again, detailed histories abound and here we describe only the broad outlines of this phenomenon.⁵³ In fact, the Cult of the Virgin is closely linked with the concentration on Christ's Passion - his mother's sufferings could be second only to his own. Conversely, as Christ came to be seen as distant and judgemental, so Mary became a figure of mercy and forgiveness to whom sinners could appeal. Her pre-eminence amongst the saints grew when her perpetual virginity was formally accepted by the Church in the fifth century. The feast of the Assumption became recognized in the sixth century, and by the year 1000 other eastern Marian feasts had been adopted in the west. She was acknowledged as an effective intercessor and came to possess a mystical quality, overflowing in mercy and piety. Of course, it was out of the superimposition of courtly attributes to her, those so often ambiguous in spiritual, supernatural and sexual ways, that grew the particular style of many of the miracles written about her. The earliest Marian miracles date from the beginning of the twelfth century and were frequently imitated in both Latin and the vernacular until the end of the Middle Ages. The cult itself is immortalized in the names of some of the great

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 548, n. 65.

⁵² Payen, p. 549.

⁵³ See in particular: M. Warner, *Alone of All her Sex*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1976.

gothic cathedrals - Notre-Dame de Paris, Notre-Dame de Laon, Notre-Dame de Chartres - and in their stained-glass and sculpted portrayals of every aspect of her life (including the apocryphal); indeed, there were frequently-read and widely-known apocryphal Gospels dedicated to the Virgin. At the time of the composition of the first *Vie*, Mary was very much a comforting mother-figure who was sympathetic to the lowly, the miserable and the sinners who appealed to her for succour. The Cult of the Virgin was firmly established and represented a symbol of hope for the pious.

III.ii

The Sermon and *Exemplum* Traditions

Prêcher, c'est faire un discours public fondé sur une Révélation divine, dans le cadre d'une société organisée, visant à la naissance ou au développement de la foi et des connaissances religieuses, et, corrélativement, à la conversion ou au progrès spirituel des auditeurs.¹

Les sermons en langue vulgaire font partie de la littérature romane.²

A necessary preliminary study in any examination of the first *Vie* is that of the sermon tradition. The author of the text places his narratives in such a framework that will maximise their didactic nature; he also uses the words 'sermon' and 'sermoniser' with regularity, indicating perhaps more than a simple awareness of the sermon tradition. Quite what effect the form and language of the preacher-poet might have had on the target audience is uncertain, but, although this thesis stresses the 'literary' nature of the first *Vie*, it remains essential to briefly examine the 'other side' of the narratives that is so intrinsically linked to sermons: 'The twelfth and thirteenth centuries in western Europe were times of profound social, economic and religious change that stimulated a rebirth of preaching. Preachers demonstrated a renewed interest in using *exempla* to enliven their sermons.'³ This notion is vital to understanding the first *Vie*.

In the Middle Ages the sermon effectively provided the vehicle for handing on the traditional teaching of the Church to the Christian community at large; indeed, it has been described as 'the nearest thing to mass communication to be found in the thirteenth century'.⁴ The religious climate of the time was conducive to the development of preaching, despite the constraints laid down by the established Church. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the spread of heresy was widespread largely because of the

¹ J. Longère, *La Prédication au Moyen Age*, Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1983, p. 11.

² M. Zink, *La Prédication en langue romane*, p. 365.

³ M. Peters, *Speculum Vitae et Fidei: The Exempla as an Historical Source in Medieval Preaching for Understanding its Context and Audience, with Emphasis on Jacques de Vitry's Sermones Vulgares*, Boston University PhD, Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1993, p. v.

⁴ D'Avray, op. cit., p. 4. The fact that one of the most recent studies on public spectacle in the Middle Ages - *City and Spectacle in Medieval Europe*, ed. B.A. Hanawalt & K.L. Reyerson, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994 - although centering on theatre, makes no mention whatsoever of popular preaching, illustrates that, whilst the subject is taking great strides forwards in specialized academic circles, it has yet to reach out to scholars in related fields.

immediacy and accessibility of the sermons given by its proponents. The link between preaching and penance has already been established: it was in the twelfth century that clerical, classical sermons were challenged by a new type of penitential preaching, by laymen and for laymen, inspired by new translations of books previously reserved for the clergy. The popular appeal of this type of preaching came from the fact that it was addressed 'au peuple sans distinction de catégories sociales, d'âge ou de sexe';⁵ however, it was only at a later stage that humour, which was not unknown to the Desert Fathers, came to play a part in self-referential, popular sermons: 'Il faudra attendre la prédication nouvelle du 13^e siècle pour entendre à nouveau et à haute voix des propos se permettant d'ironiser ouvertement sur des prédicateurs enclins à la verbosité.'⁶ Bishops and priests did not always preach as regularly - and as effectively - as was required by their positions; David D'Avray points out that 'in the twelfth century a sermon by an educated preacher must still have been an event, whereas by the end of the thirteenth century such sermons were a normal part in the structure of ecclesiastical life in towns'.⁷ How can this recognition of the potential power of the sermon and the drastic improvement in quality be explained?

Traditionally, bishops had had the right to sanction or forbid preachers in their dioceses, but it was not until 1183 that Pope Lucius III 'frappa d'anathème quiconque prêcherait sans délégation du pape ou de l'évêque'.⁸ This was a direct retort to the inroads made by popular heresies through the medium of preaching, and was reinforced by Lateran IV which recognized that the burden was too great for the bishops, giving them the right/duty to delegate preaching duties to appropriate candidates. The friars tended to concentrate their preaching in towns in order to reach the largest possible audience, although they did not restrict themselves entirely to urban areas: D'Avray

⁵E. Delaruelle, 'Les ermites et la spiritualité populaire', p. 212.

⁶J. Horowitz and S. Menache, *L'Humour en chair: Le rire dans l'église médiévale* (Histoire et Société, 28) Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1994, p. 60. For the humour of the Desert fathers, see P. Gribaudi, *Bons mots et facéties des Pères du désert*, Paris, 1987.

⁷D'Avray, op. cit., p. 28. Elsewhere, however, he warns the modern scholar to keep a level head, insisting that even for the earlier period it is unsafe to presume that some classes went without preaching altogether.

⁸A. Lecoy de la Marche, *La Chaire française au Moyen Age*, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1974, p. 23., orig. Paris, 1886.

notes that there is evidence that more literate and educated people lived outside towns than received wisdom would have it, and that these were the friars' primary targets.⁹

Preaching from the time of the early Church had frequently taken the form of the reading out verbatim of patristic homilies, which was an effective method of regulating the content of sermons. Charlemagne had recognized the important role played by preaching and in his *Admonitio generalis* set out the rule that no ordinations should take place before the age of thirty, since this was the age at which Jesus began to preach. In 822, the Attigny Assembly recommended that, in each diocese, erudite clergy should be trained to preach, and in the same century further concerns regarding preaching were expressed: 'Au même titre que la possession des livres liturgiques, on enjoint aux prêtres celle d'un homélaire pour les dimanches et fêtes de l'année. [...] Autre exigence souvent rappelée, celle de l'exemple qui doit accompagner la parole'.¹⁰ Michel Zink has noted that before 1300 there was 'une double évolution: de la prédication épiscopale à la prédication paroissiale, de la prédication latine à la prédication en langue vulgaire'.¹¹ This was the time that the sermon passed from the cloister to the parish. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries also witnessed intense activity in scholarly preaching, notably with individuals such as Saint Bernard and the establishment of the universities. There was a move away from the homily (Gospel narrative, allegorical exegesis, moral exegesis) and towards a sermon based on a single word, theme or phrase, developing meaning and interpretation. The result, according to S. Wenzel, was a 'prose work endowed with a variety of consciously sought artistic features'.¹² This, however, was still preaching for the clergy and the educated: the faithful needed a more accessible approach to hearing the Word, and among the initiatives taken up to this end was unauthorized preaching. The friars countered this threat head on, fighting like with like; Delaruelle notes that early Franciscan penitential sermons are full of eloquence but are also out to shock: 'Dépouillée de tout appareil scolastique, indifférente aux règles du bien-dire et du bien-

⁹ op. cit., p. 42.

¹⁰ J. Longère, 'Le pouvoir...', p. 161. Many of the details in this paragraph are drawn from this informative sketch of the history of medieval preaching. For a brief history of early medieval preaching see Zink, *La Prédication en langue romane*, pp. 85-91.

¹¹ Zink, *ibid.*, p. 85.

¹² S. Wenzel, *Preachers, Poets and the Early English Lyric*, Princetown: U.P., 1986, p. 62.

penser, c'est une éloquence populaire qui vise avant tout à émouvoir [...] Nous assistons alors à une véritable réforme de la chaire: jusque là, elle avait connu le sermon monastique et le sermon universitaire, le premier plein d'onction et riche d'Ecriture Sainte, le second soumis aux règles strictes des *Artes dicendi*, s'adressant avant tout à la raison; [...] l'"exhortation" franciscaine et la prédication de pénitence représentent un genre plus prophétique et, si l'on veut, kérygmaticque'.¹³

Official attempts to harness the power of the sermon continued: Eudes de Sully, in the *Statuts de Paris* of c.1204, regulated preaching practices by decreeing that the normal place for a sermon should be in a church, that the sermon's content should be orthodox, and that it should display a 'caractère désintéressé'.¹⁴ The *Statuts de Paris* also included the major themes to be taught, which included articles of faith and practices of the faithful. Longère notes, though, that the *Statuts de Paris* and similar decrees do not explicitly prescribe 'l'homélie parmi les livres nécessaires au prêtre de paroisse. Cette présence allait-elle de soi? Est-ce défiance vis-à-vis des anciennes compilations jugées inadaptées, ou bien appel à développer de façon plus personnelle les thèmes parfois originaux des décisions diocésaines? En tout cas, on perçoit en France et en Allemagne l'effort fourni pour mettre entre les mains des prêtres quelques nouveaux recueils de sermons destinés à les aider dans une tâche dont on leur rappelle l'urgence et la nécessité'.¹⁵ There was obviously a change in the perception of the sermon and a change in preaching practices at this time: what do we know about the conditions surrounding the composition and delivery of a sermon in the thirteenth century?

It has already been noted that preachers required a licence in order to be recognized as 'official' by the church. The bishop, his delegates and the parish priest would all have had some sort of spiritual training, although not necessarily to a high level. Very commonly, their training would depend on the Bible and Bible commentaries, certain ancients such as Ovid, patristic texts and, perhaps, works by

¹³E. Delaruelle, 'L'influence de s.François d'Assise sur la piété populaire', pp. 229-46 in *La Piété populaire au Moyen Age*, Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1975, p. 235.

¹⁴ Longère, 'Le pouvoir...', p. 169.

¹⁵ibid., p. 170.

authors attached to any particular religious order. The emphasis was on *auctoritas*, and, ideally, members of the clergy would be expected to have close knowledge of a very limited number of texts. What is more, episcopal delegates would very often read or adapt patristic homilies, lacking the necessary training to do otherwise. The friars, on the other hand, were trained with preaching as their central objective and were something of an educated élite.¹⁶ As D'Avray insists, the narrowing of the gap between the written texts used by preachers and the preachers themselves - primarily through the education of the latter, although, at a later date, also through the translation of the former - was an essential element in increasing the efficacy of the sermon. Preachers could turn for inspiration to the single most important preaching aid, model sermon collections. These provided the core around which the sermon could be constructed, being in complete or in summary form. These collections were 'one of the nearest things to a common factor in the experience of different sorts and conditions of men in the thirteenth century', so central that 'other kinds of preaching aids were in a sense accessories'.¹⁷ Model sermons seem to have evolved along similar lines to (other?) medieval literature: they could be revised at the time of delivery, and then set down, added to or taken from, glossed, borrowed, abridged, re-ordered, selected or de-selected, fragmented, restructured or otherwise altered to fit the context of their use, that is, to illustrate different themes in different circumstances. (This is why model sermon collections can differ so much, in language, length, structure and completeness, sometimes being ordered and sometimes not). It would, one presumes, be the nature of the congregation that dictated the changes made in delivery of written material and, to some extent, to the chosen material itself. Although genres do overlap, it is possible to list a number of preaching aids in which thirteenth-century preachers might find inspiration, and to note the central rôle played by *auctoritas* in the mentality of the

¹⁶ With regard to how the friars made the sermon more appealing to the masses, Crane notes that 'the popular character of the audiences modified essentially the style of preaching, and it became necessary to interest and even amuse the common people who had gradually become accustomed to an entertaining literature more and more secular in its character, and who possessed, moreover, an innate love for tales', Crane, *'Exempla' or Illustrative Stories*, p. xvii, n. 35.

¹⁷ D'Avray, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 13.

Middle Ages: other than model sermon collections, there were the *artes predicandi*,¹⁸ *distinctiones*¹⁹ (often in alphabetical order), Bible concordances, treatises on vice and virtue, *florilegia* (anthologies from earlier writers), glosses, encyclopaedias, priests' manuals and other liturgical books, Saints' Lives, bestiaries and lapidaries, works such as the *Legenda Aurea* and, of course, *exempla* collections. Not all of these sources may have been available to every sermoniser and some are later developments than others,²⁰ but it remains clear that the preacher during this period had the liberty and wealth of source material to preach in a relatively spontaneous, exciting and original manner. Indeed, it is vital to bear in mind Zink's comment that 'au moment de prononcer son sermon, le prédicateur mélange les divers matériaux.'²¹ Interest was paramount, although the desire to be original was not always a sermon's primary goal: 'For élite audiences, some originality was indeed expected, but when preaching to the people the thing that mattered was to be useful'.²² This is a telling idea in more ways than one; in particular, it points to the ambiguous nature of the sermon. It is - and was - preserved in written form, but that written form is already one step away from the reality of a 'live' sermon; it was also a genre with multiple use, written forms being adapted to suit a lay audience, clerics, simple folk or even to be read aloud. The fact that sermons were 'written for a proximate public of users and an ultimate public of listeners' points to the difficulty in drawing scholarly conclusions from extant written sources.²³

The development of the sermon in the thirteenth century appears to have brought about the notion of a text destined to be used rather than read. Instead of simply reproducing patristic texts, writers of sermons adapted and applied them. This

¹⁸These 'manuels proprement dits de la prédication' were for the deliverer rather than the writer of sermons, and it is difficult to measure to what extent preachers followed these theoretical rules: 'On ne conduit pas avec le code de la route ouvert sur le volant...' See J.-L. Bataillon, 'Les instruments de travail des prédicateurs du XIII^e siècle', pp. 197-210 in *Culture et travail intellectuel dans l'occident médiéval*, ed. G. Hasenohr & J. Longère, Paris: CNRS, 1981, p. 200.

¹⁹M.-D. Chenu is quoted by Bataillon (ibid., p. 200) in describing these as '[des] espèces de dictionnaires des sens multiples pour chaque mot inscrit dans les récits bibliques, [...] répertoires où sont classées les allégories élaborées au cours des siècles, selon le processus figuratif de l'économie du salut.'

²⁰D'Avray notes that the use of preaching aids was far from new and cites Gregory the Great's *Regula pastoralis*, the sermons of Caesarius of Arles and Carolingian sermon collections (op. cit., p.17). The developments of the thirteenth century illustrate that preaching aids were not static in time.

²¹Zink, *La Prédication en langue romane*, p. 207.

²²D'Avray, op. cit., p. 52.

²³ibid., p. 122.

development coincided with the newly available work tools: concordances, alphabetically listed tables, numbered indexes, library inventories and division into chapters. It is possible that the mentality of preachers changed accordingly, that is, that they considered that their own work would be used in a selective manner.²⁴ One notes with interest that the first *Vie* was also borrowed from, but is a step removed from, the 'utilitarian' conception of model sermon collections, since the tales seem not to have undergone major revisions and reworkings. Although in a form that would make borrowing easy, the *corpus* appears to have been considered a complete work by scribes and artists seeking material for their codices.

The rather vexed question of language, however significant, should not delay the present study too long. Zink's thorough *La Prédication en langue romane avant 1300* clarifies many of the issues, whilst also raising a good number of imponderables. The vast majority of medieval sermons are preserved in Latin, the language of philosophy, scholarship and the Church;²⁵ however, this is not to say that they were necessarily delivered in Latin. The object of preaching was to reach as wide an audience as possible, and Latin was one of the few constants in the Middle Ages that could facilitate such a goal. Hence, a sermon written down in Spain could be copied and used by preachers in Poland, Italy or France. Just as the composition of the congregation would in all probability determine the content of a sermon, so too would it dictate the language used by the preacher: the clergy, scholars and monks would generally hear sermons in Latin, the people in the vernacular, whilst a mixed congregation could very well expect to hear a macaronic sermon. Lecoy de la Marche concluded that preachers might often have mixed languages when preaching to a mixed congregation, perhaps beginning with 'des fragments latins plus ou moins considérables, empruntés d'ordinaire à un livre saint' and following on with a vernacular commentary.²⁶ What seems quite certain is that simple, uneducated folk would only very rarely come across sermons delivered in Latin. In the

²⁴ see R.H. Rouse, 'Développement des instruments de travail au XIIIe siècle' pp. 115-44 in *Culture et travail intellectuel dans l'Occident médiéval*, ed. G. Hasenohr & J. Longère, Paris: CNRS, 1981.

²⁵ Zink notes that clerical culture and Latin in the Middle Ages were indissolubly linked, and also that the vernacular was the language of pagan beliefs, folklore, tradition and custom. This is why 'les sermons en langue vulgaire font partie de la littérature romane' (*La Prédication en langue romane*, p. 365).

²⁶ Lecoy de la Marche, op. cit., p. 253.

ninth century, the order was given to translate sermons into the vernacular, whilst instructive sermons in the vernacular were officially recognized by the Council of Oxford in 1222 as the effective medium to preach Church dogma;²⁷ one ought not be surprised to learn that holy matters were promulgated in the vernacular, as M. Everist has pointed out in his study of medieval French motets: 'It is easy to assume that sacred music of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was sung in Latin and secular music was sung in a vernacular language', but however obvious the Latin plainsong / vernacular *trouvères* and *troubadours* links may seem, there was a crossover, for instance the *Carmina Burana*.²⁸ So, extant sermon collections provide 'evidence for a system of communication rather than for the direct religious experience of the laity.'²⁹ There was an understandable tendency to reduce sermons to a skeletal form, with the preacher expanding his base material to suit his own needs, quite possibly at the time of delivery.³⁰ A substantial amount of initiative was left to the preacher if he decided not to read verbatim a model sermon, thus limiting our knowledge of 'live' sermons. At times, a sermon originally preached in the vernacular 'might later be set down in Latin for the purpose of instruction: it would thus become incorporated into the growing body of Latin material aimed at improving a preacher's sermon technique'.³¹ And, ironically, it could then come full circle when taken from a Latin preaching aid and used in a new sermon in the vernacular.

The style of language used in sermons was also variable: although examples of early prose, and, perhaps, vital to its development, the sermon found a truly popular form in verse. Adding theatricality and eloquence, a verse sermon was a simple way of attracting the attention of a lay audience who, perhaps, would view the experience in a similar vein to hearing about the exploits of Arthur or Tristan. This was a world where our own twentieth-century values are turned upside down, since 'verse is for the

²⁷Zink (*La Prédication en langue romane*, p. 102) notes that even in the mid-thirteenth century some preachers had serious lacunae in Latin, leading to frequent mistakes in the interpretation of the Bible. Quite apart from the low cultural and intellectual level of the masses, this would appear a solid explanation as to why the vernacular was so widely used.

²⁸M. Everist, *French Motets in the Thirteenth Century*, Cambridge: U.P., 1994, p. 126.

²⁹D'Avray, op. cit., p. 94.

³⁰Note that this did not happen to the tales of the *Vie* which, although edifying in nature, cannot therefore be considered as purely 'sermonising'.

³¹Levy, *Nine Verse Sermons*, p. 8.

populariser'.³² The Church taught perfection through parable and example, but its success, according to Payen, depended heavily on the artistic talent of sermonisers: 'S'ils dominant leur temps, c'est qu'ils sont plus poètes que prédicateurs'.³³ This is certainly the case of the author of the first *Vie*, a competent preacher but a consummate story-teller. Levy is right to describe the later Anglo-Norman friar Nicholas Bozon as an 'author-preacher' rather than a preacher-author, and the same notion can be applied to the author of the first *Vie*.³⁴ Preachers would also use proverbs - 'la conscience morale, voix de la nature et donc voix de la Grâce'³⁵ - and prayers to hold the attention of their congregation, both devices used liberally in the first *Vie*. Their techniques might well also have included the use of gesture. Lecoy de la Marche believed that, with the exception of counting on their left hand - their right hand being used to hold a book - preachers would have remained calm and sober. However, in a fascinating study on the *gestuelle* of preaching, M.-P. Champetier indicates that a degree of drama was indeed permitted in the pulpit, perhaps since in the thirteenth century 'le modèle mental du Christ prédicateur est fortement affirmé'.³⁶ In *Bibles moralisées*, the preacher is frequently depicted as a very active intermediary between God and the people, taking up all kinds of symbolic stances that must have been imitated by - or the imitation of - real sermonisers. It is certainly easy to imagine lively pious tales such as *Ivresse* and *Malaquin* being performed in dramatic style. Whatever the difficulties involved in judging the quality of the genre,³⁷ the modern scholar ought not fall into the trap of judging medieval sermons by twentieth-century values, for sermons were indeed met with vast popular approval in the Middle Ages, and this at all levels of society. Much of this success was thanks to one of those 'peripheral' aids that tended to be the audience's centre of interest and one that is equally at the centre of each tale of the first *Vie*: the *exemplum*.

³² *ibid.*, p. 13.

³³ J.-C. Payen, *La Littérature française*, p. 187.

³⁴ Levy, *Nine Verse Sermons*, p. 3.

³⁵ Zink, *La Prédication en langue romane*, p. 186.

³⁶ M.-P. Champetier, 'Faits et gestes du prédicateur dans l'iconographie du XIIIe au début du XIVe siècle', *Médiévales*, 17 (1989), 197-208, p. 199.

³⁷ Payen notes convincingly that 'l'histoire de la prédication en vers au 12e et 13e siècle met cruellement en relief la médiocrité formelle et la pauvreté idéologique du genre,' *La Littérature française*, p. 187.

For a sermon to be effective it had to be illustrated, and it was the *exemplum* that gave a sermon this ‘necessary dramatic dimension’.³⁸ Ciklamini notes that ‘while much is known about the dissemination and adaptability of the *exemplum*, the search for an accurate and narrow definition has been elusive. This is partly due to the vigour, permutations and longevity of the *exemplum* and partly to the inconsistent terminology used by medieval writers. What appears paramount in formulating a definition is not structure, tone or narrative setting, but solely function, the *exemplum*’s persuasive, didactic intent.’³⁹ There have in fact been numerous attempts to define the *exemplum*, of which a small selection is offered here:

A brief narrative or description used within the sermon to illustrate or support a doctrinal or moral point [...] The *exemplum* shades off inevitably into other types of story, particularly the fables.⁴⁰

[Un] récit bref donné comme véridique et destiné à être inséré dans un discours (en général un sermon) pour convaincre un auditoire, par une leçon salutaire.⁴¹

Un. récit ou une historiette, une fable ou une parabole, une moralité ou une description pouvant servir de preuve à l’appui d’un exposé doctrinal, religieux ou moral.⁴²

Ce qui était cité pour servir d’exemple.⁴³

As far as the first *Vie* is concerned, the *exemplum* is patristic exegesis merging with popular culture and is very much the mirror of the age that produced it: ‘En matière d’*exempla*, le XIII^e siècle est incontestablement la période la plus créatrice’;⁴⁴ Welter speaks of an ‘épanouissement’ of the *exemplum* in the thirteenth century.⁴⁵ The very

³⁸ Levy, *Nine Verse Sermons*, p. 9. Apart from J.-Th. Welter, *L’Exemplum dans la littérature religieuse et didactique du Moyen Age*, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1973, (orig. Toulouse, 1927), the two seminal works on *exempla* are: C. Brémond, J. Le Goff & J.-C. Schmitt, *L’Exemplum*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1982, and J. Berlioz & M.A. Polo de Beaulieu, *Les Exempla médiévaux*, Carcassonne: Garae / Hesiodé, 1993. Other useful works include: J. Berlioz, ‘Le récit efficace: l’*exemplum* au service de la prédication (XIII^e-XV^e siècles), pp. 113-146 in *Moyen Age et Temps Moderne - Mélanges de l’Ecole Française de Rome*, 92 (1980-81); and C. Daxelmüller, ‘Exemplum’, *Enzyklopädie des Märchens. Handwörterbuch zur historischen und vergleichenden Erzählforschung*, ed. K. Ranke, Berlin, 1984.

³⁹ M. Ciklamini, ‘*Exempla* in an Old Norse historiographic mold’, *Neophilologus*, 91 (1997), 71-87, p. 71.

⁴⁰ R.E. Kaske, *Medieval Christian Literary Imagery: A Guide to Interpretation*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988, pp. 88-89.

⁴¹ Jacques le Goff in C. Brémond, J. Le Goff & J.-C. Schmitt, *L’Exemplum*, op. cit., pp. 37-38.

⁴² J.-Th. Welter, op. cit., p. 1.

⁴³ Paul Meyer in the introduction to *Les Contes moralisés de Nicholas Bozon, frère mineur*, ed. L.T. Smith and P. Meyer, Paris: Firmin Didot, 1889, p. x.

⁴⁴ J.-C. Schmitt, *Prêcher d’exemples: Récits de prédicateurs du Moyen Age*, Paris: Stock, 1985, p. 16.

⁴⁵ op. cit., p. 453.

raison d'être of an *exemplum* provides ample support for Peters in her assertion that 'exempla provide a rich reservoir of pertinent historical information about popular religion and ordinary people, a mirror of everyday life and faith.'⁴⁶ In the *exempla*, the accent is put not only on the penitential value of the *aveu* but of the redemption of absolution. *Exempla* are tales that could be approbatory or cautionary, and at times they can differ very little from the *fabliaux*. It has been suggested that the essential difference lies in the rôle of the characters: 'dans le fabliau les personnages embrouillés sont comiques, alors que dans le sermon ils servent d'avertissement solennel contre le vice et le péché.'⁴⁷ In fact, Welter indicated that the *fabliaux* provided source material especially for mendicant preachers because of their social satire.⁴⁸ The *Vitae Patrum* was a rich source for *exempla* for the new mode of preaching. Peters notes that 'reformist tendencies and general dissatisfaction with preaching as dry, impractical, excessively abstract, incompetent, or complaints about its scarcity, all combined to provide more than enough impetus for the promotion of didactic stories in homiletic method.'⁴⁹

In the thirteenth century, *exempla* were amassed into easy-to-use, and later, easy-reference collections. The Dominican Etienne de Bourbon gave the *exemplum* pride of place in his conception of the sermon: his *Tractatus de diversis materiis predicabilibus* was the first of many collections, others including the *Liber exemplorum* and the *Tabula Exemplorum*, collections that condense *exempla* into skeletal form and list them alphabetically or thematically. As A.J. Minnis has noted, this was 'an age which was obsessed with classification, valuing the universal over the particular and the typical

⁴⁶ op. cit., p. vi.

⁴⁷ Brian J. Levy, 'Le fabliau et l'exemple: étude sur les recueils moralisants anglo-normands', pp. 311-21 in *Épopée Animale, fable, fabliau: Actes du IV colloque de la Société Internationale Renardienne*, ed. G. Bianciotto & M. Salvat, Paris: PUF, 1984, p. 311. Levy suggests that Jacques de Vitry borrowed heavily from the *fabliaux* and gave them a Christian flavour and moral in order to turn them into *exempla*. E.J. Lawless takes up this idea and applies it to a contemporary setting in 'Narrative in the Pulpit: Persistent use of *exempla* in vernacular religious contexts', *Journal of the Midwest Language Association*, 21 (1988), 48-64. This interesting article illustrates how a modern pastor uses ancient techniques in his preaching: 'In competition with a fast-moving media-blitzed MTV world, [he] also has the capacity to make his audience laugh. This is not a funny story, but he tells it humourously in order to keep his audience's attention', p. 51.

⁴⁸ Welter, op. cit., p. 103.

⁴⁹ Peters, op. cit., p. 92.

over the individual.’⁵⁰ Quoting Etienne de Bourbon, author of *exempla* collections around 1250, Peters notes that *exempla* were particularly suited to the edification of the uneducated since they ‘refine the coarseness of simple persons and they present and impress with an easier and more durable tenacity upon the memory.’⁵¹ The author of the first *Vie*, just like the sermonisers using *exempla*, preached the sacrament of penance: ‘On parlait certainement beaucoup de confession dans les sermons du XIIIe siècle, comme le prouvent les recueils latins d’*exempla* destinés aux prédicateurs, entre autres celui de Jacques de Vitry ou celui de Césaire d’Heisterbach [...] Le contritionnisme ne supprime pas le recours à la confession [ie. all tearful repentances are accompanied by confession], pas plus qu’il n’abolit la nécessité d’une satisfaction quelconque. C’est pourquoi, malgré les apparences, miracles et *exempla* sont en fait des récits destinés à appeler l’attention des fidèles sur l’utilité et l’urgence d’une loyale et sincère confession’.⁵² Maurice de Sully and Jacques de Vitry were notable writers of *exempla*, men in lofty positions who obviously understood the people's taste for memorable examples. Jacques de Vitry, in the prologue to his sermons, said that the use of *exempla* was for the uninstructed - *rudium et agrestium sententiis* - ‘for they are moved more by external examples than by authorities or profound propositions.’⁵³ Cited in translation by J.-C. Schmitt, Vitry explains this point:

Il [the preacher] doit proposer aux ignorants et aux laïcs une doctrine simple et claire pour mieux les édifier, par des exemples concrets et palpables, de la nature de ce qu’ils connaissent par expérience, non seulement pour les édifier mais aussi pour les réveiller, quand, fatigués et frappés d’ennui, ils commencent à somnoler [...] ils faut les ranimer à l’aide d’exemples plaisants et il convient de leur présenter des histoires pour qu’ensuite, une fois réveillés, ils prêtent l’oreille aux paroles sérieuses et utiles.⁵⁴

As J. Horowitz and S. Menache have pointed out, ‘Jacques de Vitry s’est fait le héraut de cette conception qui consiste à mêler au sermon des anecdotes plaisantes, puisées de préférence dans l’expérience quotidienne, pour stimuler des auditoires portés à la

⁵⁰ A.J. Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship. Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, Aldershot: Scholar Press, 2nd ed., 1988, p. 2.

⁵¹ Peters, op. cit., p. 86.

⁵² Payen, pp. 546, 547.

⁵³ Peters, p. 93.

⁵⁴ Jacques de Vitry, BN Lat. 17509, fol. 1-2, in Schmitt, *Prêcher d’exemples*, p. 52.

morosité ou à la somnolence après une journée de rude travail'.⁵⁵ Again, these are tendencies that are only too evident in the tales of the first *Vie*.

It has been suggested that the use of *exempla* in thirteenth-century sermons was the single most significant development in the genre, and that this had cultural consequences beyond those immediately obvious:

Les prédicateurs et les auteurs spirituels du XIIe siècle se contentaient le plus souvent d'anecdotes édifiantes tirées de l'Ecriture sainte, des pères de l'Eglise, des *Dialogues* de Grégoire le Grand, de compilations comme la *Disciplina clericalis* de Pierre Alfonse ou, dans un tout autre genre, comme le *Physiologus* et les innombrables ouvrages scientifiques, bestiaires et lapidaires qui en dérivent, la vérité de l'histoire étant garantie à leurs yeux par l'ancienneté et l'autorité du livre où ils la trouvaient. Au contraire, leurs successeurs du XIIIe siècle, sans méconnaître que l'exemplum est surbordonné aux exigences de la prédication, le traitent en genre littéraire autonome en en constituant des collections originales, organisées selon un plan didactique qui leur donne une cohérence et une autonomie propres. [...] En outre, bien loin d'avancer comme critère de vérité l'ancienneté et l'autorité d'une source écrite, ils font volontiers valoir que l'événement est survenu tout récemment et qu'ils en ont eu connaissance soit directement soit par le seul intermédiaire d'un témoin sûr.⁵⁶

Of course, it did not matter whether the events in an *exemplum* had really taken place, but rather that they had been recounted.⁵⁷ Indeed, it has been suggested that the only objective of an *exemplum* was that it should be retained: 'Le sort ultime d'un *exemplum* est de devenir proverbe - c'est en ceci qu'est la preuve finale de son "succès"'.⁵⁸ The origins of the *exempla* were quite diverse, but this was of little import to those who used them; the tales, once placed between a prologue and an epilogue and inserted into a sermon, became instantly Christianized/formalized.⁵⁹ As Peters has indicated, 'a successful *exemplum* combined attractiveness with utility when the religious intention or moral application was clear to broad segments of the listening community.'⁶⁰ Its rôle

⁵⁵ Horowitz and Menache, *L'Humour en chair*, pp. 66-67.

⁵⁶ M. Zink, 'Le temps du récit et la mise en scène du narrateur dans le fabliau et dans l'*exemplum*', pp. 27-44 in *La Nouvelle - genèse, codification et rayonnement d'un genre médiéval*, ed M. Picone, G. Di Stefano & P.D. Stewart, Montréal: Plato Academic Press, 1983, p. 40.

⁵⁷ Cf. E.J. Lawless, 'Narrative in the Pulpit', art. cit.. This is an interesting comparison of story-telling in sermons today and in the past and draws a number of close comparisons. In particular, the range of narrative possibilities in both periods does not deflect attention from the story's purpose: '[The preacher] may tell these stories as true or not true and the effect will be the same, although there is certainly a tendency to "frame" them as legends (ie. "true" stories) even if the introductory "formula" is merely "there is a story about a man who..." [...] The important thing is not necessarily to believe the story proper, but it is essential to believe the "moral"' (p. 52). Even today, 'the *exempla* persist as a significant rhetorical form within the context of vernacular religion' (p. 61).

⁵⁸ P.F. Dembowski, 'Traits essentiels des récits hagiographiques', pp. 80-88 in *La Nouvelle*, op. cit., p. 88. Note the numerous proverbs that punctate the prologues, narratives and epilogues of the first *Vie*.

⁵⁹ This transformation meant that the 'literary' aspect of the tale may lose out, if the *moralité* was too heavily laboured.

⁶⁰ op. cit., p. 92.

was to impress upon the public a concrete image, appealing to popular imagination and taste, much in the same way that Hell was so vividly portrayed in stone in medieval churches and cathedrals. Popular preaching may not have been born out of heresy but it certainly fed on it. Popular preaching would be expected to stress the ever-present nature of the devil and it did. Even the occasionally ambivalent first *Vie* depicts terrifying devils with horrendous powers. Quite to what extent Braswell is right in remarking that 'many a sinner would not have made his annual confession had he not been motivated by fears of eternal damnation' is not certain, but it obviously contains some truth.⁶¹ Jacques Berlioz remains doubtful on the issue: 'Le public était-il vraiment terrifié à écouter de ces récits? La question demeure.'⁶² However, *exempla* certainly made it their business to depict the devil in as realistic light as possible. The distinction between good and bad was the message to be made clear, and if the most effective medium was a *fabliau*-like narrative - derived from legends of diverse and often non-Christian legends - then that was the obvious medium to use. This is very much the nature of the first *Vie*.

The first *Vie* shares an essential character with the *exempla* in a number of aspects. Tubach has noted that *exempla* display 'the tension between the written document and oral tradition, between the authority of religious dogma and the rich kaleidoscope of daily social and human concerns, between adherence to the quasi-canonical exempla of religious virtue and the search for the unique anecdote.'⁶³ The same comment might be made to apply to the tales of the first *Vie*. (However, the tales do differ in that they can offer both a substantiation of religious beliefs and Church dogmas and also a delineation of social ills and human foibles, whereas the *exemplum* is an attempt 'to discover in each narrative event, character, situation or act a paradigmatic sign' that would do one or the other but not both⁶⁴). Also, both types of narrative appear to offer practical solutions to common moral and religious dilemmas. This is a window on social and religious concerns of the moment, such as the growth of the market economy and urban society. In the eleventh and twelfth centuries pride left its position at the head of the list of capital sins to be replaced by avarice and lust. This is surely the

⁶¹ M.F. Braswell, *The Medieval Sinner, Characterization and Confession in the Literature of the English Middle Ages*, London and Toronto: Associated University Presses, 1983, p. 27.

⁶² J. Berlioz, 'L'Auditoire des prédicateurs dans la littérature des "exempla" (XIII^e - XIV^e siècles)', *Medioevo e Rinascimento*, 3 (1989), 125-58, p. 132.

⁶³ Tubach, p. 523.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

influence of the new urban society: avarice / profit; demand / supply; the market economy; merchants selling goods, labour and time (time being a gift from God and therefore belonging to the whole community; as such its sale is new). This helps to explain why the author of the first *Vie* places usury at the top of his list of the most reprehensible sins. Peters notes that '[urban penitents] made charitable donations to make recompense for the sins associated with participation in the new urban-centered cash economy, especially usury'.⁶⁵ Alms is the price to pay to open the gates of heaven and this is reflected in both *exempla* and pious tales of the thirteenth century. Lust loses its place as the most reviled evil since, in an urban context, sex became a form of trade. Peters adds that 'the rise of the merchant in a society previously dominated by the knight squarely confronted avarice and charity in disputation and action with as much force, or perhaps more, as pride and humility. Thus the theme of almsgiving is mentioned much more than pride as a theme in the *exempla*.'⁶⁶ Whatever the case may be, it is incontestable that the first *Vie* reflects the concerns of the *exempla* from which much of its action is inspired and the society for which it was produced. It is essential to remember, however, that the form and content of *exempla* were shaped by ecclesiastical edict, living conditions, the society for which they were intended and by the whole range of experiences of the preacher and the audience. This was also the case for the tales of the first *Vie*. It is possible to view *exempla* as a 'mirror of life', and although they may well be an invaluable source of information about what life was really like for the masses in the Middle Ages, they remain propaganda and need to be read with care. The very fact that they were written down should alert the modern reader to the dual nature of these short narratives. They were undoubtedly intended to satisfy a taste for romance and myth but also to open up a world of Christian legend that would please the audience and prove invaluable to the Church in its quest for authority. The *exempla* and pious tales tell the Christian story in terms familiar to listeners but there is always a subtext. *Exempla* were intended to entertain: 'Toute proportions gardées et avec les précautions qui s'imposent, c'est un fait que *l'exemplum* très souvent acquiert plus de relief dans l'esprit de l'auditeur que la morale illustrée par lui, comme les spots publicitaires se fixent davantage dans la mémoire que le nom du produit à

⁶⁵ op. cit., p. 114.

⁶⁶ ibid. Peters also notes that 'preaching of this period vehemently condemned avarice and the forms of injustice associated with it. Signs of a developing Christian moral consciousness on behalf of the poor were expressed concerning almsgiving and charity. The *exempla* reflected an increase of lay involvement in religion, and sharply criticized unworthy clerics', p. vi.

promouvoir.⁶⁷ Quite to what extent this is true in the first *Vie* depends on the narrative. When the narrative is lively, it remains in the memory longer than the moral; however, tales such as *Demi-ami*, that take the moral as a *point fixe* in the narrative, certainly succeed in leaving their moral teaching imprinted in the minds of the audience. It should be noted, therefore, that the use of entertaining stories and apparently realistic action was a deliberate act: ‘Pour parvenir à cette fin [ie. the teaching of the moral], pour faciliter l’action persuasive de son sermon, le prédicateur du 13e siècle s’accoutume à l’idée qu’il lui est loisible d’user de toutes les armes qu’il a à sa disposition. A côté de l’héritage du “faire peur”, on découvre désormais aussi le potentiel du “faire rire”, encore que le premier ait plus souvent pris le dessus, il est vrai.’⁶⁸ So, rather than the *exempla* favouring ‘literary’ or ‘artistic’ treatment, it is in fact essential that the preacher use narrative forms and devices familiar to his audience. This is an important point to bear in mind when reading didactic medieval texts such as *exempla* and the first *Vie*: they are indeed ‘mirrors of life’, but not necessarily of those who play out their narratives. Rather, the world is seen very much through the eyes of the poet and the preacher: ‘Pour hasardeux que fût ce terrain, il importait à une prédication à vocation populaire de se concentrer sur le familier, le quotidien de l’homme moyen en se penchant sur les modes de pensée et les préoccupations des divers états sociaux auxquelles elle pouvait avoir à s’adresser.’⁶⁹

D’Avray has commented that the most significant development in thirteenth-century preaching was that in previous eras the preachers were ill-equipped to make use of the material available to aid them.⁷⁰ The efforts of the Fourth Lateran Council and, especially, the flowering of the mendicant orders produced more educated preachers and more accessible preaching aids. Portable preaching aids that included written, concrete texts - providing a degree of centralization - allied to the increasing mobility of the preachers gave the Church a new weapon in its battle to assert orthodoxy. The Church could also take over the penitential preaching that had largely been practised by hermits, giving itself a practical monopoly in the administration of confession. The demands of an increasingly educated laity also contributed to ‘a bridging of cultural gaps’⁷¹ that, in

⁶⁷ Horowitz and Menache, op. cit., p. 73.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 166.

⁷⁰ This seems to come full circle if Dante is to be believed in *Paradiso*, Canto XXIX, vv. 103-120.

⁷¹ D’Avray, op. cit., p. 51.

effect, improved the quality and quantity of preaching and made the thirteenth century something of a turning point in the history of the sermon.

III.iii

The Literary Tradition

At the time of the composition of the first *Vie*, the vernacular was becoming a vehicle for ideas that were previously only set down in Latin, whilst the secular vernacular tradition continued to thrive.¹ The first half of the thirteenth century saw the composition of works by Jean Bodel, Gace Brulé, Jean Renart, Richard de Fournival and Guiot de Provins, as well as the *Miracles* of Gautier de Coinci, the *Conquête de Constantinople* of Robert de Clari and the prose *Tristan* and *Lancelot*. Popular religious works included sermons, Saints' Lives and moral poems, amongst the greatest those of Hélinand de Froidmont and Thibaut de Marly.² The *Poème Moral*, set nominally in ancient Egypt, was the most popular hagiographic text, giving examples of repentant sinners and from which preachers could have drawn material.³ There were translations and commentaries on the Bible, but, argues Payen, with the exception of Robert de Gretham's *Evangelies des domées* and Guillaume le Clerc's *Besant de Dieu*, these are of little literary interest.⁴ Secular works adopted a religious tone or, at least, a religious inspiration: 'C'est la littérature dite profane qui retrouve le plus aisément le ton et l'esprit de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament'.⁵ Lyric poetry, the *exempla*, descriptions of the Otherworld, moralising texts, fables, Saints' Lives, even *fabliaux* that respect the values of thirteenth-century society all reflect individual professions of faith. It was of course accepted in the Middle Ages that literature could be reworked, and the assumption that a re-working represents an improvement is of modern origins; medieval authors would change and re-work to adapt a text to a new function.

¹ It might be argued that the time of the first *Vie* produced, generally speaking, fewer moralising works than when the second and third *Vies* were composed; if research can prove this, the more staid nature of the later *Vies* might be more easily explained.

² Born in 1160, Hélinand wrote the *Vers de la Mort* between 1194 and 1197; but he lived at least to the age of 60.

³ The *Poème moral*, a text of less 'literary' merit than the first *Vie*, nonetheless shares the same paradox: those who stay in the world and conquer the temptations of the flesh are more heroic than monks.

⁴ Guillaume le Clerc, *Besant de Dieu*, ed. E. Martin, Halle: Niemeyer, 1869. This work dates from 1210 or 1211; Robert de Gretham, *Evangelies des domées*, partial edition by S. Panunzio in *Le Miroir*, Bari, 1974.

⁵ Payen, *La Littérature française*, p. 195.

There is a typological confusion surrounding the *récit bref* that appears even more clouded than that for other medieval genres. The whole question of genre is something of an 'old chestnut' that returns to haunt every new generation of medievalists working in the literary sphere: it is not, thankfully, central to the present study. Attaching a modern label to works composed in the Middle Ages is all well and good as an intellectual exercise, but it teaches us little about how the works were conceived or perceived by their author and intended audience. What is certain is that medieval authors did not recognize the same literary and stylistic parameters as do their twentieth-century counterparts: an author may write in any number of different ways - such as Rutebeuf and Jean Bodel - and remain a respected figure; of Bodel, L. Rossi notes that 'les distinctions entre l'écrivain "sérieux", auteur du poème épique, du miracle et des congés et le "rimailleur léger", auteur des fabliaux, ne sont qu'une supposition inutile (très difficile à conjurer, d'ailleurs) de la critique moderne'.⁶ Nor did medieval authors *attach* too much importance to the name given to any one work: if what makes an epic an epic is fairly unambiguous, there is more doubt as to the necessary elements of a romance; the essential nature of even a *lai* can appear crystal clear in comparison to the *conte*, *dit*, *fabliau*, *fable* and *essample* - but these are modern concerns.⁷ Marie de France frequently speaks of her *Fables* as *esemples*, of her *Lais* as *contes* and

⁶L. Rossi, 'L'Oeuvre de Jean Bodel et le renouveau des littératures romanes', *Romania*, 112 (1991), 312-60, p. 326.

⁷This is not to say that the topic is without interest. For a thoughtful and erudite examination of the question of genre in the *récit bref*, the starting point should be: J.-C. Payen, 'Lai, fabliau, exemplum, roman court: pour une typologie du récit bref au XIIe et XIIIe siècles', pp. 7-23 in *Le Récit bref au Moyen Age: Actes du colloque d'Amiens de 1979*, ed. D. Buschinger, Amiens: Université de Picardie / Champion, 1980. Payen accepts that the question is a modern one: 'Ce n'est pas dans la terminologie littéraire médiévale qu'est sensible la différence entre les genres; la distinction ne s'entrevoit qu'en cours de la lecture, lorsqu' intervient l'art de conter' (p. 9). See also his discussion of the *Lai de l'ombre*, pp. 12-15. M.J. Stearns Schenck, in her article 'Narrative structure in the *exemplum*, *fabliau* and the *nouvelle*', *Romanic Review*, 72 (1981), 367-82, notes that the *fabliaux* are not mere amplifications of *exempla* since they add 'narrative elements which alter the meaning and thus the point of reference of the text' (p. 374). P. Zumthor concludes that the more or less haphazard use of terms such as *estoire*, *lai*, *conte*, *fable*, *fablel*, *fabliau*, *exemple* and *dit* by medieval authors renders impossible the adoption of a static principle of classification by modern scholars, cf. 'Classes and genres in medieval literature', pp. 27-36 in *A Medieval French Miscellany*, ed. N. Lacy, Lawrence: University of Kansas Publications, 1972; cf. also Id., *Histoire littéraire de la France médiévale*, Paris: PUF, 1954, p. 239. For a direct comparison of two tales see A. Bertholot, 'Anti-Miracle et anti-fabliau', *Romania*, 106 (1985), 399-419. M. Zink, finally, in 'Le temps du récit et la mise en scène du narrateur dans le fabliau et dans l'exemplum', pp. 27-44 in *La Nouvelle - genèse, codification et rayonnement d'un genre médiéval*, ed. M. Picone, G. Di Stefano & P.D. Stewart, Montréal: Plato Academic Press, 1983, believes the *fabliau* and *exemplum* to mark the earliest treatment of contemporary subjects in medieval narrative literature - twelfth-century literature being very much a literature of the past - and, as such, they belong to the same tradition.

aventures,⁸ the *Conte du Graal* is a romance and the *Lay du Lecheor* more of a *fabliau*! M. Zink has commented that in the Middle Ages terminology meant little: '*Fabula* désigne n'importe quelle fiction, *conte* n'importe quel récit et le récit de n'importe quoi, *histoire* a une valeur plus générale encore, *nuga* est dépréciatif, *lai* et *dit* s'appliquent à des formes poétiques et ne préjugent d'aucun contenu.'⁹ Even Payen, in an essay that searches to clarify the issue of typology, freely mixes the terms *récit pieux* and *conte dévot*.¹⁰ Although it is blatantly untrue to say that there was no concept of genre in the Middle Ages¹¹ - the *aventure* being one easily recognizable type - the strict categorization of authors and works into clearly defined groups is a very modern concern.

Herpin comments that 'le conte dévot est une sorte de leçon, à la fois morale et religieuse, un sermon orné. La composition ordonnée, on peut même dire compassée, témoigne du travail réfléchi d'un clerc.'¹² The *conte pieux* was perhaps aimed at the masses in the sermon tradition, although it seems more likely to have appealed to the bourgeois and others who so enjoyed the *fabliaux*. The line between the two genres is a fine one: 'Beaucoup des récits tirés de la *Vie des Pères* sont en réalité d'authentiques *fabliaux*, même s'ils sont orientés vers une finalité édifiante: ainsi l'histoire de *Merlin-Merlot*.'¹³ The fable tradition was already ancient in the Middle Ages, and although fables do contain a certain practical wisdom, they look at nature without seeking a great

⁸See for example *Del leün e de la suriz*, v. 45, *Guigemar*, v. 19, *Laüstic*, v. 1.

⁹M. Zink, 'La littérature médiévale et l'invitation au conte', pp. 1-9 in *Réception et identification du conte depuis le Moyen Age*, ed. M. Zink & X. Ravier, Toulouse: Service des Publications UTM, 1987, p. 3. For the derivation of *fabliau* from *fable*, and a discussion of ways in which the terms were used in the Middle Ages, see P. Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux: étude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique médiévale*, Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1957, pp. 3ff.

¹⁰ Payen, 'Lai, fabliau, exemplum', art. cit.

¹¹ Gehrke can represent a common school of thought that appears unsure of the question: 'I think it highly unlikely that the generic distinction between miracles and other pious tales would be remarked discursively in this period', *Saints and Scribes*, p. 127.

¹² Herpin, *Copeaux*, p. 9. Commenting on the style of *Copeaux*, Herpin notes that 'l'auteur est sans cesse présent [...] pour prendre directement à partie l'interlocuteur dans une sorte de corps à corps entre l'homme de Dieu et le pécheur. Tout prédicateur recherche ce contact qui n'est pas du *moi* au *toi*, mais du *je* au *vous*, qui marque d'une part l'obligation morale et l'autorité de celui qui parle et d'autre part ne laisse pas à l'auditeur le confort d'un récit objectif qui ne le concernerait pas' (p. 11).

¹³ Payen, *La Littérature française*, p. 180. J. Joubert believes that the distinction between *fabliau* and *conte* is one of realism versus imaginary, myth and *merveilleux*, cf. *Fabliaux et contes du Moyen Age*, pp. 45-46.

spiritual meaning;¹⁴ Marie de France's *Fables* could well be seen as stories being told simply for pleasure. Payen makes a telling point in his explanation of medieval tastes: 'Les gens du Moyen Age ont, contrairement à ce qu'on croit, horreur du cours magistral abstrait et théorique, et ne s'intéressent aux sermons que si ceux-ci s'appuient sur une expérience quotidienne.'¹⁵ The *contes pieux* found in the first *Vie* are written in the same form as the *lai* and the *fabliau* - octosyllabic rhyming couplets - and tend to keep dogmatic moralising to a relative minimum. This is in keeping with the style of the *Chevalier au Barisel*, an *exemplum* that nevertheless had 'un désir manifeste d'éviter tout ce qui pourrait ressembler, même de loin, à un sermon ou à un enseignement direct'.¹⁶ Payen has noted that 'l'Eglise, ne pouvant entraver l'essor de lettres non latines, l'utilise [...] à son profit: le roman dévot et le conte pieux sont deux moyens de canaliser le folklore et de l'intégrer à la catéchèse', and he cites the *Vie des Pères* as a good example of an author achieving, 'avec plus ou moins de bonheur, ce mariage entre les deux cultures'.¹⁷

¹⁴The fable has been described by A. Strubel as a fixed point because of its 'ancienneté et une certaine stabilité', but does this necessarily mean that its nature was constant throughout the medieval period? Cf. 'Exemple, fable, parabole: le récit bref au Moyen Age', *Le Moyen Age*, 94 (1988), 337-61, p. 346.

¹⁵ 'Lai, fabliau, exemplum', p. 185.

¹⁶Aubailly, op. cit., p. 212.

¹⁷Payen, *La Littérature française*, p. 35.

III.iv

The 'Branche' Tradition

The *Vie des Pères* consists of three distinctive parts that would appear to have been considered 'definitive' once they were put together; for, if tales were borrowed from the collection or put in a different order, they seem not to have been reworked or copied individually. An examination of the contents of the manuscripts containing *contes* from the first *Vie*, as described by Spencer-Ellis, gives the following information: of the 42 manuscripts he details, 25 contain over 40 of the 41 tales of the first *Vie*; 10 contain over 30 tales; 3 contain over 20 tales, leaving just four manuscripts in which fewer than 20 tales are copied. This provides very strong evidence that the tales were intended to be recorded and read together.¹⁸

When giving a research seminar at the University of Hull on the *Vie des Pères*, I found the definition of the text in the title of my paper extremely problematic. It seemed prudent to opt for the French word *recueil*, meaning collective or composite text or, by extension, a group of autonomous narratives. In English, however, the alternatives all seem to lead to ambiguity: *series*, *collection*, *anthology*, *compendium*, *cycle*, *compilation*... The references that the author makes to his sources show that his work is in part that of a compiler, and the variety of sources cited make the *Vie des Pères* something of an anthology. Ironically, the most satisfying definitions of the *Vie des Pères* are the borrowed nouns *corpus* and *ensemble*, but these are not entirely satisfactory either since they do not necessarily convey the notion of the careful and deliberate putting together and personalisation of material. Suggestions of similar textual *corporea* made on an e-mail discussion list illustrate that the confusion (or ignorance) surrounding the *Vie des Pères* was once again apparent: contributors suggested that the romances of Chrétien de Troyes and their continuations, the Guillaume d'Orange epic cycle, the Lancelot-Grail Vulgate cycle and the *Roman de Renart* are all of a similar genre, in composition at least, to the *Vie des Pères*. But the

¹⁸Spencer-Ellis lists the tales of the first *Vie* for each manuscript on pp. 52-69. For a brief description of the MSS of the *Vie des Pères* and references to more detailed studies, see Lecoy's edition, pp. xvi-xix.

Vie des Pères is not a cycle. Donald Maddox¹⁹ has listed recurrent constructs that form what he calls 'cyclic signals' as: characters; events; motifs; episodes; episodic organization; and idiomatic usages (such as formulæ, figures, tropes, etc). Clearly, the *Vie des Pères* does not respond to such criteria. There is certainly a thematic coherence to the three branches of the *Vie des Pères*, and a coherence in the didactic intentions of the tales, although the second and especially third *Vies* are not of the same contritionist nature as the tales of the first *Vie*. The development of the text over time and a coherence of intention are not enough to justify the labelling of the *Vie des Pères* as a cycle. This is a multi-layered text of considerable complexity, and the generic terms *collection* and *series* hardly do it justice. First, there are the tales themselves. These are self-contained units that are preceded by a prologue and end with an epilogue or *queue*. The tales could be read individually and in any order, but my research and that of Spencer-Ellis suggests a definite structuring on the part of the author, and this structure shows the tales to be interdependent if they are to be understood at another level: the first *Vie* is in effect a manifesto that aims to bring the faithful to confession, the second and third *Vies* are illustrations of the glories of the Virgin.²⁰

¹⁹D. Maddox, 'Notes toward a more comprehensive approach to medieval literary cycles', pp. 102-107 in *Cyclification. The Development of Narrative Cycles in the Chansons de Gestes and Arthurian Romances*, ed. B. Besamusca, W.P. Gerritsen, C. Hogetoorn & O.S.H. Lie, Amsterdam: Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts & Sciences, 1994 (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen; deel 159).

²⁰ The first set of tales was added to on two different occasions, but there is little crossover of content in later manuscripts: despite an obvious attempt by the author of the second *Vie* to link his work thematically to the earlier corpus by retaining hermits and recluses as characters, the manuscripts reflect the nature of the new material by introducing the second *Vie* as *la Vie des pères et les miracles de Nostre Dame la mère Jhesucrist*. If the prologues and epilogues of the collections and the tales reflect the *author's* recognition of these multi-layered units, the rubrics and *explicit*s in each manuscript can tell us something of the *scribe's* attitude towards the text he was copying and hence are of similar interest. It might be argued that the mendicant sympathies of the second *Vie* make it a ready-made collection of sermons with concordant stories and homilies that were directly accessible to the general public, and at first glance this appears plausible, given that the second *Vie* has a general prologue to the collection, but shorter introductions before each tale, replacing the substantial individual prologues of the first *Vie*. However, Michel Zink has excluded from the sermon tradition texts that are not sermons in technique, that are too long to be 'preachable', that are found in manuscripts under the title 'book', or that are translations of Latin works which themselves are not sermons. The second - and for that matter the third - *Vies* are clearly excluded from the sermon tradition according to these criteria (M. Zink, 'Les Destinataires des recueils de sermons en langue vulgaire au XIIe et au XIIIe siècle. Prédication effective et prédication dans un fauteuil', pp.59-74 in *La Piété populaire au moyen âge, Actes du 99e Congrès national des sociétés savantes*, (Besançon, 1974), Paris: C.T.H.S., 1977, p. 69). The third *Vie* is heavily devoted to Virgin miracles and has little in common with the first *Vie*, but still it is to be found copied out with the first and second *Vies*, and the three branches together are known collectively as *la Vie des Pères*, the third layer of our multi-layered text. At each stage of the text's development the previous *ensembles* were considered as a whole, and there are none of the complicated branches associated with another

With such a large number of autonomous tales, it is clearly not possible to put forward a hypothesis of order and structure based solely on thematic evidence, as is commonly the case with the *Lais* of Marie de France. Another complication is that in the manuscripts containing the *Vie des Pères* the order of the later tales varies considerably; but it is important to take into account that we are dealing with a very large number of tales, a 'supercomposition', that was put together in three different stages and over a fairly long period of time. This, and the large number of manuscripts involved, leaves considerable opportunity for error and adaptation; indeed, in the circumstances, it is surprising that there are not *more* significant differences between the various versions of the text. This provides very strong evidence that whilst the internal structure of the corpus may be altered, for political, practical or stylistic reasons, compilers of manuscripts were reluctant to add to or take away significantly from what they surely recognised as a whole. The tales seem not to have been reworked or copied out individually and were intended to be recorded and read together. The first layer of the *Vie des Pères* is therefore the tales themselves, clearly meant to be independent units and close to the *exemplum* tradition; but these are not 'traditional' *exempla*, since they are copied out in their entirety and are intended to be read and enjoyed for their own sake, rather than be integrated into some larger work. If these pious tales were considered as *exempla*, they might be expected to fall into the same tradition as *exempla* collections and be randomly chosen, put together alphabetically and/or be borrowed individually in order to illustrate a particular point. The *Metaphorae* or *Contes Moralisés* of the Anglo-Norman Franciscan Nicholas Bozon can be considered as belonging to the same tradition as *exempla* collections, since they include thematically arranged rubrics that provide a practical manual for sermon making. The extent to which the tales from the *Vie des Pères* could be adapted, however, seems very limited, and although most of the anecdotes recounted in the text are to be found elsewhere, this is usually not in the particular form devised by our author. Groups of tales appear to be

frequently added-to work, the *Roman de Renart*, which is a lay narrative with a common trunk to which episodes could be added. In fact, the *Vie des Pères* is not a frequently added-to work, but a text that at its most complicated and diverse is an entanglement of like elements with a beginning, a middle and an end, which fired the imagination of the Middle Ages and that was added to in a copycat but universally accepted format.

thematically linked and as a consequence inform each other, and prologues and epilogues comment not only on the themes^{of} their particular tale but on the wider moral purpose of the text as a whole. The fact that the reader of the text could chose to read the tales in any order does not exclude an attempt to structure the text: the perception of medieval texts could differ at the various stages of composition, copying and reception. The twists and turns of a reading of the first *Vie* may alter according to the path the reader chooses to follow, but the tales collectively still lead to an identical finishing post. Tubach's definition of his fourth category of *exempla* collections rather confusingly moves us both towards and away from a text such as the first *Vie*: 'Collections of exempla serving as source material to the medieval preacher, but which are in fact independent tale collections separable from sermon use.'²¹

Structure is a thorny issue in texts such as the first *Vie* (and the *Vie des Pères* as a 'whole'). What the modern reader should bear in mind is that, if a manuscript could be consciously assembled in an order obviously chosen for some reason but outside modern categorization - which was undoubtedly the case - might this not also be true of the *Vie des Pères*, a collection of apparently disparate material, made into tales and both brought and kept together for reasons that the modern scholar cannot absolutely identify? It is surely an anachronism to set out looking for a 'well-defined structure' when the meaning of this expression is so obviously modern. Vernacular texts aimed at an audience were perhaps less 'well-defined' than Latin ones that were aimed at an audience that might not necessarily need or require or appreciate the mentality of codification, system-building and indexing. Gehrke has noted that in the absence of generic distinctions - a notion, it should be added, that might easily be disputed - a manuscript can be characterized with reference to the audience's implied problems and interests: 'Rather than collecting specific texts or types of texts, it appears that the scribe sought material to serve a particular function and included whatever he found suitable to that function regardless of genre.'²² The function of the tales assembled in the first *Vie*

²¹ Tubach, p. 520.

²² Gehrke, *Saints and Scribes*, p. 162.

is undoubtedly to promote confession and, in Gehrke's terms, this lends the text complete cohesion. This is a notion that the modern reader must simply accept.

Spencer-Ellis has applied the term 'branche' tradition to these tales, given that they have been grouped together and considered as a whole. Although this choice of term is misleading, given its association with the *Roman de Renart* and manuscript tradition, it would indeed appear that the *Vie des Pères* belongs to a tradition hardly recognized by modern scholarship.²³ A. Strubel has hinted at the increased meaning of a collection over the individual parts that constitute it in stating that 'le récit figuré bref, pour l'élaboration de son sens dérivé, pose deux sortes de problèmes: internes, dans la mesure où chaque type utilise différemment les principes de l'induction et de l'analogie; externes, parce que le texte n'est pas totalement autonome et appartient à un système signifiant qui le dépasse. L'importance de l'ensemble est inversement proportionnelle à l'efficacité des procédés de l'unité élémentaire'.²⁴ There are a number of texts that are 'enclosed', and are obviously intended to be seen as a whole, even though the individual *contes* could be read as separate entities, often structured themselves with introduction and / or *queue*: Adgar's *Gracial*, the first vernacular version of Miracles of the Virgin, has a Prologue and an Epilogue that enclose its 49 miracles and suggest that the author had indeed some concept of 'genre'. Kunstmann has indicated that the miracles are not in their original order, but this does not prejudice the view that this collection was intended to be conserved in more or less its present form. In the prologue Adgar discusses the name of his work:

Cest livre a nun 'Gracial' (v. 3)

Pur ço est 'Gracial' numez
cest escrit, si l'apelerez (vv. 46-47)²⁵

The epilogue indicates that what has gone before is to be considered as a whole:

²³The *Roman de Renart* is a lay narrative punctuated by episodes; it consists of a central trunk to which episodes could be added. On the other hand, the *Vie des Pères* is a work with a beginning, a middle and an end.

²⁴A. Strubel, art. cit., p. 346.

²⁵ed. cit.

Cest escrit fine, Deu merci (v. 1)

The author makes it clear that the whole is more than the sum of its parts, and there is a distinct thematic link, namely the Virgin. The collection of early fourteenth-century moral *exempla* known as *Ci nous dit* - of which there are 781 - may well be a composite and heterogenous collection with an easy reference table, but its author and/or copiers still refer to it as *ce livre*, placing a general prologue before the text (*Vezci un livre...*) and a general closing device at the end.²⁶ Another collection of pious stories that would fall into this tradition is the *Tombel de Chartrose*, a *recueil* also dating from the fourteenth century.²⁷ The *Fables* of Marie de France are similarly grouped together as a whole, linked by the themes of justice and transgression. The 102 fables are enclosed by a prologue and an epilogue, yet there are repeated opening and closing devices for almost every fable, giving the constituent parts a degree of autonomy. Marie makes it clear in her prologue that these tales come as a group:

Si comenceraï la premiere
Des fables ke Esopus escrist (Prologue vv. 38-39)²⁸

she makes it clear that there are several to follow,

Al finement de cest escrit,
Que en romanz ai treitié et dit,
Me numerai pur remembrance (Epilogue vv. 1-3)

and indicates that the 102 fables were just one *escrit*, a notion repeated - *cest livre* - in vv. 11 and 13 of the epilogue.

Marie de France's *Lais* were also considered as a collection at the time of their composition. Unified as they are by the theme of justice, transgression and salvation,

²⁶ *Ci Nous dit*, ed. G. Blangez, Paris: SATF, I, 1979, II, 1986.

²⁷ *18 contes français tirés du recueil intitulé 'Le Tombel de Chartrose'*, édités avec variantes et précédés d'une introduction par E. Kooiman, Amsterdam: Academische Pers, 1975; *Trois contes français du XIV^e siècle tirés du recueil intitulé 'Le Tombel de Chartrose'*, Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1982.

²⁸ Marie de France, *Fables*, selected & edited by A. Ewert & R.C. Johnston, Oxford: Blackwell, 1942.

few scholars would argue that this is not a collection, despite the absence of a formal epilogue and the fact that all twelve *Lais* are only conserved together in a single manuscript. In the prologue there are at least four clear indications that the tales are a carefully structured and ordered whole:

Pur ceo començai a penser
De aukune bone estoire faire (vv. 28-29)²⁹

She sought to collate her source material,

M'entremis des lais assembler
Par rime faire e raconter (vv. 47-48)

she wanted to tell all the tales she had heard,

Plusurs en ai oï conter,
Ne[s] voil laisser nē oblier (vv. 39-40)

and she offers ‘them’ to her patron:

Se vos les plaist a receveir (v. 51)

An examination of the miracles edited by P. Kunstmann in *Treize miracles de Notre Dame tirés du ms BN fr. 2094*,³⁰ suggests that here is another but incomplete collection falling in the same tradition. The epilogue, although probably citing a confused number of miracles, and possibly composed by the scribe, quite clearly illustrates the intention to present a whole:

Por ce de mon livre fais fin.
Trente miracles sont escrites
En ces livre, que granz que petites,
Et dis autres contes ancore
Atant la fin vos en fais ore (vv. 4-8)

This is not the case for Gautier de Coinci's miracles, however. They have come to be considered as a whole because they share the same author and are preserved in almost

²⁹ Marie de France, *Lais*, ed. A. Ewert, Oxford: Blackwell, 1978 (1st ed. 1944).

³⁰ P. Kunstmann, *Treize miracles de Notre Dame tirés du ms BN fr. 2094*, Ottawa: Editions de l'Université d'Ottawa, 1981.

80 manuscripts, but they lack the obvious indications of a unified, collective text that are noted above. Each miracle is a single unit of anecdote plus moral, but there is little evidence to suggest that, when composed, the aim was to produce a cohesive and definitive whole. In another tradition, the *fabliaux* represent an amorphous mass of material, often sharing common themes, motifs and intentions, but composed by many different authors over a long period of time and never considered (or intended to be) a 'whole'.

The *Vie des Pères* groups together more constituent parts than any of the collections mentioned above with the exception of Marie's *Fables*, some of which are very short. Although it could be argued that some of the numerous interpolations in the manuscripts that contain the *Vie des Pères* were - erroneously? - intended to be added to the work, it has been sufficiently established by Spencer-Ellis that 73 of the 74 tales were ordered in a logical and intentional way. Whereas the *Roman de Renart* consists of a central core to which were added a good number of new episodes over a long period of time, the *Vie des Pères*, even at its most complicated and diverse, is only an entanglement of like elements. So, in A, at the end of *conte* 74 on folio 153 verso, at the bottom of column b, is written *Explicit la vie des peres*. Schwan noted that the tales of the first *Vie* were self-contained, with individual contemplative prologues and epilogues that contain the moral, whereas the subsequent *Vies* have no individual prologues; on the other hand, they are preceded by a general prologue. In the First *Vie* the reader comes across *mon dit* (v. 30), and the author makes it plain that he is about to tell of the *lives* of the 'fathers' in the plural:

Des peres anciens vos cont (v. 51)

De mal n'ont garde ne de paine
k'en paradis herbegié sont,
et c'est de cels dont je vos cont (vv. 66-68)

Ave maria does not begin with a prologue, and the author says so, obviously noting the contrast between this and all of the other tales in the first *Vie*:

Encore ne me puis je tere
de ces cortesies retreire

ne de ces vertus raconter
 qar ci emprés vos vuel conter,
 sanz prologue et sanz sermon fere,
 un miraicle d'un suen afere.
 Biax est li contes et petiz
 et si est assez briement diz.

(vv. 7404-11)

The second *Vie*, in Arsenal 3641 (S), begins with the rubric: *Ci est li prologues de la vie des peres et des miracles Nostre Dame la mere Jhesucrist*. All but one tale has an epilogue, and almost half some sort of formalized introduction. Three factors, namely the choice of biblical references, the clear didactic intent, and the explanatory epilogues, have led Spencer-Ellis to conclude that 'the second *Vie des Pères* is revealed as a mendicant collection, which is not merely a source of *exempla* or sermon ideas, but rather a ready-made collection of sermons with concordant stories and homilies which were directly accessible to the target audience: the general public'.³¹ The tales of the third *Vie* have introductions rather than prologues; however, Spencer-Ellis' research and consequent re-numbering of the *contes* have revealed that there is indeed a general prologue - preceding *Enfant pieux* - to the entire collection. This prologue, transcribed by Spencer-Ellis from u on p. 284 of his thesis, is also to be found preceding *Vilain* in A. A general epilogue has equally been revealed by Spencer-Ellis' work: it follows *Haleine* in u, and exists in abbreviated form in A.

There are a number of reasons that could explain the different *conte* orders and incomplete versions of the collection, scribal considerations being especially likely. If two scribes were working on the same manuscript at the same time it might well prove impractical or impossible to retain exactly the same order as the original, and if this 'contaminated' manuscript were by chance to become the base copy in a scriptorium the mistakes may never be rectified. Financial or political considerations, the provision of writing materials or the 'theme' of the manuscript as a whole; whatever the reasons for the omission of a tale or its repositioning - almost always, *en passant*, enclosed within its 'original' *branche* - it is likely that it was through considerations 'literary' or practical in nature rather than theological. And can the *Vie des Pères* be considered as a whole if tales are missing? In some manuscripts the same tale(s) is/are contained twice,

³¹ Spencer-Ellis, p. 246.

but if Spencer-Ellis's renumbering is to be accepted - and it is certainly very convincing - there are a good number of manuscripts that follow the same order with little or no variation. We must also take into account that we are dealing with a very large number of tales - a 'supercomposition' - and a large number of manuscripts. The text was put together in three different stages and over a long period of time, thus leaving considerable opportunity for error. Then there is the question of patronage: who commissioned a particular manuscript, and why? Can this explain the particular order of *contes* in any one manuscript or at any one time? The practical constraints - shortening/lengthening tales according to space left, or desire not to repeat a tale that might have been copied earlier in the manuscript in a different form or context, or the budget of the patron, or illustrative concerns - must also be born in mind. The manuscript itself could well have been a thematically structured whole, as is argued recently by Pamela Gehrke,³² and so any number of considerations could explain the retention or non-retention of a particular *conte*. At any rate, even if small details of a particular anecdote differ from manuscript to manuscript, the essence of the tale - the message that Payen describes as 'profondément contritionniste'³³ - is always the same.

As stated above, if the *contes pieux* were considered as *exempla*, they would fall into the same tradition as *exempla* collections and might therefore be borrowed individually to illustrate a particular point or be accompanied by some evidence of indexing. This would make it likely that tales were systematically selected as manuscripts were tailored to meet the needs of an individual patron. Nicholas Bozon's *Contes Moralisés* can be seen in the same tradition as *exempla* collections, since they include thematically arranged rubrics that provide a practical manual for sermon making. There appears to be no recognised pattern or hierarchy at play in the selection of the tales of the first *Vie*. It is possible, therefore, that the nineteenth and twentieth-century scholars who edited individual tales - and whose work we applaud in

³² Gehrke, *Saints and Scribes*. Considerably more illuminating on this issue is likely to be Keith Busby's forthcoming work on manuscripts that contain the *fabliaux*, as presented in a seminar hosted by the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University, 8 December, 1997.

³³ Payen, p. 516. Michel Zink has noted that vernacular sermons tend not to be contritionist, even if tears and works have a certain importance; he argues that, for the uneducated masses, moral recommendations and precise, concrete advice on everyday matters were included to replace the *intériorisé* message of their Latin counterparts, *La Prédication en langue romane*, p. 440.

this study - have only served, in the long term, to put back the recognition of this 'branche tradition' in divorcing the tales from their context. We are clearly in the presence of a text whose whole is more than the sum of its parts. The tale as a unit is perfectly autonomous, with its own beginning, middle and end, but when it belongs to a more significant whole it loses some of its individuality and adds to the overall meaning of the system in place. Marie-Louise Ollier has suggested that the format of the short narrative is too brief to enable the exposition of a global model, but when put together in some sort of framework these same narratives can pass on a more profound message. Ollier suggests that the *Decameron*, *The Seven Sages of Rome*, the *Quinze Joies de Mariage* and the *Disciplina Clericalis* all have a narrative framework that establishes a link between each different element of the text.³⁴ She could also have given the *Vie des Pères* as a key member of any 'enclosed' text tradition.

Unity, integrity of structure, internal logic - these are the factors that characterise the *Lais*, *Fables*, *Gracial* and first *Vie*. It is not insignificant in this respect that in his edition Lecoy has numbered the *vers* concurrently rather than as individual tales, even though the order of the tales in his base manuscript (f) is flawed.³⁵ The unifying theme of the text might be seen to be as general as a call to praise God, given the differing natures of the three collections; it might be possible to be more precise, since the tales all contain elements that reflect the motif of improvement; but either represents a unifying theme.³⁶ The first *Vie*, however, is united in tone and in its message, as can be seen in the individual commentaries in Part Two. There is in fact a thematic chain

³⁴M.-L. Ollier, 'Le recueil comme forme. A propos des *Lais* de Marie de France', pp. 65-83 in *Der Ursprung von Literatur. Medien, Rollen, Kommunikationssituation zwischen 1450 und 1650*, Munich: 1988.

³⁵ This is not the case for the *Lais* and *Fables* nor for the *Gracial*, but arguably should be, given that the motif of improvement or the call to praise God both represent unifying themes. Collections of *Ysopets* tend to be numbered individually, but Claire Isoz's edition of Sanson de Nanteuil's late 12th-century translation and commentary on the *Book of Proverbs* (*Les Proverbes de Salemon by Sanson de Nanteuil*, ed. C. Isoz, London: A.N.T.S., 1988-94 (Anglo Norman Texts 44, 45, 50)) is indeed numbered continuously, recognising this composite work as a whole. An element of functionality is present in all of these works, but we are not in the same tradition as the *exempla* and other collections that are simple *aide-mémoires*. What is more, many of the manuscripts that contain the *Vie des Pères* are comparatively rich volumes with ample and ornate illustrations. They are much more likely to have belonged to the collection of a wealthy bibliophile than serve as functional reference instruments.

³⁶Jules Renard's *Histoires naturelles* and Julian Barnes' *A History of the World in 10 1/2 Chapters* are modern works written in the same 'tradition', where the whole is more than the sum of its parts. The unifying theme of the former is uncomplicated, and of the latter somewhat less evident but nonetheless apparent.

running through much of the text and is especially apparent the first dozen-or-so tales. The prologues of the early tales tend to repeat the lesson of^a previous tale, and *Fou* does so in the body of the narrative. The first tales^æ a sort of *échantillon* of themes / motifs / motives / miracles / situations / etc. They appear to set out the stall before similar issues are considered in more detail and with variations. This scholastic approach is not unlike Chrétien's romances which represent a constant shuffling of cards: what would happen in a given situation if different decisions were taken? Virgin Miracle Collections are bound together by being *ensembles* telling the same stories and following the same pattern but 'shuffling the cards' by setting in play different protagonists, backgrounds and types of sin. If the opening tales do indeed inform the rest of the first *Vie*, this is an instance of medieval *expositio*. It also underlines the author's concern with presentation and construction. The juxtaposition of themes (eg *Sarrasine/Renieur*) and motifs; the development of themes (beginning with despair in the first tale); the variety of social backgrounds, actions and sins all point to the author experimenting with various scenarios and outcomes. Of course, this is only really a major point if the themes are then picked up again later in the text.

The first *Vie* does not appear to be rigidly ordered by theme, as, for example, are Marie's *Lais*. However, in addition to Spencer-Ellis's theory on *exempla* / miracle interplay, based on his re-ordering of the tales of the first *Vie*, certain general remarks can be made. In fact, in a very broad sense, the newly-ordered tales seem to come in thematic clusters. The text begins with *Fornication imitée*, a tale whose general teaching sets the tenor for the narratives to come: no sin is too great that God will not forgive it, but the sinner must avoid despair. Thematically, the tale pivots on two acts of sexual behaviour, one real and one imagined. The next three tales can be taken together in that they all tell of false-faith characters. There are also references to the Albigensians in *Juitel* and *Renieur*, and a call to crusade against the heretics. The following twelve tales tell of humility and pride in various guises. *Image de pierre* and *Baril* share the themes of trust, the quest and persistence. *Abbesse grosse*, *Noël* and *Vision d'enfer* examine variations of the theme of fidelity and infidelity, *Vision d'enfer* also belonging to the next cluster of four tales that examine pathways to heaven and hell: Duke Malaquin

converts from paganism, the townsfolk of *Vision de diables* renounce usury, and the king in *Païen* is baptised after death. *Païen* and *Goliard* both tell of characters' faith despite themselves and *Colombe* might also be interpreted in this way. The following four tales have fidelity as their central theme. The next ten tales, with the exception of *Demi-ami*, show evil at work, either in the form of the devil himself, the Saracen or the usurers. The final tale stresses humility and charity, as did the first. This quick interpretation of the major themes of the tales is by no means the only one possible, but it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the internal evidence, namely the frequent clustering of themes and motifs, only adds weight to Spencer-Ellis's re-ordering of the first *Vie*.

Although the composite nature of the first *Vie* and collections of other edifying tales means that they offer no easily identifiable overall and homogenous view or teaching in their narratives, there are certain constants in the prologues and epilogues of the first *Vie*: as Payen has noted, 'cette unité, nous la voyons dans une certaine conception de la vie religieuse', that is, it is the religious values of the first *Vie* that give it its unity. Payen adds that 'La *Vie des Pères* n'est pas un recueil qui préconise systématiquement le mépris du monde', which itself is a unifying factor.³⁷ The general message of each tale, although there are subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle exceptions, can be summed up in one word: confession. Spencer-Ellis notes that the references made to repentance, confession and penance 'constitute the most evident constant theme running through the teaching of the prologues and epilogues'.³⁸ The prologues and epilogues tend to preach this message quite forcefully whilst remaining linked to the narratives they enclose.³⁹ The beginnings to the tales of the first *Vie* - that is, the proverbs and sayings that introduce the prologues - are a uniting and distinguishing factor (with the exception of *Ave Maria*). Matthew's gospel provides seven introductory quotations (11, 15: *Qui oreilles a pour oïr / Oïr dot ce dont doit joïr*; repeated as *Qui*

³⁷ Payen, pp. 552, 555.

³⁸ Spencer-Ellis, p. 179.

³⁹ Spencer-Ellis - wrongly, I think - notes that there is 'no particular pattern to the lessons of the prologues' and that 'no specific emphasis' is apparent (p. 165). Thematically and poetically I believe this to misrepresent or misunderstand their function, although Spencer-Ellis is right when he applies these remarks to the author's source material: there appears to be no reason why Matthew is cited more than the other evangelists.

talent a de bien aprendre... and *Cil qui le leu vult ressembler* (adaptation of Matt. 7, 15) and *Diex de qui toutes bontez ist* (Matt. 15, 4); *L'escriture nos dit por voir* (Matt. 16, 27) and *Mauvés est qui ne guerredone* (adaptation of Matt 25, 14-30). Two openings are taken from Luke - 16, 13: *Qui a .ii. seignors volt servir* and 6, 31: *Vilains est qui fet a autrui*. Other sources include: The Book of Proverbs (*Juitel* and *Image de pierre*); St Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians (*Colombe*) and Genesis (*Prévôt d'Aquilée*). This familiarity with the Bible is certainly adapted to meet the author's needs, both thematically and poetically. Verbatim proverbs include: *Pierre volaige, Assez volt miex amis en voie; Tant grant chievre que mal gist; Viez pechiez fist novele honte; Moult est cil povre qui ne voit; Bien est gardez cil ke Diex garde*. Drawing on the authorities at his disposal, the author is able to insist upon the importance of confession and ensure that his tales retain a common purpose. He begins his collection with, *Fornication imitée*, a tale that illustrates the only sin that cannot be forgiven is despair (although *Nièce* indicates that through the intercession of a holy man even despair can be pardoned). This is the framework for the ensuing exploration of circumstances pertaining to and surrounding confession. As for an eventual comparison between the tradition of the *exempla* collection and the first *Vie*, judgement should be reserved: *exempla* collections were ordered alphabetically rather than thematically and drew on material more or less randomly chosen. This random choice of elements is also, of course, in evidence in the first *Vie*, but this text does offer a systematically structured whole. In any case, the first *Vie des Pères* includes not only *exempla* but miracles as well.

III.v

Conclusion to Chapter III

The *Vie des Pères* should not be considered merely as a collection of *exempla*; the tales are described as *contes* and written out in full, there is a unity of tone and inspiration, and the extant manuscripts that cover a period of three centuries show that there was no attempt to index the tales. A substantial amount of initiative was left to a preacher, and this severely limits our knowledge of 'live' sermons; but the first *Vie*, although obviously closely linked to the sermon tradition, seems to have been accepted as a definitive version. The fact that two new collections were added to the first *Vie* is, for present purposes, of little importance since it bears testament merely to a desire to exploit the popularity of the first collection of tales. The questions that remain, if not easier to answer, are therefore much simpler to pose: 'Who wrote the tales? Who read or used them? How? Why?', rather than 'What form might they have taken in a particular context?' In this respect there is a clear distinction between model sermon collections, *exempla* collections and the first *Vie*. The latter, standardised and with relatively minor discrepancies between different manuscript versions, appears to have been acknowledged as a definitive whole: there was an understanding of what did, and what did not, belong. A study of interpolations may prove an interesting extension of this argument, especially how they were introduced and finished.

In order to establish precise insights concerning the audience of the first *Vie* it would be useful to make a detailed examination of the entire contents of each extant manuscript that contains the collection, a study outside the scope of the present work; an exhaustive study of illustrations and rubrics may well lead to tangible evidence as to contemporary reception.⁴⁰ As for the composition and delivery of the tales, a certain number of hypotheses may be forwarded. An author of pious intent could have written down tales heard in a sermon. This would mean that, in all probability, he intended his written versions to be used / read by a preacher, quite possibly verbatim. There is a

⁴⁰ This is the next project that I intend to undertake; Cf. Appendix IX.iii to this thesis.

precedent for this: Hélinand drew on his own sermons in the composition of his *Vers de la Mort*. (In ironic circularity, Nicholas Bozon, some hundred years later, did likewise, preaching sermons on the *Vers de la Mort* which itself was derived from a sermon!) It is perhaps less likely that a *jongleur* would recount these tales, since improving works are not known to have been part of the minstrel's repertoire, but the proximity of the *conte pieux* / *fabliau* traditions, underlined throughout this thesis, does suggest that the two 'genres' were destined for the same audience.⁴¹ The author's animosity towards jongleurs will be duly noted, and muddies the waters, as does his apparent intention to become a religious; but these details comment on authorship, not performance. The socio-religious climate of the time and the ascendancy of the sermon, added to the moralising content of the first *Vie*, make it probable that this collection belonged to a bourgeois, preaching tradition and was intended to edify through telling lively and immediate tales of piety and devotion, although the *conte pieux*'s status as 'anti-fabliau' is not to be underestimated.⁴²

⁴¹ *Fabliaux, romans d'aventure* and epics were probably all told by the same *jongleur* to a courtly audience, cf. P. Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux*.

⁴² 'La *Vie des Pères*, toutes proportions gardées, témoigne d'une même mentalité que la prédication franciscaine ou la *Somme* de saint Thomas d'Aquin,' Payen, *Le Motif du repentir...* p. 544. The first *Vie* is, however, strongly sympathetic to the Cistercians.

IV

The Anonymous Author and his Audience

Une gent sont ki vont contant
de cort a autre et vont trovant
chansonetes, moz et flabiaz
por gaaignier les biaz morsiaz.
Mais je pris petit lor affaire...¹

Le récit peut être supporté par le langage articulé, oral ou écrit, par l'image, fixe ou mobile, par le geste et par le mélange ordonné de toutes ces substances; il est présent dans le mythe, la légende, la fable, le conte, la nouvelle, l'épopée, l'histoire, la tragédie, le drame, la comédie, la pantomime, le tableau peint [...], le vitrail, le cinéma, les comics, le fait divers, la conversation.²

‘[Auctorial] intention gives signification to what is written and, ultimately, determines its contribution to wisdom and knowledge, or to a specific cause or celebration.’³

A work such as the *Vie des Pères* shows up very clearly the limitations of our knowledge about medieval texts. At the confluence of various traditions - oral and written, sacred and profane, Latin and vernacular - a study of this text will inevitably ask more questions than it answers. The question of composition is especially perplexing: Was the material selected from a large amount of texts at the author's disposal and located in one place? What role did oral transmission play in the composition and compilation of the text? Did the author know intimately his target audience? Of course, these questions are not new and have been succinctly posed, and

¹ *Fornication imitée*, vv. 33-37. In this context, *St Pierre et le jongleur* (NRCF 1/3) springs instantly to mind. The *jongleur* is given charge of hell and the devils eventually vow never again to allow a *jongleur* into the infernal domain, such is the riot that he causes (vv. 393-96). The *jongleur* is painted in comic but negative terms and finds himself in the company of the standard butts of *fabliau* humour: *Li uns aportèrent champions, / Li autre usuriers ou larrons, / Vesques, prestres, moines, abez, / Et chevaliers et gent assez / Qui en vilain pechié manoient, / Et en la fin pris i estoient* (vv. 49-54). A useful contrast can be found in Rutebeuf's *Charlot le juif* (9/112), vv. 1-11: *Qui menestreil wet engignier / Mout en porroit mielz bargignier, / Car mout soventes fois avient / Que cil por engignié se tient / Qui menestreil engignier cuide, / Et s'en trueve sa bource wide: / Ne voi nelui cui bien en chiee. / Por ce devroit estre estanchiee / La vilonie c'om lor fait, / Garson et escuier sorfait, / Et teil qui ne valent deus ciennes.*

² R. Barthes, 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits', pp. 7-57 in R. Barthes, W. Kayser, W.C. Booth, P. Hamon, *Poétique de récit*, Paris: Seuil, 1977 (Points Sciences Humaines, 78), p. 7.

³ D. Kelly, *The Arts of Poetry and Prose*, Tournhout: Brepols, 1991 (Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, 59), p. 38.

tentatively answered by S. Huot with reference not to the author but to the copyist. Her comment that ‘the scribe assumes a role analogous to the performer: he is an intermediary between the audience and the story, and the book is the space in which the written “performance” takes place’, is a useful starting-place for the present exploration into the ‘literary identity’ of the anonymous author of the first *Vie*.⁴ This chapter will also ask whether it is possible to come to know the audience of the text. Like many (most?) vernacular pious works aimed at the masses, the first *Vie* is an amalgam of vernacular tradition and holy biography. As Duncan Robertson has recently pointed out, such hybrid forms abounded in the thirteenth century for two principal reasons: the clerical mind was intent on adapting techniques of courtly romance to edifying purposes, and the nobility desired to enter the domain of spirituality without neglecting family status or responsibilities.⁵ Paul Bretel believes the intention of the authors of vernacular *exempla*, miracles and contes pieux to be fairly clear: ‘Ces récits avaient une finalité didactique et servaient de support à la prédication morale, comme le montrent les développements discursifs qui encadrent la narration et qui associent aux mises en garde les exhortations à la vigilance.’⁶ One way in which the author of the first *Vie* - whether a regular or secular cleric - renders his work accessible and avoids heavy moralisation is in his judicious use of onomastics and this is laid out in Chapter V of this thesis; another similar field is his apparently careful use of vocabulary, such as the word ‘saint’, as discussed below. It is through an accumulation of circumstantial evidence that the modern reader can hope to discern the ‘artistic identity’ of the author and the make-up of his target audience. The traditional approach towards medieval authorship is either to discuss the author in detail or, if the text is anonymous, to discuss the ecclesiastical / political / intellectual context. This chapter’s aim is to combine both approaches and to study an anonymous author in detail.

This thesis has as its centre of focus the value of the text as a thirteenth-century document; the subject matter chosen and adapted by the author is of course not original to the author; a ‘traditional’ philological study of legend, myth, folklore and other sources, such as those by Wallensköld, Wolter and Guiette, are for other scholars to complete. For present purposes, interest lies in the portrait rather than in the sitter, in

⁴ S. Huot, *From Song to Book: The Poetics of Writing in Old French Lyric and Lyrical Narrative Form*, Ithaca, London & New York: Cornell University Press, 1977, p. 174.

⁵ Robertson, *The Medieval saints’ Lives*, (introduction).

⁶ Bretel, pp. 261-62.

attitudes towards what was regarded as history rather than in history itself. The latitude afforded by the author's role as not only hagiographer but popular hagiographer reveals more about him - and perhaps about his audience - than about the legends of which he tells. It is essential to keep in mind the vital orality of popular hagiography, as outlined by Evelyn Birge Vitz: 'Hagiography is a fusion of oral and written traditions, oral and written mentalities. Hagiography is oral in three senses. First, in its deeply rhetorical, or oratorical, character; it is invariably a discourse of praise and persuasion and often one of proof. Second, it is oral in its narrative reliance on anecdotal material; its patterns of amplification and transmission are commonly almost identical to those of the folktale. And third, it is oral - or, if you will, profoundly vocal and personal - in its emphasis on prayer.'⁷ However, hagiography also depends upon written sources 'in its claim to historical status; in its relation to the liturgy, which is written, and as such, authoritative and in its function as sacred book, with icon status.'⁸ These concerns are evidently central to a study of the identity of the author of medieval *contes pieux*. The author of the first *Vie* must have intended to entertain and edify, although Vitz refines this frequently-repeated notion: 'Hagiography [...] moves from a storytelling mode, in which entertainment and charm and the ability to appeal to the emotions rank high, to a historiographic model, where historical accuracy outweighs other considerations.'⁹ The traditionally perceived and often repeated principal weakness of medieval hagiography is its mixing of fable, fiction and factual material. However, as far as the present work is concerned, this in fact becomes the text's greatest strength: it is precisely this mingling of biblical commentary and Church propaganda, with individual reflection and bias born out of personal experience, that gives the first *Vie* its unique character as a barometer of popular belief.

As with much hagiography, the first *Vie* resembles the style of other writings of the same period, but its intention is clearly to demonstrate the power and piety of the

⁷ Evelyn Birge Vitz, 'From the oral to the written in medieval and renaissance Saints' Lives', pp. 97-114 in *Images of Sainthood in Medieval Europe*, ed. R. Blumenfeld-Kozinski & T. Szell, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991, p. 97.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 98. Notwithstanding Vitz's comments, the notion of 'oral residue' is important to the present study: 'By oral residue I mean habits of thought and expression tracing back to preliterate situations or practice, or deriving from the dominance of the oral as a medium in a given culture, or indicating a reluctance or inability to dissociate the written medium from the conscious at all. Habits of thought and expression inseparable from the older, more familiar medium are simply assumed to belong equally to the new until this is sufficiently "interiorized" for its own techniques to emerge from the chrysalis and for those more distinctive of the older medium to atrophy', W.J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance and Technology*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971, pp. 25-26.

lives of its pious heroes. It naturally concentrates on the miracles performed by God and his saints, but highlights even more those miracles performed in the interests of pious, often modest, characters who have obeyed Lateran IV and have repented conform to canon law. The first *Vie* is therefore, in many places, hagiography of and for the recognisable, the humble, the modest and the unnamed. It deals with deeds rather than with names - indeed, many of its saints, and all of those figuring in its most successful tales, are not named at all. The character is far more important than the individual, and character types common to most readers of medieval literature are represented here: the confessor, the cunning devil and the penitent are stock characters in pious texts, but the knight and his quest are more common to Romance and the nagging wives, weak husbands and worldly monks of the first *Vie* seem to come straight from *fabliau* tradition. The saints are rarely the central characters of the tales, their glory being reflected in the salvation of others. The first *Vie* does not promote the veneration of the saints but it does furnish recognisable and accessible examples of how holy men and women in the past and in the present helped others to salvation. The heroes of the first *Vie* overcome the world, the flesh and the devil, and dedicate their lives to God. The text was not designed to foster devotion to the saints but seems to be designed to promote the sacrament of penance. One of the radical notions put forward by the author in *Prévôt d'Aquilée* is that there is more virtue to be had by staying in the world and facing its temptations than in a life of contemplation and seclusion. This is, therefore, a devotional text with practical, and even realistic, implications, it does not pretend to be critical or historical in its purpose; nor is it a collection of biographies, but of examples to follow that are, when it comes down to it, within the reach of all.

The author might be called 'sober', a designation that so often means 'tedious'. However, if his sobriety lies in his repeated and orthodox message, his illustrations of that message are usually lively and entertaining. The 'sober' lives of the saints often contrast with the colourful lives of the contemporary heroes of the tales, the sinners that repent or the men and women who stay in the world and are saved. So, in *Ivresse*, no matter how hard the author praises the hermit's abstemious and ascetic life, the real interest of the narrative lies in the descriptions of his neighbours, a couple who enjoy good food and wine - and probably good sex - and of whose life there is not a scrap of criticism. Likewise in *Malaquin*, where the exciting action of the tale, including detailed accounts of the spiced foods and fine wines set in front of the hermit and the exotic

charms and erotic expertise of the courtesans, by far overshadows the rather dry and stylised account of the hermit's ascetic way of life. These details are not only allowed but are even glorified, since the duke and his court all convert in the end. The form and style of the story makes it enjoyable and easy to listen to. It contains all the elements of popular texts of the time, but the author does take care to promote explicitly the message rather than the action of the narrative. This is a constant throughout the first *Vie*; most often the author will simply state 'listen to the message and not the story'; the enclosed structure of the tales also gives him space to reinforce this teaching.

The inventiveness of the author of the first *Vie* is not automatically accepted by modern scholars. Paul Bretel notes that its translations from the ancient sources 'ne présentent par rapport aux originaux que des différences de surface qui laissent intacte la signification essentielle du récit (inscription artificielle dans la réalité médiévale par quelques traits isolés, comme, par exemple, la mention de *noirs moines* dans les déserts égyptiens des premiers temps du Christianisme.'¹⁰ Although Bretel is undoubtedly correct to insist upon the vestiges of ancient sources that remain in the thirteenth-century redactions (hence the heavier presence of the *contemptus mundi* motif in tales such as the second half of *Haleine* and the very setting of *en Egypte... jadis*) it cannot be posited that these are simple translations or transpositions of the older texts since the older message is often subordinated to the medieval story. The first *Vie* is infused with thirteenth-century details and atmospheres, lingering over descriptions of the hunt, food, money, sex and other 'human details' that are related to issues that coloured the medieval mentality at the time of writing. By way of themes relevant to the urban world - travel, suspense, the quest, recognition scenes, extensive descriptions - the author is able to move his text towards his modern, lay audience.¹¹ The substance of the message may not alter, but the medium is very different, as is the form: it is almost inevitable that the use of octosyllabic rhyming couplets will invest the tales with a certain flavour influenced by other vernacular *estoires* and verse romances of the time; the 'sermons' of the tales are often kept out of the narratives and restricted to the prologues, epilogues or fairly isolated passages. The tales of the first *Vie*, heterogeneous as they might appear, are distinctive medieval narratives that have in common an awareness of the importance of the act of story-telling.

¹⁰ Bretel, p. 237.

¹¹ Victoria Jordan in her review of Robertson (*Speculum*, 73 (1998), 249-54) is right to stress that 'empathy [...] is built through identification' (p. 253).

One way in which the author manages to avoid heavy moralisation is by a careful choice and placing of vocabulary. A rapid scan for uses of the word 'saint', in references to named saints in Lives, stories and invocations, and also as applied to the admittedly stylised but more obviously thirteenth-century characters - who are referred to as saints and why, by whom and in what circumstances? - reveals the author's use of the word to be quite rare. This scan appears to give an indication of personal creativity that is quite rare in other hagiographical texts, such works intending to promote the moral welfare of the community rather than the artistic talents of the author. The only Life recounted with any degree of completeness in the first *Vie* is that of Thaïs, told from her adult life of sexual depravity to her salvation in heaven. *St Paulin* tells an episode of St Paulinus of Nola's life in which he sells himself into captivity to have a widow's son released; in *Queue*, St Jerome witnesses devils playing on a bourgeois lady's train. These are in fact the only characters in the text that are named saints. All other named saints - Riquier, Mary Magdalene, Leger, Paul, Daniel, Susanna, Peter, John, Gregory, Nicholas and Benedict - are named only in invocations, prayers, as the dedicacees of churches or in the context of a feast day. The only case in which such a reference promises to further the modern scholar's acquaintance with the medieval author is that of Nicholas: in *Abbesse grosse*, the author, in a critical aside from his narrative, states that Saint Nicholas would not have been made bishop by today's worldly priests. Most of the other saints in the text are unnamed hermits used in stylised situations and contexts.¹² There are, however, one or two instances of the author giving the modern reader the briefest glimpse of either his own (and presumably the audience's) more personal image of sainthood or, perhaps more plausibly, clues as to a consciousness of the power of the word 'saint'.

In *Thaïs*, the author's voice in a well-known saint's life is almost inaudible, but it can still be heard: towards the end of the tale, the prostitute-saint's body is buried *saintement* (v. 2699), and the hermits who witness her holy death *comme sainte en terre l'orent* (v. 2702). These are the only two occasions during the tale in which the

¹² Spencer-Ellis is right to point out that 'Vie des Pères' refers to holy men and woman in a general sense rather than named saints: this was 'a medieval world where canonisation was an honour but certainly not a prerequisite for popular devotion.' (p. 19) Indeed, Spencer-Ellis believes that it is the very anonymity of most of the characters that makes them accessible to the audience. However, it is important to make a distinction between the anonymous, holy hermits who live frugal and often heroic lives of abstinence and prayer and those nameless but recognizable character-types - the glass-maker, the *borjois*, the widow, the priest, the child, the merchant - that come directly from thirteenth-century urban reality. These are the nameless (but scarcely anonymous) characters with which the audience will identify rather than the recluses and ascetics of ancient times.

protagonist, known as a saint to the audience even before the narrative begins, is actually named as such. What is more, when she is proclaimed a saint, it is not by the author, narrator or Church authorities, but by the hermits - admittedly holy hermits - who witness her soul rising from her corpse and ascension into heaven. Perhaps it is because the author has previously described in detail her sexual sins that at no stage does he name her 'Saint Thaïs'. In contrast to this usage, the author in *Brûlure* identifies his protagonist as a saintly hermit right at the beginning and throughout his tale. It appears that the difference here is that at no stage does the hermit commit a sin. However, it is only after his would-be seductress has witnessed his act of Christian heroism, is damned and is then brought back to life, that she, a spokeswoman for the entire community, *conme saint l'enora* (v. 13709). In *Usurier*, a holy hermit saves a repentant usurer and then, during the latter's penance - which will in fact cause his death - declares him to be *conme saint* (v. 16217). The people of the area follow the hermit in regarding the ex-usurer as a saint (v. 16329) because he was the beneficiary of a miracle. In *Fou*, it is only when the knight witnesses the heavenly honour paid to Félix that he realises the holiness and wisdom of his confessors, and he says to Félix about Boniface: *mout est sainz hons et cortois* (v. 5053). It is easy to imagine that the audience would commonly hear preachers tell of saintly individuals, but the expression takes on a whole new force when uttered by a character whose reluctant, whinging repentance they have witnessed.

Impératrice declares, towards the end of the tale, that she is *la bone amosniere* (v. 6293). This is at a point in the narrative where the empress is miraculously healing lepers with the help of herbs given to her by the Virgin and their true confession, but she has not yet been recognised by her husband and former accusers. A few lines later, even the pope *por sainte dame la tint* (v. 6225). The audience, privy to her adventures and heavenly grace, knows her real identity and can enjoy the fumbling ignorance of her accuser and of her husband's court. The author reveals the empress to be a saint to the audience long before the final, dramatic recognition scene. In only two tales does the author all but identify a character as a saint before then going on to describe that character's fall: in both cases, he uses the expression *a une nonne de sainte vie* (*Sacristine* 6919, *Feuille de chou* 16396), which elsewhere seems to be used as an equivalent to the substantive 'saint'. *Sacristine* tells of a nun who leaves her abbey and is replaced in her functions by the Virgin so that no-one notices her absence, whilst *Feuille de chou* recounts how a nun eats a cabbage leaf without crossing herself and

swallows a devil. In both cases, it is prior devotion and piety that allow the nuns' salvation. The characters tend, therefore, to be presented as accessible heroes rather than fully-fledged saints, and this raises another interesting question: at what stage does a saint enter popular medieval consciousness as a real, popular and accessible hero? The likes of St Martin, St Nicholas and St Eustace all find themselves enshrined in vernacular texts that go well beyond the *Golden Legend* in their audience appeal: *fabliaux* entries for St Martin, early popular religious staging for the *Jeu de St Nicolas*, and the near omni-presence of the Eustachius theme in vernacular romance, where the original saint's qualities are neatly transferred to the secular adventuring hero and his family.

In what is quite probably a conscious and judicious use of the substantive 'saint' the author is able to create the required effect - reverence, dramatic tension, even humour - without being too heavy-handed. Another similar way in which the author avoids heavy moralisation is in his skilful use of nomenclature, as examined in Chapter V of this thesis. His preaching goes beyond the straightforward lessons of the prologues and epilogues that enclose his tales, and ventures into what we may call the literary or artistic: his subtle use of nomenclature colours the action and often gently, sometimes brutally, pushes his reader to a particular way of thinking or into the desired reaction towards to his characters. This can be seen on a number of different levels:

- i/ the authorial voice that simply designates a character as good, bad, worthy, unworthy, etc
- ii/ the narrator's voice, which tends to do the same,
- iii/ the characters' naming of each other, and
- iv/ the characters' naming of themselves.

Use of names varies from situation to situation, and can serve as a barometer of approval / disapproval. This is not the case in every tale, but there often is an element of *mouvance* that again usually seems conscious rather than unconscious.

It is not at all easy to identify the 'I' in different parts of the text. It is possible, for example, that the author's complaints are borrowings and reworkings of discourses and texts that he has heard elsewhere, although it is just as likely that there is here a tone of personal experience.¹³ There is an emphasis placed on the virtue of physical labour

¹³ Herpin gives five reasons why he is convinced that the author is a cleric (*Copeaux*, pp. 8-9):

and on charitable works, both notions shared by the Cistercians. The Cult of the Virgin, although not excessively present in the first *Vie*, also seems to hold a key place for the author.¹⁴ Discipline and asceticism are equally stressed in the first *Vie*, giving the text, on a simple level, even more of an easily identifiable Cistercian flavour. St Bernard, just like many of the tales' heroes, began as a contemplative, openly criticised Church abuses and believed that understanding could only come after faith.¹⁵ The author frequently praises white monks, depicts white abbeys as places of the utmost virtue and names Cîteaux as the holiest place on earth. When one considers also the *contemptus mundi* of the text, its call for the faithful to follow the example of the early Church Fathers and the promotion of repentance, confession and penance,¹⁶ it would be easy to affirm that the author is a Cistercian. Indeed, these are clear indications of the author's Cistercian sympathies, or of the sympathies of those who have influenced his work;¹⁷ however, this does not lie easily with the down-to-earth narratives, the entertaining

1. 'la prédication qui sert d'exorde et de conclusion [...] Le ton du discours est bien celui d'un homme d'église dans l'accomplissement de sa mission d'exhortation.'

2. Because 'l'auteur fait une place importante et avantageuse aux clercs [...] Or, pour n'en prendre à témoins que le *Roman de Renart* et Rutebeuf, la littérature profane du temps n'a pas que des tendresses pour la condition religieuse.'

3. 'La raison la plus évidente, c'est le langage de l'auteur.'

4. 'Le ton des formulations.'

5. 'C'est bien aussi le fait d'un clerc que cette espèce de nudité de l'oeuvre, cette pauvreté qu'on pourrait qualifier d'évangélique. [Le récit] élimine délibérément la description, le portrait, la narration complaisante, tous les moyens proprement littéraires par lesquels un auteur qui veut paraître et plaire prend ses distances avec le sujet, plus soucieux de l'exploiter que de le faire servir.'

¹⁴ In certain tales the Virgin's role appears more conventional than truly heartfelt, in particular *Abbesse grosse*, a tale in which the Virgin's role is especially peculiar.

¹⁵ The words *simple* is often applied to the heroes of the tales. This does not necessarily imply low social status or dim-wittedness, even though in Old French *simple* can move into the derogatory. The term also points to holy simplicity/directness/good/uncomplicated. The Cistercians stressed holy simplicity, an idea picked up by the Franciscans.

¹⁶ Cistercian repentance has been defined by J.-C. Payen in two articles: 'Y a-t-il un repentir cistercien dans la littérature française médiévale?', *Cîteaux*, 12 (1961), 120-32; and 'Le sens du péché dans la littérature cistercienne en langue d'oïl', *Cîteaux*, 13 (1962), 282-95. See also *Le Motif du repentir*, pp. 446ff.

¹⁷ Spencer-Ellis notes that hermits, monks and nuns 'occur as major or minor figures in no fewer than 29 of the contes' (p. 135). According to him, this does two things: it justifies the title 'Vie des Pères' and it gives an indication as to the identity of the author. (Familiarity with the rites of religious orders; sympathy + familiarity with Church matters...). I would add that the strong criticism of 'today's priests' supports this view. Gehrke postulates that in the *Vie des Pères* the emphasis on the supernatural, the entertaining and the earthly, when combined with the author's criticism of the contemporary Church, amounts to an acknowledgement of the inadequacy of current ecclesiastical institutions with regard to the devout, lay public (*Saints and Scribes*, op. cit., p. 99). J.T. Miller makes the important point that claiming authority can in fact be liberating, as appears to be the case in the first *Vie*: 'A poet may disclaim his autonomy only to provide himself with a beneficial type of authorial anonymity: the formal gesture of acknowledging a higher authority may allow the imagination to roam freely under the guise of authoritative sanction', J.T. Miller, *Authority and Authorship: Some Medieval and Renaissance Contexts*, Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1982 (Johns Hopkins University PhD Thesis, 1980), p. iii.

descriptions of drunkenness and sex, and the general tone of indulgence - in 20,000 lines of text and 41 separate tales, there are only a handful of characters who are explicitly damned, and one of those is brought back from damnation to be eventually saved.

Above all, the message of *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, *Baril* and other tales is the almost revolutionary, and not obviously Cistercian, view that a pious life in the world, in which an individual or couple overcomes the temptations of the flesh, is not only as worthy but even more worthy than the life of a monk or recluse. This has led Jean-Charles Payen to label the *Vie des Pères* as 'une oeuvre d'avant-garde'.¹⁸ Payen even goes on to suggest that here is 'la voix des laïques qui se fait pour une fois entendre dans une forme de littérature religieuse à leur usage'.¹⁹ Nor is it easy to detect a clear Cistercian spirit in the text, although this is not where my own expertise lies; however, in the passing from confession to a precise knowledge of one's sin, which itself gives rise to penance not out of fear of God but through a consciousness of one's imperfect state and a renouncing of the world, tales such as *Baril* do appear to correspond with a Cistercian spirit of repentance. As Payen has noted, 'La *Vie des Pères*, malgré son caractère réaliste et brutal, est une oeuvre optimiste: la miséricorde de Dieu est sans limites, pour peu qu'on y ait recours. Elle s'inscrit dans la tradition de ces oeuvres qui, telle la *Vie de Grégoire*, veut faire ressortir cette générosité divine par la peinture de fautes énormes et pourtant pardonnées.'²⁰ In addition, and in response to Conrad Rudolph's recent book on the Cîteaux *Moralia in Job*, it is tempting to see the first *Vie* in the same light as the strange illustrations to the early twelfth-century *Moralia*, that is, as textual analogues illustrative of struggle in the Cistercian sense, as well as of a more general Deadly Sins psychomachia.²¹

So, the author has strong Cistercian sympathies and in his asides from the narrative he gives vent to numerous complaints and criticisms: he speaks out against Jews, heretics, the *fabliaux*, widows looking for new husbands, the rich and greedy, uncharitable donors who cause religious houses to live in poverty, hypocrites, corrupt clerics, fathers who hold on to their daughters too long, vain women, usurers and quack doctors. If some of these are fairly typical complaints, others appear to have a less

¹⁸ *Le Motif du repentir*, p. 522.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 535..

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 522.

²¹ C. Rudolph, *Violence and Daily Life. Reading, Art and Polemics in the Cîteaux 'Moralia in Job'*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997.

obvious place in a pious text. A good number of the tales do resemble *fabliaux* in form, with their details of nagging wives, incompetent doctors, long-suffering husbands, dupers duped, worldly monks and clever word-play. *Jardinier* is a good example of the dramatic, ironic, comic and parodic opportunities afforded by the author's subject matter. The author also, on occasion, openly criticizes those peddlars of fables and untrue stories that do not lead to edification - not only *fabliaux* but Romance and *Renart* - but he seems to recognize that this is what pleases his audience and he adapts holy stories and *exempla* accordingly. This is a standard way to provoke not just an intellectual response from the audience but an emotional and empathetic one as well. As a consequence, much of the narrative detail that he gives concerns travel and adventure, the quest and exotic descriptions of foreigners, sex, foods and spices. He also adapts popular motifs such as the magical white hart, otherworldly journeys and fantastic meteorological conditions. He condemns the foolishness of love, repeatedly stresses the need for repentance, confession and penance, gives vivid illustrations of Last Judgement scenes, condemns the false faiths and comments on proper relationships between parent and child, man and wife and disciple and master.

The author's main concern is the promotion of confession, a notion that might help to date the text; this may well be a reaction to the imposition of annual auricular confession by the Fourth Lateran Council, although it could also reflect the general atmosphere prior to that Council; this might also be said of the author's concern with the Jews. However, by his references to heretics and, in the epilogue to *Juitel*, his call to crusade against the Albigensians, the author does appear to show this issue to be current at the time of composition. Bretel preaches caution with regard to an automatic identification of 'white monks/hermits' with the Cistercians. He notes that the term is, in pious and profane literature, an expression that usually refers to the 'white abbeys' of Egypt and in this way belong to the spiritual tradition of the desert: 'Ce n'est finalement que dans les textes qui s'ancrent, ou qui sont censés le faire, dans la réalité du 12^e et du 13^e siècle (l'hagiographie historique, le roman de *Wistasse le moine*, la littérature des moralistes, le *Roman de Renart*...) que l'expression "blanc moine" désigne, sans autre valeur, explicitement les Cisterciens.'²² However, Brian Patrick Maguire assures me that

²² Bretel, p. 471. This does not really clarify the situation as far as the first *Vie* is concerned. (Indeed, is it 'littérature des moralistes'?) How does this effect those tales that in fact *are* situated in Egypt but still show strong Cistercian sympathies?

as far as the Cistercians were concerned, ‘anything goes after about 1220 because the order is very much in flux [...] The order wants to be imitated and wants to look down on the Benedictines, but there is a growing awareness of change and the need for adjustment to the secular world.’²³ Maguire does not know of Cistercian texts similar to the first *Vie* in either Latin or the vernacular, but insists that things were very much ‘loosening up’ in the first decades of the thirteenth century and that there was a tremendous receptivity to the notion that ‘the Cistercians have got to live in the world and respond to it.’ This evidence, if it is to be accepted that the text was composed either by a Cistercian or by someone close to the order and that the Albigensian question was current, suggests 1209-29 as a probable period for the composition of the text, with the fifteen years following Lateran IV as perhaps the most likely.²⁴

The erudition of the author is an equally slippery issue.²⁵ On the one hand, he liberally quotes the Bible and patristic writers, lets his own narrative become infused with biblical metaphors and, perhaps most significantly, never says that he has *heard* a story but rather that he has *read* it, often adding a mention of the book in which the teachings are supposed to be found. However, it is possible that many of these allusions, in particular when not sourced or vague, might have been heard in sermons and are being copied from memory. In the Middle Ages, *exempla* might have been told to point the finger at local abuses (civil, legal, clerical), and included in local sermons to that effect. However, the first *Vie* - a text that includes tales based on many *exempla* taken

²³ I should like to take this opportunity to thank Brian Patrick Maguire, Professor of Medieval History at Roskilde University, Denmark, for his insightful and valuable email correspondance.

²⁴ The author of the first *Vie des Pères* was not necessarily replying directly to the decretals of Lateran IV but rather to a whole atmosphere of which the 1215 Council was the symptom. Certain canons may nonetheless be seen to add a new gloss to the often ancient subject matter of the tales: so, *Ivresse* might be read in the light of canon 15 that warns clerics against excessive drinking; the priest in *Sénéchal* transgresses canon 21 that stresses the secrecy of the confessional and his attempted extortion does not adhere to canon 66; *Image de pierre* illustrates some of the inconveniences of clandestine marriage that canons 51 and 52 seek to abolish; and of course, there are the canons that call for anti-Jewish measures such as wearing of special clothing. But these decretals seek to treat problems that are already present in contemporary society and the scholar cannot affirm with any certainty that the author of this text addresses such problems in reaction to Lateran IV. Having said this, it should be remembered that the hagiography of the first *Vie* is ‘practical’, propaganda that is designed to move the reader to action. It is therefore also heavily political.

²⁵ Spencer-Ellis’s conclusion that the range of the imagery, proverbial expressions, references and quotations that open the tales of the first *Vie* ‘bears witness to the breadth of erudition of the author and his desire to establish a pattern but yet to avoid repetitious use of any one method of beginning his prologues’ (p. 180) is far from certain. This gives too much credit to the notion of ‘authorial intent’. This is not to deny that the author did have some overall plan in mind, but if he was aware - which he most surely was - that his text would not be read as ‘a whole text’, and might not even be copied as such, why would he seek to avoid repetition? After all, he is most repetitive in other aspects of his text such as message and vocabulary.

from different sources - was widely copied, a probable indication of its popularity among contemporary audiences. Presumably this means that the abuses described in the tales were pertinent to local communities everywhere the first *Vie* was read. However, in his prologues, epilogues and interjections the author seems to complain about precise abuses of which he may well have had first-hand experience. This gives the text both a local and widespread flavour. In the best tradition of the medieval preacher, the author is able to attract the audience's attention by intermingling with his holy subject matter popular themes and motifs. Most of all, he can do this with a degree of subtlety which allows his narratives to convey a message without too much overt - and tedious - moralisation. The text appears carefully structured, and although no reader would have read the tales in the order in which they were set down, this is immaterial to the act of authorship. As for the author's sources,

Spencer-Ellis notes that eighteen tales claim to have written authorities. This leads him to conclude that 'the author of the first *Vie des Pères* probably read widely in Latin to find stories suitable for his collection'.²⁶ This is, of course, too wide an assumption, since neither knowledge of material preserved in written form nor claims to having found a story in a book can guarantee that the author did indeed come across that particular material in that way. On the other hand, the frequency with which the author repeats the claim and its apparent innocence in phrases such as *N'est pas escrit en parchemin / en combien il revient arriere* (*Baril*, vv. 9143-44), added to the author's obvious artistic talents, does indeed point to an erudition that would imply knowledge of and access to the sources claimed in the text.

The author of the first *Vie* is therefore a talented individual who appears to have a notion of what we would call the 'artistic'. He manages to put across his serious, spiritual or political message and still tell lively and entertaining stories. His frequent favouring of dramatic, exotic or artistic themes is not at the expense of religious moralisation, for external manifestations of sanctity are always and explicitly shown to have great spiritual value. The author seems to have a feel for inspiring practical and real action, but he does have flaws, of course: some of his narratives are punctuated by long sermons and at times he struggles to make the most of his source material - lively dialogue is the exception rather than the rule; his version of *Baril* is greatly inferior to

²⁶ Spencer-Ellis, p. 160.

the *Chevalier au barisel*; *Queue* is little more than a padded-out *exemplum*; *Demi-ami* is drily homiletic. However, the humanism of the tales, their recognition and details of everyday life, their 'literary' qualities and their function within a collective text show the author of the first *Vie* to be an elusive but fascinating artist.

Allied to the question of authorship is necessarily that of reception. Direct address at once identifies an audience, although whether *vos* / *nos* always implies the target audience is uncertain. The notion of who 'we' are can change within a narrative and usually defines itself not by those who are included but by those who are excluded.²⁷ As far as story-telling and preaching are concerned, *vos* creates a direct connection with the audience surrounding the speaker, whereas in a written text these terms of address are wider in scope, associating the author rather than teller to a wider public other than the immediate congregation. Hence the term of address becomes a *topos* of authorial action.²⁸ The presence of an audience can easily be confirmed in this way, but its identity remains elusive. As Payen points out, these are 'fabliaux édifiants [qui] ont été composés par des clercs, et s'inspirent de récits plus courts destinés eux aussi à des clercs. Mais ils tendent à l'édification des laïques: ils utilisent donc un langage à la portée de ces laïques, et sont tenus de donner une plus grande place à une vision laïque de la vie spirituelle.'²⁹ The laicity of at least part of the audience must be accepted, especially when mindful of developments in vernacular preaching: 'La nouvelle prédication, qui se fait jour à partir du 13e siècle, tient désormais pour acquis qu'un même langage ne saurait convenir à tous les états sociaux [...] il ne suffit plus de diffuser la parole divine avec zèle; il faut y mettre de l'art, de l'élégance ou une verve plus tonique selon les circonstances.'³⁰ The preacher had to penetrate the language and the way of thinking of his audience and adapt from audience to audience;³¹ the first *Vie* was presumably aimed at a particular audience, using its language and reflecting its interests. It seems clear that this was the same audience as that of the *fabliaux*, romance and epic. Bretel notes that pious tales 's'adressaient non seulement à des laïcs mais aussi

²⁷ See the chapter on nomenclature, below.

²⁸ Cf. Gautier de Coinci who tells us that he is composing for essentially fellow clerics (and presumably a few high born laymen), giving *vos* an extra degree of specificity. It is important to bear in mind the audience expectation of the text: they would expect the author to speak to them directly, and the author needs to speak to them on a number of levels to satisfy this expectation and satisfy his own, more artistic desires. The question of intentionality - 'the author wants to...' - is complex, for although he has certain choices, he remains bound by other inevitabilities (such as linguistic requirements).

²⁹ Payen, pp. 552, 556.

³⁰ Horowitz & Menache, *L'Humour en chair*, pp. 72-73.

³¹ On the reception of sermons, see Berlioz, 'L'Auditoire des prédicateurs'.

à des religieux (en particulier à des convers et à des moniales qui ne connaissaient pas le latin}'.³² Equally, P. Dembowski believes that 'les récits en vers [étaient] écrits sans doute pour un public plus varié que les récits en prose [et qu'ils] prenaient plus de liberté vis-à-vis de leur modèle-source latin'.³³ Vitz adds that 'vernacular works were generally composed for nonreligious, nonliterate, and commonly performed by jongleurs [...] But laymen are not a captive audience like monks and nuns, and if they do not appreciate the way a story is told, they may well just walk away, or fail to pay the performer. Thus, while Latin sources are sometimes a bit dry or undramatic, vernacular compositions reliably liven up the story: they give the characters names, provide dramatic details and vivid dialogue, and so on. Formally and stylistically speaking, there are differences as well. Whereas the Latin works are generally set in cool past tenses, the vernacular compositions are recounted largely in the present: listeners are made to feel that they are *there*, and that the saint is - still - *present*'.³⁴ A close reading of the first *Vie* reveals an audience used to epic and romance, for example in the central role given to the motif of counsel. In specific direct speech, this is active and passive in that it is both offered and sought; the narrative makes many indirect mentions of the motif; and the narrator himself uses the notion in that he is constantly referring to the events of the narrative in his addresses to the audience. Counsel can be good or bad, followed or ignored. It links in with the feudal insistence upon *consilium*, with the role of the wise counsellor in romance and epic, with 'good wisdom' and its saracen equivalent, 'bad wisdom' and with the notion of the devil's counsel. A courtly audience would certainly be receptive to repeated references to this motif. Payen supports the notion of profane traditions exerting a considerable influence on the *conte pieux*: 'Nous irons [...] jusqu'à dire qu'en ce qui concerne le repentir (comme en ce qui concerne plus généralement l'expression de tous les sentiments), l'usage du monologue dramatique, et le recours systématique à une certaine rhétorique du débat intérieur, trahissent une influence directe du roman dans la mesure où le style de ces passages est celui-là même que l'on trouve déjà dans les monologues du roman antique ou de Chrétien de Troyes.'³⁵ It can equally be posited that the use of proverbs and sayings stems out of the laicity of the intended audience. Delaruelle has noted that

³² Bretel, p. 261.

³³ P. Dembowski, 'Traits essentiels des récits hagiographiques', pp. 80-88 in *La Nouvelle - genèse, codification et rayonnement d'un genre médiéval*, p. 81.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 99.

³⁵ Payen, p. 555.

the first (and most popular) biblical texts translated for broad lay consumption were Proverbs, Psalms, Kings and the Acts of the Apostles: 'Il semble [...] qu'on ait conscience que la Bible des clercs et des moines ne saurait être celle des laïcs: aux premiers les *profunda*, le livres de doctrine, au sens difficile que seules les théologiens peuvent comprendre; aux seconds les *aperta*, les livres qui racontent l'histoire-sainte comme autant *d'exempla* ou qui expriment, sous la forme sententieuse des livres de sagesse, les devoirs de la morale courante.'³⁶ However, the most convincing - and simplest - evidence pertaining to the laicity of the audience is succinctly (but inadvertently) noted by Payen: the text teaches that 'il n'est pas nécessaire d'être moine, ermite ou reclus pour mériter le ciel'.³⁷

The first *Vie* offers examples of spiritual success with which a lay audience can identify: not all heroes are the recipients of miracles or heroic hermits. The numerous references made by the author to *clerc et laie* / *petit et granz* / *hom et fame* - all of which are highlighted in the commentaries below³⁸ - add further evidence that the target audience was of a diverse nature. This would place the audience of the the first *Vie* solidly within that rather amorphous group identified by Zink as being the audience of edifying readings and sermons: 'Demi-clercs, demi-moines, demi-savants, femmes, que leur sexe même place en position marginale par rapport à l'Eglise et par rapport à la culture.'³⁹ Another indication of the audience's tastes is in the occasional notes of irony in the first *Vie*: indeed, it is not too difficult to imagine the audience openly laughing at the image of the wife in *Jardinier*, at the pointed description of opulence in *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, at the *nouveau riche* peasant in *Merlot* or at the jibe at worldly women in *Queue*. Laughter in the context of pious tales may seem incongruous - after all, the modern readern tends to be more familiar with the austere tone of Gautier de Coinci⁴⁰ - but it too mirrors a tendency in popular preaching: 'On détecte une tendance accrue à

³⁶ E. Delaruelle, 'La culture religieuse des laïcs en France aux XIe et XIIe siècles', pp. 548-81 in *I Laici nella "Societas christiana" dei secoli XI e XII. Atti della Settimana di studio*. Vol. III, Mendola, 1965. Miscellanea del Centro di Studi Medioevali, V, Milano, 1968, p. 568.

³⁷ Payen, p. 553.

³⁸ Examples abound: *Image de pierre*, vv. 8555, 8639, 8722-3 (women), 8744-45 (clercs / lai); *Haleine*, vv. 3355 (clerc / lai), 4076 (young/old); *Meurtrier*, vv. 6517-18, 6808ff; *Queue*, vv. 7708-9 (lai / clerc), 7762, 7767 (women); *Demi-ami*; *Impératrice*, v. 6389; *Vision de diables*, v. 11104 (women); *Païen*, v. 11825 (young / old); *Sacristine*, vv. 7001, 7083 (men / women), 7402 (petit & grand); *Usurier*, vv. 15964 (hom / fame), 15995 (lai), 16333 (old / young); etc.

³⁹ M. Zink, 'Les Destinataires des recueils de sermons en langue vulgaire au XIIe et au XIIIe siècle. Prédication effective et prédication dans un fauteuil', pp. 59-74 in *La Piété populaire au Moyen Age. Actes du colloque de Besançon*, I, Paris: CTHS, 1977, p. 74.

⁴⁰ Cf. for example A. Drzewicka, 'Le livre ou la voix? Le moi poétique dans les *Miracles de Nostre Dame* de Gautier de Coinci', *Le Moyen Age*, 94 (1990), 245-63.

l'humour dans la prédication, qui se développera au cours du 13^e siècle sous l'influence et les ingénieuses directives d'un des plus éminents théoriciens de la prédication, Jacques de Vitry (1180-1240)'.⁴¹ Laughter, or at the very least the smile, became a potent weapon in the war for lost souls. Humour became more widespread 'tantôt à l'initiative du prédicateur, tantôt à la faveur d'une réaction parfois inattendue de l'auditoire, tantôt encore créées [ie. the humour and the smile] par une complicité facétieuse entre le prédicateur et la communauté de ses auditeurs, réunis dans le rire contre un tiers qui a démérité'.⁴² One must not exaggerate the role of irony and humour in the first *Vie* - after all, despite its indulgent nature and mitigated praise of the *contemptus mundi* ideal, the message of the text is a stark one. It is important to keep in mind the new climate, however, especially when reading passages containing descriptions of everyday life. The audience and the author/text can come together in the knowledge that a character will be saved or damned, and this complicity is enjoyable; it can be further exploited when characters occasionally act against the expectations of the audience. '[Le rire de la chaire] n'est pas nécessairement associé au comique. Bien moins encore l'humour.'⁴³ This point marks the coming together of two traditions: that of the comic *fabliau* and of the deadly serious *conte pieux*. *Fabliaux* are often alluded to in the commentaries below, offering not only useful but, I would argue, vital analogies to themes and motifs found in the tales of the first *Vie*.⁴⁴ It is perhaps ironic, perhaps intentional, that the tale which most clearly has one foot in each camp, a tale that might so easily belong to the *fabliau* canon, is *Merlot*, the very last tale in the collection. This privileged position for the most ambiguous of the tales, in terms of spiritual authority if not moral teaching, focuses the mind of the modern reader at the end of what is a long and sometimes difficult read: of all the forty-one tales, those which might best satisfy an urban, lay audience are perhaps those that are closest to the *fabliau* tradition: *Jardinier*, *Crapaud*, *Merlot*.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Horowitz & Menache, p. 65.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 70.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 254.

⁴⁴ I would posit that narratives such as *La Housse partie* (NRCE 3/16) and *Les Souhais* (NRCE 9/105) are practically indistinguishable from a *conte pieux*; Cf. Lecoy in *Romania*, 74 (1953), 251-53.

⁴⁵ Appendix IX.iii attempts to gain a tangible insight into reception, real evidence of real readers' reactions to the narratives as opposed to the supposed reactions of the target audience. The first *Vie* affords the modern reader, in particular via manuscript illustrations and rubrics, rare evidence of contemporary reception that is best studied through specific examples. There are sufficient clues in the text to give the modern reader an idea of the author's opinions, talents and purpose, and by extension, those of the audience. By way of a systematic analysis of certain details of *Malaquin* and *Brûlure*, and then an examination of the illustrations that accompany these tales in three contemporary manuscripts, it

is possible to paint an ambiguous but fascinating image of the relationship between sex and salvation for those working on the manuscripts; this in turn suggests a new approach to the study of contemporary reception, whilst also offering an insight into the reactions of individuals exposed to the text. An analogue motif, that of 'holy' space, indicates that behaviour of a sexual nature could only take place in the world: sexuality is a transgression of the symbolic 'holy' space. In fact, textual and illustrative architecture separates sex and chastity, filth and purity. However, any pious gesture can re-establish 'holy' space whatever the *locus* of the gesture. An analysis of these motifs leads the scholar, by way of paratextual features, to the interpretation of the narratives by a contemporary audience. This audience may not be the target audience of the text - the study of contemporary reception is a notoriously inaccessible area of medieval literary studies - but even those working on the manuscript - scribe, illustrator, rubricator, planner - were 'real' medieval people who shared the interests and concerns of their more illustrious but also more anonymous clients (I have in mind in particular rubrics and illustrations. For a definition of the term, see G. Genette, *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré* (Paris: Seuil, 1982) and J.H.M. Taylor, 'Le Roman de la dame à la lycorne et du biau chevalier au lion: text, image, rubric', *French Studies*, 60 (1997), 1-18, notes 4-8.)

V

Names and Functions

Il était d'usage, au moyen âge, de se parler, même entre amis et proches parents, en se donnant des titres de politesse [...] on ne s'appelait que rarement par son nom.¹

V.i

Names, Functions and the Notion of the Outsider

The question of who were outsiders and who were not in the eyes of the audience of an Old French pious text does not, in practical terms, present *too many* difficulties. According to the first *Vie*, all of those who put themselves outside God's love are outsiders:

se l'Escriture ne nos ment,
qui dit bien que danpné seront
cil et celes qui ne feront
le commandement Jhesucrist.

(*Inceste*, vv. 16983-86)

Reflecting the uncompromising nature of his source material, the author, otherwise remarkably indulgent, also states plainly: all of those who have not been baptised will be damned. In Raoul de Houdenc's contemporary allegorical poem, *Le Songe d'enfer*,² a work that can here be seen to represent any number of iconographical portrayals of the Last Judgement, the Christian notion of the outsider is illustrated most vividly. Raoul is in hell and eating at the devil's table, where usurers' pelts make up the table-cloth at the devil's feast (v. 433), the guests use Publicans for seats (v. 438), napkins are made out of an old whore's skin (v. 442), roasted usurers, fattened at the expense of others, are devoured all year round (they are the staple diet in hell, vv. 455, 470), murderous thieves are marinated in garlic (v. 473), a pot-roast of heretics comes with a fire sauce and is seasoned with damnation (v. 490), false preachers' tongues are ripped out and lightly sautéed (v. 574), religious charlatans are fried with hypocrisy (v. 591); dessert comprises boiled pagan priestesses and sodomites. In this popular poem, as in most contemporary pious texts, the issue of who is an outsider tends to be clear cut and

¹ Gaston Paris, *Récits extraits des poètes et prosateurs du moyen âge*, Paris: Hachette, 1896, p. 223.

² ed. cit.

presented in none too subtle a fashion. However, in the first *Vie*, a text apparently just as popular as the *Songe d'enfer*, although it is made quite clear, in general terms, which of the characters are within God's love and which are without, there are grey areas and a process of fairly subtle development and/or relapse. The audience's perception of a character can be changed mid-tale, even mid-line: the audience can follow a character's fall and rehabilitation by, amongst other things, the author's apparent employment of nomenclature in *mouvance*.

My use of the set expression *names and functions* takes for granted that the author of the first *Vie* was doing something concrete and was conscious of what he was doing. The importance of names in everyday life is mirrored in the author's careful use of nomenclature. This chapter aims to illustrate that the element of *mouvance* highlighted is not only rational but, on certain occasions at least, quite deliberate. This can be seen on a number of different levels: i/ the authorial voice that simply designates a character as good, bad, worthy, unworthy, etc ii/ the narrator's voice, which tends to do the same, iii/ the characters' naming of each other, and iv/ the characters' naming of themselves. Use of names varies from situation to situation, and can serve as a barometer of approval / disapproval. This is not the case in every tale, but many tales do contain an often systematic element of *mouvance* that usually seems conscious rather than unconscious. *Juitel* has been chosen as a case-study since the *mouvance* of nomenclature contained within it is generally more marked than elsewhere (at times verging on the spectacular) but *Baril* or *Renieur* offer an equally interesting use of onomastics as indicators of a character's status as insider or outsider at a given stage of the narrative.

Jews and Saracens are sometimes sketched in ethnic rather than religious terms: 'we' are Christians, who think about death and prepare for judgement; 'we' try to be pious and 'we' go to confession.³ One of the most interesting and potentially

³ The Jews are present in scores of *exempla*, a selection of the most relevant to the present study (following Tubach) are:

#1373 A crucifix made by St. Nicodemus was martyred by the Jews; when they stuck a lance into the image blood ran out. The Jews then converted to Christianity. Cf. *Romania*, 14 (1884), 584; 29 (1899), 513-17; Ward, *Catologue of Romances*, II, pp. 702, 705.

#2689 Jews cuts a host in half with a knife and blood streams forth.

#2810 Jews kill a boy who sings a song mocking them; revived by the Virgin, the boy is commanded to sing her praises.

#2798 A paralyzed Jew is cured by being baptised

#2800 A spendthrift enters the service of a Jew; he steals his master's treasure and rapes his daughter. Struck with remorse he confesses to a monk and makes restitution. Meantime the Jew calls forth his

revolutionary teachings to be gleaned from the first *Vie* is that ‘we’ could easily be ‘those of us who live in the world and resist temptation’. There is a strong sense of *contemptus mundi* in the text, as should be expected, but in *Prévôt d’Aquilée* and *Baril* the audience is given encouragement to stay in the world and conduct their lives appropriately. Despite the different geographical and temporal locations - Egypt, deserts, in a forest, once upon a time - ‘we’ are a fairly homogenous group who tend to hate and fear Jews, pagans and any others who are not one of ‘us’. A complication, however, is the medieval Church’s definition of and attitude towards Jews and pagans. There was, of course, a distinction made between the Ancients, ‘those who were there before the Law’ (and who are cited as authorities by the author of the corpus) and the Saracens-as-pagans-as-heretics. This contemporary view poses chronological problems for us, since Judaism, the Old Law, actually predates Graeco-Roman pagan culture; but, for the Middle Ages, Antiquity precedes the Old Testament and therefore the Law. The author’s description of pagans and Jews as *sanz loi* is notable in this regard.⁴

It is natural, in a pious text such as the first *Vie*, that ‘they’ should be sinners of various types, non-believers and heretics. Occasionally, in his asides, the author all but identifies ‘them’ by name, with attacks on the lecherous monks, vain women and uncharitable people of his own personal experience. This is the ‘real them’, the ‘them’ from real life experience, common to the audience and to the author. Through careful use of names there can be movement between ‘them’ and ‘us’ via the Christian faith: nomenclature can help the author to say who is who and when. This is done without heavy moralisation, and the modern reader, not privy to the experiences and in-jokes of the audience, is able to follow. Jews and pagans can convert, sinners can repent; the exception are those who posed the greatest threat to contemporary christendom, heretics, who can only be slain. So, a character can be one of ‘us’ and one of ‘them’ in the

demons, but they cannot denounce the penitent because he has already confessed. Cf. Herbert, *Catalogue of Romances*, pp. 484 #70; 525 #90; 634 #86.

2803 A Jewish prince invites a theologian to visit him, promising to conjure up the Virgin. The theologian secretly brings a consecrated host and produces it in the presence of the pseudo-Virgin, who is really a devil and is chased away. The Jews are baptised.

2804 A Jewess refuses to name her lover (who is a Christian) and her father tries to find out from his demons. In the meantime the Christian goes to confession and the demons tell the Jew that they could have helped him yesterday but are powerless now.

5063 There was a city in which usurers were held to be viler than Jews.

⁴ Saracens seem to make more exotic outsiders in the corpus. Despite the real and present threat to Christendom posed by the pagan, the evidence of the first *Vie* suggests that there was a certain literary appeal surrounding tales such as *Païen* and even *Malaquin*, a *conte* in which the diabolical duke eventually converts.

same tale - in the case of the *happy Jew*, I would argue, in the same expression.

Nomenclature helps the audience know the function of a character at any particular moment. This is just another form of role reversal so common in this sort of text.

The author of the first *Vie* was more of a poet with a theological agenda than a poetic theologian. He also at times seems to allow his own experiences get the better of him as he veers away from his legendary subject matter towards sometimes personal attacks on targets identifiable to his audience. This is quite natural and by no means exclusive to the first *Vie*. The author may well have been aware of the medieval tripartite scheme of salvation: *ante legem, sub lege, sub gratia*, derived from Augustine's doctrine of grace, that became a tripartite scheme of *time*; for the most part, his audience would not. For those listening to his text, there would certainly have been different categories of religious (and non-religious) outsiders derived from different life experiences, appreciably different to those outsiders described in the text; no amount of clever onomastics will change such prejudices. A neat piece of anecdotal evidence, with a serious lesson for the student of medieval literature, comes in Robert de Clari's reporting of the clergy's militant sermons, preached to the troops on the Fourth Crusade, to put some backbone into them after a reverse during the siege of Constantinople. The Greeks, he says, are worse than the Jews, but this is not because of any fancy, theological crime.⁵ Rather, they have just shown the siegers their backsides and taunted them, and this insult was experienced personally by Robert himself.⁶ Consequently, this humiliating experience is of much greater significance to Robert than any theological niceties, and his prose is a useful reminder that author and audience did not view a text in the same way.

Religious outsiders in the first *Vie* falls tend to fall into one of four categories: the Jew; the Saracen; the heretic; the unrepentent sinner.⁷ However, there is much crossover. In *Sarrasine* there is confusion over this distinction (vv. 978, 986). *Renieur* is

⁵ *Adonc sarmonnerent li evesque par l'ost [...] et monstrerent aus pelerins que la bataille estoit droiturier meurdri, et qu'il estoient pire que Juifs*, Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. A. Pauphilet, pp. 7-84 in *Historiens et chroniqueurs du Moyen Age*, Paris: Gallimard, 1952 (Bibliothèque de la Pléiade), LXXIII.

⁶ *Quant li Grieu les virent traire arriere, si s'accueillent à huer et à escrier si durement que trop; et monterent sur les murs et avaloient leur braies et leur monstroient leur culs*, *ibid.*, LXXI.

⁷ The hermits of whom the tales of the first *Vie* purportedly tell were also outsiders in a sense, rejecting the worldliness of the Church and the accommodation it had made with the world. The hermits of the first *Vie* resemble more closely the contemporary hermits whose asceticism was usually praised and often supported by the Church; it is not insignificant that in all but the closest borrowings from patristic sources, hermits tend to refer penitents to bishops, archbishops and other religious of rank and stature for 'official' baptism and confession. They are, in this collection, firmly inside the umbrella of the Church.

a reworking of the Theophilus legend but amid the details of Jewish necromancy, the Old Law (vv. 1405-6) and concerns over money (v. 1364) and apostasy, the author notes:

Vez Abijoiz ki nos defie
 et vez la terre de Surie
 ou l'en fet honte et deshonor
 a notre droiturier seignor
 qui por nos fu livrez a mort (vv. 1229-33)

Ave Maria adds that only sinners fall into dispute with the Church (vv. 7452-57) and the question of the Old and New Law is again raised in *Image de pierre* (vv. 8433, 8492). In *Baril*, the retained knight makes a long speech about what Jesus did for us, stressing his suffering and how, beforehand, all men were heading for damnation; it is thanks to Jesus that we can now hope for salvation (vv. 8973-88). This image of 'before' and 'after' is repeated in *Vision d'enfer* (vv. 10164-6, 10168-9), highlighting the suffering undergone by Christ at the hands of the Jews. It is, however, Christian usurers who are the outsiders in *Vision de diables*, a sin that is perhaps more social than religious. The symbolism of a beautiful son of an inwardly ugly father, examined below with reference to *Juitel*, is equally present in this tale and there are long sections justifying the author's vitriol against those who practise usury. In *Païen*, the outsider is a Saracen, but there is not a little ambiguity surrounding his place in Purgatory and subsequent salvation. The author also exemplifies the link between the Jewish and Christian faiths in his exhortation to keep the commandments (vv. 11582-85). Judas, the most vilified Jewish character, is referred to in *Goliard*; the epilogue to *St Paulin* demands that the audience choose the right lord to serve; *Rachat* shows a good merchant who is explicitly described as not practising usury (but the usurer in the tale is bracketed with the pagans, v. 15700). In *Usurier*, the author notes that usury is a constant sin (vv. 16140-71) that is worse than adultery and lust (vv. 16140-42). The epilogue to *Feuille de chou* reminds the audience that it was Christ's blood that saved us and that non-believers are *erites* (v. 16519). *Crucifix* presents an image of rich Jews who live well and actively despise Christians: Christ is *son ennemi / son aversier qu'il mescreoit* (vv. 17627-28). Here, Christ has been rejected, whereas in *Païen* it is apparently the Saracen king's ignorance of Christianity that saves him. The Jews in *Crucifix* conform to the most unkind stereotype, contorting themselves before the cross in an inversion of the praying Christian's posture (vv. 17647ff) and re-enacting Christ's Passion. But, however

outrageous was their collective crime in murdering Jesus, however blind Synagogua may be (v. 17764) and however much Jewry may stink if not cleansed by Christian baptism (vv. 17785-87), the author draws short of calling for a pogrom in his epilogue. Jews are outsiders that need to be avoided and will be punished independently by God; this is a long way from Gautier's anti-semitic calls for their murder. Religious outsiders fulfil different functions in the first *Vie* and no single category of marginal figures stands out for a particularly harsh narrative treatment. However, in his asides and figures of speech, the author, a man of his time, makes it clear that it is the Jews against whom he harbours the most rancour:

Ave, cil qui ne t'aime fust afonduz en mer,
 Ave, conne hon, is et a cuer plain d'amer!
 Des ors juïs sanz foi me convient a clamer,
 dame, qui pas ne t'ainment, cui tuit doient amer
 (*Prière à la Vierge*, vv. 18960-3)

Case Study: *Mouvance* of Nomenclature in *Juitel* and in the Legends of the Jewish Boy by Adgar and Gautier de Coinci

The popular medieval legend of the Jewish boy, who is thrown into an oven by his enraged father only to be miraculously saved from the flames, is contained in numerous medieval texts.⁸ The three most ancient Old French vernacular versions are those by the Anglo-Norman poet Adgar,⁹ Gautier de Coinci¹⁰ and the anonymous author of the first *Vie*. Adgar's account of the legend is of interest since it pre-dates all other extant vernacular versions, and Gautier de Coinci, a brilliant contemporary of the author of the first *Vie*, is of interest in his own right. However, *Juitel* is of a liveliness and vivacity that is not so apparent in these other two versions, being full of human details and extraordinary dramatic tension. This text contains several examples of an intentional - or at least rational - *mouvance* of epithets which adds another layer of *senefiance* to a tale that is already complex. A comparative study of these three versions reveals the genius of the author of the first *Vie* and shows this to be, in many respects, the most satisfying of the three redactions of the legend.¹¹

Adgar composed his tale in England in the second half of the twelfth century. It is contained in his *Gracial*, a work that is in large part a translation of a Latin *essamplaire*:

Cest escrit fine, Deu merci,

⁸ For an edition of 27 of these texts, dating from the 6th to the 18th centuries and in Greek, Latin and French, see E. Wolter, *Der Judenknabe*. For references to the numerous Latin versions, see Tubach #2041.

⁹ *Enfant juif de Bourges* is Miracle no. 14 of the *Gracial* (pp. 109-111). For a study of the *Gracial*, see M.D. Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and its Background*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963, pp. 187-191.

¹⁰ *De l'enfant a un giu qui se crestiena* is in volume II, pp. 95-100 (see also the introduction to volume I).

¹¹ This point of view is quite objective. I am perfectly ready to admit that *Baril*, for example, is much inferior to *Le Chavalier au barisel*. As for the motif of the Jew in French medieval literature, there has been only limited research relevant to this study. See M. Lifschitz-Golden, *Les Juifs dans la littérature française du Moyen Age (Mystères, Miracles, Chroniques)*, New York: Publications of the Institute French Studies, Columbia University, 1935, (of which pp. 103-15 examine our legend), G.-B. Depping, *Les Juifs dans le Moyen Age. Essai historique sur leur état civil, commercial et littéraire*, Bruxelles, 1844, and G. Dahan, 'Les Juifs dans le théâtre religieux en France du XIIe au XIVe siècles', *Archives Juives*, 13 (1977), 1-10. Parallel studies include B. Blumenkranz, *Les Auteurs chrétiens latins du Moyen Age sur les juifs et le judaïsme*, Paris & La Haye: Mouton & Co, 1963 (Etudes Juives, IV), J.-C. Payen's detailed review in *Le Moyen Age*, 72 (1966), 140-44, and M.R. Menocal, *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History*, Philadelphia: U.P.P., 1987, pp. 139-53.

Kunstmann has made a study of the lost sources of Adgar's tale, noting that the Miracles of Dominic of Evesham, Anselm the Younger (?) and especially William of Malmesbury all played a particular part in the coming together of Adgar's vernacular verse version : 'Je, Adgar, est un autre [...] et le lecteur sera bien avisé de se rappeler que la moitié des *je* du *Gracial* sont des *ego* traduits';¹² even so, Kunstmann attempts to attribute certain passages to Adgar himself, stressing that he has been unable to find them in the main Latin sources, but also thereby implicitly acknowledging that the cited passages could well have come from other, now lost, sources. This, of course, is an omnipresent problem in medieval studies, but it is worth underlining it here to stress that Adgar's work is principally that of an extremely talented *translator*. His version of the legend is brief :

A certain Pierre from the abbey of Saint-Michel de Cluse (Chiusa, Piedmont) tells a story that is already well-known. There was once a Jewish boy who accompanies the Christian children to church on Easter Sunday and who receives communion alongside them. At that moment the Jewish boy notices a statue of the Virgin and believes that this person is helping the priest; he believes that he is given the Host by this person. When his father learns that he has taken communion he becomes so furious that he throws his son into an oven that he happens across. But the Virgin protects the boy from the flames, and when the crowd of Jews and Christians that has gathered on hearing the boy's mother's wailing opens the oven, the boy is found safe and well. The Jewish boy tells of how the lady who had helped the priest at mass - the Virgin - had looked after him in the oven, thereupon the crowd throws the father into the oven. Since that moment, Jews and Christians of the region have dedicated their lives to the Virgin,

In this short miracle of 103 lines Adgar gives the essential details of the story without insisting on detail: it is Easter, the boy receives communion, he tells his father who then throws him into an oven, and is saved by the Virgin. Given the matter-of-fact tone of the author, eager to tell the story, it is noteworthy that references made to his authorities - a vitally important part of medieval composition - and the scene-setting of the tale occupy a considerable percentage of the action-filled Miracle (8 of 103 lines):

En Biture, une cité,
Avint un fait mult renumé
Ke uns moines cunter soleit
Ki de Cluse moines esteit.
Cil moines ert Pieres numez,
De bone vie mult loez.
Bien dist ke il en la cité fud
E k'il i vit ceste vertu.

(Miracle XIV, vv. 1-8)

¹² *Gracial*, pp. 13, 14.

The father appears in the narrative only when anger pushes him to attempt infanticide, and there is no logical link between him and the oven. As for the motif of the statue, this quite possibly gives Adgar a way of avoiding putting the the priest in a delicate position: would giving communion to an unbaptised Jewish boy have constituted a transgression of canon law? What is more, the child goes to church *pur enveisier* (v. 18) and is taken along by his christian friends. There is no solid case put forward by Adgar as to why the Virgin should save the Jewish boy, but the action of the narrative argues for his salvation since he goes to church and communicates. (As we shall see, this is rather different in *Juitel*, since the author of the first *Vie* takes care to paint the Jewish boy in a favourable hue before recounting the miracle proper.) As for the use of nomenclature, Adgar - or his Latin source - is not concerned with epithets, his tale in any case being rather short. The only proper nouns are: *Pierre* (the monk who has told the story), Bourges, *Pasches*, Jesus and the Virgin, that is to say no human protagonist. Adgar's characters - like many medieval characters - remain anonymous, making the way in which they are described of more significance. However, the reader learns little from Adgar's character descriptions. The Jewish boy is *fiz a un jueu* (v. 13), *li enfes al jueu* (v. 22) and *fiz al jueu* (v. 26), or *li enfes / l'enfant* (vv. 17, 31, 40, 45, 54, 56, 70). These terms are all fairly neutral. It should be noted, nonetheless, that at no point does Adgar describe the child as *li jueu*, an omission that establishes a distance between the boy and the Jewish faith. As for the father, an evil representative of the Jewish people, Adgar says very little: *sis peres* (vv. 32, 39) becomes *le giu* (v. 89) when the town learns of his felony, then the *pere al enfant* (v. 91) as he is seized by the crowd, and in the oven he dies as *li dolenz* (v. 94). There is a certain *mouvance* of epithet here, a degradation from *sis peres* to *li dolenz*, but the tale is too short and the character too peripheral to the narrative - named only five times - for the modern commentator to perceive a well-defined scheme on behalf of the author. An interesting aside here is a detail found in a fourteenth-century manuscript illumination: although painted two centuries after the composition of the *Gracial* and a century after Gautier's miracles and the first *Vie*, this illumination illustrates exactly the same legend and makes a significant physical difference between father and son: 'Le père est nettement orientalisé [...] mais son fils, qui reçoit l'eucharistie avec les autres enfants, [...] rien ne le distingue comme enfant juif.'¹³ In our three versions of the miracle, the distinctive traits of the Jew - an

¹³ B. Blumenkranz, *Le Juif médiéval au miroir de l'art chrétien*, Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1966, p.

anti-christian and violent father - are characteristics of personality rather than physical differences, even if Gautier's Jewish boy is exceptionally beautiful, and if there is a sort of metamorphosis that occurs after the boy takes communion in *Juitel*. It seems that Adgar, just like the illuminators that Blumenkranz speaks of, did not so much want to describe ethnic traits as 'une idée théologique en rapport avec le problème du salut.'¹⁴

As for the other characters, use of nomenclature is hardly more revealing: the child's mother is simply *la mere a l'enfant* (v. 55) or *la mere a ceste enfant* (v. 63), and she cries for her son *cume custume est de mere pieuse, / seient crestienes u jieues* (vv. 57-8); the Christian children are described as such in line 11, and are simply *les enfants* in line 18. On two occasions the Jews and Christians are even described collectively:

Tute la gent de la cuntree,
Crestiens, gieus ensement (vv. 66-67)

Tuit ensemble en la cuntree,
crestien, jieu ensement (vv. 96-97)

From this evidence, it is possible to conclude that names are not of primary importance to Adgar; this is an early narrative whose brevity scarcely allows for 'literary' motifs to be developed (which takes nothing away from the interest of this marvellous miracle). Finally, it is worth noting the absence of anti-semitism in Adgar's tale. According to this version of the miracle, Bourges is a town in which Christians and Jews can live happily and peacefully together,¹⁵ and there are no truly anti-semitic outbursts in the narrative:

Avint mut gloriusement
Ke enfant crestien alerent
A mustier e od els menerent

24. In this excellent book there are several reproductions of manuscript illuminations that illustrate the legend of the Jewish boy. Blumenkranz notes, with regard to an early fourteenth-century illumination, that the artist '[n']a pas su différencier les traits du père de ceux du prêtre catholique', (p. 24), following the expulsion of the Jews at the end of the thirteenth century.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁵ In his article 'Les Juifs chez Gautier de Coinci', *Archives Juives*, 16 (1980), 41-49, G. Dahan asks: 'Pourquoi cette localisation à Bourges? Peut-être faut-il l'expliquer par les récits de conversions massives de Juifs sous les évêques Félix et Sulpice II, dont le souvenir devait être resté vivant; d'autre part, on rappellera qu'à la fin du 12^e siècle et au 13^e la construction d'une nouvelle synagogue à Bourges a posé un problème dont font état plusieurs lettres de papes' (p. 43). Note, for example, a letter from Pope Honorius III in 1221, addressed to Simon de Sully, Archbishop of Bourges, and published by S. Grayzel in *The Church and the Jews in the Thirteenth Century*, Philadelphia: Dropsie College, 1933, p. 168: *Pervenit ad audientiam nostram, quod Judei in tua dioecesi habitantes, synagogas de novo contra sanciones canonicas construere presumpserint, ideo fraternitati tue per apostolica scripta mandamus, quatenus, si ita est, synagogas ipsas facias demoliri, fideles si qui se opposuerint, per censuram ecclesiasticam, appellatione postposita, compescendo.*

Un enfant, fiz a un jeue,
Ki folement reclaiment Deu (vv. 10-14)

La gent vers le giu se pristrent,
De li malfere s'entremistrent (vv. 89-90)

At the end of the tale the Jews and Christians *servirent Deu omnipotent / et sa mere, la dame sainte / ki fist e fait merveilles meinte* (vv. 98-100), but Adgar does not speak of their conversion: his tale demonstrates the love and pity of the Virgin rather than the perceived, vile nature of the Jewish people. In fact, Adgar composed his miracles in a climate that seems less rabidly hostile to Jews than that of Gautier and of the author of the first *Vie*.¹⁶ Admittedly, relations between the two faiths were never easy in the Middle Ages, but modern historians are keen to paint a less sombre image than the traditional *idée reçue* of fanatical anti-semitism (or even ‘anti-israélisme forcené’¹⁷): ‘If the legal status of Jews were our sole criterion, the picture of their relations with medieval Christians would need to be painted in very sombre hues. Laws, however, were made to be broken, and the actual relations between Jews and Christians were for long periods far different to those which the Church Councils and, to a less degree, the Jewish ritual code tended to produce. Jews and Christians often defied the laws which sought to keep them asunder.’¹⁸

This said, it should not be forgotten that Adgar was an Anglo-Norman poet. The twelfth century did witness excesses of anti-semitic feelings, particularly in England where Jewish communities were not very widespread but had considerable financial influence over the kings of England. Inspired to a large extent by the crusades, waves of violence hit the English Jews. C. Roth has stressed the favourable conditions enjoyed by English Jews under Henry II (1154-89) and noted that ‘there was no pretext [...] for Englishmen to imitate the massacres which intermittently continued on the continent’.¹⁹ However, R.B. Dobson observes that ‘within England also, although less dramatically than in northern France, there is evidence of growing hostility towards the Jews during the 1170s and 1180s’.²⁰ Anti-semitic blood libels spread rapidly after the death of William of Norwich in 1144. Although many inhabitants of Norwich did not believe

¹⁶ It should be remembered that Adgar was active well before Lateran IV and its policies intended to isolate European Jews.

¹⁷ P. Kunstmann, *Vierge et Merveille*, Paris: Bibliothèque médiévale 10/18, (1424), 1981, p. 21.

¹⁸ I. Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages*, London: E. Goldston, 1932, p. 423.

¹⁹ C. Roth, *A History of the Jews in England*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964 (3rd edition), p. 10.

²⁰ R.B. Dobson, *The Jews of Medieval York and the Massacre of March 1190*, York: St Anthony's Press, 1974 (Borthwick Papers, 45), p. 19.

that William was the victim of a murderous Jewish rite, 'within a generation [...] it seems likely that large sections of the English population had been predisposed to accept ritual murder accusations at their face value.'²¹ Even if the most famous boy-martyr is Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln, whose death in 1155²² is referred to in Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale*, the cult lasted until at least the end of the twelfth century: Harold of Gloucester (1168), Robert of Bury St Edmunds (1181) and Adam of Bristol (c.1183) were all canonised thanks to the popular conviction that the Jews had sacrificed them. This atmosphere of hostility towards the Jews - political, economic²³ and popular - was nourished by the decretals of the Third Lateran Council in which Pope Alexander III (1159-81) indicated the dangers of sexual relations between Jews and Christians, and also by the bloody assaults on Jewish communities in continental Europe (in particular the massacre at Blois in 1171). Dobson has commented that 'the series of savage acts of persecution against Jewish communities in northern France [...] until at least the atrocity at Bray-sur-Seine in March 1191 seem to represent a particularly significant and sinister development in the history of European anti-semitism. The effect within England of these gratuitously sadistic massacres, at a period in this country's history when relations with the north of France were unusually close, is bound to have been considerable.'²⁴ So, Adgar lived at a time when the inhabitants of England were becoming increasingly hostile towards the Jews. Shortly after the composition of the *Gracial*, on the occasion of Richard I's coronation, there were anti-Jewish riots in many urban centres: 'A phase of vindictive Jew-baiting led almost inevitably to murder and then to a concerted attempt by the mob at the complete extermination, usually by arson, of the urban Jeweries.'²⁵ In March 1190, on the evening of *Shabbat ha-Gadol*, the bloodiest of these massacre of Jews took place in York; some 150 Jews killed themselves rather than put themselves at the mercy of a crowd filled with murderous hatred.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 20. See also *The Life and Miracles of St William of Norwich*, ed. A. Jessopp & M.R. James, Cambridge, 1896.

²² See J.W.F. Hill, *Medieval Lincoln*, Cambridge: University Press, 1948, pp. 224-32, and G. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: University of California Press, 1990, pp. 237-62.

²³ Dobson notes that 'the rapid expansion of Jewish activity during the later years of Henry II's reign had begun to evoke a strongly critical reaction', *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²⁴ *op. cit.*, p. 19. For a detailed account of these events, see R. Chazan, *Medieval Jewry in Northern France: a Political and Social History*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1973.

²⁵ Dobson, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

At this point, before moving onto *Juitel* and Gautier's version of the legend of the Jewish boy, it seems useful to recall the anti-semitic decretals of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) :

- no. 67 proclaims against the heavy injustices practised by Jews and obliges them to make good tithes and offerings that are due to the Church;
- no. 68 decrees that Jews should wear distinctive clothing so that sexual unions between Christians and Jews could be avoided. It also bans Jews from appearing in public on Holy Days and on Easter Sunday;
- no. 69 prohibits Jews from taking up public functions;
- no. 70 reminds Jews that after baptism into Christianity they cannot return to judaic rites;
- no. 71, preaching the 4th crusade, suspends interest on debts to crusaders until either their return or their deaths.²⁶

As we shall see, these decretals were to influence, little by little, every aspect of Jewish life in the West, including their portrayal in literary works.

Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Notre-Dame* were composed between 1218 and 1233 and no longer represent a fairly literal translation of Latin source material, but rather a compilation of tales told in a personal and personalised manner.²⁷ Gautier devotes his work to the Virgin and describes her miraculous interventions in the world of the thirteenth century. *De l'enfant a un giu qui se crestïena* numbers 142 lines that contain details that are not contained in Adgar's version:

The son of a Jewish glassmaker at Bourges is the most intelligent and most beautiful of all the Jewish children. Loved by his schoolmates²⁸, he suffers cruel treatment at the hand of his father. At Easter, the Jewish boy goes to church with his school-friends and he receives communion. However, rather than taking communion from the priest he receives the host from the beautiful

²⁶ *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, ed. N.P. Tanner S.J., I, London and Washington DC: Sheed and Ward & Georgetown University Press, 1990, pp. 265-67. See also R. Foreville, *Latran I, II, III et Latran IV*, Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1965 (Histoire des Conciles Oecuméniques, 6) and S. Simonsohn, *The Apostolic See and the Jews. Documents: 492-1404*, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988 (Studies & Texts, 94).

²⁷ It is important to note that Gautier's originality (and even more so that of the author of the first *Vie des Pères*) is in his *treatment* of the subject: 'Tous les récits avaient déjà charmé bien des âmes quand Gautier de Coinci les mit en vers', E. Mâle, *L'Art religieux du 13ème siècle en France*, Paris: Armand Colin, 1948.

²⁸ Dahan notes the difference between Adgar, *Od els sout aprendre letteure / Latin, ebreu...* (vv. 15-16) - that he finds to be 'tout à fait invraisemblable' - and Gautier, *sovent aloit à lor escole* (v. 11), a toned-down version, art. cit. (1980), p. 43.

statue of a lady, veiled and carrying a child. In wonder at this vision of beauty and gentleness, the boy returns home with his face radiant. His father notices his new beauty, asks where he has been and learns that his son has communicated. Filled with anger, the father throws his son to the ground and tells him that he has fallen into a Christian trap; he is going to punish him in an extraordinary way! Taking the child by the hair he throws him into his oven; then, so that his son will burn all the better, he looks for dry wood and stokes the fire. The child's mother cries desperately and this attracts a crowd of over ten thousand people. However, on opening the oven, everyone is astonished to discover not only that the boy is safe and sound, but that he is asleep on a bed of live embers. His father is beaten and thrown into the oven, and the flames flare up again to consume and kill him. The child tells of how the lady he had seen at church had covered him with her veil and saved him from the flames and the smoke, and how, feeling so much at ease, he fell asleep. The child, his mother and many Jews who had witness the miracle are baptised, and they serve the Virgin all their lives.

As is frequently the case, Gautier fills his narrative with human details and social commentaries. Less concerned than Adgar to be precise about his sources - *ce truis lissant* (v. 1) - he launches straightaway into the tale proper, explaining that the Jew was a glassmaker (v. 2). This helps render the action of the tale more plausible than that of Adgar (and, as Benjamin of Tudela remarked towards the end of the thirteenth century, glassmaking was one of the crafts practised by Jewish communities²⁹). But Grayzel has noted that 'local councils [...] forbade the public appearance of Jews during Holy Week, from Friday to Sunday inclusive. They also forbade Jews to do any public work on Sundays and holidays, for the work itself was interpreted as a blasphemous infraction of the day sacred to Christianity.'³⁰ The action of this tale takes place at Easter, and the Jew's oven is already alight when he attempts to kill his son. Does this mean that the Jew is working in public on a holy day and as such in violation of local laws? The human details are also noteworthy: the father runs after his son and covers him in kisses (vv. 38-40)³¹; the same character's cruelty when he learns that the boy has taken communion (vv. 47-48); the mother's suffering as she believes her son to be burned alive (vv. 64-69); and the painful but deserved lot of the father (vv. 84-88). Gautier also gives supernatural details: the sublime beauty of the statue of the Virgin (vv. 20-34); the

²⁹ The 'classic' edition of *l'Itinéraire* is that of M.N. Adler, Londres, 1907, with Hebrew text and English translation. I have used the edition of T. Wright which occupies pp. 63-126 of *Early Travels in Palestine*, London: Bohn, 1848. In our legend, the child is not always thrown into a glass-maker's oven; Blumenkranz notes that 'par la suite, à mesure que d'une part les Juifs sont éloignés des métiers, et que d'autre part le nombre des prescriptions rabbiniques augmente, il est question d'un chauffe-bain: apparemment, il y a désormais moins de vitriers juifs', op. cit. (1966), p. 22.

³⁰ Grayzel, op. cit., p. 34.

³¹ Dahan remarks that 'à l'inverse de ce que l'on constate dans d'autres miracles, les épithètes injurieuses à l'égard du Juif sont relativement rares; il n'est pas présenté comme un monstre de méchanceté mais comme un père qui peut se montrer affectueux envers son enfant' (art. cit. (1980), p. 44). However, I believe that it is just this image, of a father capable of affection, that renders his crime all the more reprehensible. Gautier perhaps insists upon this detail since his miracle is intended for a monastic audience supposedly divorced from such scenes.

boy's physical change in appearance (vv. 36-37 - as in *Juitel* and in medieval iconography as a whole, the boy's beauty has a symbolic value); the miracle itself (vv. 76-80); and the miracle as told by the boy (vv. 94-104). As for the portrayal of the characters, Gautier describes their personalities and their actions at the same time. There is a degree of onomastic *mouvance* but, as we shall see, this is less subtle and systematic and altogether more fleeting than in *Juitel*. The mother is always a very neutral character, and the reader only comes across her when she witnesses her husband's barbaric actions:

La mere aqueurt, qui brait et crie (v. 64)

She also appears at the end of the tale:

Sa mere après lui se baptoie
Ou non de Sainte Trinité. (vv. 112-13)

In fact, these lines are not without irony, given the character of her husband and his eventual fate. The mother only plays a secondary role, but the father is one of the tale's protagonists. From the outset, doing away with any suspense, Gautier names him as *un giu verrier mesdisant* (v. 2).³² Once simply *uns gius* (v. 5), it is rather through the character's actions than through the author's use of epithet that the audience discovers his personality. For example, he is violent towards his (worthy) son:

La char, qu'avoit tenrete et mole,
Sovent ses peres li batoit
Por ce qu'avec aus [*les écoliers*] s'embatoit (vv. 12-14)

Of course, for Gautier, the very fact of being Jewish is damning enough and the actions of the father only serve to reinforce the audience's - presumed - deep-grained anti-semitism.³³ The tenderness that the father shows towards his radiant son is a dramatic

³² A short and incomplete analysis of the use of the term 'Jew', as used in the *Chansons de Geste* (A. Moisan, *Répertoire des noms propres de personnages et de lieux cités dans les Chansons de Geste françaises et les oeuvres étrangères dérivées*, Genève: Droz, 1986, p. 632), suggests that *Juif mesdisant* / *mescreant* was a standard epithet in the Middle Ages, cf. Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube, *Girart de Vienne*, ed. W. van Emden, Paris: Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1977, v. 170, and *Florence de Rome*, ed. A. Wallensköld: Paris, Société des Anciens Textes Français, 1909, v. 4695.

³³ The theological justification / explanation of anti-Jewish sentiment can be found in the Bible. Their supposed collective responsibility for the crucifixion is put forward in Matthew, 27: 25: *Et respondens uniuersus populus, dixit: Sanguis eius super nos, & super filios nostros*; and John explains the Jews' exclusion from heaven: *Beati, qui lauant stolas suas in sanguine Agni: ut sit potestas eorum in ligno vitae, & per portas intrent in ciuitatem, Foris canes, & venefici, & impudici, & homicidae, & idolis*

tool that contrasts in a striking manner with the Jew's true character. At that moment the boy calls him *biaus pere* (v. 42), but the father / son relationship will not be the same again. The boy has sinned against Jewish Law (as seen by Gautier), the father hates him already and is entirely conscious of his actions:

'Tu iez cheüs en maus liens !
En despit de toz crestiens
Et en viltance de lor loi
Grans merveilles ferai de toi !' (vv. 51-54)

It is interesting to note *en passant* the irony that fills this last line: in fact, the father is not wrong, since his son does indeed see a 'marvel', but one other than that intended by and alluded to by the father. The author here repeats the word *merveilles*, having already used it at the beginning of the miracle:

Or entendez fines merveilles. (v. 3)

In re-using this term, Gautier creates a most effective echo that is both ironic and memorable.

Having already described the events in the church, Gautier now sets Christians and Jews in opposition. The father becomes *li chiens* (v. 62) as he stokes the oven fires, and this term is repeated the very last time he is directly named by the author :

L'enragié chien mout tost saisirent (v. 84)

The motif of the devilish-Jewish-dog can be found in the Bible.³⁴ The dog - along with the hyena and the fox - is unclean and symbolises the enemies of God and of Man in the Old Testament. However, in Christian iconography, the dog is often the symbol of loyalty, figuring for instance on many medieval *gisants*. Bestiaries also give a fairly positive image of this animal; not entirely positive, though, since the dog returns to its vomit, thereby symbolising *cil qui repairent a lor pechié dont il eurent confés*.³⁵ This

seruientes, & omnis, qui amat, & facit mendacium (Apocalypse, 22 : 14-15). All Biblical quotations from *Bibla Sacra Vulgatae Editionis*, Oeniponte: Sumptibus Librariae Academiae Wagnerianae, 1906.

³⁴ Quoniam circumdederunt me canes multi: concilium malignantium obsedit me. Foederunt manus meas & pedes meos: dinumerauerunt omnia ossa mea...(Psalm 22: 17)

Erue a framea Deus animam meam: & de manu canis uncam meam (Psalm 22: 21)

Videte canes, videte malos operarios, videte concisionem (Philippians 3: 2)

³⁵ An edition of the *Bestiaire* of Pierre de Beauvais by E. Lindsey (from MS B.N. fr. 834) can be found as an appendix to *Medieval French Bestiaries*, Hull (GB): unpublished PhD thesis, 1976. More accessible is G. Bianciotto's translation in *Bestiaires du Moyen Age*, Paris: Stock, 1980, pp. 17-64. See also F.

idea repeats almost verbatim Proverbs 26: 11. What is more, E. Block mentions a misericord at Aarschot on which can be found the image of a Jew kissing a dog: 'The legend told of Jews who kissed dogs and ate them, since they were forbidden to eat pork.'³⁶ There is also a parallel between non-human sounds - the barking of a dog, the guttural language of the arabs, the unfamiliar sounds of Hebrew - and the devil. J. Voisenet remarks that 'les bruits et les sons inarticulés, comme ce qui est inorganisé, appartiennent au monde du désordre sur lequel Satan étend son emprise.'³⁷ The very same message is found in the Bible with regard to those who plot against God:

Conuertentur ad vesperam: & samen patientur ut canes, & circuibunt ciuitatem
(Psalm 58: 7)

Dante has demons and the damned barking and howling :

Cerbero, fiera crudele e diversa
con tre gole caninamente latra
sopra la gente che quivi è sommersa (Inf., vi, 13-15)

urlar li fa la pioggia come cani (Inf., vi, 19)³⁸

In fact, the dog image suits Gautier (and the author of the *Juitel*) very well since the author has already shown that the father is capable of affection towards his son, but he returns immediately to sin, just as the dog returns to its vomit. According to Vincent de Beauvais, the hyena - a cousin to the dog - symbolises the children of Israel: *Cesti sanble les fuis Israel qui au commencement servirent Dieu et apres se donerent es delices du monde et a luxure et continerent les mahomeries; et por ce dit li prophetes que signagogue resanble cele orde beste.*³⁹ This image is not only to be found in edifying literature; Chrétien de Troyes, amongst others, finds it useful:

Li faus juïf par lor envie,

McCulloch, *Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries*, Chapel Hill: University of California Press, 1962, pp. 110-11.

³⁶ E.C. Block, 'Judaic imagery on medieval choir stalls', *Reinardus*, 8 (1995), 25-47 (p. 37).

³⁷ J. Voisenet, *Bestiaire chrétien: l'imagerie animale des auteurs du haut Moyen Age*, Toulouse: P.U. du Mirail, 1994, pp. 236-37. Voisenet also remarks that, according to Hubert of Maastricht, the devil 'pousse un cri d'une voix de bête sauvage' (p. 237).

³⁸ Quotations taken from the excellent study by H. Flanders Dunbar, *Symbolism in Medieval Thought and its Consummation in the Divine Comedy*, New Haven (Conn.): Yale University Press, 1961. The author comments that 'throughout the *Divina Commedia* dogs, foxes and wolves, representing wicked men or principles of wickedness, manifest the root of all sin, cupidity, direct opposition to love as cold to heat', pp. 163-64.

³⁹ ed. Lindsey, op. cit; Bianciotto, op. cit., p. 39. A recent and interesting study of the damning hyena/Jew relationship can be found in D. Hassig, *Medieval Bestiaries - Text, Image, Ideology*, Cambridge: University Press, 1995, pp. 145-55.

c'on devroit tüer come chiens,
 Firent als mal et nos biens
 Quant il en la crois le leverent;
 Als perdirent et nos salverent...

(*Perceval*, vv. 6292-96⁴⁰)

Lastly, it is interesting to note that Gautier, just like Adgar, describes the father as being burned alive. His state / status has not changed from the beginning to the end of the tale, there is no *mouvance* of nomenclature in his case and the tenderness that he shows to his son, followed by attempted infanticide, paints an extremely negative image of this character.

As for the Jewish boy himself, Gautier describes him as *un giutel* (vv. 5, 24, 42, 50) et then as *l'enfant* (vv. 56, 76, 89). The diminutive distances him from the Jewish faith, but it is rather through his actions and behaviour that the reader understands that this is an atypical Jew:

Mielz entendant et mout plus bel
 De touz les autres giuetiaus (vv. 6-7)

Better still, he is loved by the Christian children :

Por ce qu'il ert plaisans et biaux
 Tuit li clerçon de la cité
 Le tenoient en grant chierté. (vv. 8-10)

He is physically beautiful,

La char, qu'il avoit tentrete et mole (v. 12)

even more so when blessed by the Virgin:

Toute sa face resclaira
 De la grant joie qu'il avoit. (vv. 36-37)

The audience witnesses the father's hatred for his son (vv. 46-54) and the cruel violence of which the latter is victim (vv. 55-63); but it can only be a good thing to be hated by a Jew.⁴¹ Gautier leaves no doubt surrounding the worthiness of the boy: when he becomes the object of a glorious miracle, he deserves it. As for the father, he also is equally deserving of his painful death. The vehemence with which Gautier calls for the extermination of the Jews contrasts vividly with Adgar's more measured tone. In his study of the Jewish community of Nîmes, J. Simon notes a process of degradation in the

⁴⁰ *Le Roman de Perceval ou le Conte du Graal*, ed. W. Roach, Geneva: Droz, 1956.

⁴¹ It is useful to recall Schaff's comment, cited by S. Grayzel in 1933 (op. cit., p. 3), which puts the era's anti-semitism in context: 'The thirteenth century began for the Jews the most unfortunate period of their history...'

favourable conditions of the Jews around the beginning of the thirteenth century: 'les populations [chrétiennes] perdirent peu à peu les sentiments de tolérance et de fraternité dont elles avaient été animées jusqu'alors envers les juifs', this change in feeling being caused by Church propaganda and the Albigensian crusade.⁴² Simon adds that 'l'Eglise força le peuple, malgré lui, à s'éloigner du Juif, à le considérer comme un être abject'.⁴³ So, between the periods of activity of Adgar and Gautier de Coinci and the author of the *Juitel*, there has been a change in attitude and in policy: 'The powerful position of the Church in the first half of the Thirteenth Century made the western Church cognizant of its unity under the Catholic Church. In this unity the Jews found no place, in fact they seemed a source of danger to it. Innocent III thereupon gave them a place outside of Christian Society, marking their exclusion by means of the Badge. Relentlessly he and his successors drove them into the place assigned them. It was a policy which eminently fitted in with the other political and economic conditions, and was therefore enthusiastically adopted and carried to its logical conclusions.'⁴⁴

It can safely be assumed that there is little or no intentional *mouvance* of epithet in Gautier's tale, and asserted that his characters' personalities are revealed by their actions rather than by direct authorial intervention. Gautier does not appear interested in the motivation of the Jewish boy, concentrating rather on the miracle and the *après-miracle*, and also on the father's character: at the end of the tale some 14 lines - that is, 10% of the narrative - are given over to his now infamous call for the extermination of the Jews. This miracle may show the Vigin's great pity, but was Gautier more concerned with passing on the message that even the worst sinner can gain salvation in the right circumstances - which in itself is not really the case since the *guitel* is distanced from the Jewish faith - or rather that *vers aus sui durs si durement / Que, s'iere rois, por toute roie / Un a durer n'en endurroie* (vv.140-142)?

Juitel is more or less the contemporary of Gautier's miracle.⁴⁵ As is the case with most of the tales of the first *Vie*, *Juitel* has a substantial prologue and epilogue, of

⁴² J. Simon, 'Histoire des juifs de Nîmes au Moyen Age', *Neumaussa*, 2 (1884-85), 10-18, 94-124, cited by J. Shatzmiller, *Recherches sur la communauté juive de Manosque au Moyen Age 1241-1329*, Paris & La Haye: Mouton & Co, 1973 (Etudes Juives, 15), p. 20.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 21.

⁴⁴ Grayzel, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁴⁵ Dahan believes that the best known version of the *Vie des Pères*, to be found in *A*, 'semble s'inspirer de Gautier' (art. cit. (1980), p. 43), but he does not develop this hypothesis. Most modern commentators concur that the two authors may have shared a Latin source, but, given the very close chronology, that there is unlikely to have been any direct contamination.

71 and 22 lines respectively.⁴⁶ But even if these parts are not included, the narrative proper still comprises some 271 lines, that is twice as many as Adgar and Gautier. We are no longer at Bourges but, as with most of the other tales of the first *Vie*, in Egypt.⁴⁷ The tolerant atmosphere of Adgar has disappeared, replaced by a strong desire to convert the audience. *Juitel* is full of new elements, in particular with regard to character depiction. The length of the tale allows for more detailed descriptions of personality and motivation, and the author thereby adds a 'human' aspect to the tale. It is in this way that the characters become less anonymous, even in a literary tradition whose characters are rarely named. The author is also able to use epithets in a precise way according to a given situation. Taken as a whole, this varied and intelligent usage suggests an intended *mouvance* of nomenclature, an artistic device that adds new layers of *senefiance* to the tale.

The mother in *Juitel* remains quite a neutral character, but her human reaction to her son's fate is of note. The author does not consider her as a Jewess but :

Come mere, ki ne set feindre
la dolor qu'il covient plaindre. (vv. 589-90)

In fact, the author never speaks of 'the Jew's mother' but simply of 'the mother'. The Jewish children (v. 424) and the Christians (vv. 435, 464) are described as such by narrative necessity, with no open attempt to pass a value judgement. However, from as early as line five the author seems to begin to set out the motivation of the Jewish boy and thereby prepare a justification for the ensuing miracle through his description of the child:

Cil enfans cure n'avoit
des juïteax, ainz reperoit
avec les enfans crestiens. (vv. 433-35)

At the beginning of the tale, the boy is not a 'Jew' at all, but rather *enfans* (v. 433) or *fil del juïf* (v. 463). He is also aged seven years old, a detail which is not only a case of gratuitous Christian symbolism.⁴⁸ In 1246, Innocent IV legislated against forced

⁴⁶ The author gives his source in the prologue, *ensi Salemons le nos dist / et afferme per son escrit* (vv. 367-8) and tells the reader that children should be taught discipline: we are all God's children and he tests us. We should repent before it is too late because *l'Escriture dit sanz mentir / qu'a Deu ne puet riches venir / ne ke li chameulz puet entrer / el chaz d'une aguille et passer* (vv. 412-16). In his epilogue, the author preaches God's greatness.

⁴⁷ This collection was at least inspired by patristic literature, an influence that leaves its mark even when the narrative is not drawn directly from that corpus.

⁴⁸ For the symbolic value of numbers, see J. Ribard, *Le Moyen Age : littérature et symbolisme*, Paris: Champion, 1984.

baptisms of Jewish children: *Prohibeas etiam quantum in te fuerit ne in baptizandis eorum filiis ipsis violentia inferatur, cum sacrificium voluntarium esse debeat, non coactum.*⁴⁹ Moreover, Erler has commented that Jewish children could choose to be baptised without their parents' consent from the age of seven.⁵⁰ So, the boy's age is significant, as is the fact that on only one occasion does the author describe him as *juitel*:

Par l'usage et per art set l'en
la raison del monde et le sen :
sans le juitel ne savoient
rien fere, quant il ne l'avoient ;
et cil toz esgarez estoit
d'autre part, quant il nes veoit. (vv. 471-76)

Here, two things distance the boy from the Jewish faith: the diminutive and the context. This is still the beginning of the tale and the author is setting the scene; he has not yet described the miracle, and his account gives the impression that the christian children themselves speak through the intermediary of the narrator. The Jewish boy is then named as *li juïs* on three occasions, and each use of this apparently damning term appears to be rational, perhaps intentional:

Longuement lor amor maintindrent
et tant k'a une Pasque vindrent
que li enfant s'ajoïssioient
de ce qu'acommigier devoient
le jor de Paske, par matin.
Li juïs tint le chief enclin
et dist : 'Iroiz i vos sanz moi ?
- Nenil, firent il tuit, avoi !' (vv. 477-84, my italics)

The symbolic value of this scene is obvious: a Jew, at Easter, head bowed and excluded from the christian ceremonies, from the sacrament and from the joy that accompanies the great feast. The gesture of bowing one's head does not only signify shame but also submission.⁵¹ So, at this point in the tale the Jewish boy has become a symbolic character, *Synagoga*, and the human aspect of the narrative only adds to the already heavy symbolism: his worries and concerns find a natural contrast in the joy and excitement felt by his Christian friends. (This projected image of symbolic identity is not uni-directional: there was equally a trend in the Jewish communities of the period by

⁴⁹ Letter from Innocent IV to the King of Navarre, published by Grayzel, op. cit., p. 260.

⁵⁰ Cited by Grayzel, ibid., p. 14, n. 12.

⁵¹ In medieval iconography, those who bow their heads are often guilty of a crime or the damned who give in to despair.; this is equally a voluntary gesture of self-abasement. Synagogue, having lost her influence, bows her head and loses her crown; this gesture can also signify sadness.

which, according to Ivan Marcus, the male child was brought up to see himself as a potential sacrifice and so as a symbol of the entire Jewish people.⁵²) But this is also a child, and he does not want to be left out. By using the term *juïs*, the author adds another layer of *senefiance* to this passage.

A few lines further on is the second use of the term *juïs* to qualify the tale's protagonist:

Mout s'en parti *li juïf liez*,
mout fu la nuit esmanvelliez
por ce ke perdre ne voloît
ce ke l'en promis li avoit.

(vv. 499-502, my italics)

Here is a rare example of a positive application of the substantive 'Jew'.⁵³ It is extremely uncommon to find the adjective *liez* accompanying the substantif *juïf*,⁵⁴ and the audience would have expected to encounter a negative adjective or context, such as *un ort juïf vil et malvais* (v. 659) or *quant Jhesucrist crucifierent / en Mont Calvaire* (vv. 443-44).⁵⁵ This is a sign of radical transformation, since within the single expression 'happy Jew' the boy is at once one of 'them' and one of 'us'. There is perhaps some irony in the fact that the child knows that he will go to church with his friends, but, at any rate, the use of *liez*, whilst reminding the reader of the Jew / Christian polemic, serves to distance the boy still further from the Jewish stereotype and from the Jewish faith in particular.

The third and final qualification of the Jewish boy as *li juïs* comes when the child is a church:

Li juïs avant se ficha
come anfes ki tot vuet veoir
et qui de tot vuet essayer.

(vv. 516-18)

⁵² I. Marcus, *Ritual of Childhood. Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe*, London & New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

⁵³ In *Renieur* the positive words of a Jewish character towards the Christian protagonist have a negative effect : A Christian is in love with his neighbour, but the feeling is not reciprocal. The man therefore goes to see a Jewish necromancer and declares himself ready to renounce his faith if that will make the Jew's magic work and the woman love him. The Jew calls the Christian *beaz amis*, but when the latter does not keep to his oath - he cannot bring himself to renounce the Virgin - he loses the Jew's respect^{and} is no longer addressed as *vos* but *tu*. The woman, who before this scene uses no honorific at all in addressing her neighbour, now calls him *amis*.

⁵⁴ In *Girart de Vienne*, a *chanson de geste* by Bertrand de Bar-sur-Aube (ed. cit.), there is a Jewish character, Joachin, that is three times named as *li bons juïs* by the author (vv. 4917, 5529, 5572).

⁵⁵ For the motif in religious drama of the Jew's alleged direct responsibility for the crucifixion, see Dahan, art. cit (1977), p. 6.

Again, I would argue that the action requires this use of the term, rather than the author choosing an epithet in a haphazard manner. Verisimilitude, symbolism, logic and dramatic tension are all served since a christian boy would not have had the same feelings; and on a didactic level, the author is again able to insist upon the exclusion of the Jews. There is equally a certain symbolic value in the fact that the *juitel* is called a Jew three times. Perhaps the author intended to make a value judgement by using the term *juif* since, each time, it qualifies not the individual - the boy - but the Jewish faith. The child is never again 'the Jew' or 'the Jew's child', but *filz* or *enfants*.⁵⁶ At the end of the tale, this former Jew whom God [*de*] *son juïsme esclava* (v. 678)⁵⁷ becomes *provoirre* (v. 688) and, as a result, *proudons* (v. 669). This was no mean feat for one born a Jew in such a violently anti-semitic epoch.⁵⁸ There is no doubting the boy's Jewishness at the beginning of the tale, even if he has Christian virtues and leanings. The use of the term *Jew* therefore reminds the audience that conversion and baptism are necessary, and provides a contrast to the elevated status enjoyed by the same character at the end of the tale.

If the son is the subject of a subtle *mouvance* of nomenclature, the father's case is more clear-cut. As the tale opens he is a *juif* (vv. 430, 431) *qui voirres fesoit*. It is only when this anonymous character 'becomes' the father of the Jewish boy who is already known to the audience and who deserves the affection of his father - the audience knowing already that the boy loved only his *Christian* friends - that the author

⁵⁶ Note, however, that the word *enfant* is not always neutral in medieval literature. In *Le Couronnement de Louis* (ed. E. Langlois, Paris: Classiques Français du Moyen Age, 1888), the term is pejorative and shows the young Louis to be unworthy / ungrateful when he does not step forward to take the crown (v. 87).

⁵⁷ To be Jewish was to be dirty: the author of the first *Vie* uses the verb *eslaver* in the prologues of two other tales to express the need to 'wash away sin':

Si lou, tant com loisir avons
que de nos mals nos esclavons. (Sarrasine, vv. 781-81)

Si lou ke del fiem vos lavoiz
et ke vos armes esclavoiz
des pechiez dont tuit estes plein
ainz ke mort en vos mete mein. (Thaïs, vv. 2219-22)

In *Crucifix*, the Christian is conspicuously clean (v. 17624).

⁵⁸ Bretel notes that the term *preudome* has 'une valeur axiologique et révèle la présence dans l'énoncé de la subjectivité de l'énonciateur qui, en même temps qu'il désigne son personnage, porte sur lui un jugement positif. Plutôt que de hermite, rendu, moine ou frere, *preudome* est un équivalent lexical de 'saint homme'. Cette valeur du substantif le rapproche de celle de l'adjectif, avec lequel d'ailleurs il semble se confondre dans les emplois en fonction d'attribut,' p. 569.

provides more details: he is *anciens*⁵⁹ (v. 436) and violent (vv. 437-8), then, indirectly, a dog:

entre juïf et crestien
s'entrument comme chat et chien. (vv. 439-40)

As he is describing the father, the author digresses and his tale turns into a sermon-like monologue against the Jews, and this furious criticism quite naturally attaches itself to the fictitious character of the father: *Bien est drois ke nos les haions* (v. 441) since they put Jesus to death *per lor grant fellonie* (v. 445); they do not believe in the holy sacraments and are therefore already damned:

[...] il gaaignent le juïse
d'enfer, desoz, en la sentine,
en l'ordure, en la puantine
qui toz jors es nez lor purra,
et en feu ki toz jors durra.
La sont dampné et la sont vil,
quar il sont de diable fil.
Qui les aime et ki les maintient,
Damedeu por enemy tient... (vv. 450-58)

There is clearly a *mouvance* in the reception and perception of an initially fairly neutral term. Before this vicious discourse, the author told the story of *un juïf qui voirres fesoit* (v. 430); now, when he says that *au fil del juïf m'en revieg* (v. 463), he may be speaking of the same fictitious character but with a new underlying current that condemns him all the more: the name has remained the same but the function has altered. There is considerable irony in the father's belief that his son has fallen foul of a christian plot (vv. 534-7), which mirrors the episode in Gautier's version that would have the boy as having fallen into a christian trap (v. 51). This deterioration in the father's standing continues on two levels: in the action - he throws his worthy son into the oven - and in epithet - he is *comme chiens sanz foi, sale et vil* (v. 537). Not only is he a dog, but the father is also guilty of being *sanz foi* - a constant theme in the first *Vie* - and a son of the devil.⁶⁰ As such he responds exactly to the extra-narratorial description of the Jews

⁵⁹ In the comic *fabliaux*, old characters are frequently duped or the butt of jokes (eg. *La vieille qui oint la palme au chevalier*, *La vieille truande*), and in other works being old can also be a negative trait (eg. the king in Marie de France's *Les Deus amanz*). In *Crapaud*, the aged father is duped by his selfish son but it is he who has the last word.

⁶⁰ For the identification of the Jews with the powers of evil, see Isaiah 56:10 *Speculatores eius caeci omnes, nescierunt uniuerſi: canes muti non valentes latrare, videntes vana, dormientes, & amantes somnia* and John 8 : 30-51, especially verse 44: *Vos ex patre diabolo estis: & desideria patris vestri vultis facere*. Dahan (art.cit., 1977) refers his readers to the work of J. Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jew*, Baltimore, 1944, that I have not been able to consult.

given by the author. The father's words - he justifies his actions as a defence of *nostre loi* (v. 562)⁶¹ - and his violent actions - *l'enfant per les temples geta / et de l'estouper ce hasta, / que funs ne cholor n'en issist* (vv. 571-3) - are also in line with the typical traits of Jews already given. In short, the father has become a devil. This is his lowest point, but whereas Adgar and Gautier would have him put to a painful and fully deserved death, the author of the first *Vie*, anxious to show God's great mercy, 'resurrects' the character and in^{so}doing continues the motif of *mouvance* already apparent. The first *Vie* as a whole presents the message that no sin - incest, infanticide, murder, denial of faith - is too great to be forgiven, if the correct circumstances obtain. So, it is quite normal that the vehement denunciation of the Jews and the atrocious violence of the father in *Juitel* be followed by an illustration of God's infinite compassion: the father, a sinning Jew, is to be forgiven. When the neighbours bring the child to him after the miracle, the father repents immediately. He cries - the outward sign of contrition and sincerity - and he eloquently devotes himself to (the Christian) God before recognising that his former state as a Jew was leading him up the wrong path:

Sire, dont vos est ce venu
que de moi vos est sovenu,
d'un larron usurier sanz foi,
qui trop a vesu a besloi,
d'un ort juïf vil et malvais ?
(vv. 635-39, my italics)

As he speaks of himself, the father is distanced from his former self. He speaks in the third person to call himself *larron usurier*, but as a baptised Christian this is no longer the case.⁶² However, at the beginning of the tale the author described him as a glass-maker, a profession practised by some Jewish communities but not necessarily 'a Jewish profession'. At the very beginning of the narrative the father, as we have seen, is portrayed in relatively neutral terms,⁶³ but after the subsequent events of the story he loses this neutrality and takes on the role of the infamous, dangerous and diabolic Jew.

⁶¹cf. vv. 521-24 in which the child takes communion :

Avant ce trest, un en reçut,
dont sa loi bleça et descrut
conme nices ki ne savoit
se sen ou folie fesoit.

⁶² Confession transforms the sinner into a person who remembers his sins as if they were those of another person: *Ceterum ut memoria integra maneat, et ipsius maculae deleantur, quae novacula posset efficere?* (Saint Bernard, *De conversione*, II, PL, 849). Payen notes that 'ce n'est qu'en renonçant définitivement au vieil homme, qu'en assumant pleinement notre vocation de ressucités que nous serons à même de considérer avec détachement notre passé', p. 64.

⁶³ In this context, perhaps a Jew is unable to play an entirely neutral role, but the author's virulent attack on Jewery has not yet begun.

So, if at this point he calls himself a usurer, this is to identify his pre-baptised state with a widely recognised stereotype. This *mouvance* of professions, from *verrier* to *usurier* may be seen to mirror reality since from the first half of the thirteenth century Jews were banned from almost every profession.⁶⁴ The father's repentance marks a logical turning point,⁶⁵ and the father himself is indirectly responsible for the conversion of other members of the town's Jewish community:

Ensi son affere atorna
que cel jor se crestina
c'onques n'i quist delaïement,
et fist tot son proposement,
et maint juïf avec lui furent
que Deu por le miracle crurent. (vv. 655-62)

Juitel contains other interesting elements that distinguish it from the versions composed by Adgar and Gautier. The character depiction is enriched by a degree of onomastic *mouvance*, but the author also gives many small details that create clear and human images. The Jewish boy is the leader of a gang of children (v. 473), a potentially symbolic detail given that the other gang members are Christians; he is sad when he believes his friends are going to do something without him (vv. 482ff); on Easter Saturday he is so excited at the prospect of receiving communion that he is unable to get to sleep (v. 500); he leaves home when his busy parents are not looking; at church he is eager to get a good view of proceedings (vv. 516-18); he cannot lie (v. 551);⁶⁶ and he explains the miracle according to the logic of an innocent child (*quar cil si est avueques moi / que j'ai hui mengié au mostier*, vv. 606-7). His father's cruel violence is also painted in lively terms: inside the oven *li voirres boilloit* (v. 570); he seizes his son by the temples (v. 571) and quickly slams shut the oven door (vv. 572-3); and the child is discovered safe and sound amongst *voirre ki lez lui boilloit* (v. 602). It can also be noted *en passant* that the father could not see inside the oven if the door was closed (v. 583). These details suggest that the author is very conscious of his art. For example, he knows that he must get back to the narrative after his anti-semitic sermon (vv. 463-4)

⁶⁴ See Baron (op. cit.) and Abrahams (op. cit.), and also L. Poliakov, *Histoire de l'Antisémitisme*, Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1961.

⁶⁵ It is perhaps very much to his credit that, in this version of the tale, the father is not seen to forbid his son from playing with Christians, even if he is afraid of just such a *malheur* (v. 535).

⁶⁶ This virtue almost causes him to be martyred. There is here a parallel with the ancient church fathers: converts from a non-Christian faith, they were often put to death in the name of their new religion. In this way the boy's father in *Juitel* can represent an 'old law'.

and he creates a mysterious and fantastic atmosphere after the opening of the oven door, suggesting that the miracle is continuing (vv. 610-11).

Outsiders in the first *Vie* fall largely into one of four sub-categories: Jews, pagans, heretics and unrepentant sinners, occasionally excommunicants. This study of names and functions is especially concerned with those tales telling of Jewish characters but elsewhere diabolic pagans do become penitents and worthy Christians; murderers become saints. This is the natural reversal of worthy characters falling into sin and being damned: the movement between the status of insider and outsider is not uni-directional. It must be added that not all tales in which Jews play a major role contain the same sort of movement of names and functions as outlined in this chapter. In *Crucifix*, for example, the explicitly detailed cruelty and violence of the Jews, allied to their collective guilt in the slaying of the Christian messiah, rule out the use of an epithet such as 'good and happy Jews', even when baptised. The context of social and religious reality is a necessary backdrop to all 'artistic' or even 'exegetical' concerns. A final point needs to be made here: the author of the first *Vie* categorically states, on a number of occasions, that all those who have not been baptised will be damned. This is the fundamental state of the religious outsider. In the strictest sense, this is illustrated in the narratives of the collection, but in the terms of those listening to the tales there are exceptions to this. The most notable exception is *Païen* in which the good pagan king is baptised in purgatory, thereby gaining salvation. Before his Christian baptism he is identified as being full of *largesse* and pity, charitable, simple and kind to all, a hater of sin and injustice and a lover of orphans and widows. He was famous for his good works to great and small. Are these not surprising attributes for a pagan when one remembers that both Adgar and Gautier damn their false-faith characters? In *Païen*, the king is Christian in all but name and the author is aware of the outcome of his narrative. It must be assumed that the ensuing baptism and major miracle require some justification and this is the author's chosen method to make names and functions tally. The audience is periodically reminded that this man is a pagan, and so, just as is the case with the Jewish boy, a miracle and baptism are required for his salvation.

Conclusion to Part V

This chapter does not argue for inter-authorial *mouvance* between Adgar, Gautier and the author of *Juitel*.⁶⁷ All three versions tell of a well-known and very popular legend, and they may have shared sources in common, but the three versions do differ significantly. *Juitel*, for example, is not a Virgin miracle and the boy's father is not slain. And, as Blumenkranz notes, the legend was to undergo still more changes well after the compositions examined in the present study.⁶⁸ The *mouvance* that is at issue here is that of onomastics within the text, sometimes voluntary, sometimes unconscious, but always rational. This broadens the meaning of the tale and influences the reader's reception of a given character as insider or outsider in a manner that is much more subtle than the usual commentaries and sermons. *Juitel*, and other tales in the first *Vie* - notably *Sarrasine*, *Renieur*, *Thaïs*, *Baril* and *Crapaud* - contain elements of *mouvance* of nomenclature that are subtle and quite possibly intentional and which illustrate a deftness of touch that is largely absent in the other versions of the legend. If any hard evidence is required to signal the author's awareness of the use of names, this can be found in the progression of the peasant's terms of address in *Merlot*, from *mon seigneur Merlin* to *sire Merlin*, then *Merlin* and finally *Merlot*. As for the *dénouement* of *Juitel*, it is the context that requires it to differ from that found in Adgar and Gautier; the first *Vie* is actively seeking the repentance and confession of its audience. It^{is} perhaps this that renders the tale so much more satisfying than the other versions examined here. The richness of the narrative, the ample human detail and an apparent desire to depict the motivation of the characters - father, son, God - make *Juitel* the most convincing of these versions of what is a curious and popular legend. The salutary tone that pervades

⁶⁷ It is always difficult, and sometimes dangerous, to postulate that there has been *mouvance* between texts, authors and eras. For a very good example of a clear and precise presentation of such a hypothesis (in a neighbouring tradition), see L. Light, 'French Bibles c.1200-30: a new look at the origin of the Paris Bible', in *The Early Medieval Bible*, ed. R. Gameson, Cambridge : University Press, 1994 (pp. 155-76).

this legend will be taken up in the next chapter but the emphasis will shift rather dramatically; in *Juitel*, salvation is a direct result of unexpected fidelity. Now our attention moves to the other side of the coin: sexual transgression.

⁶⁸ See Blumenkranz, op. cit., (1966), pp. 22-25.

VI

Sex, Sin and Salvation

[La luxure est] le motif [qui] engendre des récits parmi les plus réussis, les plus émouvants et les plus édifiants de la *Vie des Pères*.¹

In a collection of pious tales put together with the intention of promoting the institution of confession, thereby stressing God's infinite forgiveness, it is not too surprising to encounter examples of the worst possible sins which, if the appropriate circumstances obtain, can still be forgiven; these include murder, infanticide, gluttony, pride, drunkenness and avarice. The intention was, after all, to engage the attention of an audience of mixed backgrounds, hence the inclusion of elements that are scandalous, exciting, strange, and fabulous. What is more remarkable is the high incidence of tales that rely, to a differing extent, on sins of a sexual nature : fornication, adultery, prostitution, lust and incest are important themes, whilst oblique references are made to the potentially more serious sins of sodomy, oral sex, intercourse in unnatural positions and homosexuality, all of which were classified as *contra naturam* and, consequently, are sins committed directly against God himself. James Brundage would certainly see nothing strange in this emphasis on sexual sin immediately before and after Lateran IV, since this was a period of 'the rethinking of doctrine and restructuring of law concerning sex [...] Suspicion about the impurity of sex continued to trouble the writers of this period'.² As a major theme, homosexuality is all but excluded from the first *Vie* probably because of its close ties with heresy; masturbation since 'pour la plupart, on n'y voit rien de proprement criminel';³ and bestiality since, from the evidence of the penitentials, 'à cette époque, on ne la juge guère plus vicieuse que la masturbation'.⁴

¹ Bretel, p. 369.

² J.A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society in Medieval Europe*, Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987, pp. 414, 415.

³ B.J. Levy, 'Le Dernier tabou? Les fabliaux et la perversion sexuelle', pp. 107-124 in *Sexuelle Perversionen im Mittelalter / Les Perversions Sexuelles au Moyen Age*, ed. D. Buschinger, Wodan, 46, Greifswald: Reineke-Verlag, 1994, p. 120.

⁴ Levy, *ibid.* The author points out that even when, at a later period, bestiality became classed as *peccatum nequissimum* and is associated with pederasty, heresy and the devil, and is as a consequence strongly denounced by ecclesiastical authorities, 'on se montrait en pratique beaucoup plus désireux de persécuter les homosexuels que d'extirper la bestialité' (p. 120). See also N. Roth, 'Bestiality in the Middle Ages', pp. 157-72 in *Sex in the Middle Ages. A Book of Essays*, ed. J.E. Salisbury, New York & London: Garland, 1991. For a study of the penitentials see J.T. O'Neill & H.M. Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, New York:

However, with reference to moralising texts of the period, J.-C. Payen has most perceptively remarked that 'la luxure [...] est la tentation qui trouble le plus les gens du Moyen Age. C'est elle qui éloigne de Dieu le plus grand nombre d'âmes [...] c'est elle qui provoque les chutes les plus spectaculaires, suivies généralement il est vrai des remords les plus subits.'⁵ In a similar vein, P. Bretel has remarked that 'le motif [de la luxure] engendre des récits parmi les plus réussis, les plus émouvants et les plus édifiants de la *Vie des Pères*'.⁶ Forgiveness and salvation are therefore all the more dramatic in tales that include the most evil of sinners making the most unexpected acts of repentance and remarkable spiritual recoveries. The powerful and sometimes brutal reality of these tales is a vital element in the author's creation, given that the *Vie des Pères* aims to propagate the teaching that no sin is beyond forgiveness. Payen remarks that the whole point of the exercise is that 'les pénitents [...] soient de très grands coupables, qui reviennent de loin et ont besoin d'une grâce exceptionnelle, ne serait-ce pour avoir le courage de confesser leurs fautes.'⁷

Heterosexual acts between consenting unmarried lay men and women are absent from the first *Vie*. It can be postulated that this is because such acts were not widely recognized as a soul-threatening or socially dangerous practice, whereas adultery both contravenes the spiritual contract and threatens inheritances and, as a consequence public order;⁸ fornication by men and women in holy orders is contrary to the laws of religious celibacy; and prostitution gives rise to the double sins of sex for pleasure, and greed for the rewards of the trade.⁹ The important spiritual (and often civil) crimes committed by those indulging in any of the latter practices would be immediately apparent to the audience of any medieval work.¹⁰

Columbia U.P., 1938; M. Sullivan, 'A Brief textual history of the *Manuel des Péchés*', *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 93 (1992), 337-46; and C. Vogel, *Les 'libri paenitentiales'*, Turnhout: Brepols, 1978 (Typologie des Sources du Moyen Age Occidental, fasc. 27).

⁵ Payen, p. 532.

⁶ Bretel, p. 369.

⁷ Payen, p. 534.

⁸ Note however the social implications that are seen through the unmarried, pregnant girl's fear of her parents in *Ermite accusé: Por ces parens ce dementa, / que bien sot, quant il le savroient, / que honte et grant duel en avroient* (vv. 5479-81). There is an important commentary on the role of children in *Vision de diables*, v. 11228.

⁹ Sex for pleasure rather than sex with the intention of procreating is *contra naturam*. For this distinction made in the twelfth century by Hugh of St-Victor, see Levy, 'Le Dernier tabou...', p. 124.

¹⁰ This comment is not meant to contradict Evelyn Birge Vitz's interesting and commonsense comments on medieval sexuality; they are worth quoting at length: 'But the question is: when did the faithful become aware of such teachings [ie. that the only licit intercourse was between spouses with the object of procreation]? If

Of the 41 tales that make up the first *Vie*, 18 have sexual transgressions or transgressions provoked by sexuality as the major theme, and at least another 9 make passing references to important sexual issues of the day.¹¹ It may of course be argued that sex is not the major theme of the tales, but only serves as illustrative material in an exemplary narrative that describes repentance, confession and salvation. These are *exempla*, an intersection between patristic exegesis and with popular culture, and as such may be not seen as just another continuation of the frequently reworked *Vitae Patrum* tradition, despite D. Robertson's assertion that 'surveying the variety of genres and systems, the modern reader perceives that the legendary desert of the Fathers was the scene of a groping search for literary form.'¹² Sex is central as an issue to the author of the collection, and almost half of his tales revolve directly around some sexual intrigue or other. He may be concerned with the spiritual and theological dogma post-Lateran III and IV - as Robertson rightly points out, pious tales can 'rouse the god-fearing reader from his moral sleep'¹³ - but he is, it would appear, more preoccupied with the practicalities that lead both to a person's fall, and the circumstances that can lead to his salvation. As a consequence the first *Vie* may be considered a true mirror of society (as far as any medieval literature can be so considered¹⁴), reflecting both the preoccupations of the clergy and the practices of the

one thinks back to narrative works of the later twelfth century - works in which the narrator appears to be a Christian and presents most of his characters as such - what do we find on sexual ethics? Only the very dimmest grasp of even the fundamental Christian teaching that adultery is necessarily a sin - and certainly no evidence for any complex moral understanding about licit versus illicit pleasures in married sex. In French literature of this period, to be a Christian means to go to mass; to cross oneself; to pray to God, the Virgin and the saints for help - and to expect miracles; to have ecclesiastical figures present at one's marriage; for a man, to be willing to fight and die for Christ, etc. But as to such issues as the proper role of sexual pleasure in human life: nothing. It is only in the course of the thirteenth century that these teachings - and others relating to the development of lay spirituality - became widely known, for a variety of reasons. The rise of lay literacy is one. Another is the wide social impact of the new orders, especially the mendicants. Yet another is the impact of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, which required yearly auricular confession, worked to raise the level of the weekly sermon, strengthened parish life, etc. Thus it is only in the thirteenth century that many teachings of the Church concerning sexual ethics and other matters began to be brought to the laity.' E. Birge Vitz, review of Charles Muscatine, *The Old French Fabliaux*, New Haven & London: Yale U.P., 1986, in *Speculum*, 63 (1988), 199-202, p. 201.

¹¹ Even in tales that have nothing whatsoever to do with sex, the motif of sexual sin is never far away; for example, the robber in *Copeaux* lists his sins as including: *Homicide, rat, roberies, / traïson, ardoir abeïes / ai je fet, et la lecherie / de la goule n'obli je mie*. (vv. 1937-40). Sex is at times referred to in a very biblical way: *puis l'espousa et la connut / si conme connoistre la dut* (*Usurier*, vv. 16036-7); cf. Genesis 4: 1.

¹² Robertson, *The Medieval Saints' Lives*, p. 86.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁴ J. Voisenet has noted a change in the treatment of clerics in the literature of the early and later Middle Ages. Initially, 'le sexuel et le sacré s'excluent', but in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries appear the motif of the frustrated and debauched cleric when 'la rencontre du sexuel et du sacré n'est pas traitée sur le mode de la

people (although it seems unfair to bracket the author of the *Vie des Pères* with the 'misogynistic, pleasure-hating, guilt-ridden writers' that followed Augustine¹⁵). In the Middle Ages sex was (at it still is today) one of the Church's major concerns, which is only to be expected if V.L. Bullough's assertion that western culture is 'a sex-negative culture' is to be accepted.¹⁶ It was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries - ironically, the same era that saw the development of the *fin' amor* of twelfth-century lyric tradition into the fashionable and 'courtly' codification of love and behaviour - that the Church rose to new positions of power when, strengthened by canon law and scholasticism, legal and ecclesiastical norms concerning all matters sexual were established.¹⁷ According to Gratian, whose influence reaches far beyond the Middle Ages, there are only three conditions under which couples can safely partake of sexual intercourse, even in marriage : 'Either in order to beget a child, or to avert temptations to marital infidelity, or to accommodate the insistent (and probably sinful) demands of their spouse'. All other sexual activity is sinful, including desire and arousal, both in and out of wedlock, 'and if it became publicly known, might be subject to criminal prosecution as well'.¹⁸ J. Surdel insists that the Church's desire to manage and order the sex-lives of the faithful was not purely motivated by a perceived need to have power and influence in every aspect of a Christian's life, 'mais aussi par un désir sincère de sauver l'homme des pièges du démon: *Diabolus in limbris*, l'enseignement de s. Augustin est très clair.'¹⁹

moralisation mais du rire', 'Figure de la virginité ou image de la paillardise: la sexualité du clerc au Moyen Age', pp. 569-79 in *Le Clerc au Moyen Age*, Senefiance, 37, Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1995, pp. 571, 577-8.

¹⁵ A. Weir & J. Jerman, *Images of Lust : Sexual Carvings on Medieval Churches*, London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1993, p. 84.

¹⁶ V.L. Bullough, *Sexual Variance in Society and History*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976, p. ix.

¹⁷ It is difficult to ascertain to what extent the treatment of sexual sins in the first *Vie* reflects this codification. The seminal work on the subject is J.A. Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, op. cit. This volume includes an extensive and impressive bibliography. For the development of papal authority in sexual matters, see also Bullough, op.cit., chapters 13 and 14., and G. Richards, *Sex, Dissidence and Damnation: Minority Groups in the Middle Ages*, London & New York: Routledge, 1991.

¹⁸ J.A. Brundage, 'Sex and Canon Law', pp. 33-51 in *A Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, ed. V.L. Bullough & J.A. Brundage, New York & London: Garland, 1996, p. 40. This volume is an extremely useful starting place for the study of medieval sexuality. Another broad-ranging work is *L'Erotisme au Moyen Age*, ed. B. Roy, Québec: L'Aurore, 1977. There is an excellent introduction to sex in literature in *Fabliaux érotiques*, Edition critique, traduction, introduction et notes par L. Rossi, avec la collaboration de R. Straub, Paris: Livre de Poche, 1992.

¹⁹ J. Surdel, 'Amour, mariage et... sainteté dans les légendes et les mystères hagiographiques', pp. 73-91 in *Amour, mariage et transgressions au Moyen Age*, ed. D. Buschinger and A. Crépin, Göppingen: Kümmerle Verlag, 1984, p. 73.

By the thirteenth century marriage had become a sacrament and fell within the jurisdiction of the Church. As such it became, along with confession, a valuable weapon with which the Church could have more control over its flock's sexuality.²⁰ However, definitions of prohibited practices were not available (nor often attempted), and euphemisms or general terms abounded even in works that aimed to address directly the problem of sexual morality. Hence there is considerable ambiguity over what actually constituted a sexual sin in the Middle Ages; the term 'sodomy', for example, far from being restricted to intercourse *in ano*, was frequently used to refer to any sin *contra naturam*, even though the biblical story that gives rise to the term (Genesis, 18-19) is anything but ambiguous.²¹ A. Weir and J. Jerman see a manifestation of the Church's ever-expanding teachings on sexual morality in the sexual carvings commonly found on medieval religious edifices. Rather than accept the widespread belief that these are vestiges of the 'Old Religion' absorbed by church-builders wanting to christianise popular pagan culture, Weir and Jarman express the view that such images deal with the very contemporary issue of sexual *mores* and salvation and were consequently encouraged by Church authorities.²²

Before broaching the issue of sexual transgressions in the first *Vie*, it may be useful to note those examples of sexual and spiritual fidelity, not simply to one's partner but also

²⁰The Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 imposed annual confession as a Christian duty, and the *Vie des Pères* is without question influenced by the new importance given to confession and penance. It should also be noted that much of the Third (1179) and Fourth Lateran Councils deal with sexual matters, see R. Foreville, *Latran I, II, III et Latran IV*, Histoire des Conciles Oeuméniques, 6, Paris: Editions de l'Orante, 1965; P.J. Payer, 'Sex and confession in the thirteenth century', pp. 126-44 in *Sex in the Middle Ages*, op. cit.; and J.A. Brundage, 'Carnal delight: canonistic theories of sexuality', pp. 361-385 in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress of Medieval Canon Law*, ed. S. Kuttner & K. Pennington, VI, Vatican City, 1980.

²¹Brundage has noted that 'writers on theology and canon law frequently branded any departure from heterosexual relations in the missionary position as 'sodomy'', 'Sex and canon law', art. cit., p. 40. More details are given by Bullough, op. cit., pp. 381-3, A. Gauthier, 'La sodomie dans le droit canonique médiéval', pp. 111-122 in *L'Erotisme au Moyen Age*, and J. Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: University Press, 1993, p. 214, n.161. A.J. Frantzen highlights the exception that proves the rule in his essay 'The disclosure of sodomy in *Cleanness*', *P.M.L.A.*, 111 (1996), 451-64. The author of *Cleanness* appears to go to some lengths to narrow the definition of sodomy to male homosexual anal intercourse.

²²*Images of Lust*, op. cit., in particular the introduction to the volume. The Church's problematic and ambiguous attitude to sexuality was not a new phenomenon; the eroticism of the Song of Songs had already given rise to numerous commentaries by the twelfth century, not least the *Sermons in Cantica* of St Bernard. The saint's attempts to reconcile the Song of Songs' apparently open eroticism with sacred teachings were translated into French in the twelfth-century and are the subject of an excellent edition by S. Gregory, *La Traduction en prose française du 12e siècle des Sermones in cantica de Saint Bernard*, Amsterdam - Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994. For a brief sketch of other such paradoxes see J. Verdon, *Le Plaisir au Moyen Age*, Paris: Perrin, 1996, chapter 4. A good introduction to the religious climate of the Middle Ages can be found in B. Hamilton, *Religion in the Medieval West*, London: Edward Arnold, 1986.

to the laws of God.²³ The corpus holds spiritual fidelity as paramount, but outstanding acts of marital / sexual fidelity are in fact few and far between. *Fornication imitée* contains a striking example of fidelity to one's spiritual partner, which leads a hermit to pretend to have committed the same sin of fornication as his colleague so that he can do penance with him and thereby give him the support his friend needs to see his penance through. This is however not *sexual* fidelity but *spiritual* fidelity. There is an example of an even greater fidelity to God and the Virgin in the first *Vie*. *Renieur* tells of a man who is so in love with his widowed neighbour that he is prepared to resort to the black magic of a Jewish necromancer to win her affections. He must renounce God, the saints and the Virgin, and the woman will be his. This is a moment of high drama, since the man's feelings for the lady are, to a degree, worthy (*tant convoita son desirrier / qu'il ne pot boivre ne mengier*, vv. 1348-9), and it is only when he becomes increasingly obsessed with her, not as a sex object but as a potential soul-mate, that the man is guilty of unworthy *démésure*. At this point, the courtly tone of his advances deserts him (*vos n'iestes cortois ne sennez*, v. 1320) and he eventually considers endangering his soul to win her love. There is some ambiguity about the nature and worthiness of the man's feelings - at no time is there a suggestion of lust - but also a clear image of the intensity of these feelings.²⁴ The reader may be shocked at the man's apparent readiness to renounce God and the saints, but will at the same time appreciate the inner turmoil that pushes the man to this point. Elsewhere, the author of the corpus reminds the audience of the most famous denial of faith in the Bible:

Sainz Pieres, qui Deu renia

²³ Note in this respect the difference between the first *Vie* and Gautier's *Miracles*: in our text, the sexual transgressor is typically female - that is, a woman who may or may not have been inflamed by the devil. Masami Okubo has noted that this is not the case in Gautier's text: 'Nous ne rencontrons jamais dans son oeuvre la complicité inconsciente ou volontaire de la femme à l'égard du diable. Dans les *Miracles de Notre Dame*, c'est toujours l'homme que le diable utilise comme complice pour mettre à l'épreuve la chasteté des femmes. Même dans l'histoire de rapports incestueux, c'est le fils que le diable enflamme, et non pas la mère [...] Notons que dans les *Miracles de Notre Dame* le diable ne prend jamais l'apparence d'une femme', M. Okubo, 'La femme et le diable. Feminisme dans les *Miracles de Notre Dame* de Gautier de Coinci' (unpublished paper given at the University of Hull in 1993, pp. 3, 5). M. Zink has noted that, in general, the opposite was the norm: 'Lorsque le prédicateur parle, et il en parle souvent, du péché de la chair, seul le péché de l'homme est pris en considération, analysé, condamné, seul sa tentation est décrite. La femme n'est que l'occasion du péché et l'objet du désir,' *La Prédication en langue romane*, p. 401.

²⁴ Physical and spiritual love were not wholly incompatible in the Middle Ages, as a carved corbel at Maillezais (85) seems to indicate: a haloed couple are depicted in an extremely intimate embrace, leading two modern art historians to label the carving 'holy love?'. Frustratingly, they offer no further commentary, cf Weir & Jerman, *Images of Lust*, p. 90, plate 43.

As a consequence of the psychological drama in *Renieur* one can suppose that the reader will himself experience the intensely dramatic lines in which the object of the man's all-consuming obsession comes within his grasp. It is at this moment, when a vivid psychological picture of the man and his obsession has been drawn, and when the reader may feel ready to damn him for his lack of reason but also, to some degree, to sympathise with his inner trauma, that the author paints an image of a spiritual fidelity that no human desire can transgress. The author chooses this moment of high psychological tension, heightened by the very accessibility of the woman, for his *coup de théâtre*, which is an illustration of the truly worthy heavenly bond. The man refuses to renounce the Virgin, and, as a result of resisting temptation, even at the last minute, he is rewarded first by the Virgin herself and then by the woman he so desires. Fidelity leads to reward, either in heaven or on earth. The newfound worthiness of the man's relationship with the woman is in contrast to that found in *Impératrice* : the brother-in-law's actions are to be no less condemned than those of the man in *Renieur*, with the important exception of the impediment of incest. In *Impératrice*, the relationship could never be worthy.

Exemplary acts of spiritual fidelity abound in the corpus. *Sacristine* is one of the best known examples of the Virgin rewarding loyal service, but the same theme is found in *Abbesse grosse* and *Inceste*. Acts of sexual immorality in effect represent infidelity to the bond that Man has with God, and in these three tales only a superior devotion to the Virgin prior to the moment when the women involved succumb to the devil's temptations saves them from eternal damnation. Even in *Inceste*, although the woman doubles her devotions to the Virgin as she falls deeper into the sinful relationship with her son, it is the love and loyalty that already existed that save her. Indeed, it might be argued that this pre-existing devotion to the Virgin is the very cause of the woman's fall - why else would the devil choose *her*? - and so the very least she deserves it to be rewarded for her loyalty. Such rewards are in a sense the very *raison d'être* of the first *Vie*, and it is not only loyalty to the Virgin that leads to salvation. Man has a contract with God and the Church, and contracts by their very nature create transgressions - the marriage contract can lead to adultery, oath making can lead to treason, entry into holy orders requires rigorous and numerous vows

that most human beings will transgress at some time.²⁵ Spiritual fidelity is exceptional behaviour deserving of the highest praise and rewards, but it is not only the saintly hermits and anchorites of legend that can aspire to it : spiritual fidelity is illustrated in spectacular form by the heroic exploits of the protagonists in *Haleine, Fou, Meurtrier, Baril, Usurier* and especially *Malaquin* and *Brûlure*, but more humble folk in *Copeaux, Miserere, Jardinier* and *Ave Maria* remain loyal to their spiritual bonds in their own small ways.

Marital fidelity, however, appears infrequently as a major theme in the first *Vie*. There are fleeting snapshots of the 'good' and 'bad' spouse, such as the boy's parents in *Juitel*, the worthy first marriage of the woman in *Renieur*, the nagging wife stereotype in *Jardinier*, the mismatched couple in *Vision d'enfer* and the unfortunate loyalty shown by the miller's wife in *Ivresse*, but none of these examples represent the central core of any one tale. In only three tales does marital / sexual fidelity actually play a pivotal role in the narrative. *Impératrice* depends on the empress' loyalty to her husband for the plot to unfold. In *Ivresse* the husband quickly disappears from the tale never to return, but the husband in *Impératrice* is always present in spirit, driving the empress on to new acts of heroism for the sake of her loyalty to the emperor and her marital bond. The entire Potiphar's wife theme and subsequent intrigue depends on the empress's refusal of her brother-in-law's incestuous attentions, and her unwavering loyalty to her husband. So, the injustice of her punishment, the favour the Virgin shows upon her and the drama of the final 'unmasking' scene could not have happened had the empress not defended her sacred marriage vows. She recognizes the seriousness and holiness of the marital contract, unlike the young hero of *Image de pierre*.

There is another powerful sexual irony in *Impératrice*: the empress cures the ruler of the foreign land of his leprosy, and is soon called upon to cure every leper in the country. This she does using miraculous herbs that the Virgin gives her when she appears to her on the island. In the Middle Ages, victims of leprosy were linked with moral and sexual depravity, and so it is fitting that her brother-in-law also comes down with this disease.²⁶

²⁵The paradoxical nature of the importance of fidelity to medieval society is evident in *Renieur*: the man has made a Faustian oath with the devil which will inevitably lead to his damnation, but the transgression of even this contract - essentially a good transgression - is a most serious affair.

²⁶In *Meurtrier*, the hero saves a drowning leper, but there is no indication given as to the cause of the man's leprosy. It appears that being a leper was not always intrinsically linked to sexual immorality and therefore stigmatised : if an individual sufferer were lucky enough to live in an area which considered lepers as

Physical disfigurement and infection could easily be allegorised as the outward sign of spiritual corruption, whereas beauty might be idealised and made to symbolise purity within. S.N. Brody cites a passage from Robert Mannyng's *Handlyng Synne* that clearly illustrates this popular belief. Intercourse with a common woman will lead to leprosy since:

Meseles, men seye, vsen hem;
And, who takeþ hem yn þat hete,
Clenesse of body he may sone lete.²⁷

Leprosy can equally be a birth-defect resulting from prohibited sexual relations:

Ante omnia, quotiens dies dominicus aut aliae festiuitates veniunt, uxorem suam nullus agnoscat [...] Nam qui uxorem suam in profluvio positam agnosverit, aut in die dominico aut in alia qualibet sollemnitate se continere noluerit, qui tunc concepit fuerint, aut leprosi aut epileptia aut forte etiam daemoniosi nascuntur.²⁸

A thirteenth-century text even says that 'many [lepers] burn with desire for coitus.'²⁹ As Brody points out, 'a homiletic writer could be expected to reproduce the common assertion that the leper is a person with coarse sexual needs', so it is extremely fitting that *Impératrice* ends neatly with the empress being brought before her lecherous brother-in-law, now a leper himself.³⁰ He has heard of her miraculous powers and wants a cure; but the cure offered by the incognito empress will not work until he has confessed all, including the sexual sin committed towards his brother's wife. So, his physical and spiritual ills are cured together, his body is cleansed and so is his soul. The contemporary audience would easily interpret the symbolism of the tale's *dénouement*: 'The medieval poets inherited an

pauperes Christi, 'suffering from "leprosy" [...] could well have been considered preferable to being suspected of unethical or immoral behaviour.' (S. Rubin, *Medieval English Medicine*, London: Harper & Row, 1974, p. 155.) However, Rubin does add that 'for the average citizen [...] it was a serious matter to be regarded as a leper and considerable trouble was taken to ensure correct diagnosis,' *ibid.* See also P. Richards, *The Medieval Leper and his Northern Heirs*, Cambridge: Brewer, 1977.

²⁷ Robert of Brunne's 'Handlyng Synne', A.D. 1303, with *Those Parts of the Anglo-French Treatise on which it was Founded*, William of Waddington's *Manuel des Pechiez*, ed. F.J. Furnivall, London: E.E.T.S., 1903, vv. 7448-50, cited by S.N. Brody, *The Disease of the Soul*, Ithaca: Cornell U.P., 1949, p. 144. Note 52, p. 52, clearly sets out the rapport between leprosy and sex in the Middle Ages.

²⁸ Caesarius, Bishop of Arles (503-43), *Sermones*, XLIV, 7, ed. G. Morin, Turnhout: Brepols, 1953, (p. 199).

²⁹ 'A thirteenth-century medical description of leprosy', ed. & transl. C. Singer, *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 6 (1949), p. 238.

³⁰ *op. cit.*, p. 143. Brody explicitly states, speaking of the version of the legend found in the *Gesta Romanorum*, that 'leprosy afflicts the brother because he is a lustful man' (p. 146). For a real life account of the effects of leprosy, see Jean Bodel's *Congés*, pp. 83-104 in *Les Congés d'Arras*, ed. P. Ruelle, Bruxelles & Paris, 1965.

ancient and pervasive tradition that branded the leper as a pariah. It accused him of being immoral, separated him from society, took him as a figure of sin, feared him for the disease he spread and for the terror he inspired. It is this background that shapes the literary representation of the leper as a man who is morally depraved, whose body bears the stain of his spiritual corruption.³¹ In this light, it is equally possible to see the leprosy of the brother-in-law in *Impératrice* as a parallel to the more worthy love-sickness of Romance.

In *Image de pierre*, before taking part in a wrestling contest the newlywed removes his ring and slips it onto the finger of a nearby Roman statue, jokingly saying: *Feme, de cest anel t'espous* (v. 8372). After the bout he is unable to recover his ring, and that night, as he tries to consummate the wedding, the statue appears, insisting that *she* is his wife and that he should not sleep with another. It is only through divine intervention that the newlywed's enforced fidelity to the unintended contract with the statue can be undone. Marital fidelity is one of the few themes that could quite naturally lead the author to his intended conclusion:

Qui oeuvre sanz conseil, bien saiche
qu'a paine s'en part sanz damage;
et ki troive et le croit,
son preu fet et s'onor acroist. (vv. 8840-43)

This tale differs in several ways from the better known version by Gautier de Coinci, *De l'enfant qui mist l'anel ou doit l'ymage*.³² Most significantly, the statue in Gautier's version is of the Virgin, not a Roman goddess, and the boy who marries her is still young, a *clerçonciaus* (v. 20). He is prevented from making love to his wife, who is *mignote et bele* (v. 102), by the Virgin's insistence that he is already married to her. His sexual desires are strong:

Mout desirra l'aler gesir
por acomplir son grant desir (vv. 103-4)

³¹ibid., p. 146. A good literary example of the sexual / moral corruption of a leper can be found in vv. 2298-2309 of *Jaufré*: for a leper, a beautiful girl is but an object of lust, ed. C. Brunel, Paris: S.A.T.F., 1943. For further literary treatment of the motif of leprosy, see F. Le Saux, 'Quand le héros devient malade: le lépreux dans *Ami et Amile* et *Amys et Amillyoun*', pp. 3-14 in *Epidemics and Sickness in French Literature and Culture*, ed. C. Lloyd, Durham French Colloquies, 5 (1995).

³²I Mir. 21. For William of Malmesbury's 'Statue of Venus', see C. Lecouteux, *Mondes parallèles. L'Univers des croyances du Moyen Age*, Paris: Champion, 1994, pp. 36-39. This legend is # 5148 in Tubach..

However, the Virgin lies between the young couple and dampens his sex-drive. Whereas in the much longer and, perhaps, more satisfactory version in the first *Vie*, the Virgin delivers the young man from his seven years of suffering and he achieves sexual salvation, Gautier's hero remains 'married' to the Virgin and forgets his worldly desires. *Image de Pierre*, much like Marie de France's *Eliduc*, is able to some extent to reconcile devotion to a marriage partner and devotion to God or the Virgin;³³ Gautier's tale, on the other hand, Gautier is unable to see beyond the need for a spiritual bond:

A Marie se maria.
Moines et clers qui se marie
A ma dame sainte Marie
Mout hautement est mariiez... (vv. 184-87)

Impératrice and *Image de pierre* depend on sexual fidelity as a catalyst to illustrate a wider point, but perhaps the most significant instance in the *Vie des Pères* of such fidelity is to be found in *Prévôt d'Aquilée*. This tale directly addresses the values and actions of an exemplary married couple and serves as a model to the aspiring faithful. Indeed, this is a tale in which fidelity and transgression meet head on. The hermit already shows a degree of vainglory in asking God to show him his equal, and is guilty of (wounded) pride in his reaction to God's answer. The essential point here, though, is the question: how can he, *a married man*, be my equal? In the Middle Ages marriage was always a lesser institution than holy orders - that is, marriage to the Church - and the message of *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, that married life can be as worthy as religious life, is almost revolutionary, leading Payen to proclaim this tale as 'une oeuvre d'avant-garde'. However, Payen's supposition that this tale is 'la voix des laïques qui se fait pour une fois entendre dans une forme de littérature religieuse à leur usage' needs some tempering.³³ After all, is not the married state so praised in this tale a *chaste* one, sanitised and therefore worthy in the eyes of the Church, but wholly unacceptable and undesirable to the vast majority of those layfolk who constituted the tale's audience? *Prévôt d'Aquilée* may well herald the virtue of spiritual marriage, and of the provost's character in particular, but this is essentially just another piece of Church dogma, for the Church considered it highly virtuous for married couples to renounce sexual

³³ Payen, p. 556.

intercourse voluntarily; however, the sentiment was not widespread amongst the laity.³⁴ More typical, perhaps, is the voice that addresses the hero Perceval on the morning of his wedding to Blanchefleur in the *Continuation* of Gerbert de Montreuil:

Et sachiez bien de verité
Que de par Dieu te viegn nonchier
Que nus home ne doit atouchier
A sa moillier fors saintement
Et par deus choses solement:
L'une si est por engenrer,
L'autre por pechié eschiver.

(Gerbert de Montreuil, *La Continuation de Perceval*, ed. M. Williams, Paris: Champion, I, 1925, vv. 6886-92)

H. Birkham notes, perhaps with some irony, that 'c'est évident qu'il existe des rapports entre le rôle de la pédérastie dans et hors les monastères et l'estimation inférieure de l'amour conjugal que l'on peut observer [...] dans la société médiévale', but the author of the first *Vie* might argue that constant companionship in celibate temptation is a true and superior act of human and spiritual love.³⁵

It is interesting to examine the role of the husband in this tale: he appears in person only once, towards the beginning of the narrative, and yet he is the indisputable hero of the piece. We learn that he and his wife are constantly faced with temptations of the flesh but do not succumb to them, but it is he who suffers the most, since he is regularly plunged into the freezing tub.³⁶ The provost's virtue in constantly putting himself through and resisting the temptations that the audience witnesses through the eyes of the hermit is heightened by the dramatic telling of the tale; the experiences of the hermit are new and unpredictable, and

³⁴Between 1199 and 1297, four married saints were canonised, leading H. Legros to conclude that 'L'Eglise a doublement assimilé l'institution féodale du mariage: en légiférant et en en faisant un sacrement d'une part et, d'autre part, en lui faisant une place dans les moyens d'accession à la perfection, voire à la sainteté', 'Parenté naturelle, alliance, parenté spirituelle: de l'inceste à la sainteté', pp. 509-540 in *Les Relations de parenté dans le monde médiéval*, Senefiance, 26, Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1988, p. 538. See also Brundage, *Sex, Law and Christian Society*, pp. 218-20; D. Elliott, *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U.P., 1993; M. McGlynn & R.J. Moll, 'Chaste Marriage in the Middle Ages: It Were to Hire a Greet Merite', pp. 103-122 in *A Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*, op. cit.; A. Vauchez, *Les Laïcs au Moyen Age*, pp. 203-7. J. Leclercq gives real life examples of chaste marriages - including those of Marguerite of Scotland and Malcolm III, and St Geoffroy of Sauvigny's parents - in *Le Mariage vu par les moines au XIIIe siècle*, Paris: Cerf, 1983, pp. 74-80. Other examples, both historical and literary, are given by Bretel, p. 59, n. 122.

³⁵H. Birkham, 'Qu'est-ce qui est préférable de l'hétérosexualité ou de l'homosexualité? Le témoignage d'un poème latin', pp. 25-45 in *Amour, mariage et transgressions*, op. cit., p. 41.

³⁶There is a nice irony here: neither the flesh that the household devour before them nor each other's naked flesh proves sufficient to tempt the couple away from their godly ways.

the worldly reputation of the provost, consciously underlined by the author, lowers the reader's expectations of his wife's virtue. However, when she sets about arousing the hermit the reader has already learnt of her good ways at table and cannot be surprised at the ensuing action. This part of the tale is a little ambiguous: the woman knowingly uses her naked body to arouse the hermit, even though sexual intercourse undressed was against canon law and an offence to be confessed.³⁷ Here, of course, intercourse does not take place, but the very arousal of the hermit is in contravention of the laws that prohibit sexual arousal outside marriage.³⁸ In fact, the woman deliberately leads the hermit (and her husband) into a lesser sin in order to test resistance against a much greater offence, preventing the hermit from doing what all hermits do and flee the temptations of the world. As one would expect in a medieval work written by a man, there is no question of *her* being aroused; she is a strong character who expertly controls male sexuality:

Frere, or vos reposez
et vostre astinence esprovez.
Ne vos semoig, s'il ne vous siet,
de fere chose qui vos griet (vv. 13954-57)

Lors dist que il se leveroit
et cele dist que non feroit.
Vers li se trest, si l'enbraça
et li dist : 'Tornez vos de ça...' (vv. 13978-81)

Prodom, atendez.
levez sus, avec moi venez
jusque ci; quant vos revendoiz,
de moi vostre vouloir feroiz (vv. 13992-95)

She is spoken of as part of a virtuous couple and, to some extent, in control of the couple's virtue, but she remains subordinate to the hermit and to her husband: she may be active in their salvation, but the sexuality considered and tested in *Prévôt d'Aquilée* is *male* sexuality. The hermit is led to commit two sins - *tost fui amors et alechiez / en luxure et en avoltire* (vv. 14109-10) - but at the end of the tale, thanks to his sexual urges and the woman's virtue and expertise, he finds eternal happiness. In fact, just as the hellish toad in *Crapaud*

³⁷For details see Burrough, op. cit., pp. 405-6. Nudity was not in itself a medieval taboo (see for example *Ivresse* and *Usurier*) but in a sexual context was always viewed as a danger to the soul. For numerous examples of the threatening nature of sexual nudity in the Middle Ages, see Weir & Jerman, *Images of Lust*.

³⁸This issue is dealt with by Brundage, 'Sex and Canon Law', p. 40.

is a necessary tool in the son's repentance, so is sex vital to the hermit's salvation in *Prévôt d'Aquilée*.³⁹

We can now turn our attention away from fidelity and towards sexual transgression and salvation in the first *Vie*. It has already been made clear that if the work has for its major objective the promotion of repentance and confession, it repeatedly uses sexual sins and morals as a vehicle for this message. Fornication, including non-marital sex, features in a good number of tales. In *Sacristine* there are few details of the nun's debauchery (possibly because right from the outset it is clear that she will be saved, being described as *une nonne de sainte vie*, v. 6919) : the devil tempts and corrupts her, and she leaves the cloister with a man:

a lui del tot se dona
et de lui servir ce pena (vv. 6976-77)

The only other indication of her physical relations with the man comes at the end of her period of debauchery:

Cele ki ot el cuer la raige
deuz ans ce tint en son folaige
si conme maufez la tenoit (vv. 7006-8)

The tale speaks of the nun's lack of reason, the endangering of her soul and the dishonour she does to herself, her family, her convent and the Virgin, but the reader learns little more of her sins. Debauchery means loss of honour and joy and does not therefore equal happiness, although there is some ambiguity over whether the greater dishonour would be brought on her family by her fornication, or by her leaving the abbey. The severity of her sin is made clear towards the end of the tale:

Si sui cele dont Deus n'a cure,
qui por le pechié de luxure
et por ma consciéce amere
ai je perdu lui et sa mere (vv. 7292-95)

³⁹For the toad as an unsuspecting instrument in the son's salvation in *Crapaud*, see A.P. Tudor, 'The medieval toad: demonic punishment or heavenly warning?', *French Studies Bulletin*, 59 (1996), 7-11.

Abbesse Grosse is similar to *Sacristine* in substance and in outcome. The abbess' desires are also stoked up by the devil (vv. 9309-11), although she blames her body rather than the forces of evil (v. 9334).⁴⁰ She has to pursue the valet to whom she is to fall pregnant, but is still concerned perhaps more with her honour rather than her soul. The author does not condemn her public denials of her sin, and criticises the other nuns for their malicious gossip. Even in the indirect reporting of their meeting with the bishop the author remains neutral:

[...] les nonains alerent
a lor esveques et li conterent
que l'abaesse grosse estoit,
qui bone et chaste estre devoit. (vv. 9402-50)

Thanks ironically to the *glorieuse virge pucele* (v. 9424), the abbess gives painless birth to her child and can reply to the bishop's accusations displaying false but confident offence: he should not believe the wicked, wagging tongues so easily! From the safety of her position as beneficiary of a miracle she can ask for an intimate body-search to publicly establish her virginity:

Li esvesques, qui conut bien
qu'ele disoit reson et bien,
en une chambre l'envoia
et por esprover li bailla
un arcediakre et .vi. dames
qui sorent privetez de fames
et qui l'abaesse haoient
por le crime q'en li cuidoient. (vv. 9596-603)

This public establishment of the abbess' virginity is in contrast to the examination undergone by the abbess in Gautier's version of the legend, *De l'abeesse que Nostre Dame delivra de grant angoisse*.⁴¹ The abbess is publicly humiliated by the bishop, who then sends two clerics to privately check on the abbess' physical state:

'Allez, fait il, et si voiez
Priveement s'est grosse ou non.
Mout a esté de haut renon:
Se ne me vuel vers li mesfaire

⁴⁰Later there is a suggestion that the abbess does not blame herself : *Je chastoie mes nonains / de ce dont je sui enjensee...* (vv. 9377-78).

⁴¹I Mir. 20.

Devant que sache son affaire.'
 A la dame vinrent andui.
 Mout eut grant honte et grant anui
 Quant a despoillier la covint.
 De Nostre Dame li sovint,
 Et mout doucement l'apela.
 Li dui clerc deça et dela
 Mout longuement l'ont portastee,
 Mais lor entente i ont gastee,
 Car riens n'i truevent a redire.
 A l'evesque le vont redire.

(vv. 260-74)

But the abbess' shame is not over yet. Doubting his clerics' word, the bishop himself conducts a physical examination:

Quant ele eut toz les dras ostez
 Et l'evesques vit les costez
 Et le ventre graille et poli,
 Mout granz pitiez li prist de li.

(vv. 299-302)

Such 'virginity checks' have a biblical archetype in Deuteronomy 22: 13-21. They are also in almost vulgar contrast to the fantastic waters in *Floire et Blancheflor* that turn muddy when crossed by a non-virgin.⁴²


Although midwives and female attendants delivered babies, women were excluded from university education. As a consequence, academically trained physicians in thirteenth-century France were all men, hence the presence in this scene of the archdeacon. The religious context of the tale also requires that the highest Christian authority takes an interest in her case and oversees the miracle, and this means an ordained minister of the Church. Cadden, however, comments that 'virginity checks' were quite common, given the importance of avoiding illegitimate children in marriage, and that 'usually this office would be performed by a midwife, that is to say a woman with obstetrical experience and knowledge, who would make a visual inspection.'⁴³ An interesting comparison to the six ladies who witness the abbess' physical examination - presumably because they are familiar with female anatomy - is *Le Maignien qui foti la dame* (NRCE, 6/73) : A female servant sees her mistress' genitals from behind and believes the inside of her body to be falling out.

⁴² *Floire et Blancheflor*, ed. M. Pelon, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1956, vv. 1800-47.

⁴³ op. cit., p. 163. See also S. Laurent, *Naître au Moyen Age*, Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1989, chapter 10. The other example of such a physical test is in *Haleine* : the king, concerned that his breath is repulsive, tests it out on five girls. This is not a sexual act but one of vanity.

Her ignorance of even female anatomy leads to a passing man pretending to be a doctor and 'stuffing' the mistress' innards back with his penis.

One cannot overstress the importance of virginity to medieval society, both in the realm of the lives of the religious and, in particular, in lay circles : the evidence of the blood-stained sheets from a wedding night was widely required to secure lineages and avoid the danger of often renegade illegitimate children. In fact, in *Sénéchal* it is the fear of this very ritual that leads the already deflowered girl into another cycle of murder and deception. So, the seven people chosen to test the abbess - a number of great Christian symbolism - find her to be *virgo intacta* , she confesses and is absolved, and then punishes her body for the sins of the flesh (vv. 9677-81, 9687, cf. *Thaïs*, *Malaquin*, vv. 10765-7, 10773ff, 10879ff): the oft repeated adage that a punished body houses a pure soul is certainly true in the first *Vie*.⁴⁴ Finally, the love-child of the abbess and her valet becomes the bishop's wise and holy successor, but the circumstances of his birth and magical upbringing are kept a secret. Other illegitimate children in the collection are less fortunate: in *Ermite accusé*, both mother and unborn child almost die thanks to the girl's libellous accusations, but the eventual lot of the baby is unknown; the baby born of the mother and son's incestuous relationship in *Inceste* is strangled at birth.

In *Sénéchal*, the king falls in love with  his future queen because of her beauty, and respects the codes of conduct leading to engagement and marriage. It is perhaps imprudent of him to want to see his future bride alone and in secret, and although the author makes no suggestion of lust, there is some ambiguity in the couple's arrangement. However, it is far more imprudent to have an untrustworthy seneschal - in contrast to the king in *Haleine* whose seneschal is loyal and just -, and it is this 'crime' that leads to fornication and murder.⁴⁵ In a section full of sexual imagery - the girl and then the king hand over the key to a hidden entrance... - the seneschal commits premeditated rape as he hides his identity

⁴⁴For the reinforcement of this teaching in other contexts, see for example *Fou* and *Prévôt d'Aquilée*.

⁴⁵There is perhaps an echo here of *Senescalculus* in the *Seven Sages of Rome*, ed. H.A. Keller, *The Seven Sages of Rome*, Tübingen, 1936, vv. 1439ff. B. Woledge comments that 'son maître lui ayant demandé de lui procurer une belle femme, à qui il offrira une forte somme d'argent si elle consent à coucher avec lui, le sénéchal envoie sa propre femme, malgré ses protestations, dans la chambre du roi.' 'Bons vavasseurs et mauvais sénéchaux', pp. 1263-1277 in *Mélanges Rita Lejeune*, II, Gembloux: Duculot, 1969, p. 1275. It is interesting to muse on Woledge's etymology of the word *sénéchal* as 'le serviteur le plus âgé' (p. 1272). Might there be a connection between the largely negative portrayal of seneschals in twelfth- and thirteenth-century romance, and the commonly held cynical attitudes to aspects of old age?

and assumes the king's place at the *rendez-vous*. The seneschal is guilty of lust and treason, but these sins are against God and the king rather than the king's fiancée, even though he tricks her into letting him take her virginity.⁴⁶ Even though she believes him to be the king she takes some persuasion :

De biau parler tant la mena
li lerres et tant se pena
que nu coucherent en un lit
ou cil aconpli son deli
et fist son talent de la bele
tant que non perdi de pucele.

(vv. 12884-89) ⁴⁷

Ambiguities abound here: had it been understood that she would sleep with the king? Does she really hesitate, or is that merely included as a narrative convention? When she declares *Lasse! Je sui honie* (v. 12894), would it have made any difference had it been the king who had deflowered her? Does she take any pleasure from the sexual relations, or does she suffer the man's lust, similar to the Prévôt d'Aquilée's wife? Evelyn Birge Vitz is quite right to insist that 'literary rape [...] is often difficult to identify'.⁴⁸ At any rate, in *Sénéchal* the deed is an evil one, and the seneschal gets his comeuppance; it also helps to justify the girl's subsequent crimes, and is certainly a factor in her ultimate salvation. In fact the seneschal, through his treasonable infidelity, prevents the king from being put in a compromising and potentially dangerous position with his betrothed, and, given his evil nature, gives rise to a forgivable crime of passion:

Ensi morut comme malvés
et de son mal porta le fes.

(vv. 12918-19)

Is the seneschal's act rape? It is clearly treason and dishonest of him to trick his way into the future queen's bed, but according to medieval law he may not have raped her. In the

⁴⁶ Woledge notes that seneschals could well have the influence suggested in *Sénéchal* : 'Dans la vie réelle, au XIIe et au XIIIe siècle, comme dans les romans, chaque grand seigneur avait normalement son sénéchal, qui pouvait s'occuper non seulement du service à table mais aussi de la justice, des affaires militaires, de tous les aspects de la vie administrative; comme dans les romans, un sénéchal pouvait même remplacer un duc ou un roi' (ibid., p. 1276).

⁴⁷ Compare this with the scene from Bodel's *De Gombert et des deux clercs* (NRCE 4/35) in which a cleric successfully has intercourse with his host's wife since, under cover of the dark, she believes him to be her husband.

⁴⁸ Evelyn Birge Vitz, 'Rereading rape in medieval literature: Literary, historical and theoretical reflections', *Romanic Review*, 88 (1997), 1-26. This is an important essay in which the author attempts to offset increasingly anachronistic and 'internally incoherent' modern commentaries on medieval literary rape.

Middle Ages it was up to the woman to lay charges of rape, and this she does not do.

Certainly she has lost honour, but the seneschal's misdeeds would not necessarily have corresponded to the medieval definition of rape. This stipulated that for a rape to have been committed :

- 1 the woman should not encourage the man
- 2 there should be no connivance by the husband
- 3 witnesses are required
- 4 the onus is to prove that a crime has taken place rather than the opposite.

That the woman should protest was all important. In Branche II of the *Roman de Renart*, Hersant shouts and protests during the rape scene, and in Branche VIa her defence, when she might have been accused of adultery, is that Renart took her *à force*. This is clearly not the case in *Sénéchal*. Although the seneschal has sinned morally, his trickery is immaterial in medieval law and a rape has not taken place. Kenneth Varty is quite right to question whether in a medieval rape case it was ever possible to be sure that one of the two parties was *totally* guilty and that the other was *totally* innocent, and it is surely with this notion in mind that the author of the *Vie des Pères* composed a spiritual and morally justified *dénouement* to *Sénéchal* without once mentioning any possible civil, legal implications.⁴⁹

The seneschal's corpse is fittingly covered with manure by the girl and her cousin, but the latter's initial complicity mirrors the seneschal's relationship with the king and turns to treason: she too is to be corrupted and damned through sex, this time not for lust and rape but for enjoying intercourse with the king. Of course, replacing her cousin in the conjugal bed on the couple's wedding night - she is a virgin - is a considerable favour, but, as outlined above, actually *enjoying* sex is a dangerous defect. This is the mother's major sin in *Inceste*, and is explicitly excluded as the reason for prostitution in both *Thaïs* and *Nièce*. Women, like the devil, can be sources of sexual corruption - made clear in *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, *Malaquin* and *Brûlure* - and were widely believed to be more sexually voracious

⁴⁹K. Varty, 'Le viol dans l'Ysengrimus, les branches II - Va, et la branche I du *Roman de Renart*', pp. 411-24 in *Amour, mariage et transgression*, op.cit., and 'Back to the beginning of the *Romans de Renart*', *Nottingham Medieval Studies*, 29 (1985), pp. 44-72. See also, by the same author, 'The giving and withholding of consent in late twelfth-century literature', *Reading Medieval Studies*, 12 (1986), 27-49. All of these thoughtful essays must be borne in mind when reading influential but unbalanced works such as Kathryn Gravdal, 'Law and literature in the French Middle Ages: Rape law on trial in the *Roman de Renart*', *Romanic Review*, 82 (1991), 1-24.

than men.⁵⁰ The cousin cannot control her desire to repeat her sexual experiences with the king, and is murdered as a consequence; again, her treasonable behaviour goes some way to assuaging the new queen's sin. Equally, the king's chaplain betrays his position of trust - to God, the king and the queen - in his attempt to blackmail the queen into having sex with him. She is a victim of injustice throughout the tale and is rightly saved from fires of the stake and of hell; but she is also a victim of her own physical desirability and of men's sexual urges, and these are issues naturally avoided by the medieval author.

Fornication is at the centre of other tales in the first *Vie des Pères*. In *Ivresse*, the hermit chooses drunkenness as the lesser sin offered by the devil, but commits both fornication and murder when drunk.⁵¹ Here, the sexual act also raises some questions. The scene in question is quite brief:

When he gets up to leave the miller's house he is surprised by the effect of the wine he has drunk, so the miller asks his wife to help him back to his hermitage. This she does, but she then falls asleep and the hermit, under the influence of alcohol, fornicates with her. The miller sees this from his mill, takes his axe and goes after them; but, in the ensuing mêlée, he loses the axe to the hermit and is killed by a mighty blow. The wife sleeps through all of this, and the hermit also falls asleep. It is only when he wakes up and comes to his senses that he remembers what he has done.

There is no hint of the woman's consent to intercourse, so this can be considered as rape.⁵² Verisimilitude is challenged when one considers that a virgin hermit, who is so drunk that he has difficulties walking, can have unproblematic intercourse with a comatose, fully-dressed woman lying in an unspecified position. Matters are not helped by the fact that the sex scene lasts precisely one line :

[the hermit] prist sa comere et a li jut (v. 15374)

⁵⁰Anatomical reasons for the sexual rapacity of women, and theological justifications of the importance of keeping this in check, are given by Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, pp. 350-51, 426-28.

⁵¹The author of the first *Vie* makes it clear in *Usurier* that usury is an even greater sin than drunkenness, lust and adultery: *Mout a male chose en usure : / ivrece, avoltire et luxure / ne font tant mal com ele sole*, vv. 16140-42.

⁵²In the Middle Ages, the importance given to rape depended largely on the social status of the parties involved; invariably, if a crime was deemed to have been committed, it was the woman who was at fault. See Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, pp. 311-13, 396-98, 469-72...; K. Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

La Damoiselle qui sonjoit (NRCF 4/25) also tells of a woman who is made love to while asleep, and there is here a faint echo of Lot and his daughters (Genesis 19: 30-38).⁵³ In the biblical story, Lot is plied with wine and then his elder daughter slept with him *at ille non sensit, nec quando accubuit filia, nec quando surrexit* (v. 33). The same happened the following night, but this time it was his younger daughter who slept with him. In *Ivresse*, the scene is reinforced only by the miller's observation as he catches the hermit in *flagrante delicto*:

[...] il m'est avis, par m'ame,
que cil ivres gist a ma feme (vv. 15378-79)

The author is concerned with letting the reader know that the hermit has fornicated, but the details of the act are irrelevant; this is the opposite to *Malaquin* and *Brûlure*, in which the hermits' virtue rests on the very fact that they can resist the most provocative (and explicitly described) sexual temptations. As the act takes place - on a Friday⁵⁴ - the miller's wife is asleep, which may be an indication that intercourse is in the missionary position; Levy has noted that in *La Demoisele qui sonjoit*, a girl is raped by an equerry who respects nothing but the position.⁵⁵ In *Ivresse*, the sex act marks the end of the miller's wife's role - she is an instrument for the hermit's sin and in the author's narrative, and then disappears from the tale. The hermit's fornication leads the miller, his friend, to sin, but unlike in *Sénéchal* the miller's crime of passion backfires and he is killed; again, this is a necessary part of the narrative, so that the hermit can mirror the devil's words by exclaiming: *ai fet tels .iii. mesprisons, / ivrece, homicide et luxure* (vv. 15411-12). The hermit's penance is fitting,

⁵³In fact, the girl is made love to three times before she awakes. She is not such an innocent party as the miller's wife in *Ivresse*, since as she sleeps - and is made love to - she dreams of a handsome man.

⁵⁴In the penitentials, intercourse was frequently forbidden on Fridays, see Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 157.

⁵⁵'Le Dernier tabou...', p. 114. This is more of an issue in *Malaquin*, see below. Cadden notes that intercourse from the rear or with the woman on top was not only a theological taboo but also believed to be a method of contraception. The medieval uneasiness with regard to so-called 'unnatural positions' marks an intersection of natural philosophy, medicine, canon law and theology where different branches of thinking provided mutual reinforcement: 'The condemnation of what were taken to be unnatural coital positions by religious authorities was related to what they understood to be the function of sexual intercourse and sexual pleasure. Their purpose, procreation, might be subverted by improper positions,' op. cit., p. 246. J.A. Brundage has devoted an entire article to the question of sexual positions, "'Let me count the ways". Canonists and theologians contemplate coital positions', *Journal of Medieval History*, 10 (1984), 81-93. See also Burrough, *Sexual Variance*, p. 392. Verdon notes that intercourse in the position where the woman rides the man was used as a contraceptive measure in the Middle Ages, *Le Plaisir*, pp. 44-45.

since his sins could not be more corporeal: he suffers physical abuse and ridicule, tortures his body and shaves his head. It is only when he is forgiven that he is, symbolically, clothed and honoured, and this suggests that the major theme of the tale is that humiliation is a necessary part of penance and, consequently, a worthy precursor to salvation.

The sin of fornication includes desire and arousal, and in *Sarrasine* the reader is given a clear illustration of this. The tale is in effect a pendant to both *Fornication imitée* and *Ermite accusé*, in which, for diverse reasons, the sin of fornication is suspected or assumed, and also to *Renieur*, in which the issue is spiritual rather than physical.⁵⁶ The protagonist of *Sarrasine*, a hermit, falls for a saracen girl as he watches her wash in a spring. So great is his desire, he is prepared to deny his faith in order to obtain her favours.⁵⁷ There is nothing overtly sexual about the image of female beauty in *Sarrasine*, and it could be suggested from line 914 - *si com amor son cuer tensa* - that the hermit really is in love. However, the context of his infatuation makes it clear that his feelings, love or lust, are misplaced. The saracen girl is in any case an unworthy lover for a Christian, particularly a holy hermit, and in the thirteenth century the penalties for miscegenation were severe.⁵⁸ What is more, there is never any question of her conversion, the tale centring rather on the theme of the hermit's transgression and salvation. The hermit commits the grave sin that is so heroically avoided by the hermit in *Malaquin* who is tempted by a series of pagan women; but he also seeks marriage rather than just sex, ostensibly a worthy pursuit. He is also the object of an intense psychological drama - 'will I, won't I?' - that would be a familiar experience to every reader and that helps to concentrate attention on the individual's responsibility for his own soul. Ultimately, though, the object of his attention and the ends to which he is willing to go are both highly unworthy transgressions of the heavenly contract. The saracen girl's beauty haunts the hermit, and in different

⁵⁶*Ermite accusé* in particular echoes the biblical story of Susanna and the two elders (Daniel: 13). In *Impératrice*, the empress who has been falsely accused by her brother-in-law invokes Susanna by name (v. 6044).

⁵⁷As in the *Lai de l'ombre*, the symbolism of the fountain is not without sexual meaning; and water more generally can be an instrument for sexual imagery, as for example in *Guigemar*. For a broad survey of the theme of water, see *L'eau au Moyen Age. Symboles et usages*, ed. B. Ribémont, Orléans: Paradigme 1996 (in particular B.J. Levy, "'Tant va la cruche à l'eau...' : parodies et périls hydriques dans les fabliaux français', pp. 41-60) and *L'eau au Moyen Age*, Senefiance, 15, Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1985.

⁵⁸Brundage cites a slightly later case : 'Commentators on Bartolus (1314-1357) thought the death penalty was appropriate; and their opinion agreed with customary practice [...] If they [the fornicating mixed-faith couple] were not taken in the act, however, they were to be flogged in public and sent into exile', *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 462.

circumstances her physical beauty would give her symbolic value.⁵⁹ Her physical appearance is described after the hermit's sin, that is when the reader knows that she must be refused and that she is accessible to him. So, the author's description of her exotic beauty heightens dramatic suspense and makes the hermit's position all the more difficult :

La sarrazine a l'endemain
vint a la fontaine bien main,
si ce fu lavee et pigniee,
et entre .ii. euz fu guigniee,
onques n'i ot lessié pelet.
En son chief ot un chapelet
de flors de pré et de fanueil.
La garce joine ot riant l'ueil
et fu brunete et acemee.

(vv. 873-81)

Perhaps the most striking examples of the sin of fornication in the first *Vie des Pères* are to be found in two similar tales, *Malaquin* and *Brûlure*. The hero of *Malaquin* is a hermit who mirrors the worthy by abstaining from *biax morsiaz, de beles fames* (v. 10702), but his life is called into question by the pagan Duke Malaquin : when the body is weak the flesh is not tempted and a life of abstinence is nothing but a charade.⁶⁰ The evil Malaquin⁶¹ sets out to tempt the hermit:

[...] verrai comment vos tendroiz
vostre boche en pes et vos reins,
ainz que vos partoiz de mes mains

(vv. 10789-91)

but for 40 days the best foods and wines are resisted. The first dancing girl who is brought to seduce the hermit spends half a day trying to arouse him, and the author goes to some length describing her physique and her talents : she is *bele et jonete, simple et cointe* (v.

⁵⁹The saracen girl - and the courtesans in *Malaquin* - would most likely have been darker than Euro-Christians, and this might have made her all the more sexually appealing. Cadden remarks that Albertus Magnus commented upon dark girls being 'hotter and most swarthy, who are sweetest for mounting, as the pimps say', op. cit., p. 163.

⁶⁰Somewhat paradoxically, the Duke's ideas are taken up in *Prévôt d'Aquilée* and found to be true!

⁶¹The name 'Malaquin' is very commonly given to saracens, often kings, in the *chansons de geste*. This is the case in, amongst others, *Vivien de Monbranc*, *L'Entrée d'Espagne*, *Moniage Rainouart II*, *Tristan de Nanteuil*, *Aliscans*, *Les Enfances Guillaume* and *La Prise d'Orange*. In *La Chanson du chevalier au cygne et de Godefroid de Bouillon*, 'Malaquin' is a Jewish blacksmith. See A. Moisan, *Répertoire des noms propres de personnes et de lieux cités dans les chansons de geste françaises et les oeuvres étrangères dérivées*, Geneva: Droz, 1986, I, pp. 668-78.

10837) and she makes it quite clear to the hermit that she is offering her body. Her exotic and erotic dance enables her to display her feminine virtues:

sovent remuoit sa toele
 por la crine qu'ele avoit bele,
 les mains, le chief li tastenoit,
 grant semblant d'amor li donoit,
 mes de tote amor estoit hors,
 que l'ame n'amoit ne le cors.
 Maintes fois sor lui se plessa
 et sor la couche l'enversa... (vv . 10842-49)

The hermit's albeit difficult - *si l'ot cele mout asproié* (v. 10858) - rejection of this girl leads Malaquin to bring on a second and more beautiful temptress. Malaquin gives her precise orders to have sex with the hermit (vv. 10866-69) and the hermit recognizes her physical beauty:

Deu amez et Deu reclamez,
 qui si bele vos a formee.
 Se fussiez boçue ou gormee,
 espoir prode fame fuissiez,
 et vos Damledeu guerroiez
 de ce que bele vos a fete! (vv. 10878-84)

The girl is also aware of her own physical attractiveness and almost forces herself onto the hermit, thereby contravening the law that forbids sexual arousal outside marriage. Brundage notes that the canonists constantly affirmed that 'any voluntary action that might lead to sexual arousal or pleasure was sinful, whether or not the anticipated result occurred'.⁶² This includes telling dirty jokes, nudity, caressing and fondling, especially if the breasts or genitals were involved; consequently this girl and her colleagues all sin, but not so the hermit, even when he is aroused, since his actions are not voluntary. This scene also offers the modern reader a fascinating glimpse of the medieval concept of female desirability:

Frere, je sui bele et jonete.
 Encore n'ai en sain mamelete... (vv. 10900-1)

In her essay that studies female beauty in the later Middle Ages, K.M. Phillips stresses that the virtues of youth, virginity, passivity and compliance were so central to the medieval

⁶² Brundage *Law, Sex & Christian Society*, p. 204.

perception of beauty that the ideal of beauty was 'grounded in a near fetishization of youth and virginity in women'.⁶³ Pale, milk-white skin, slenderness and a slim waist are all desirable, and Phillips' assertion that women at a 'transitional stage between puberty and adult womanhood' is borne out by the evidence of the *Vie des Pères*. In *Ermite accusé*, the author describes the daughter thus:

Nature l'ot fete a devis
gente de cors, belle de vis,
et si fu de mout bel aaige,
entre .xv. et .xiiii., saige,
cortoise et preuz et bien chantans
et bien aprise de romanz. (vv. 5462-67)

Phillips could easily be referring to the second girl in *Malaquin* when she describes a later portrayal of beauty: the 'slender limbs, small breasts and narrow waist suggest the body of a woman who is past puberty but has not yet reached the stage of childbearing'.⁶⁴ W.C. Curry's research confirms Phillips' hypothesis, indicating that Old French texts show, for example, that breasts should be small and pear- or apple-shaped, firm and pale, and that large and droopy breasts are unattractive.⁶⁵ In *Ermite accusé*, the daughter is *granz*, / *pucele preste a marier* (vv. 5445-46), and in *Image de Pierre* the beautiful, young bride is *simplete et jone sanz mamele* (v. 8399).

Physical beauty was directly linked to good breeding, as the woman's flattery of the hermit in *Brûlure* indicates:

Estrete sui de halt paraige,
si estes vos, si com je croi.
A vostre estate bien le voi :
biaz braz avez et beles mains,
mais au sorplus est ce del mains,
que la chiere avez si formee
c'onques plus bele fu nee... (vv. 13555-62)

⁶³K.M. Phillips, 'The medieval beauty myth : an aesthetics of virginity', *Medieval Life*, 5, 1996, 10-13, p. 10.

⁶⁴ibid., p. 12.

⁶⁵ W.C. Curry, *The Middle English Ideal of Personal Beauty; as Found in the Metrical Romances, Chronicles and Legends of the XIII, XIV and XV Centuries*, Baltimore: J.H. Furst, 1916 (rep. New York: AMS, 1972), pp. 112-14. See analogies / parodies in the *fabliaux*, such as in *Le prestre et le chevalier* (NRCF 9/102): *Gille avoit a non la puceles / qui mout ert avanans et bele [...] graillete estoit, et les mameles / li venoient tout premerains [...] plus blanche estoit que n'est gelee [...] si chevreil resambloient d'or [...] s'avoit petites oreillettes...* (vv. 55-56, 60-61, 63, 65, 69).

The beauty of the queen in *Sénéchal*, described in courtly terms, allegorises her inner goodness:

La fille, qui ne fu pas sale... (v. 12743)

[...] 'Ceste feme ci a
les biautez en cors en en vis
que l'en puet fere a toz devis.
Mes joeaz ne pris ne mon or
.III. botons envers le tresor
et la biauté que ceste garde...' (vv. 12751-56)

Here is a beautiful character who will, despite her foolishness, find salvation. In contrast, her treacherous cousin's physical beauty is not described at all. In *Impératrice*, there is a vivid contrast between the empress' almost transfigured beauty (vv. 5779-85) and the brother-in-law's physical state (*Mout fu pale, mout desfroja / et de toz eses ce mist hors*, vv. 5874-5). Ugliness is both a symbolic state and, for medieval women, an ever-present threat : pregnancy and childbirth can mean that a woman will lose her beauty forever. This eventuality is used as an argument in praise of virginity in the thirteenth-century English letter on virginity, *Hali Meiðhad*, that is notorious for its revulsion at all physicality. When you become pregnant:

...þi rudie neb schal leanin, ant ase gres grenin; þine ehnen scule doskin, ant underneoðe wonnin, ant of þi breines turnunge þin heaued aken sare. [...] heuinesse in euch lim; þine breostes burerne o þine twa pappes [...] Al is wið a weolewunge þi wlite ouerwarpen...⁶⁶

A variation on the same theme is to be found in *Ermite accusé*, in which the girl cannot have her baby until she confesses her sin :

El ne pot celer son domache,
qar la ceinture li leva
et sa fresche color mua (vv. 5483-85, my italics)

Clearly, beauty, virginity and youth are closely equated. Since the legal age that girls could marry was 12 - the same age at which Marie l'Egyptienne leaves her parents in Version T⁶⁷

⁶⁶*Medieval English Prose for Women*, ed. B. Millett & J. Wogan-Browne, Oxford: Clarendon, 1990, pp. 30-32. For a broad discussion of the medieval perception of beauty, see U. Eco, 'Sviluppo dell'estetica medievale', pp. 115-230 in *Momenti e Problemi di storia dell'estetica*, I., Milan: Marzorati, 1959. Of course, the supreme virtue of virginity had been equated with martyrdom in patristic literature from the early Middle Ages. For biblical prototypes, see. Matthew 19: 12; 1 Corinthians 7: 25, Isaiah 56: 4-5...

-, it would be perfectly normal that the girl that libels the hermit in *Ermite accusé* - she is 14 or 15 - should be sexually active, but of course in wedlock. The insistence on the sexual desirability of young girls does however raise the question : just *how* young? P. Bretel has noted that in the *Vitas Patrum* of Henri d'Arci, an abbot warns his disciples against frequenting not only women but also children: 'Fréquemment suggéré ou évoqué dans la littérature des Pères orientaux, le péché de pédophilie n'apparaît guère dans la littérature médiévale, faisant peut-être l'objet d'un tabou'.⁶⁸

Let us here remind ourselves of a classic courtly and erotic description of female beauty transferred to the realm of hagiography. The twelfth-century Version T of the Life of Marie l'Egyptienne depicts her in more detail than Thaïs or any other woman in the *Vie des Pères*:

Reondes avoit les oreilles,
 Mais blanches erent a merveilles,
 Les iex cler et sosrians,
 Les sorchix noirs et avenans,
 Bouche petite par mesure
 Et pie le regardeüre,
 Le face tenre et coloree,
 Com le rose qui sempre est nee.
 Ja el nés ne el menton
 N'aperceüssiés mesfaichon.
 En som le col blanc com ermine
 Li undoit le bloie crine.
 Les mameles de cele dame
 N'estoit pas menrres d'une pome.
 Desous le goule, en la poitrine
 Ert blanche conme flor d'espine.
 Blans bras avoit et blances mains,
 Les dois reons, grailles et plains.
 Gent cors avoit et bien mollé,
 Sous l'aissele lonc le costé.
 El n'iert trop grant ne trop petite.
 Ja le biauté de ceste dame
 Nen iert escrete par nul home... (vv. 165-88)⁶⁹

This passage, of 'an eroticism that is often far from restrained' and that follows the model of many courtly romances, reminds the modern reader of medieval texts not to be shocked at

⁶⁷P.F. Dembowski, *La Vie de Sainte Marie l'Egyptienne. Versions en ancien et en moyen français*, Geneva: Droz, 1977.

⁶⁸ Bretel, p. 364.

⁶⁹ed. cit.

seemingly 'out of place' sexual detail.⁷⁰ After all, the more beautiful and desirable she is, the greater impact her post-repentance self-mortification will have upon the audience. As Robertson points out, 'as a woman, and *a fortiori* as a "fallen" woman, her place [ie. the penitent] is at the bottom of the social and moral hierarchy; her conversion and sanctification effect, therefore, a revolutionary reversal.'⁷¹ The physical beauty of a wretched sinner will be internalised as the fallen woman finds grace; this will be mirrored by a symbolic degradation of her external beauty. Gaunt also sees here an element of *plaisir du texte* in such passages and comments that 'the text offers these men [in the audience for whom the text is deemed to be destined] the double pleasure of enjoying the spectacle of Marie's beautiful body and her sexual adventures, then witnessing the disintegration of her beauty, the just reward for her debauchery.'⁷² To some degree, this remark could be applied to *Thaïs*, although the detail of her beauty is much reduced, and also to *Malaquin*. The physical description of beautiful women, and in a good cause, would certainly have made tales such as these popular with male audiences. Gaunt equally notes that 'the men reading this text can enjoy both the titilating spectacle of the adventures of the comely and sexy harlot, and then the physical degradation of that very same body as it is punished, largely for the desire it aroused in them. The text appeals to the libido of the men in the audience by playing on the desire of the male characters for Marie and by offering an erotic description of her body, but it then enables them to feel morally uplifted by the tale and in so doing it parallels the sadism of virgin-martyr narratives. The implied male audience has its cake and eats it : it watches a holy strip show in which the stripper is first allowed to do her act, and is then punished for her lack of shame, allowing the male audience to enjoy the show, then to feel righteous. The popularity of the legend of Marie l'Egyptienne is no doubt due to more than the medieval reader's taste for narratives about repentance.'⁷³ However,

⁷⁰S. Gaunt, *Gender and Genre in Medieval French Literature*, Cambridge: U.P., 1995, p. 219.

⁷¹op. cit., p. 95.

⁷²ibid. Robertson sees little problem with the element of *plaisir du texte* as long as bad behaviour is not sentimentalised and the lyric amplifications are balanced by 'an evident determination to maintain an unconfused, orthodox moral teaching throughout the paradoxes of the story', op. cit., p. 110. The rhetorical and structural techniques of romance that are adapted to hagiography positively assert physicality and eroticism. This is unavoidable, but as Robertson remarks, it can have a positive effect. This is less of an issue in *Thaïs* and *Nièce*.

⁷³ibid., p. 218.

despite a tone of anti-feminism, restrained in medieval terms,⁷⁴ the first *Vie* cannot be shown to be directed at men only. There are a few hints at women being in the audience: in the prologue to *Image de Pierre*, for example, the author warns: *Vos, genz ki cors tant amez, / qu'est hom? qu'est feme? or i gardez / et si sosoist chascuns sa vie* (vv. 8274-6); and the epilogue to *Païen* warns : *ne fols ne fole riens ne dote*. Perhaps the fact that the author knew that his audience would be mixed led him to give fewer female-erotic images, concentrating such passages in tales that necessitate detailed sexual descriptions. I would suggest that the first *Vie* is not a close neighbour of those saints lives that are primarily intended for men and lack appeal for women, despite the close relationship between the legend of Marie l'Egyptienne and certain aspects of *Thaïs*, *Malaquin* and *Nièce*.

The hermit in *Malaquin* unwittingly reflects thirteenth-century society's attitudes towards beauty and ugliness in his tirade against his second temptress:

Mex valt une nainne contrete
qui de mal ce garde en cest monde
que l'aligniee, que la blonde
qui aime le deable et sert
tant que le regne Deu en pert
et s'en vet danpnee en l'ordure
d'enfer ou toz jors art et dure.
Ensi sa beautez la convoie
qui a honte sanz fin l'envoie. (vv. 10885-93)

The second girl is set up as a picture of beauty, highly desirable and only too accessible. The perfectly chosen proverb that introduces *Thaïs* instantly comes immediately to mind:

Ce n'est pas ors quant ke reluit⁷⁵ (v. 2161)

An important point with regard to rape fantasies - in this case, those of the audience rather than the character - has been made by Vitz: extramarital sex was a potentially dangerous

⁷⁴Gaunt comments that 'femininity for hagiographers is never straightforward; it can connote virtue, purity, weakness, passivity or carnality depending on the situation [...] Virgin martyrs could be revered as feminine in a culture that was deeply mysogenistic and worshipping virgins could be reconciled with enjoying the spectacle of their being cut to pieces', *ibid.*, p. 233. *Thaïs*, however, is only part-hagiography, the other part being *conte*.

⁷⁵For a literary comparison, see Rutebeuf's *fabliau*, *Frere Denise*, NRCF 6/56: *Uns proverbes dit et raconte / Que tout n'est pas ors c'on voit luire* (vv. 14-15). This refers to Denise who is twice disguised by clothing, first as a monk, then as a virgin. S. Gaunt says the proverb 'should mean you will be found out, but Denise and her new friend get away with their subterfuge', *ibid.*, p. 247. In *Thaïs*, the proverb is perfectly appropriate, and its message is relevant throughout the first *Vie des Pères*.

affair, and so rape fantasies have the advantage of eliminating ‘both the problematic act of assent and anxiety about long-term consequences’.⁷⁶ So, both men and women in the audience might well consider the hermit’s situation as desirable and heightens the hermit’s virtue in not having sex with the courtesan. That the hermit in *Malaquin* refuses to let himself be aroused by her perhaps presented the author with a tricky situation: the hermit *needs* to be tempted so that his heroic virtue is plain to see, but this can only become a major issue on the arrival of the third girl. However, the author deems it necessary at this point to clear the hermit of any suspicion of homosexuality, the ultimate medieval taboo. This he does by having these suspicions voiced by the girl in a slanderous way:

Et ne savez vos que Deus fist?
 Home et femē ensemble mist
 por ce que li hom conneüst
 la feme si con li deüst.
 Tele assemblee bien avient.
 Connoissiez moi, qu'il le convient.
A malvés erite s'encuse
qui tel feme feuit et refuse
come je sui, si me prenez
 et de vos solaz m'aprenez.

(vv. 10902-11, my italics)⁷⁷

In different circumstances, the girl's argument might make more sense, particularly since the accusation of homosexuality was always potentially disastrous and taken very seriously. In *Haleine* the king whose 25-year-old son is not yet married *ce correçoit* (v. 2954), and *Lanval* is a particularly striking example of this since it was written by a woman.⁷⁸ There is much irony in the girl's words: *erite* means both homosexual and heretic, and at the time of the first *Vie* sexual deviance in general, and buggery in particular, became associated with heretics.⁷⁹ Here, though, the accusation is worthless since it is in the mouth of a saracen! This is evidently an important contemporary issue, since in *Juitel* and *Renieur* there are

⁷⁶ art. cit., p. 12.

⁷⁷ Compare this use of the term *erite* with the last three lines of *Feuille de Chou* : *Qui ce ne croit, il est erites / et Damledeus asservira / celui qui ne la servira* (vv. 16519-21). Brundage states that Jacques de Vitry reports Parisian prostitutes crying ‘sodomite’ after those who choses not to sample their delights, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, pp. 390-91.

⁷⁸ For bibliographical details, see Levy, ‘Le Dernier tabou...’, pp. 119, n. 42.

⁷⁹ On the development of the association of homosexuality and heresy, see Burrough, *Sexual Variance...*, pp. 389-92, and J. Boswell, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality. Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980.

references to the Albigensian heretics who were at that time being accused of sins including homosexuality; and just a few decades later the Templars will be disbanded on the trumped up charge of sodomy.⁸⁰ There is elsewhere in the *Vie des Pères* at least one suggestion of *coitus in ano* between men and women, a practice equally as abhorrent to medieval theologians as homosexuality since it cannot lead to conception and is consequently is *contra naturam*⁸¹. Before her repentance, Thaïs is willing to perform any sex act to procure material reward and is afraid of no sin:

Clerc, chevalier, borjois, vallet,
onkes ne fu li hons si let,
s'il li dona, k'il n'en eüst
de cele part qui li pleüst

(vv. 2239-42, my italics)⁸²

Levy has indicated that even in the mocking and apparently amoral *fabliaux* anal sex is dealt with carefully. In *Le Sot Chevalier*, (NRCF 5/53) we find the lines :

Gardez en cel n'adoist vos vis
Car il n'est mie a cel ues fais
Qui i met, c'est grans mesfais...

(vv. 74-76)

The line from *Thaïs* could also hint at her willingness to perform oral sex, which is equally *contra naturam*. A similar suggestion is to be found in *Malaquin*. The first and second girls sent by the duke to corrupt the hermit fail in spite of their beautiful bodies and clever

⁸⁰ Raymond de Peñafort remarks that sodomy is the worst sexual sin and that just hearing about it can cause pollution (Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 399). This belief may well explain why not only in pious texts such as the first *Vie* but even in the much more candid *fabliaux* this sexual practice is rarely alluded to.

⁸¹ Note the distinction drawn between sins committed against one's neighbour and sins 'against nature' and therefore against God. This term is generally a euphemism for those activities not rendering conception possible. Peter Lombard (c.1100-1160) defined sins against nature as sexual activity not leading to procreation, and considered these to be worse than fornication, adultery or incest. (Peter Lombard, *Libri IV sententiarum*, 2nd ed., Libri IV, Distinctio XXXVII, cap.ii, Florence: College of St.Bonaventura, 1916, 2 vols, p. 970.). For Gratian, 'the general rule was [...] that any departure from the assumed normal position of female on her back or any attempt to avoid conception, regardless of the sex of the partner, was a sin against nature' (Bullough, *Variance*, p. 382. However, it is interesting - and somewhat confusing - to note that for Peter Damien (c.1007-1072), so-called unnatural sex acts were sinful less because of their contraceptive nature than because they were sodomitical and 'against nature', cf. Brundage, *Law, Sex & Christian Society*, pp. 212-214). For Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) the sins against nature included, in increasing order of severity, four different actions : bestiality, homosexuality ('sodomy'), intercourse in an unnatural position (ie. not missionary), masturbation. (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. cliv, 11 & 12, transl. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York: Benzinger brothers, 1947.)

⁸² Rutebeuf was to take up the same notion in describing the absence of limits in what is offered by Marie l'Egyptienne ; par tel couvent que il feïssent / toute lor volentei de li, Rutebeuf, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. M. Zink, Paris: Bordas, 1989, I, vv. 122-23.

rhetoric. The third girl tries a different approach and forces herself physically on the hermit. He is stripped and tied to a bed and this exquisite creature - who is *joine et simplete* (v.10950) - lies, naked, on his restrained body. The duke oversees the seduction scene:

Desus l'ermite tote nue
la fist couchier et bien li dist,
ainz que de lui se departist,
qu'amont et aval l'esmeüst
tant q'a lui compaignie eüst. (vv. 10951-55, my italics)

The use of the expression *qu'amont, qu'aval* has been noted by Levy in the *fabliau* entitled *La Saineresse* (NRCF, 4/36) as being used in a description of mutual oral sex : in *Malaquin*, it is only too easy to imagine the actions of this beautiful saracen girl, even if the sex act is not mutual.⁸³ The term is repeated in *Nièce*:

la mere li le dos greta,
amont et aval le tasta,
la char senti soef et tendre. (vv. 17064-66, my italics)

In *Malaquin*, a more explicit reference to oral sex is given a little later:

Cele, qui desus lui se jut,
tant l'eschaufa et tant l'esmut
par besier et par acoler... (vv. 10990-92)

The woman is at the same time transgressing another law in sitting on top of the hermit with the intention of having intercourse : this is an unnatural position, since it was believed that 'such a posture reversed the proper order of relationship between the sexes by making the female superior to the male'.⁸⁴ In fact the author does not elaborate on this girl's beauty, and there is a strong suggestion that she is not a virgin - *Cele qui bien sot son mestier* (v. 10956) - nevertheless she is the one who, via methods none too subtle, is able to push the hermit towards his ultimate point of suffrance. She urges him to give way to his desires, and he is certainly aroused:

Tant l'ala cele sermonant
et ci et ça ces mains metant

⁸³'Le Dernier tabou...', p. 113. See also S.M. White, 'Sexual language and human conflict in Old French *fabliaux*', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24 (1982), 185-210.

⁸⁴Brundage, *Handbook*, p. 40.

que li preudonz fu si surpris
qu'a pou qu'il ne se rendoit pas. (vv. 10974-77)

[...] au fere se voloit doner... (v. 10993)

And it is at this very point that the hermit bites off his tongue, the gushes of blood an ejaculation preferable to the hermit than the one sought by the girl. In another context, the hermit's act of self-mutilation - and that found in *Brûlure* - may be examples of (the anachronistically labelled) sado-masochism, but here there is no question of heightening sexual pleasure through pain, although the result of both hermits' acts of defiance is undoubtedly one of spiritual self-gratification : the hermit wins through this severe test of male chastity and proves himself a worthy and holy man to the soon-to-be-converted Duke Malaquin, and in *Brûlure* he keeps both body and soul pure and gives rise to a miracle.

The scenario is similar in *Brûlure* to that of *Malaquin*. The devil tries and fails to corrupt the hermit, so it is down to the young men and their female companion of easy virtue to truly put him to the test. She is *fole garcë et vilotièr* (v. 13396) who is popular with the young men *por ce qu'ele les desduisoit* (v. 13398). She is also *afichiee / de glotenie et de luxure* (vv. 13433-34), and the idea of the bet comes from her : through guile and cunning she will have had sex with the hermit before morning. This woman is very clearly a harlot and a bad influence on her male company. However, her target this particular night will be no pushover : the symbolic picture painted by the author is of a Christian on his guard. Night has just fallen, and the woman approaches the hermitage:

bien vit que il ne dormoit pas,
qu'ele l'entendi versieillant
et sa lanterne vit ardant. (vv. 13457-59)⁸⁵

Her devious theatrics and argument finally gain her entry into the hermitage and then the hermit's bed. By this time she has managed to throw responsibility for the circumstances in which they find themselves onto the hermit, creating a situation of considerable irony: he lets her into his hermitage and then his bed because he fears the sin he may commit in not doing so! Once lying alongside him, her strategy to seduce the hermit begins with rhetoric:

⁸⁵ Cf. the expression *a candoille estinte*, meaning 'with hypocrisy', in Jean Bodel, *Le Jeu de Saint Nicolas*, ed A. Henry, Bruxelles: Académie Royale de Belgique, Mémoires de la Classes de Lettres, 2ème série, 65 (1981), v. 286.

she flatters him, speaks of their lineage and goes to some lengths to persuade the hermit that it is possible to give in to one's desires and still be saved, which is exactly the opposite of the first *Vie*'s central teaching. She then turns to physical means of seduction, but it is not clear whether this or their discussion initially arouses the hermit:

Longuement entr'els desputerent,
tant que la chose a ce menerent
que li prodom mout s'eschaufa
et cele les piez li greta;
ses mains des piez as genoz mist. (vv. 13388-92)

The hermit is determined not to give into his *lecherie* (v. 13600), but is increasingly aroused by the woman's attentions :

Que qu'il pensa, cele gretoit
qui en la cholor l'enbatoit. (vv. 13610-11)

It is a dangerous woman who can push a holy hermit this far, regardless of the hermit's wishes, and she deserves to be struck down and damned. Only after her miraculous resurrection does she represent the right sort of woman for Christian society: purified, chastened, veiled. The hermit is accused of killing the woman through sexual excesses, and is kicked and beaten, his body so praised by the woman (vv. 13553-60) thereby being symbolically reduced to its former and proper place. The image that remains with the reader is, however, that given at the moment the hermit realises he has reached his breaking point:

Li feuz des doiz si le lia
que celui des reins oubliia. (vv. 13622-3)⁸⁶

In *Malaquin* and *Brûlure* there are detailed accounts of attempted rapes which conform to the criteria set down by medieval law, but these scenes have the particularity of being men that are almost forcibly taken by women. There is a precedent for this in Chrétien de Troyes' *Chevalier de la Charrete* (vv 932-1325, esp. 1209-12). Lancelot is offered lodgings by a beautiful young lady on the condition that he shares her bed, and, reluctantly, he agrees. When the lady - who has herself set up a fake rape scene in her

⁸⁶A similar metaphor is to be found in *Inceste* : the fires of passion and of hell are extinguished by the mother's confession : *Si comme l'ieve qui esteint / le feu la ou ele l'ateint...* (vv. 17358-59).

household in a vain attempt to arouse Lancelot - calls on the knight to fulfil his oath, Chrétien writes:

Donc est ce force? Autant le vaut;
par force covient que il s'aut
couchier avoec la demeisele;
covanz l'en semont et apele

(*Le Chevalier de la charrete*, vv. 1209-12)⁸⁷

But the lady eventually retreats in order to respect Lancelot's honour and his refusal to seduce her. Varty has shown that the motif of the heroic knight who is so beautiful that all the maidens he meets offer themselves to him is well known in folklore and in popular tales. The tales of the first *Vie* appear to parallel if not parody popular taste, and the intended victims of the rapes - two worthy hermits - risk the same as a female rape victim, namely honour and reputation, although towards God rather than towards a husband.⁸⁸

Fornication, in the form of sexual excitement, lust, intercourse and rape, is very present in the corpus. Two other sexual transgressions that are not *contra naturam* are also described by the author: prostitution and incest. Prostitutes and courtesans play important roles in *Thaïs*, *Nièce* and *Malaquin*, but all eventually find salvation. Robertson comments that the 'penitent courtesan' is a type that is reinvented in every age and are sinners whose sins lead directly to divine intervention and a state of grace.⁸⁹ In the Middle Ages, having sex for money was seen as a less sinful motivation than having sex for pleasure, which is why the mother's sin in *Inceste* (vv. 17075-90, see below) is doubly horrendous.⁹⁰

Rutebeuf's version of *Marie l'Egyptienne*, dating from 1262 or 1263, shows clearly that she also had sex for sex not money:

Robes, deniers ne autre avoir
ne voloit de l'autrui avoir.
Por gaaing tenoit bordelage,
Et por proesce teil outrage.
Ses tresors estoit de mal fere.

⁸⁷ ed. M. Roques, Paris: Champion, 1983.

⁸⁸ Varty, art. cit. (1984), p. 416.

⁸⁹ op. cit., p. 95.

⁹⁰ Although *Thaïs*' sin is technically less than that of the mother in *Inceste*, her penance is considerably more severe. This is presumably a result of the disparate sources that were drawn upon by the author of the first *Vie* who, at any rate, was not intending to write in the tradition of the penitentials. The theme of women in physical need of sexual pleasure will be developed after the time of the composition of the first *Vie*, notably in the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*; cf also Verdon, *Le Plaisir*, pp. 32-42.

Por plus d'amis a li attraire
Se faisoit riche et conble et plainne.(vv. 55-61)⁹¹

This gives rise to Zink's comment that 'la nécessité où se trouvaient de nombreuses femmes de se livrer à la prostitution pour survivre rendait le Moyen Age plus indulgent pour celles qui se prostituaient par intérêt que pour celles qui le faisaient par plaisir. Ce trait se retrouve sans les vies de sainte Marie-Madelaine - celle d'Odon de Cluny, celle du Pseudo-Raban Maur, la vie anonyme en prose française du XIIe siècle - , qui soulignent toutes que rien ne la contraignait à vivre dans la débauche car elle était fort riche.'⁹²

The New Testament shows itself comparatively indulgent towards prostitutes (Luke 7: 36-50, 8: 2; John 8: 1-11), and the resurrected Jesus chooses to appear first to a reformed prostitute, Mary Magdelene (John 20: 11-18).⁹³ On three occasions, Mary Magdelene is invoked as a fitting example to those caught up in sexual sin. In *Fornication imitée* the second hermit uses her as a sign of hope for the first hermit, and thereby helps him avoid the sin of despair:

Menbre vos de la Magdelaine,
qui si est precieuse et fine (vv. 276-77)

In *Thaïs* Mary Magdelene plays a similar role; the hermit uses her to illustrate that no sin is so great that it cannot be forgiven:

Dex puet tolir, Dex puet doner,
Dex puet toz pechiez pardonner
com a la Magdelaine fist,
qui .vii. deables hors li mist
del cors, quant merci li cria
et a bien fere s'alia.
C'estoient .vii. pechiez mortex.
Bonement li pardona Dex
et de la dame fist s'amie
por ce k'en bien chainja sa vie. (vv. 2381-90)

⁹¹ed. cit., pp. 397-469.

⁹²ibid., n. 4, p. 496. There is a certain *mouvance* in this legend, since Marie's sin becomes marginally less terrible when she offers herself for payment in return for passage on the ship. This is despite the obvious enjoyment that she derives as she abandons herself to this 'payment' (vv. 108-9, 111-12, 137-42).

⁹³Church ambiguities towards Mary Magdelene are examined by Leclercq, op. cit., pp. 130ff. See also V. Saxer, *Le culte de Marie-Madeleine en occident*, I, Auxerre: Cahiers d'Archéologie et d'Histoire, 3, 1959. Brundage notes that late twelfth-century popes and other churchmen 'did not attempt to repress prostitution (which they had apparently concluded was a hapless task), but rather aimed to make it easier for women to leave the trade, either through marriage or entry into religion', *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 342.

In *Nièce* the uncle refers to Mary Magdelene in an identical way, showing the most famous biblical prostitute to be a symbol of God's eternal love. In more practical terms, she is used to bring together biblical tradition and thirteenth-century Church dogma:

La preciose Magdelaine
 qui en mal fere mist grant peine
 et qui assez se delita,
 par penitance s'aquita
 de ces mesfez, et tant conquist
 que Deus de lui s'amie fist.
 A ce vos devez porpenser;
 ne vos devez pas desperer (vv. 15070-77)

Again, the medieval portrayal of Marie l'Egyptienne proves a useful point of reference in the study of sexuality in the first *Vie*. Her cult was extremely popular in the Middle Ages, and her legend bears close comparison to that of *Thaïs* and, to a lesser extent, that of the girl in *Nièce*. Indeed, she is invoked by the hermit who tries to bring Thaïs to repentance:

- Tesiez vos, fole desperee!
 Vos seroiz ausi esmeree
 et ausi bone crestiene
come est ciels la Juciene,
 qui assez contre reson fist
 ainz k'a bien fere se preïst,
 se vos volez; ce vos promet (vv. 2370-77, my italics)

Version T of her legend, composed in the last quarter of the twelfth century, gives considerable details of the young saint's debauchery, stressing that she had sex for pleasure rather than for money:

Molt fu esprise de luxure,
 De nule autre rien n'avoit cure. (vv. 63-64)⁹⁴

El les [men] recevoit volentiers,
 Non seulement par lor deniers,
 Mais por faire le sien deduit
 Les avoïrs o soi toute nuit. (vv. 117-119)

⁹⁴ed. cit.

Robertson's remarks about this most popular of saints could just as easily be applied to sexual sinners in the first *Vie*, in particular Thaïs: 'The prostitute-saint had been, traditionally, a figure for the contemplative, but she had been available as such only to the monastic elite. Marie l'Egyptienne speaks, in the literary vernacular, to the laity, to all whose experience of sex had been literal rather than figurative; her message concerns the need, and above all, the real possibility, of conversion: "translation" indeed, of a deeper sort [...] [her] absolute self-abandonment as a prostitute [she takes no money] logically anticipates her self-abnegation as a penitent; she remains the same person throughout.'⁹⁵

The Church itself took a paradoxical position in the face of the oldest profession. Augustine had deemed prostitutes acceptable in order to satisfy men's lust and protect respectable women from their desires, and as such prostitution leads to social harmony and domestic peace.⁹⁶ However, according to Etienne de Fougères, writing well before Lateran IV, the vermin of hell eagerly await women of easy virtue:

Crapauz, colovres et tortues
lor pendent aus mameles nues.
Ha! con mal furent unc veües
les amistiez des foles drues!

Quant leisardes et reneisselles
et sorz lor pendent aus mamelles,
ne sunt pas illors demeisselles,
ainz se claiment sovent misselles.

(*Le Livre des manières*, vv. 1301-8)⁹⁷

The public nature of the sin of prostitution was not lost on the medieval mind and is reflected in Thaïs' public confession:

Maintenant confesse se fist;

⁹⁵op. cit., pp. 117-18.

⁹⁶J.A. Brundage, 'Prostitution in the medieval canon law', *Signs*, 1 (1976), 825-45. See also L.L. Otis, *Prostitution in Medieval Society: The History of an Urban Institution in Languedoc*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985; J. Rossianude, *Medieval Prostitution*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995; and three items by R.M. Karras, 'Prostitution in Medieval Europe', pp. 261-79 in *Handbook*; Id., *Common Women, Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*, Oxford & N.Y.: O.U.P., 1996; and 'Holy Harlots: Prostitute Saints in Medieval Legend', *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 1 (1990), 3-32. For a record of prostitution in the literary tradition, see M.-Th. Lorcin, 'La prostituée des fabliaux, est-elle intégrée ou exclue?', pp. 105-118 in *Exclus et systèmes d'exclusion dans la littérature et la civilisation médiévales*, Senefiance, 5, Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1978; and C. Novet, 'The discourse of the "whore" and economy of sacrifice', *Modern Language Notes*, 105 (1990), pp. 750-773.

⁹⁷ed. R.A. Lodge, Geneva: Droz, 1979. I would like to thank Professor Lodge for bringing this passage to my attention. See also the *Songe d'enfer* (esp. 479ff 578) for horrible treatment of whores.

devant tote la vile dist
 sa confession en apert.
 Qui devant toz a pechié sert,
 si doit fere l'amendement
 devant toz, quant il s'en repent. (vv. 2449-54)

This is not strictly in keeping with the thirteenth-century Church's teachings on confession, but would have been common practice at the time of Thaïs and the first recording of the saint's life. C. Vogel notes that already in the Carolingian period public confession was being questioned: 'à péché grave public, pénitence publique, c'est-à-dire accomplie selon le mode ancien; à péché grave occulte, pénitence secrète, c'est-à-dire accomplie suivant le système de la pénitence tarifée'.⁹⁸ Another physical part of Thaïs' penance for sexual sins is her shaven head and mortified flesh. This motif, found equally in *Abbesse grosse* and *Malaquin*,⁹⁹ echoes the first line of the tale: *Ce n'est pas ors quant ke reluit* (v. 2160) refers not only to the material gains (of prostitution) but the very beauty of a human body. B. Cazelles views the undressing of Thaïs as an essential action in order to 'renounce the artifices of female seductiveness. Stripping and nakedness [...] create a uniform portrayal of female sanctity as anatomized through male perception'.¹⁰⁰

As we have seen, Thaïs is a prostitute who will stop at no sexual barrier in order to gain rich material rewards. She will give herself to the highest bidder, regardless of his physical appearance; in fact she is served and loved by the ungodly, even though the author does not openly criticise Thaïs' clients. In *Thaïs*, the seduction scene lasts a mere two lines:

Au col li mist les bras tantost
 et en sa chambre le bouta. (vv. 2296-97)

As is the case in *Nièce*, the main male character is put in a position in which he^{is} all but tainted by the woman's own sin. But, it is Thaïs' repentance and in particular her penance that is the central theme of the tale, the attempted solicitation of the hermit's custom is of little relevance to the plot and there is little moral ambiguity in this meeting of the pure and the impure. In *Nièce*, by the time the man finds his daughter she has left the lecherous monk

⁹⁸C. Vogel, *Le Pécheur et la pénitence au Moyen Age*, Paris: Cerf, 1969, p. 20. See also Brundage *Law, Sex, and Christian Society*, pp. 319-23, 481-5, 544-6.

⁹⁹vv. 9677-81, 9687; 10765-67, 10773ff, 10879ff.

¹⁰⁰*The Lady as Saint*, p. 53.

and abandoned herself to a life of prostitution.¹⁰¹ The prototype for *Nièce* is Mary Meretrix, the niece of Abraham, in a tale as told by St Ephrem (c.306-373) : 'She is seduced one day, elopes, and becomes a prostitute. Abraham learns of her whereabouts, and goes to find her, in disguise. He appears to her as a client, dines with her, and even flirts with her, as though to enter into her experience in order to rescue her lost soul. [...] As they are about to lie down together, her uncle reveals himself, amid floods of tears on both sides.' This scene of recognition and reunion 'belongs, of course, to the purest romance tradition'.¹⁰²

Initially, there is no mention of sex for money in *Nièce*; the girl's devil-inspired fall into lechery sees her having sex just for the sake of it. However, as with *Thaïs*, it is soon made clear that as a prostitute she has sex for material reward rather than for pleasure:

Ilec a toz s'abandona,
si ot de li qui li dona. (vv. 14940-41)

There are few details of her sins. Physically, she is *crasse et rosnee* (v. 14934) and this dirt mirrors the blackness of her life and her soul.¹⁰³ When her disguised uncle approaches her she offers her virtue in return for payment, and does not find it strange that her client asks to eat before having sex with her (vv. 14996-7). In fact, as we have seen in *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, sex and gastronomic pleasure were indelibly linked : 'la luxure ne provient-elle pas souvent du manger et du boire?'¹⁰⁴ This is also apparent in *Impératrice*, where watching someone eat is not far removed from a sex act:

De li regarder ce disna;
tant plus la vit, plus s'enclina
vers li ces cuers et si volsist. (vv. 5802-4)

In *Noël*, eating and drinking to excess is explicitly shown to lead to fornication. In fact, although the tale tells of a priest who fornicates on Christmas Eve and who is prevented by celestial forces from consecrating the host at mass on Christmas Day before he has

¹⁰¹The lecherous monk is not an uncommon character in medieval literature but is rare in the first *Vie*. See Bretel, pp.363-69.

¹⁰² PL 73, 651-60, cited by Robertson, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁰³In his glossary Lecoy suggests that she is pregnant. In other tales, such as *Fou* and *Thaïs*, being physically dirty is synonymous with leaving the vanities of the world behind and is therefore a state of some virtue.

¹⁰⁴Verdon, *Le Plaisir*, p.70. The evidence of the *Vie des Pères* certainly reinforces this theory, as abstinence from *biax morsiax* is a frequently heralded virtue, and one that tends to accompany chastity, cf especially *Prévôt d'Aquilée*.

confessed his sin, the epilogue preaches neither against fornication nor against sex at a prohibited time. The author is much more concerned with conveying the message that the consumption of rich foods and wine will inevitably lead to sins of the flesh:

La char aise et solaz demande,
 et quand ele est bien aoilliee
 de vin, de morsiaz de d'ailliee,
 si requiert que par luxure
 puisse delivrer sa nature
 de la cholor qu'il a en lui.
 Ensi quiert la mort et l'anui
 de la lasse d'ame honie
 qui conpere sa glotenie [...]
 [...] Si vos devez contreguetier
 de trop boivre et de trop mengier
 por voz chars foler et matir,
 tant qu'en pes les puissiez tenir. (vv. 10093-101, 10106-9)

At the beginning of *Noël* the author immediately depicts the priest to be worldly: *belement i prenoit son vivre* (v.9815), and on the arrival of the woman:

Cele trova la chose preste
 et le provoie a son talent
 qui la herberja bonement
 et ot mout chiere sa venue,
 qu'a une fois l'ot conneüe (vv. 9819-23)

Finally, they engage in a gastronomical orgy:

Il fist aprester la viande,
 que la char covoite et demande.
 Assez mengerent et trop burent;
par le trop boivre ensemble jurent,
 si conme maufez les surprist,
 qui a mal fere les esprist. (vv. 9824-29, my italics)

This, of course, is another way of preaching the same moral code that is illustrated in *Ivresse*. *Noël* makes the teaching more explicit, particularly in the epilogue, but dwells little on the narrative aspect of the inevitable slide from gluttony to lust. *Ivresse*, however, depends for its moral teaching on a detailed and colourful depiction of the hermit's temptation and fall. Taken together, the tales show that gluttony and drunkenness come from the devil and lead to sins of a more serious nature, and the evidence of the uncle's request to eat in *Nièce* serves to reinforce this message. G. Matoré notes that the word

lecherie 'signifie à la fois 'luxure' et "gourmandise"'.¹⁰⁵ In the light of this explanation, the drinking and gambling of the goliardic cleric in *Goliard* are quite sufficient to give rise to his name, *Lechefrite*. In *Noël*, is the hermit's major sin fornication, its timing or his over-eating and drinking? It is also interesting to reflect upon which is the greater crime that the hermit is *Emite accusé* finds himself having to answer for : being a *lecheor* or a *hypocrite* (v. 5546)?¹⁰⁶

The niece's moment of repentance comes when she recognises her uncle, and she goes on to mirror her actions of the beginning of the tale by giving her (ill-gained) riches to the poor. Perhaps the most significant aspect of *Nièce* is that the lecherous monk is damned. He is a familiar of the devil and argues that life as a hermit is unnatural and unfruitful and therefore sinful, ironically urging the girl to repent of her solitary life. He also confidently advocates the 'we'll sin when we're dying' strategy. These are serious misdemeanours, but the corpus is invariably indulgent towards sinners guilty of much greater sins; to be one of the few characters damned by the author must mean that the monk was in no way eager to reform his ways, thereby not setting up the circumstances required for forgiveness and salvation. This is less because of his specific, sexual sins than for the long and bitter passage that the author devotes to unworthy monks (vv. 14718ff). The author of the first *Vie* makes an example of this unworthy character in a micro-context that is both suitable and fitting.

The mother's sin in *Inceste* is equally inspired by the devil. In his prologue the author warns the reader *trop est la lecherie male / qui son mestre en enfer enmale* (vv. 16998-99), and the heroine of the tale promptly falls into the sin of fornication!¹⁰⁷ Any ambiguity surrounding the circumstances of her husband's departure and therefore possible guilt is lifted straightaway: as Innocent IV had insisted, he leaves his wife alone in order to enter holy orders by mutual consent, and as a consequence this is a worthy act.¹⁰⁸ Her continued sexual activity is a contravention of her vow of continence and only adds to her sin. The husband's departure is also a dramatic necessity, since it makes her subsequent

¹⁰⁵ *Le Vocabulaire et la société médiévale*, Paris: P.U.F., 1985, p.113.

¹⁰⁶ He is falsely accused of 'lecherie' in lines 5522-23.

¹⁰⁷ For a brief study of *Inceste* see Payen, pp. 522-24.

¹⁰⁸ E.M. Makowski, 'The conjugal debt and medieval canon law', *Journal of Medieval History*, 3 (1977), 99-114. The circumstances in *Usurier* (vv. 16206-11) are less clear.

pregnancy a problem. In fact at this time there was great pressure brought to bear on married clergy to give up their families and live a celibate existence, and the canons of the first and second Lateran Councils (1123, 1139) stripped the families of clerics of the legal status and protection they had previously enjoyed.¹⁰⁹ So, the senator in *Inceste* is doing something laudable by following the example of the clergy. However, the couple do fall foul of 1 Corinthians 7:5, that warns against too much marital abstinence since this gives rise to new temptations : *Nolite fraudare inuicem, nisi forte ex consensu ad tempus, ut vacetis orationi: & iterum reuertimini in idipsum, ne tenet vos Satanas propter incontinentiam vestram.*¹¹⁰

Their son grows up into a beautiful adolescent, as is to be expected of a worthy senator's son, and even when he is fourteen the mother continues to sleep next to him.¹¹¹ However, her caresses are not wise and she falls into the devil's trap of temptation. There is little detail of their sex acts, but the mother's pleasure is well documented: she follows her body and satisfies her lust, and despite her devotion to the Virgin does not seek to end the incestuous relationship with her son.¹¹² The son has become a substitute for the father, a consequence of the author's insistence upon the mutual love between husband and wife. Roussel points to a similar substitution in *Yde et Olive*, *La Belle Hélène de Constantinople*, *La Manekine* and the *Roman du Comte d'Anjou*. In all of these texts the father loses a much loved wife whose place is taken by a beautiful daughter. This aspect of tragedy therefore serves as a mitigating factor in the father's incest, and is as such absent from *Inceste* since the husband and wife's separation is both mutual and holy.

¹⁰⁹Brundage, *Sex, Law & Christian Society* pp. 218-20.

¹¹⁰*Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis*, Oeniponte: Sumptibus Librariae Academicæ Wagnerianæ, 1906.

¹¹¹Cf. *La Belle Hélène de Constantinople*, *Le Dit de la Bourgeoise de Rome*, *Le Dit du boeuf*, the *Gesta Romanorum* (XIII), and the *Vie du Pape Grégoire*. The seventh-century *Canons of Theodore* prescribe a penance of 15 years for sexual relations between a man and his mother and 3 years for those between a mother and a young son, cf. McNeil and Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*, p. 186.

¹¹²C. Roussel has pointed out that in the penitentials there is little place for father/daughter incest, but many other types figure, in particular mother/son; in literature from the thirteenth century onwards, however, father/daughter incest becomes quite common. See 'Aspects du père incestueux dans la littérature médiévale', pp. 47-62 in *Amour, mariage et transgressions*, op. cit. Kathryn Gravdal notes how a daughter is paradoxically 'empowered' by incest since, considered solely responsible for the sin and therefore for her own salvation, plays the role of the autonomous agent usually reserved for the male protagonist of romance, cf. 'Confessing incests: Legal erasures and literary celebrations in medieval France', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 32 (1995), 280-95.

An important factor in *Inceste* is that the mother commits the sin of incest because she enjoys it, and even after falling pregnant to her son and committing infanticide she returns to the forbidden pleasures of the flesh.¹¹³ Her pregnancy may be viewed as a warning, or as a 'punishment pregnancy', as in *La pucele qui voloit voler* (NRCF, 6/65), but she manages to keep it from becoming public knowledge. The incestuous relationship lasts for another 10 years, by which time her son will be at least 25 years old. He is excused all blame, despite the fact that *Demi-ami* provides evidence for a boy of 15 being held to be a responsible - if immature - adult. Even at this point there are no details of their actual sex acts, but the gravity of the mother's sin is beyond question. When she confesses her sins, she is not immediately believed, making this true confession into an interesting parallel to that found in *Le Chevalier qui fist sa feme confesse* (NRCF, 4/33). There, the wife is guilty of an incestuous relationship with her husband's nephew and admits as much in her mocking confession, but is not believed:

Tant fis que je o lui pechai
et que cinc anz, je cuit amai
or m'en repent vers Dieu, aïe! (vv. 171-73)¹¹⁴

E. Archibald points out that that parent/sibling coupling is likely to attract the attention more easily than incest between distant cousins : 'The high profile of incest as the theme of a major ecclesiastical campaign in the 11th and 12th centuries may have influenced the fashion for incest as a literary theme in both romance and exemplary literature'.¹¹⁵ Committing incest implies a loss of identity that needs to be restored before salvation is possible. Roussel comments that 'l'inceste c'est évidemment l'autre, le lointain, l'ancien, le géant, l'hérétique, mais c'est aussi nous-mêmes, confrontés au mirage d'une possible auto-destruction'.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Compare *Inceste* with *La Vieille truande* (NRCF, 4/37) in which an invented/desired incestuous mother-son relationship is at the centre of the comic action. Levy argues that of all the sexual perversions to be found in the *fabliaux* incest is the rarest; but the theme can be found elsewhere, for example in the *Lais* of Marie de France, Philippe de Rémi's *La Manekine* and *La Belle Hélène de Constantinople*.

¹¹⁴ An interesting study of this *fabliau* is to be found in Levy, 'Le Dernier tabou...', pp. 120-21.

¹¹⁵ E. Archibald, 'Incest in medieval literature and society', *Forum for Modern language Studies*, 25 (1989), 1-15, p.10. The author cites an unpublished thesis that deals with the same subject : B. & M. Meslier, *Le Thème de l'inceste dans la littérature du Moyen Age*, Thèse de 3ème cycle, Tours, 1981. Adgar's version of the legend of Marie l'Egyptienne is an earlier reference to incest: *Unkes de parent ne s'estint, / Tuiz acuilli u qu'ele vint*, Miracle 40 of *Le Gracial*, vv. 21-22.

¹¹⁶ art. cit., p. 58.

The author of the *corpus* finds *Inceste* a fitting moment to explain how God became incarnate with a virgin mother by comparing the Virgin's impregnation to light passing through a window (vv. 17278-85). This is undoubtedly an important point that the author needs to clarify, especially if the tales of the first *Vie* were to be read in order, since, as we have seen, sexual sins abound and human sexuality is universally condemned. As for the theme of incest, Archibald is in no doubt as to why it is prevalent in the literature of the thirteenth century and gives an explanation that supports the hypothesis that in the text incest is closely tied to the motif of repentance and divine grace: 'the incest theme seems to have come into fashion just at the time when the Church was insisting on the scrutiny of relationships before marriage, on the awful sin incurred by those who married within the prohibited degrees, and on the separation of couples found to have broken the rules'.¹¹⁷ Finally, let us note that in the second *Vie* the theme of incest is taken up again in *Infanticide*, in which a woman has three children by her uncle, strangles all three at birth and then attempts to commit suicide.¹¹⁸

Sexual desire in the first *Vie* is inspired by the devil and is at once powerful and brutal. In *Sarrasine* and *Renieur* the victims of hellish arousal will stop at nothing to satisfy their desires. The seduction scenes in *Brûlure* and in particular *Prévôt d'Aquilée* and *Malaquin* are all in one way or another driven by the devil's need to tempt and corrupt and such brutality is met with violent resistance. The fires of passion lead directly to the fires of hell as the devil schemes and plots his victims' downfall. The Achilles Heel of humankind is sexuality, and this is exploited expertly by the most active and resourceful demons of the first *Vie*. On occasion the devil's direct intervention is not successful, and he must resort to different means to overcome the stoic defiance of the holy men and women of these tales : no matter, since the devil can use a third party as an instrument to tempt his prey, as in *Sacristine* and *Nièce*. Of course, in the medieval mentality a sexually voracious woman is not far removed from a devil herself and can be the most dangerous sort of temptress: at Canterbury there is an eleventh-century carving of a she-devil, displaying her sexual organs

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 9.

¹¹⁸ B.N. fr. 1546, f^o.136 r - 139 r^o. In both *Inceste* and *Infanticide* murder is the logical continuation of the desire to hide a pregnancy; the only alternative offered by the author of the first *Vie* is the divine intervention of *Abbesse grosse*.

and taming beasts.¹¹⁹ Eve was commonly held to be the cause of Man's Fall, blackening the name of all women in Christian society. The author of the *corpus* reminds the reader of this:

Autrement fuissions nos tuit mort
por le mors k'en la pome fist
Eve, qui en mordant defist
les biens ke promis nos avoies
por nos besoinz ke bien savoies.

(*Fornication imitée*, vv. 18-22)

Bonté? Voire, k'il aquita
ce dont Eve nos endeta

(*Juitel*, vv. 381-82)

Ave, qui amendas ce que Eve mesprist,
Ave, qui en la pome le mors a fere emprist,
por tot le monde metre le feu d'enfer esprist,
quant del monde perdu, dame, pitié prist.

(*Prière à la Vierge*, vv. 19028-31)

The first *Vie* presents clear and vivid examples of the direct and indirect temptations inspired by the devil, but also, critically, illustrates the hurt felt by the devil as a consequence of Man's goodness:

Mes li malfez grant duel en ot...

(*Ivresse*, v. 15204)

In those sexual temptation scenes where the devil is not directly implicated, he is still lurking behind the apparent licentiousness of the woman. The girl in *Nièce* becomes a prostitute because of the direct intervention of the devil, whereas in *Fornication imitée* the sinning hermit laments:

Las est mes cors et lasse m'arme,
quant honis sui per une fame,
non pas feme mais uns maufez
qui en moi c'est bien esprovez.
Haï, deables enemis !
en quels liens m'avez or mis,
dont j'ai perdu Deu et le monde !

(vv. 159-65)

The hermit then goes on to blame his heart and body for leading him into iniquity :

Drois est ke cuers et cors me fonde,

¹¹⁹Weir & Jerman, *Images of Lust*, p. 36, plate 15.

li cuers dont li voloires me vint,
et li cors ke le mal soustint.

(vv. 166-68)

Man has a latent proclivity to do wrong, and the temptations to which this hermit succumbs are ever-present throughout the first *Vie*, with the degree of resistance varying from tale to tale. In *Renieur*, the man's prayer to the Virgin, *qu'il l'eüst ou k'il l'obliast* (v. 1513), shows the uncompromising stance that weak men take in front of temptation. In this tale, the woman who refuses him her love is delivered on a plate once the man has proved his fidelity to the Virgin. Strangely, in a work that is largely hostile to courtliness, it is the man's very courtly values that win him the woman he so desires. Temptation here is not devil inspired, but rather displays man's own shortcomings, as illustrated in the woman's rebuttal:

Vos n'estes pas bien assenez
ne n'iestes cortois ne sennez,
ainz estes trop mal enseingniez
quant de tel chose m'aresniez.

(vv. 1319-22)

The lessons of the *corpus* are less to do with sexual duties, morals and manners than with the circumstances necessary for salvation. The emphasis is repeatedly on 'real' repentance and 'real' confession, as illustrated by the following, typical passages from *Ivresse* and *Inceste*:

Par la bone confession
vient la bone remission,
et par la bone repentance.

(vv. 15164-66)

Ensi le malfé desjuglons
et des euz an .ii. l'avuglons
si que mie nos connoit
la ou apertement nos voit
par la confession veraie
qui d'eulz et de cuer le desvoie.

(vv. 17364-69)

As is made clear in *Copeaux*, no matter how great or small the sin, the same circumstances are required for salvation. In the first *Vie*, no character is damned because of sex alone: the monk in *Nièce* is an unrepentant familiar of the devil and in *Sénéchal* the seneschal's sexual desires are merely a symptom of a deeper and more serious sin, namely treason; the same could be said of the queen's confessor in the same tale. There is no mention of the fate of

the saracen temptress in *Sarrasine* who inadvertently attracts the hermit's attentions, but one presumes that the dancing girls in *Malaquin* are saved since their lord converts. In *Brûlure*, the temptress is brought back from damnation and repents. The one less clear case is that of the cousin in *Sénéchal*: is she damned for treasonable behaviour, or because she enjoys sexual intercourse with the king and will do anything to repeat the experience? This said, the tales do give the modern reader an exciting and valuable glimpse of the propagation and reception of Church teachings on sexual matters, and the problematic contradictions of holy ideals and human nature are made only too apparent. The author quite brilliantly illustrates that although the holy virtues of chastity and sexual integrity are the most worthy, sexual activity does not in itself exclude salvation, and that a pious life in the world can be at least the equal of the life of a recluse. Carnality is the most striking (or easiest) sin with which the devil can entrap his victims. Other sins of the flesh make his task easier still given that they naturally lead to sexual sin, notably the transgression that is the subject of Chapter VII: the Demon Drink.

VII

The Demon Drink

In a medieval society full of contradictions, the excesses of the profane table contrasted with an idealized and spiritual image of the divine banquet: 'La littérature cléricale du Moyen Age offre trois images du festin, antagonistes et complémentaires: celle du banquet profane où s'étalent le luxe et l'abondance et qui suscite parfois de la réprobation devant les risques de débordements; celle du banquet divin qui renvoie une représentation idéalisée des élus autour de Dieu à l'instar du Christ et de ses apôtres; enfin celle du banquet chrétien qui, sans rejeter les plaisirs, les encadre et les oriente pour faire de la table un instrument d'édification'.¹ Wine is drunk at the *festin horrible* but also at the *festin divin* and drunkenness is not exclusively evil: *Ivresse de Dieu*, the spirit of ecstatic dancing, could also be allegorised by the effects of drinking large quantities of wine.² Although Christ *desenivre les yvres*, wine equally gives courage and symbolises his blood shed on the cross.³ Saint Bernard's sermon LXXII on the Song of Songs addresses this *Ivresse de Dieu*, M. Gérard noting that in this context wine is 'vin du divin amour à boire à longs traits, qui dépense une "ébriété sobre", c'est-à-dire une ivresse qui ne se noie dans le capiteux liquide, mais qui brûle d'amour pour Dieu'.⁴ Intoxication can be divine, but it is also one of the devil's favourite ruses. In the first *Vie* characters can become 'drunk' with both wine and sin and it is only through repentance, confession and penance that they return to God's fold.

Throughout the *corpus* holy hermits and pious lay men and women are set up as examples for the faithful to follow. These characters, through their living out of a personal drama give a moral and spiritual example to the audience. They have reached or are near to

¹J. Voisenet, 'Le Banquet chrétien au haut Moyen Age (Ve-XIe) : un plaisir encadré', pp. 543-59 in *Banquets et manières de table au Moyen Age* (Senefiance 38), Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1996, p. 546.

²For more details see M. Possamaï-Perez, 'Nourriture et ivresse dans l'*Ovide moralisé*', pp. 237-54 in *ibid.*

³*ibid.*, p. 241 n.61. In the pseudo-Christian myth of the Grail there is an image of the cup of plenty providing more than enough food and drink, cf. for example vv. 7276-306 of *La Première continuation de Perceval*, ed. W. Roach, tr. C.-A. Van Coolput-Storms, Paris: Livre de Poche, 1993.

⁴'A la table de l'époux. Les agapes spirituelles dans les Sermons sur le "Cantique des cantiques" de s. Bernard', pp. 533-41 in *Banquets et manières*, op. cit. Note the ironic words in *Image du Diable: tuit estes enivré par foi* (v. 18185).

the apotheosis of the Christian ideal, abstain from sexual acts and thoughts; pray and meditate; regularly perform good deeds for their neighbours; and eat and drink frugally. There is a constant message that a body that is used to ease and luxury will house a rotten soul,⁵ whereas a person who rejects all physical pleasures and comforts will be of an absolute purity within. As Payen remarks, the whole point of the exercise is that 'les pénitents [...] soient de très grands coupables, qui reviennent de loin et ont besoin d'une grâce exceptionnelle, ne serait-ce pour avoir le courage de confesser leurs fautes'.⁶ Consequently, Bretel notes that 'le péché des religieux [in pious literature] apparaît même comme un motif obligé'.⁷ So, the reader ought not be surprised to witness future saints committing venal and mortal sins before repenting and finding salvation. Equally, the higher placed the character, the harder the fall. One could broaden Bretel's remark that these tales serves as 'une mise en garde contre un danger virtuel susceptible de menacer n'importe quel religieux' to include anyone at all.⁸ One of the author's standard narrative tools is to stress a character's purity by describing an abstemious diet. Indeed, much of one entire tale, *Haleine*, is concerned with passing on the message that abstinence and humility lead to salvation, and the location of the tale, a desert called *la Lande Seche* (v.3769), serves to highlight the piety and inner strength of anyone who is able to live and fast in such an inhospitable place. The action of certain other tales also revolves around food and drink : in *Feuille de Chou*, a nun is punished for not making the sign of the cross before eating, and in *Colombe* human virtue is rewarded by heavenly food and drink. Little of this is original to the author of the first *Vie*, who draws on popular culture, *exempla* and patristic literature for the subject matter of his tales. However, it is interesting for the modern scholar to examine the common themes that cement together the tales of the first *Vie*, especially given that their sources are from such disparate provenances. Sexual transgressions are commonplace in the text, as are dilemmas over the keeping of an oath. Another common theme is the demon drink.

Of all the 41 tales of the first *Vie*, only *Ivresse* has the evils of drink as the central theme, but the motif is far from absent elsewhere. This is not surprising given that Lateran

⁵This is not so in *Colombe*, but in this case the food is provided by heaven.

⁶ Payen, p. 534.

⁷ Bretel, p. 359.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 363.

IV had cautioned clerics to avoid excessive drinking in order to avoid the sin of lust.⁹ Drink is seen to be something which needs to be avoided for the good of the soul, intemperance coming directly from the devil and therefore leading to sin. As he seeks the salvation of all human souls, God works very much as an agent of sobriety whose task is to undo the evil done by the devil:

Cortoisement les delivra
et del boivre les desivra
que li deables fet lor ot

(*Image du Diable*, vv. 18243-45)

Throughout this tale 'drink' is used in a figurative sense to represent temptation and sin itself. The devil is directly responsible for evil thoughts and deeds and the audience is privy to every stage of his evil ruse. This means that the sinners themselves are not wholly responsible for their faults, having fallen into the devil's trap. As a consequence the possibility of their eventual salvation is never excluded. Worse sins are committed in the *Vie des Pères* than drinking to excess, but often under the influence of the devil : both drink and the devil lead characters to sin. The motif of drink is often explicitly woven into the fabric of the tales. The holy hermit in *Haleine* warns his companion against a worldly life:

Par foi, ki ja ne moreüst
et bien menjast et bien beüst
et toz jors menaist large vie,
je ne m'en merveillaisse mie.
Mes ils muerent tuit sanz resort,
jone et viel, et feble et fort.

(vv. 4071-76)

In the prologue to *Malaquin*, the author reinforces his belief that the road to damnation is paved with gluttons and drunkards:

Cil qui la voie d'enfer sivent,
ce sont cil qui a ese vivent
el monde et qui se font seignier
por plus boivre et por miex mengier.

(vv. 10690-93)

Here, the emphasis is on the *quality* of food but the *quantity* of drink. In the same tale, God tells the hermit to go along with the evil Duke Malaquin and let himself be tempted by *char, possons et vins, / boif et menjue a grant plenté* (vv.10805-6). Excessive drinking is

⁹ R. Foreville, *Latran I, II, III et Latran IV*.

damned in *Demi-Ami*: a loving father reproaches his adolescent son for his naïvity and over-spending, whereupon the boy replies

mes vos devez estre mout liez
que je ne suis pas trumelieres,
ivroins ne mesleïs ne lierres,
ne fame ne maintieg je mie.

(vv. 16229-32, my italics)

In the first *Vie*, the author also stresses the quality of the wines that tempt his pious protagonists. In *Malaquin*, the hermit is tempted for forty days by soft beds, luxurious foods and *bons vins* (v.10834), and in *Prévôt d'Aquilée* the food and drink with which the virtuous couple tempt themselves each day comprises *poissonz, oisiaz et venoison, / et orent vins clers et raans, / fors et aspres et bien bevans* (vv.13885-7), qualities remarkably similar to those praised in *Trois dames de Paris*, Watriquet de Couvin's fourteenth-century *fabliau*.¹⁰ This, however, is earthly fare, and to gain salvation the reader should be inspired by the fasting and abstinence of the provost and his wife, coupled with their constant and voluntary temptation. In *Nièce* the author bemoans the fact, in an aside from the tale proper, that although holy orders - most probably the Benedictines - had been established to praise God, to give good examples to the faithful and to help the poor, nowadays monks *sont diable privé* who *bons vins aiment et bons morsiaz* (vv.14714ff). Drunkenness indicates lack of self-control and is an unholy state that indicates the inability to fast. Before she takes on the life of a penitent recluse, Thaïs voices doubts over her capacity to switch from a life of comfort and pleasure to one of abstinence and self-denial:

A grant aise ai esté norrie,
si ne porroie geüner
ne veillier por mon cors pener

(*Thaïs*, vv. 2396-98)

The same message is to be found in *Baril* as the sinning knight refuses to fast (vv.9016-24). The penitent abbess who has been miraculously delivered of a baby and of public shame in

¹⁰ For the most appreciated qualities of wine in the Middle Ages, see M. Salvat, 'Du Bon usage de la chair, de l'eau et du vin d'après *De Proprietatibus rerum* de Barthélemy l'anglais (XIIIe siècle)', pp. 331-42 in *Manger et boire au Moyen Age. Actes du colloque de Nice (15-17 octobre 1982), I, Aliments et société, II., Cuisine, manières de table, régimes alimentaires*, ed. D. Menjot, Nice: Les belles Lettres, 1984. Wine is generally of great benefit to the constitution 'mais à condition d'être *deuement prins*, car s'il est bu en excès, en qualité comme en quantité, c'est un poison, voire la mort pour celui qui en abuse' (p. 338). The evidence of the first *Vie* shows that this lesson can be taken literally or metaphorically (Cf. *Des trois dames de Paris* (NRCF 10/122)).

*Abbesse Grosse*¹¹ owes much of her salvation to self-mortification and fasting (vv.9686-93), and in the prologue to *Malaquin* the reader learns that those who abstain from *biar morsiaz* can aspire to eternal happiness (vv.10700ff). Such references abound, and indeed an entire tale has^{at} the centre of its action the virtue of fasting. The two young hermits in *Colombe* grow thin and weak despite their rich diet, whereas their seniors, who eat only bread and water are stout and healthy. It is of course the grace of God that is nourishing the two older hermits, and this grace, along with the healthy constitution that accompanies it, is the tangible reward for fasting. More accessible to the target audience of the first *Vie* would be the notion that 'heavenly' water is the equivalent to any wine. This is expressed by the younger hermits when they taste for the first time the bread and water touched by God's messenger:

Li pains ot savor de toz mes
que l'en puet fere de poissons,
de char, d'oiseaz, de venoisons;
et en l'eve froide ensement
savor de vin et de piment
ou d'autres boivre, s'il l'amerent,
tot a lor volenté troverent. (vv. 12399-405)

Wine is a desirable commodity and abstinence from it is a heavenly virtue. Despite the Biblical warnings against drunkenness (Luke 21: 34 *Adtendite autem vobis ne forte graventur corda vestra in crapula et ebrietate et curis huius vitae et superveniat in vos repentina dies illa*; Ephesians 5: 18 *et nolite inebriari vino in quo est luxuria*) - and the numerous decretals from Church councils - in 813, the Council of Mainz indicated that drunkenness will result in even greater evil -, even St. Benedict had to allow for a moderate daily consumption of wine for those living in his Rule.¹² Wine seems to have been accessible to people at almost every level of society, especially those in towns. Jean Bodel's *Jeu de Saint Nicolas* contains an urban tavern scene in which *borjois* are concerned about the quality of the wine on offer.¹³ R. Dion has noted that countryfolk did not drink wine, but the evidence of *Ivresse* - in which a miller has plenty of wine to share - and iconographical evidence from the thirteenth century suggests that this may not have been

¹¹Cf. Gautier de Coinci, *De l'abbesse que Nostre Dame delivra de grant angoisse*, 1 Mir 20, and Adgar, *Gracial*, Miracle 49.

¹² For *libri poenitentiales* and related documents see McNeill & Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance*.

¹³ed. F.J. Warne, Oxford: Blackwell, 1968, vv. 645-63.

the case.¹⁴ . In two twelfth-century epics the social importance of drink is clear : in *Moniage Guillaume* the hero needs a good reason - fear of the fires of hell - to give up wine, and for Rainouart the monks' abstinence from drinking wine appears unnatural:

Apporte vin, fil a putain, lanier!
Si beberont cil moine des mostier;
mieus canteront et liront lor sautier
(*Monaige Rainouart* II, vv. 1610-12)¹⁵

There is a close approximation of the devil and drink underlined in other tales of the first *Vie*. The epilogue to *Image de Pierre* warns that if you throw *ordure* into your well and subsequently drink from it, you will be damned:

[...] lor mort a escient boivent
qui de son venin les enyvrent
tant q'a danpnacion les livre (vv. 8855-57, my italics)

A similar image can be found in proverb collections which provided raw material for preachers:

Il deyt ben beyre ordure qy en son puys le fet¹⁶

A dreit beit la merde ki en sun puiz la chie¹⁷

The message conveyed by these cautionary proverbs is taken one step further by the author of the first *Vie*. Gautier de Coinci uses the same language of poison and drunkenness in *De un moigne que Nostre Dame delivra dou Dyable: Une nuit vin tant contecha / que d'yvrece trop s'entecha*.¹⁸ The same point is put into the mouth of the Virgin Mary in *Abbesse Grosse* as she admonishes the pregnant abbess for fornicating and falling pregnant. However, the major criticism that she has to make is that the abbess, formerly devoted to

¹⁴ R. Dion, *Histoire du vin et de la vigne des origines au XXe siècle*, Paris, 1959. For the iconographical evidence, see P. Mane, 'L'Alimentation des paysans en France et en Italie aux XIIe et XIIIe siècles à travers l'iconographie des calendriers (sculpture, fresque, mosaïque et vitrail', pp. 319-33 in *Manger et boire au Moyen Age*, I, op. cit.

¹⁵ ed. G.A. Bertin, Paris: Picard, 1973.

¹⁶ *The Anglo-Norman Lyric: An Anthology*, ed. & tr. D.L. Jeffrey & B.J. Levy, Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1990, p. 219.

¹⁷ Morawski, #28. Other proverbs cited by Morawski summarise the various teachings of the tales in the first *Vie* (*Qui boit et reboit trop fol se t[i]ent* [1855]; *le vin est bon qui es prent par raison* [1133]; *pain et vin est la viande au pelerin* [1578]; *vin et confession descouvrent tout* [2488]...) This is indicative of the close links between the *conte pieux* and the sermon tradition.

¹⁸ 1 Mir 16, vv. 14-15. Cf Possamaï-Perez on the *rapprochement* of wine, madness and poison in the *Ovide moralisé*, art. cit., p. 239.

the Virgin's service, has been tricked by the devil. The abbess will live forever in shame unless:

[...] par pitié n'es delivree,
vilz qui estoies enivree,
come malvese, conme fole,
du pechié qui le monde afole,
de la luxure dechaciee
qui hors de t'onor t'a chaciee. (vv. 9472-77)

The devil was at the source of the abbess' fall from grace having 'intoxicated' her with evil and foolish thoughts. This is another constant theme that runs through the first *Vie*, madness signifying a move away from God and towards a life of sin and the devil. The monk in *Image du Diable*, having carved a statue of the devil that is so hideous that he is punished by the devil himself, is made to have sinful sexual desires. These are put into his head by the devil, but it could have been drink:

[...] Dont me vient cis pensez
qui me tient? Sui je forsenez?
Est ce songes, ou sui je ivres? (vv. 17958-60)¹⁹

In *Rachat*, the audience hears that those who look to favour the body above the soul are blind and drunk (vv.15557-61). This is indeed the 'Demon Drink', brewed by the devil himself and leading to foolishness and sin. In *Vision de Diables* the author indicts those clerics who amass wines and riches without sharing them with the poor (vv.11141-9), and in the tale proper a town full of usurers - described in *Usurier* as a sin worse than drunkenness, adultery and lust (vv.16140-2)²⁰ - also makes a good living though its splendid vineyards (vv.11180-7). The virtuous couple in *Prévôt d'Aquilée* must everyday 'drink' the tempting smells of luxurious foods and wines without giving in to such gastronomic delights that only lead to sin and damnation (v.13907).

The most common sin that results directly from demonic intoxication and gluttony is fornication. Gautier de Coinci makes this clear in *De un moigne que Nostre Dame delivra*

¹⁹The woman who also falls prey to sexual arousal in the devil's evil plan is *fole* and speaks of her *lasnerie* (vv. 18001, 18006)

²⁰In *Demi-Ami*, vines are held dear by worldly people (v. 16806). This is not necessarily a condemnation of such people, since vines were and are, of course, necessary for the fermentation of altar wine.

du dyable: the hero is a sacristan who would have been the best of monks *se trop ne s'enyvrast sovent* (v. 8).²¹ Drink leads to other sins and to the devil:

Cil qui d'ivrece est entechiez
il est sougis a toz pechiez (vv. 10-11)²²

This teaching is mirrored in Henri D'Arci's *Vitae Patrum*:

De vin vus estenez e si ne l'amez mie
kar vin atrait meint prodome afolie (vv. 5129-30)²³

Whereas in miracles of the Virgin it is not uncommon for sinning religious not to repent and therefore be damned, this is not the case in the first *Vie*, a text of an altogether more indulgent nature. In the comic *fabliaux*, the scenario is somewhat different: for example, *Auberee* (NRCF 1/4) asks for bread and wine as part of an elaborate ruse to lead a young married woman into the bed of an amorous neighbour (vv.170-8). As for hagiography, the lesson is also clear: drink leads to fornication:

De trois menieres de pechiez
I fu li siens cors entechiez.
Li uns fu de li enyvreur,
Li autres de son cors livreir
Dou tout en tout a la luxure.²⁴

In the T Version of the same legend a similar point is made:

Car boire et mengier et luxure
Che ert toute le siur cure (vv. 123-24)²⁵

In *Nièce* the girl has fallen, by way of the devil's ruse, into the life of a prostitute. The evidence of the uncle's request to eat in *Nièce* serves to reinforce this message. G.

²¹ Masami Okubo, noting with justified astonishment that the devil never actually takes the form of a woman in Gautier's *Miracles*, comments that it is the devil and drink that directly lead the pilgrim to Santiago to sin in the flesh: *Tant le taria li maufez / Et tant fu de vin eschaufez...*, *D'un moigne qui fu ou fleuve*, I Mir 42, vv. 19-20. Indeed, 'les femme sont souvent les victimes de la séduction ou de l'hostilité des hommes qu'incite le diable', M. Okubo, 'La femme et le diable. Feminisme dans les *Miracles de Notre Dame* de Gautier de Coinci', unpublished paper given at the University of Hull in 1993, pp. 5-6.

²² ed. cit. It also leads to fitting penance: for Thaïs, for example, the pleasures of the table and the bed lead inevitably to the privations of thirst, hunger and exposure.

²³ *Henri d'Arci's Vitae Patrum*, ed. O'Connor.

²⁴ *La Vie de Sainte Marie l'Egyptienne*, vv. 43-44 in Rutebeuf, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. cit., I, pp. 397-469.

²⁵ ed. cit.

Matoré notes that the word *lecherie* 'signifie à la fois "luxure" et "gourmandise"'.²⁶ In the light of this explanation, the drinking and gambling of the goliardic cleric in *Goliard* are quite sufficient to give rise to his name, *Lechefrite*. This tale shows that spiritual ruin is not the only danger faced by those who frequent taverns, since *nus ne puet hanter taverne / se sa borse ne l'i governe* (vv.11957-7).²⁷ In *Noël*, is the hermit's major sin fornication, its timing or his over-eating and drinking? It is also interesting to reflect upon which is the greater crime that the hermit is *Emite accusé* finds himself having to answer for : being a *lecheor* or a *hypocrite* (v.5546)?²⁸

When her disguised uncle approaches her she offers her virtue in return for payment, and does not find it strange that her supposed client asks to eat before having sex with her (vv.14996-7). The author, in a long aside in the narration of *Nièce*, complains about worldly monks who no longer respect the Rule:

Bons vins aiment et bons morsiaz ;
 et quant la char a ses aviaz
 et durement est enbeüe
 a fere ce que la viande
 qui est el ventre chalt demande,
 quar ventres qui est pleins de vin,
 si com nos content li devin,
 est tost esmeüz a luxure,
 un pechié dont l'ame n'a cure. (vv. 14730-39)

Malaquin too contains the message that rich foods heat up the body and lead to sexual misdemeanours:

Mes quant la char est eschaufee
 de graz morseaz et de pevree,
 por qu'ele soit bien embeüe,
 si est de legier esmeüe
 a fere les deliz del cors. (vv. 10760-64)

This echoes the words of Julian of Vézelay: *Vino optimo in quo est luxuria de briatur*.²⁹

Dante describes gluttony as leading directly to lust, as does an anonymous Genoese poet of the end of the thirteenth century:

²⁶*Le Vocabulaire et la société médiévale*, Paris: P.U.F., 1985, p. 113.

²⁷This is one of the teachings of *Courtois d'Arras* and is a popular theme in the *fabliaux*, for example *De l'oustillement au vilain: Tost est d'avoir delivre / home qui trop s'enyvre*.

²⁸He is falsely accused of 'lecherie' in lines 5522-23.

²⁹*Sermons*, Paris: Sources Chrétiennes, no. 130, 1967, Sermon VI, 55.

Che la gora conseigno liga
 la luxuria e noriga,
 chi fa tanti atri mar szhoir
 ch'elo nose pò contar ni dir³⁰

In *Le Chevalier de la charrete*, Chrétien gives details of foods and wines, first seen then tasted together by Lancelot and the lady, in order to build up an erotic atmosphere just before the rape scene.³¹ *Courtois d'Arras* has a very lively tavern scene in which the hero loses all of his money, first on drink and then on women.³² Other pseudo-erotic, drunken meals are eaten in *Du vilain de bailluel* and *du Bouchier d'Abeville*.³³ Various versions of the legend of *Sainte Marie l'Egytienne*, a tradition very close to the *Vie des Pères*, clearly show the relationship between drink and sex.³⁴ All of these literary examples parallel the scientific and theological belief, dating at least to John Chrysostom in the fourth century, that drunkenness would inevitably lead to fornication.³⁵ There was a belief that wine and certain foods created sperm and gave rise to sexual desires,³⁶ and Brundage notes that the seriousness of adultery could be mitigated in certain circumstances concerning drink. Adultery was 'an occupational hazard for women employed in taverns and [some canonists] therefore held that a husband who allowed his wife to work as barmaid could not charge her with adultery if she succumbed to the temptations associated with her calling.'³⁷ N. Roth has indicated that wine was at the core of certain medieval Moslim *majālis* with the specific intention of facilitating sexual activity.³⁸ This tangible evidence that the authorities recognized the evil effects of excessive drinking helps give greater symbolic meaning to the icy waters into which the hermit in *Prévôt d'Aquilée* is plunged when he feels aroused.

³⁰ Cited by J. Nicolas, 'Les Excès de table et de boisson et leur conséquences selon un poète anonyme génois de la fin du XIIIe et du début du XIVe', pp. 291-305 in *Manger et boire au Moyen Age*, II, op. cit., p. 295.

³¹ ed. M. Roques, Paris: C.F.M.A., 1983, vv. 983ff.

³² ed. E. Faral, Paris: C.F.M.A., 1980. *Goliard* shows that spiritual ruin is not the only danger faced by those who frequent taverns, since *nus ne puet hanter taverne / se sa borse ne l'i gouverne* (vv. 11957-57). This is also a popular theme in the *fabliaux* and contes, for example in the tale *De l'oustillement au vilain* are found the words: *Tost est d'avoir delivre / home qui trop s'enivre* cf. *Recueil général*, op. cit., p. 149.

³³ NRCF 5/49, 3/18. Cf. also Morawski, #1603: *Par vin, par fame et par dez / si vient toust homme a povretez*. There was, however, a positive allegorization of *la taverne du paradis*, cf. Possamaï-Perez, art. cit., p. 247.

³⁴ Version T, vv. 123-24, ed. P.F. Dembowski; vv. 43-47 of Rutebeuf's version, ed. cit.

³⁵ Cf. *Le Plaisir au Moyen Age*, op. cit., p. 70.

³⁶ C. Thomasset & D. Jacquart, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, Cambridge: University Press, 1988, esp. pp. 147-9; J. Cadden, 'Medieval scientific and medical views of sexuality', pp. 157-72 in *A Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*.

³⁷ Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 387. Note however that drinking to excess can also be an obstacle to amorous pursuits, cf. Jean Bodel's *Du souhait des vez*, NRCF 6/70, vv. 40ff.

³⁸ A research note on sexuality and Muslim civilization', pp. 319-28 in *A Handbook of Medieval Sexuality*.

In *Prévôt d'Aquilée*, sex and gastronomic pleasures are indelibly linked, supporting J. Verdon's belief that 'la luxure ne provient-elle pas souvent du manger et du boire?'³⁹ This is also apparent in *Impératrice* : watching someone eat can itself be not far removed from a sex act:

De li regarder ce disna;
 tant plus la vit, plus s'enclina
 vers li ces cuers et si volsist. (vv. 5802-4)

In *Noël*, eating and drinking to excess is explicitly shown to lead to fornication. In fact, although the tale tells of a priest who fornicates on Christmas Eve and who is prevented by celestial forces from consecrating the host at mass on Christmas Day before he has confessed his sin, the epilogue preaches neither against fornication nor against sex at a prohibited time. The author is much more concerned with conveying the message that the consumption of rich foods and wines will inevitably lead to sins of the flesh:

La char aise et solaz demande,
 et quand ele est bien aoilliee
 de vin, de morsiaz de d'ailliee,
 si requiert que par luxure
 puisse delivrer sa nature
 de la cholor qu'il a en lui.
 Ensi quiert la mort et l'anui
 de la lasse d'ame honie
 qui conpere sa glotenie [...]
 [...] Si vos devez contreguetier
 de trop boivre et de trop mengier
 por voz chars foler et matir,
 tant qu'en pes les puissiez tenir. (vv. 10093-101, 10106-9)

This passage is particularly significant since it is found not in the mouth of a holy hermit or pious penitent, but in the author's own epilogue. It is in the prologues and epilogues that the author has the clearest opportunity to bring home the message of a given tale or give another teaching that he considers vital to Christian salvation; it is here that he is ⁱⁿ a position to express himself most fully. That he has chosen to write tales which show the evils of drunkenness and gluttony already goes some way to revealing his own attitudes towards these sins, but it must never be forgotten that an author such as that of the first *Vie* depended heavily on the source material at hand. In the prologues and epilogues, and also

³⁹Verdon, *Le Plaisir*, p. 70. The evidence of the first *Vie* certainly reinforces this theory, as abstinence from *biax morsiax* is a frequently heralded virtue, and one that tends to accompany chastity.

in the occasional interjections mid-tale, he is able to give full rein to his own preoccupations, but in the body of the tales proper narrative transparency replaces overt sermonising, although in didactic literature of this type the sermon is never far from the author's mind.⁴⁰ At the beginning of *Noël* the author immediately depicts the priest to be worldly: *belement i prenoit son vivre* (v.9815), and on the arrival of the woman:

Cele trova la chose preste
et le provoie a son talent
qui la herberja bonement
et ot mout chiere sa venue,
qu'a une fois l'ot conneüe (vv. 9819-23)

Finally, they engage in a gastronomic orgy:

Il fist aprester la viande,
que la char covoite et demande.
Assez mengerent et trop burent;
par le trop boivre ensemble jurent,
si conme maufez les sorprist,
qui a mal fere les esprist. (vv. 9824-29, my italics)

The author knows exactly where to place the blame for the priest's sin, and the priest is soon made to realise the error of his ways:

trop ce reprist durement
quant par dormir fu delivrez
del vin dont ce fu enyvrez. (vv. 9841-43)

This spiritual hangover in fact is another way of preaching the same moral code that we shall see in *Ivresse*. However, *Noël* makes the teaching more explicit, particularly in the epilogue, dwelling little on the narrative aspect of the inevitable slide from gluttony and drunkenness to lust. *Ivresse*, on the other hand, depends for its moral teaching on a detailed and colourful depiction of the hermit's temptation and fall. Taken together, the tales show that gluttony and drunkenness come from the devil and lead to sins of a more serious nature.

In any pious text, however, drink cannot be a wholly negative property. After all, wine becomes the blood of Christ in the celebration of the mass, and there are many and

⁴⁰ It should equally be acknowledged that, even in the sermon tradition, some element of narrative is almost always present. It has been presumed that this is borne out by Latin sermon collection and by the prevalence of *exempla* used in both Latin and vernacular sermons.

varied biblical images of the vine.⁴¹ It is immoderation in all things except virtue that is to be condemned, a spiritual teaching that mirrors the medieval concept of *démésure*. So, in Miracle XLII of the *Gracial* the Virgin will willingly perform a miracle to provide mead for a noble lady at Glastonbury entertaining King Athelstan. Drunkenness rather than drink itself leads to sin, and the devil is at the root of drunkenness. The message of the first *Vie* is to avoid worldly pleasures and to favour the soul rather than the body. Consequently, the text contains other images that show the virtue and life-giving nature of drink, be it water, herbal brews or wine : *Copeaux* contains the biblical message *j'ou fain, ne ne me saolates; / j'ou soif, ne si ne m'abrevastes* (vv.1751-2); in an ironic parallel to the celebration of mass, the greedy and uncharitable son in *Crapaud* tells a lie that will lead immediately to punishment (and eventually his salvation) as he informs his starving father that *nos n'avons autre atornement / que pain et vin* (vv.8093-4); the lack of food and drink is life-threatening in *Merlot*, but the refusal to give charity is soul-threatening (vv.18499-501); water is the drink of the virtuous in many tales, including *Thaïs*, *Colombe*, *Prévôt d'Aquilée* and *Nièce*;⁴² the *Riviere de la Sauleche* brings nourishment and salvation to the hermits in *Haleine*; heavenly herbs provide the base for a drink that cures leprosy in *Impératrice*; the abbess' baby is fed on the breast-milk of a 'heavenly' hind (*Abbesse Grosse*, vv.9516-9); the courtly behaviour of the king in *Sénéchal*, who eats, washes, drinks and sleeps (vv.12772-3) is anathema to neither the author nor his audience; and, on three occasions, God is depicted as the fountain of goodness from which every man should drink (*Sacristine* v.6849, *Brûlure* v.13302, *Feuille de Chou* vv.16366-7). Communion is celebrated in *Noël*, and the water touched by the holy spirit in *Colombe* tastes like wine: drink is not in itself an evil thing in the first *Vie*, but immoderation and greed represent and lead to more serious sins for the remission of which contrition, confession and penance are necessary.

Many of the above motifs come together in *Ivresse*, a tale whose action revolves around the drunkenness of a holy hermit, and the theme is very present elsewhere. The scribes who copied the first *Vie des Pères* often show through their choice of *incipit* what they believed to be the most significant theme or teaching of the tale that follows. So, in *A*

⁴¹The Anglo-Norman poet Adgar, writing some fifty years before the composition of the first *Vie*, tells a miracle involving spilt, pre-consecrated altar wine, *Gracial*, Miracle XII.

⁴²But even the quality of water could not be guaranteed. Cf. *Moniage Guillaume* in which the hero is given water *de la piour que on puisse trover*, ed. W. Cloetta, Paris: S.A.T.F., 1906-11, 2 vols., v. 3269.

Noël is introduced as *Du provoire qui chanta* (fol. 50r⁰), in *f* it is *Del provoire qui leva .iii. corpus domini ensamble* (fol. 134v⁰) and in *P* it is *Del provoire ki fist fornication la nuit de Noël* (fol. 187r⁰). Even though the action depends upon the priest's drunkenness, this is not the central issue of the tale for its medieval readership and is consequently not highlighted in the *incipit*. Such logic can by no means always be applied to medieval *incipits*, but in this case it provides a handy indication of the thirteenth-century scribes' perception of the text upon which they worked. In the three manuscripts quoted above, the *incipits* for *Ivresse* are quite revealing : *Del ermite qui s'enivra* (*A* fol.82r⁰), *Del hermite qui s'ennivra* (*P* fol. 142r⁰) and *De l'ermite qui par s'ivrece fist fornication et homicide* (*f* fol.209r⁰).⁴³ For at least these three scribes the drunkenness of the hermit represents the major theme of the tale.⁴⁴ This is not surprising given the detail in which the author describes the state of inebriation, but does not mirror the author's own commentary on this ancient story since his epilogue speaks not against drunkenness but against despair. Again, in the context of medieval literature this is not a contradiction. First, the teachings found in the prologues and epilogues of the first *Vie* do not always appear to correspond with what appears to be the central message of the tales they envelop. Equally, the author's business is not to damn drink *per se*, but the evils to which it can give rise. So, the scribes have chosen what they as *readers* interpret as the main interest of the tale. *Ivresse*, the tale's modern title, is by consequence a most fitting description of the story.

Introducing his protagonist at the beginning of the tale, the author takes care to underline his success in upholding the virtues of fasting and abstinence. Such descriptions are important throughout the text since they are reliable indicators as to a character's eventual lot and frequently are chosen to fit in with the tale to follow. In *Ivresse* the hermit *bien se*

⁴³To illustrate that this is very much an imprecise science we give the *incipit* of *B*, another thirteenth-century manuscript : *Del hermite qui tua son compere et jut a sa comere*. This makes no mention of drunkenness but the two sins that the scribe highlights are, of course, direct consequences of the hermit's inebriation. The scribe is still bringing to the reader's attention the hermit's transgression rather than his salvation.

⁴⁴ The devil appears in the form of a bear, a leopard and a lion. In Miracle XVIII of Adgar's *Gracial* and 1 Mir 16 of Gautier de Coinci's *Les Miracles de Nostre Dame* a similar scene is described. However, this monk is already drunk and the demonic visions are his punishment. There is no lively description of his drunken state, he does not go on to rape or murder, and the Virgin makes him confess his sin of drunkenness. As is the case in *Ivresse*, however, there are close thematic and linguistic links between the demon and drink: *Avint par malfé, cum espeir, / ke cil out tant beü un seir / ke ne se pout de rien aider; / tant ot beü en lur celier... Gracial*, XVIII, vv. 5-8. For the devil as wild animals see Tubach, #1812, #1533, etc.

voloit esprover / en astinence (vv.15185-6) and *s'ame sa char domina* (v.15193). The hermit is repeatedly tormented by the devil and shows his faith and virtue in conquering his fear to repulse every attack, and such virtue hurts the devil (vv.15204ff). However, even he can be duped by a clever and cunning demon:

Je te dis que tu t'eniverras,
ou fornicacion feras,
ou omecide. Ce sont troiz,
or puez prendre l'un a ton choiz. (vv. 15286-89)

As this and other tales illustrate, the devil is lying to the hermit, since it is impossible to commit just one sin : one misdeed will inevitably lead to another, a comment on human nature made to great effect in the epilogue to *Colombe*:

Idropiques a tele teche
que la langue toz jors li seche ;
tot tens vuet boivre et si se duet,
et quant plus boit, et plus le vuet. (vv. 1248-51)

The symbolism of the number of sins from which the hermit can choose, and the three days that he takes to decide, contrast most effectively the Christian values given the number three. Quite apart from the echoes of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Family, the three days and nights before the Resurrection, the crucified trio, the cock crowing three times and Jesus falling three times on Mount Calvary, the devil is here setting himself up as a foil to the three steps necessary for Christian salvation that are repeatedly set out in the *Vie des Pères*: repentance, confession, penance. The hermit therefore shows himself to be culpably naïve in thinking that just one sin will satisfy the devil:

Cil li dist qu'il s'eniverroit
ensi vers lui s'aquiteroit,
q'ome ocirre ne feme avoir
ne feroit il por nul avoir. (vv. 15300-3)

The hermit may be sincere as he expresses his desire to commit no serious sin, but he has already fallen into the devil's trap, since accepting to do even a small wrong has ended his stoical resistance to the devil's temptations. What is more, the oath that he makes to become drunk cannot be ignored simply because it is with the devil. As is the case in *Renieur*, in which a man makes a pact with the devil in order to gain the favour of his

female neighbour, the honour of the hermit is at stake. It is so vital that he should keep his word that at this point the author adds:

Mes il le feroit en tel point
que de blasme n'i avroit point. (vv. 15310-11)

The hermit does not visit the miller with the intention of becoming drunk, but as the symbolically intemperate atmospheric conditions suggest - *Cele nuit ot devant toné / et ot mout pleü et venté* (vv.15326-7) -, his friend's invitation to stay for a meal will inevitably lead to disaster. They eat fish, since this is a Friday, but this is richly prepared and accompanied by large quantities of wine:

A lor mangier anguilles ot,
au broet, en paste et en rost
dont richement se conreerent,
et de boivre bien s'efforcèrent,
qu'il orent vins fors et noveaz
qui lor eschaufa les cervaz. (vv. 15342-49)

This is no humble Friday meal, and the hermit's decision to join his host in such rich fare is another sin committed in the desire to be quits with the devil.⁴⁵ This is the ideal opportunity for the hermit to get drunk and satisfy his oath, and he makes sure that there are no half-measures. The wine 'heats their brains' and the hermit becomes *hetié* since he is not used to drinking alcohol. The effect of the wine on the hermit's movements would not be out of place in a *fabliau*, but in the context of *Ivresse* they are anything but comic:

De la table sus se leva,
estordis fu, si chancela
si que avant aler ne pot. (vv. 15356-58)

The miller's wife is also *tote coquilliee* (v.15364) and as she rises to help the hermit home she takes his hand to lead him away. Once at the hermitage she falls asleep and the hermit takes advantage of her. Such scenes are the source of great hilarity in the *fabliaux*,⁴⁶ but not so here:

cele maintenant s'endormi
qui del vin ot fet son amin,
et cil, qui fu toz forsenez,

⁴⁵In the penitentials, intercourse was frequently forbidden on Fridays, see Brundage, *Law, Sex and Christian Society*, p. 157.

⁴⁶For example Watriquet de Couvin's tales.

qui ne cuidait pas qu'il fust nez,
 prist sa comere et a li jut

(vv. 15370-74)

This drink-induced sleep resulting in sin has a parallel in the *fabliaux* which, ironically, results in salvation: A man is in such a deep, inebriated sleep that he can be tonsured and moved to the gates of an abbey without stirring. Convinced by the 'miracle' he becomes a monk. In *Ivresse* the hermit's physical and spiritual awakening from his demon-inspired drunken sleep is equally as catadysmic, but it is not at all comic : he can remember what he has done and instantly begins to lament. Just as in the *fabliaux* the drunkard is destined to be duped, so the hermit in *Ivresse* is duped by the devil. Lorcin has noted that drunkenness in itself is not at all praised in the *fabliaux*, 'le plaisir de boire reste un plaisir s'il est modéré [...] l'ivrogne est un solitaire, un exclu'.⁴⁷ In *Ivresse*, through his drunkenness the hermit certainly albeit temporarily excludes himself from God's love.

The Latin *exemplum* on which *Ivresse* is based has drunkenness leading to rape and murder, and there is certainly no question of the miller's wife consenting to intercourse.⁴⁸ According to modern sexual morality this can be considered as fairly clear-cut rape since there is no hint of the woman's consent to have sex with the hermit. On the other hand, nor is she in a position to protest - since she is in a deep, sottish slumber - and this was the major factor of a medieval rape case. She has not led on the hermit and is depicted as a kindly, Christian woman. Of course, the story demands that the hermit has sex and so it is inevitable that she will be the target of his lust. The woman's drink-induced sleep leading to sin has a parallel in the *Des trois dames qui troverent l'anel* (NRCE 2/11) which, ironically, results in salvation: a man is in such a deep, inebriated sleep that he can be tonsured and moved to the gates of an abbey without stirring. Convinced by the 'miracle' he becomes a monk. Verisimilitude is challenged when one considers that a virgin hermit, who is so drunk that he has difficulties walking, can have unproblematic intercourse with a comatose, fully-dressed woman lying in an unspecified position, and matters are not helped by the fact that the sex scene lasts precisely one line:

⁴⁷M.-Th. Lorcin, 'Manger et boire dans les fabliaux : rites sociaux et hiérarchie des plaisirs', pp. 227-37 in *Manger et boire au Moyen Age*, op. cit., pp. 234, 235.

⁴⁸In the Middle Ages, the importance given to rape depended largely on the social status of the parties involved; invariably, if a crime was deemed to have been committed, it was the woman who was at fault. See Brundage, *ibid.*, pp. 311-13, 396-98, 469-72...; K. Gravdal, *Ravishing Maidens: Writing Rape in Medieval French Literature and Law*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991.

[the hermit] prist sa comere et a li jut (v. 15374)

This is reinforced only by the miller's observation as he catches the hermit *in flagrante delicto*:

[...] il m'est avis, par m'ame,
que cil ivres gist a ma feme (vv. 15378-79)

In *Sénéchal* and *Ivresse* neither of the women consent to intercourse with the *malfaiteurs*, and although there may not have been a case for rape in a civil medieval court, the author of the first *Vie* recognises the wrongs that are done and sees to it that either proper penance is done or that the evil perpetrator of the crime is damned.

The author is concerned with letting the reader know that the hermit has fornicated, but the details of the act are irrelevant; this is the opposite to *Malaquin* and *Brûlure*, in which the hermits' virtue rests on the very fact that they can resist the most provocative (and explicitly described) sexual temptations. On the other hand, the detailed attention paid by the author to the hermit's drunken state is central to *Ivresse* since it shows not only that he has fallen into the devil's trap, but that by doing so he has lost his senses. The author is keen to show that one sin will inevitably lead to another, and in drunkenness has found the perfect vehicle for this message. As he describes the hermit's drunkenness in a lively, comic way he shows his audience that sin can be fun, but this feeling lulls the sinner into a false sense of security. The following sins are shocking but their details are less important to this particular tale. You must always be on guard against the devil's attacks, as is the hermit in *Brûlure*:

bien vit que il ne dormoit pas,
qu'ele l'entendi versieillant
et sa lanterne vit ardent. (vv. 13457-59)

As the rape takes place in *Ivresse* the miller's wife is asleep, which may be an indication that intercourse is in the missionary position; Levy has noted that in the *fabliau* entitled *La Demoisele qui sonjoit* (NRCF, 4/25), a girl is raped by an equerry who respects nothing but the position.⁴⁹ In *Ivresse*, the sex act marks the end of the miller's wife's role - she is an instrument for the hermit's sin and in the author's narrative, and then disappears from the tale. The hermit's fornication leads the miller, his friend, to sin, but unlike in

⁴⁹Le Dernier tabou...', p. 114.

Sénéchal the miller's crime of passion backfires and he himself is killed; again, this is a necessary part of the narrative, so that the hermit can mirror the devil's words by exclaiming : *ai fet tels .iii. mesprisons, / ivrece, homicide et luxure* (vv.15411-12). It also gives the author the opportunity to put the initially comic words *cil ivres gist a ma feme* (v.15378) in the mouth of the miller in an apparently comic situation. However, black irony abounds here, since the aggrieved party is no simple *cocu* but a *prodome* (v.15314), and the rapist, who should typically be referred to as *prodome* or *li saint ermite* is nowhere addressed in such terms. As he staunchly resists the devil's temptations he is described as *cil qui ot en Deu sa fiance*, as a penitent he is repeatedly abused by the crowd as *Picouz li folz* (v.15499), and even when his soul has been saved the author can only describe him as *cist hermites* (v.15438). There is a clear role-reversal here, marked by the author's choice of nomenclature, that renders the apparently comic scenes - of drunkenness, fornication and murder - all the more shocking.

In any pious text, however, drink cannot be a wholly negative property. After all, wine becomes the blood of Christ in the celebration of the mass, and there are many and varied biblical images of the vine. It is immoderation in all things except virtue that is to be condemned, a spiritual teaching that mirrors the medieval concept of *démesure*. So, in Miracle XLII of the *Gracial*, the Virgin will willingly perform a miracle to provide mead for a noble lady at Glastonbury entertaining King Athelstan. Drunkenness rather than drink leads to sin, and the devil is at the root of drunkenness. The message of the first *Vie* is one of moderate *contemptus mundi*, namely that the faithful should avoid worldly pleasures and favour the soul rather than the body. Consequently, the text contains other images that show the virtue and life-giving nature of drink, be it water, herbal brews or wine. Communion is celebrated in *Noël*, and the water touched by the holy spirit in *Colombe* tastes like wine: drink is not in itself an evil thing in the first *Vie*, but immoderation and greed represent and lead to more serious sins for the remission of which contrition, confession and penance are necessary.

The hermit in *Ivresse* is quick to acknowledge the source of his downfall, realising that it is not possible to commit just one sin and remain faithful to God:

Bien m'a malfez pris en sa cure,
 bien m'a deceü, bien m'a mis
 a perte, li Deu enemis... (vv. 15413-14)

Drunkenness and the devil have now become synonymous, and the 'demon drink' is explicitly shown to be the cause of the hermit's soul-endangering misery. Once sobered up, though, the hermit is also able to recognise the path to salvation and place his trust in God. His penance is appropriate, his sins could not be more corporeal: he suffers physical abuse and ridicule, tortures his body and shaves his head. Having been tricked into drunkenness, the root of greater sins, the hermit is subsequently treated as a madman as he atones for his misdeeds. This too is quite fitting, given that sinners who choose to stray from God's path are repeatedly referred to as *li fol* throughout the first *Vie* and other pious literature. As a penitent he still accepts hospitality, but no longer the rich foods and wines he shared with the miller; only bread is given to him now (v.15464). The misery of a long and difficult penance is borne with humility by the hermit - *en bone pacience prist / toz les anuiz que l'en li fist* (vv.15500-1). This contrasts with his wish to escape the suffering imposed by the devil's torments that contributed to his downfall. It is only when he is forgiven that he is, symbolically, clothed and honoured. This suggests that a major theme of the tale is that humiliation is a necessary part of penance and is consequently a worthy precursor to salvation. In his epilogue, however, the author stresses the need to avoid despair, the worst of all sins, since all sinners who contritely repent and confess and who serve God loyally by way of penance can hope to gain eternal salvation. This is a common scenario in the first *Vie* and in miracles and pious tales more generally. Characters fall, confess, do penance and earn salvation, thereby serving as an example to the faithful living in a hostile world. By abstaining from excessive drinking a person is denying the devil one of his most powerful weapons in the war for souls, since it is only a matter of time before 'drunkenness' - that is, devilish intoxication - leads to sins of a more serious nature. At this point, only God's grace can relieve the inevitable hangover from hell.

VIII

Conclusion

The size and nature of this thesis indicates both the extraordinary richness of the first Old French *Vie des Pères* and also the scope for future research. Generations of scholars have concurred that this is an important *corpus* and the present attempt at a global study of the text, accompanied by some more analytical chapters centring on selected themes and motifs, certainly supports this view. The themes and motifs examined in Part One will reappear in Part Two, a naturally more expository section of the thesis; many other themes and motifs will suggest themselves in Part Two, again reinforcing the view that the neglected first *Vie* is a mine for future scholarship that is yet to be exploited. No thesis of this kind could possibly dispense with a sometimes repetitive and often descriptive but at the same time focused account of the individual tales; as such, the commentaries in Part Two are vital to the aim of the study, namely to open the first *Vie* to a wider and more critical audience. Lecoy's edition is an indispensable tool in this regard; not only does it give a reliable edition of this rather complex *corpus*, but its accessibility should encourage new generations of scholars to consider the first *Vie* along with other medieval texts. So far, serious research has necessarily concentrated on codicology and the establishing of editions. Lecoy's edition, along with the present thesis, should render the text accessible as a more mainstream part of the medieval French literary canon, one that can be dipped into and referred to with authority and confidence. New directions of research immediately suggest themselves, including a thorough analysis of the relationship between the *conte pieux* and the *fabliau* and an examination of contemporary reception with text, context and paratext as its *point de départ*. No longer does the first *Vie* by necessity require minute examination in all its aspects: it is to be hoped that the (far from exhaustive) commentaries in Part Two of this thesis will enable new research to take place and re-establish the first

Vie as a significant medieval French text. As Pierre Gallais noted in 1971, ‘des textes d'un intérêt aussi fondamental devraient être immédiatement accessibles à tous.’¹

¹ P. Gallais, Review of Bornäs in *Cahiers de Civilisation Médiévale*, 13 (1970), 239-46, p. 242.

IX: Appendices

IX.i Modern editions of tales from the *Vie des Pères*

Numbers 1 - 74 give the *conte* order in MS A.

IX.i^a: The First Vie (1 - 42)

1	<u>Fornication Imitée</u> FL 1 (1-354)	23	<u>Vision de Diables</u> FL 2 (11080-11557)
2	<u>Juitel</u> FL 1 (355-722) Wolter	24	<u>Ermite Accusé</u> FL 1 (5362-5667) Méon (pp. 129-38)
3	<u>Sarrasine</u> FL 1 (723-1194) Keller	25	<u>Brûlure</u> Keller FL 2 (13298-13723)
4	<u>Renieur</u> FL 1 (1195-1708)	26	<u>Crucifix</u> FL 2 (17476-17789)
5	<u>Copeaux</u> FL 1 (1709-2169) Weber Herpin	27	<u>Païen</u> FL 2 (11558-11883)
6	<u>Thaïs</u> FL 1 (2161-2742)	28	<u>Goliard</u> FL 2 (11884-12231) Méon (pp. 447-58)
7	<u>Miserere</u> FL 1 (2743-3116) Lecoultre	(29	<u>Gueule du Diable)</u> FL 2 (19040-19205)
8	<u>Jardinier</u> FL 1 (3117-3342) Matile	30	<u>Colombe</u> FL 2 (12232-12595)
9	<u>Haleine</u> FL 1 (3343-4310) Méon (pp. 331-61)	31	<u>Sénéchal</u> FL 2 (12596-13297) Baron de Reiffenberg Méon (pp. 256-78)
10	<u>Fou</u> FL 1 (4311-5361) Chaurand	32	<u>Prévôt d' Aquilée</u> FL 2 (13724-14177) Roquefort (p. 314) Méon (pp. 187-201)
11	<u>Impératrice</u> FL 1 (5668-6439) Wallensköld	33	<u>S.Paulin</u> FL 2 (14178-14563) Lecoultre

12	<u>Meurtrier</u> FL 1 (6440-6841) Méon (pp. 202-15)	34	<u>Nièce</u> FL 2 (14564-15135)
13	<u>Sacristine</u> FL 1 (6842-7403) Kjelleman Méon (pp. 154-72)	35	<u>Ivresse</u> FL 2 (15136-15441) Roquefort (p. 334) Legrand D'Aussy (p. xiii) Méon (pp. 173-86)
14	<u>Ave Maria</u> FL 1 (7404-7629) Caron	36	<u>Rachat</u> FL 2 (15442-15957)
15	<u>Queue</u> FL 1 (7630-7899)	37	<u>Usurier</u> FL 2 (15958-16347)
16	<u>Crapaud</u> FL 1 (7900-8249)	38	<u>Feuille de Chou</u> FL 2 (16348-16521) Salverda da Grave Michi
17	<u>Image de Pierre</u> FL 1 (8250-8911) Castets Méon (pp. 293-313)	39	<u>Demi-ami</u> FL 2 (16522-16951)
18	<u>Baril</u> FL 1 (8912-9267) Schultz-Gora	40	<u>Inceste</u> FL 2 (16952-17475) Méon (pp. 394-410)
19	<u>Abesse Grosse</u> FL 1 (9268-9763) Legrand d'Aussy (p. i) Méon (pp. 314-30)	41	<u>Image du Diable</u> FL 2 (17790-18257) Méon (pp. 411-26)
20	<u>Noël</u> FL 1 (9764-10135)	42	<u>Merlot</u> FL 2 (18255-18911) Legrand D'Aussy (p. vii) Méon (pp. 236-55)
21	<u>Vision d' Enfer</u> FL 2 (10136-10661)		
22	<u>Malaquin</u> FL 2 (10662-11079) Méon (pp. 275 - 92)		

Spencer-Ellis and Lecoy (vol. II) give editions of the Prayer to the Virgin (FL 2, vv. 18912-19639). Included in the verse numbers of *Merlot* is the conclusion to the first *Vie* (FL 2, vv. 18856-911)

Key

Baron de Reiffenberg (*l*) Dumortier, ‘Fragment d'un ancien fabliau’, *Annuaire de la Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, 9 (1850), 31 - 36.
Castets F.Castets, ‘Le Romant de la Vie des Pères’, *Revue des Langues Romanes*, 17

- (1880), 53 - 75.
- Caron** (Arras frg.) A. Caron, 'Petites pièces de vieilles poésies', *Mémoires de l'Académie d'Arras*, 28 (1854), 286 - 341.
- Chaurand** (f) J. Chaurand, *Fou - Dixième conte de la Vie des Pères*, Geneva: Droz, 1971.
- Herpin** E. Herpin, *Copeaux, Conte no.5 de la Vie des Pères*, Thèse de 3e cycle, Caen, 1971.
- FL 1** (f) *La Vie des Pères* ed. F.Lecoy, Paris: SATF, I, 1987.
- FL 2** (f) *La Vie des Pères* ed. F.Lecoy, Paris: SATF, II, 1993.
- Keller** (N) A. Keller, *Zwei fabliaux aus einer Neuenburger Handschrift*, Stuttgart, 1840.
- Kjelleman** 'Le Miracle de la Sacristine: Etude sur les versions métriques de l'ancien français', pp. 65 - 71 in *Mélanges de Philologie offerts à M.Johan Melander* Uppsala, 1943.
- LeCoultré** J. Lecoultré, *Contes dévots tirés de la Vie des Anciens Pères*, Neuchâtel, 1884.
- Legrand D'Aussy** *Fabliaux ou contes, fables et romans du XIIe et XIIIe siècle*, ed. P. Legrand D'Aussy, Paris J. Renouard: 1779 (repr. 1829).
- Matile** (A) M.Matile, 'Du jardinier qui donnoit la moitié de son gaing pour Dieu', *Revue Suisse*, 2 (1838), 246 - 50, 297 - 306.
- Méon** D. Méon, *Nouveau Recueil de fabliaux et contes inédits des poètes français des XIIe, XIIIe, XIVe et XVe siècles*, II, Paris: Chasseriau 1823.
- Michi** C. Michi, 'Edition du conte 38 de la *Vie des Pères*: De la nonain qui menja la fleur du chol...', *Médiévales*, 3 (1983), 111-35.
- Roquefort** B. Roquefort-Flaméricourt, *De l'Etat de la poésie françoise dans les XIIe et XIIIe siècles*, Paris: Fournier, 1815.
- Salverda da Grave** (A) 'De la nonain qui manga la fleur du chol', pp. 109-21 in *Feestbundel ter Gelegenheid zijner veertigjarige Amtsbediening op den 28. November 1889 aangeboden aan Matthias de Vries*, Utrecht, 1889.
- Schultz-Gora** (M) O. Schultz-Gora, *Zwei Altfranzösischen Dichtungen*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1899.
- Wallensköld** (Q) A. Wallensköld, *Le conte de la femme chaste convoitée par son beau-frère*, Helsingfors: Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae, 34, 1, 1907.
- Weber** (A) A. Weber, *Untersuchungen über die Vies des Anciens Pères*, Fraünfeld: J. Huber's Buchdruckerei, 1876 (Handschriftliche Studien auf dem Gebiete Romanischen Litteratur des Mittelalters).
- Wolter** (A) E. Wolter, *Der Judenknabe*, Halle: Niemeyer, 1879 (Bibliotheca Normanica, II).

May be added to the above list the following :

Legrand D'Aussy published modern versions of all or part of the following *contes*:

Haleine p. 60; *Meurtier* p. 100; *Sacristine* p. 79; *Image de pierre* p. 53; *Abbesse grosse* p. 48; *Malaquin* p. 116; *Sénéchal* p. 147; *Prévôt d'Aquilée* p. 106; *Ivresse* p. 91; *Inceste* p. 125; *Image du diable* p. 86; *Merlot* p. 138.

A.Tobler in *Jahrbuch für Romanische und Englische Literatur*, 7 (1866), 401-37 would appear to have given some of the following *contes* (source: P.Meyer in *Notices et extraits*): *Thaïs* p. 409; *Miserere* p. 413; *Haleine* p. 425; *Fou* p. 425; *Meurtier* p. 417; *Sacristine* p. 423; *Queue* p. 424; *Crapaud* p. 410; *Image de pierre* p. 434; *Baril* p. 421; *Abbesse grosse* p. 423; *Vision d'enfer* p. 417; *Malaquin* p. 419; *Ermite Accusé* p. 405; *Colombe* p. 448; *Sénéchal* p. 429; *Prévôt d'Aquilée* p. 405; *S. Paulin* p. 415; *Ivresse* p. 406; *Usurier* p. 406; *Feuille de chou* p. 407; *Image dudiabie* p. 408; *Merlot* p. 416.

According to **Chaurand** (p. 111), **E.Langlois** gives a certain number of *contes* in *Nouvelles françaises inédites du XVe siècle* Paris, 1908: 'Les numéros xi, xiii, xv, xviii, xxv sont tirés de la *Vie des Pères*; les numéros xxvi, xxvii, xxxii sont de même nature de ces derniers. Nous avons donc une version en prose des contes 13 (xxiv), 1 (xv), 35 (xxv), 30 (xxvi).'

P. Kuntsmann has published a version of *Sacristine* taken from the Rosarius (BN fr 12483) in *Miracles de Notre-Dame* Ottawa: Presses de l'Université, 1991.

Part of *Crucifix* was published by Weber (see above).

Brigitte Cazelles has published an English translation of most of *Thaïs* in *The Lady as Saint*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991, pp. 290-99.

IX.i^b: The Second Vie (43 - 50, 64 - 74)

43	<u>Sel</u> Bornäs	66	<u>Patience</u>
44	<u>Enfant Jureur</u>	67	<u>Infanticide</u>
45	<u>Image de Notre-Dame</u>	68	<u>Piège au Diable</u>
46	<u>Frères</u>	69	<u>Anges</u> Bornäs
47	<u>Crâne</u>	70	<u>Sac</u>
48	<u>Renieur</u> Morawski	71	<u>Image du Diable</u>
49	<u>Deux Morts</u>	72	<u>Ange et Ermite</u> Legrand D'Aussy xvii Méon 216 - 35
50	<u>Confession</u>	73	<u>Pain</u>
64	<u>Coq</u> Méon 362 - 93 Bornäs	74	<u>Sermon</u>
65	<u>Mère</u>		

Key

Bornäs (<u>C</u>)	G.Bornäs, <i>Trois contes de la Vie des Pères</i> , Lund: Gleerup, 1968.
Legrand D'Aussy	As above
Méon	As above
Morawski (<u>u</u>)	J. Morawski, 'Mélanges de littérature pieuse, I', <i>Romania</i> , 61 (1935), 165-209.

May be added to the above list the following:

- **D. Bois (née Bruxelles)** *Cinq Miracles de la Vierge tirés de la Deuxième Vie des Pères*, Paris IV: Thèse du 3e Cycle (1983). Not having been able to consult this *thèse*, it has not been possible to check i/ which five tales have been edited and ii/ whether the author recognises the existence of a third *Vie*.
- **Legrand D'Aussy** (cf. above) produced modern versions of *Coq* p. 179 and *Ange et ermite* p. 165.
- **P. Kunstmann** has printed a version of *Infanticide* from the Rosarius (cf. above).
- **G. Paris** in *La Poésie du moyen âge* gives a modern French version of *Ange et ermite* on p. 156.

IX.i^e: The Third Vie (51 - 63)

51	<u>Pied Guéri</u> Royer 1970/71	58	<u>Fenêtre</u>
52	<u>Ecoliers</u> Royer 1970	59	<u>Femme Aveugle</u>
53	<u>Enfant Pieux</u>	60	<u>Nom de Marie</u>
54	<u>Brandons</u>	61	<u>Enfant Sauvé</u>
55	<u>Prêtre pécheur</u> Kuntsmann	62	<u>Purgatoire</u>
56	<u>Ame en Gage</u> Méon 427 - 42	63	<u>Vilain</u>
57	<u>Ave Maria</u>		

Key

Kunstmann (A) P.Kunstmann, ‘La légende de St Thomas et du prêtre qui ne connaissait qu'une messe’, *Romania*, 92 (1971), 97 - 117.

Méon As above

Royer 1970 (A) G. Royer, *Edition critique des contes 51 et 52 extraits des Vies des Pères*, Ottawa: Master's Thesis, University of Ottawa, 1970.

Royer 1971 G. Royer, ‘Un Miracle de la Vierge extrait de la Vie des Pères’, *Revue de l'Université d'Ottawa*, 41 (1971), 495 - 507.

May be added to the above list the following:

Legrand D'Aussy (cf.above) published a modern version of *Ame en gage* p. 130.

P. Kunstmann has published versions of *Prêtre pécheur* and *Enfant sauvé* from the *Rosarius* (op. cit.).

Appendix IX.ii

First *Vie* (Following order of Spencer-Ellis)

<u>New Order</u>	<u>Tale</u>	<u>Some Major Themes and Motifs</u>
i.	Fornication imitée (1)	desire, sexual sin, humility & charity
ii.	Juitel (2)	false-faith, faith, fidelity, conversion
iii.	Sarrasine (3)	desire, denouncement, false-faith
iv.	Renieur (4)	desire, denouncement, false-faith
v.	Copeaux (5)	humility, sincerity, conversion
vi.	Thaïs (6)	sexual sin, trust, faith, conversion
vii.	Miserere (7)	humility, sincerity, pride
viii.	Jardinier (8)	charity, covetousness
ix.	Haleine (9)	humility, quest, pride
x.	Fou (10)	conversion, quest
xi.	Impératrice (11)	fidelity, humility
xii.	Meurtrier (12)	pride
xiii.	Sacristine (13)	sexual sin, devil temptation, humility
xiv.	Ave Maria (14)	Fidelity & humility
xv.	Queue (15)	Pride
xvi.	Crapaud (16)	Loyalty to family; charity; humility
xvii.	Image de pierre (17)	marital fidelity & sanctity, loyalty
xviii.	Baril (18)	conversion & faith - quest
xix.	Abbesse grosse (19)	fidelity to Virgin
xx.	Noël (20)	infidelity of priest
xxi.	Vision d'enfer (21)	paths / appearances - fidelity, hell
xxii.	Malaquin (22)	Christian heroism / evil pagan - proof - hell
xxiii.	Vision de Diables (23)	paths - usury, preaching - hell
xxiv.	Païen (27)	faith despite himself - good pagan - tear
xxv.	Goliard (28)	faith despite himself - thief turns good
xxvi.	Colombe (30)	faith & charity
xxvii.	Sénéchal (31)	faith & charity - fidelity
xxviii.	Ermite accusé (24)	Christian heroism / suffering - fidelity
xxix.	Brûlure (25)	Christian heroism / suffering - fidelity
xxx.	Prévot d'Aquilée (32)	pride - fidelity
xxxi.	S. Paulin (33)	total faith - humility - Saracen
xxxii.	Nièce (34)	devil at work
xxxiii.	Ivresse (35)	devil at work
xxxiv.	Rachat (36)	innocence, charity, usurer
xxxv.	Usurier (37)	total faith - repentance, usurer
xxxvi.	Feuille de chou (38)	innocence - devil always around
xxxvii.	Demi-ami (39)	innocence - people are no good - fidelity
xxxviii.	Inceste (40)	Devil at work
xxxix.	Crucifix (26)	Image - conversion, Jews
xl.	Image du Diable (41)	Image; Devil at work; no heavy sermonising
xli.	Merlot (42)	No heavy sermonising - humility & charity

not included : Gueule du diable (29)

Appendix IX.iii

Evidence of Contemporary Reception

It is through a study of various artistic solutions to any one illustrative problem that it is possible to gain an insight into the contemporary reception of the tales of the first *Vie*. Any modern study that concentrates simply on the sexual details of tales such as *Brûlure* and *Malaquin* ignores both the innate symbolism of the medieval narrative and certain textual and iconographical diegetics, devices used with a view to underlining salvation as opposed to sex. The motif of space is a good example of this, employed as it is on a symbolic rather than practical or geographical level. Paul Zumthor notes that ‘il y a partout des lieux susceptibles d’être investis par le sacré’, but he is referring only to the place and not to its symbolic value; for him, ‘c’est en tant que lieu que le site sacré concerne l’homme’. In *Brûlure* and *Malaquin*, the holy ‘site’ concerns rather the characters as symbols and can change locations, an effect surely recognized by the medieval audience.¹ The bed is an example of an enclosed space in *Malaquin* and *Brûlure*, being the *locus* for acts of christian heroism in both tales. Elsewhere it is also the *locus* for iniquitous actions, as is the case in the fabliau *du Sougretain* II where the monk asks the lady:

... qu’avuec moi
vos tenisse en un lit segroi!
Adonques auroie achevé
ce que lonc tens ai desirré...²

In *Malaquin*, the hermit must undergo the ‘torture’ of a soft bed:

quant .XL. jors ot esté
as mols liz et a la plenté... (vv. 10833-34)

The second courtesan settles in next to the hermit on the bed (v. 10872), and then the hermit is attached to the bed so that the third woman can attempt to seduce him by force (v. 10941). But the *locus* for the hermit’s heroic biting off of his tongue is also a bed.

¹ P. Zumthor, *La Mesure du monde*, Paris: Seuil, 1993, pp. 55, 58.

² NRCF 7/63, vv. 111-14.

This act in effect makes the bed into a holy space that is hostile to the presence of the courtesan who, in different circumstances, would feel perfectly at ease in this 'place':

tote nue sailli du lit
ou point n'ot trové de delit
D'un sorcot sengle se covri... (vv. 11006-8)

It is in this way that the bed in which the hermit has been tortured becomes a holy even welcoming place. In a scene analogous to the biblical punishment meted out to Eve, the woman is banished first from the bed, then from the room.³ In *Brûlure*, the fate of the hermit is inextricably linked to the bed since the harlot gains entry into the hermitage by claiming that she needs a place to sleep. The woman begins to fool the hermit by saying:

Si je sanz plus covert avoie,
meillor lit ne demanderoie (vv. 13484-85)

and the hermit believes her:

Desoz un apentiz la mist,
son lit d'un pou de fain li fist (vv. 13498-99)

Why should he harbour any doubts? Does he himself not sleep *sor un poi d'estrain* (v. 13410)? However, such a modest bed is not sufficient for the harlot who very soon will utter: *sanz conpaignie / ne porroie je pas durer* (vv.13513-14). This episode illustrates, in an unexpected way, Michael Camille's remark that 'the bed was the only really private space in the medieval home.'⁴ It also illustrates Bretel's point that 'si l'hospitalité est en effet, pour le moine, une grâce et un devoir, elle représente aussi pour lui, un danger. Avec l'hôte, c'est le siècle qui pénètre dans la clôture ou dans l'ermitage; et parfois même le mal, voire le diable.'⁵

Even more striking is the author's use of the symbolism of the door. At the same time signifying both an opening and a closing, the symbolic door is already a well established iconographical motif. This can be seen, for example, in the Good Samaritan window at Chartres (see figure1). The pilgrim who is leaving Jerusalem is reflected in

³ Cf. *Fornication imitée*, vv. 18-22; *Juitel*, vv. 381-82; *Prière à la Vierge*, vv. 19028-31.

⁴ *Gothic Art*, London: Everyman, 1996, p. 67.

⁵ Bretel, p. 537.

the image that illustrates the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise (figs. 2 and 3). The door signifies the physical and symbolic division between holy and worldly space.⁶ An entrance or an exit, the door can welcome or exclude, as is the case with the eschatological doorway, a popular and potent symbol in the Middle Ages (fig. 4). In the world of the senses, the doors of perception - eyes, ears and the heart - were also a feature of textual and artistic symbolism. Richard de Fournival, in his *Bestiaire d'amour*, mentions that:

et pour chu Diex, ki tant aime l'omme qu'il le velt porveoir de quant ke mestiers lui est, a donné a homme une vertu de force d'ame ki a non memoire. Ceste memoire si a .ij. portes, veïr et oïr, et a cascune de ces .ij. portes si a un cemin par ou i puet aler, che sont peinture et parole...⁷

Some manuscript illustrations accompanying this text place a heavy emphasis on the doorway as symbol (figs. 5 et 6). In *Yvain* the long prologue to Calogrenant's tale includes the following detail:

Cuer et oroilles me randez!
 Car parole oïe est perdue,
 S'ele n'est de cuer antandue.
 De tes i a, que ce, qu'il öent,
 N'antandent pas et si le loent;
 Et cil n'an ont mes que l'oïe,
 Des que li cuers n'i atant mie.
 As oroilles vient la parole
 Aussi come li vanz, qui vole;
 Mes n'i areste ne demore,
 Ainz s'an part an mout petit d'ore,
 Se li cuers n'est si esveilliez,
 Qu'au prandre soit apareilliez;
 Que cil la puet an son venir
 Prandre et anclorre et retenir.
 Les oroilles sont voie et doiz,
 Par ou s'an vient au cuer la voiz;
 Et li cuers prant dedanz le vandre
 La voiz, qui par oroille i antre.
 Et qui or me voldra antandre,
 Cuer et oroilles me doit randre... (Yvain vv. 150-70⁸)

⁶ This division can be seen very clearly in a richly symbolic illumination reproduced from MS Beaune Bibliothèque Municipale 21, f. 149 in Bériou, Berlioz et Longère, *Prier au Moyen Age*, pl. X. Two walls separate the places of christian, jewish and pagan worship. The first of these, between Jews and pagans, includes a window, whereas the one that separates Christians and Jews does not. In this way the artist is able to establish not only a visible link between the two false faiths but also a clear division between them and Christianity.

⁷ *Li Bestiaires d'amours di maistre Richart de Fornival e li response du Bestiaire*, ed. C. Segre.

⁸ ed. W. Foerster, Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1887; rep. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1965. See also Luke 8:8.

Rosanna Brusegan has spoken of 'la force d'attraction exercée par la frontière du seuil'. She also notes that 'l'opposition porte ouverte / porte fermée [...] a une valeur symbolique et non morale' dans les fabliaux. Le motif de la porte est joueur dans le système élaboré d'éléments spatiaux dans les fabliaux: la porte ouverte / fermée signifie désir de séduction - *De la grue* (v. 33), *Du Sot chevalier* (v. 118) - ou séduction réussie - *Gombert* (v. 185), *De celui qui bouta la pierre* (vv. 24-26).⁹

The first verses of *Brûlure* recall these symbolic characteristics of the doorway:

Qui a talent de bien aprendre,
et oreilles et cuer doit tendre
a celui qui le bien dist
por entendre ce qu'en li dist (vv. 13298-301)

Artists in the Middle Ages, working in all media, successfully employed architectural and spatial motifs - one thinks instantly of Gothic arches and vaults, walls and ramparts - and the author of the first *Vie* is no exception. In *Malaquin* and *Brûlure*, in order to gain access to paradise, the hermits and their entourage must cross a doorway that is not easy to broach:

Mout es la voie d'enfer lee
et bele et plesanz a l'entree
Quant plus vet avant, plus estrece,
tant qu'a la fin est la destrece
as fols qui leanz ce sont mis.
Et l'entree de parevis
au premier est estreite et dure,
mes cele estrece poi dure;
tant plus dure, plus eslargist
et plus as alanz enbelist (Malaquin vv. 10680-89)

Neither sex nor even an attempted seduction can take place in a 'holy' space. Wicked people are therefore obliged to violate first the spatial context, in this case the *topos* of the isolation of the holy hermitage. So, in *Malaquin*, the pagan duke travels to the desert and forces the hermit to leave his hermitage, marking the end of the hermit's isolation and the end of his symbolic protection against the world.¹⁰ In order to reinforce this important image, the hermitage is destroyed, thereby forcing the hermit to face up to the real and brutal temptations of the world (v. 10795). The same motif comes up

⁹ R. Brusegan. 'La Représentation de l'espace dans les fabliaux: frontières, intérieurs, fenêtres', *Reinardus*, 4 (1991), 51-70, p. 55.

¹⁰ Cf. Bretel, pp. 197-203, 400-13.

several times in the tale. After his sexual temptation, the holy man is able to return to his symbolic 'holy' space, even if it is located in a different geographical area. The terrified courtisan, wanting to tell all to the duke, must now leave the holy space created by the hermit's Christian heroism - the bed and the bedroom in in Malaquin's castle occupied by the hermit - and re-enter the symbolic space of the world by passing through a doorway:

D'un sorcot sengle se covri,
a l'uis se torna, si l'ovri,
devant le duc vint erranment

(my italics, vv. 11008-10)

The motif of holy space is all the more pronounced in *Brûlure*. The author describes the enclosure around the hermitage in order to show that the forest-dweller is indeed physically separated from the world (v.13348).¹¹ There is then a series of doorway confrontations that delineate the respective worlds of the naïve hermit and the cunning woman:

a l'uis vint, si le deferma
et a la fame demanda
'Qui estes vos...?'

(vv. 13472-74)¹²

The woman lies, telling the hermit that she is on her way to *cel chastel* (v.13478), the castle symbolising materialism, power and the wickedness of the world (the hermit being tormented first by the devil, then by the city-dwellers). She explains that she is tired and that if the hermit does not open his doors she will die of fear and fatigue. In fact, her words will prove both true and false in that if the hermit refuses her access to the hermitage she must return to the castle, will not repent and will be damned. On the other hand, by entering the hermitage she gives rise to a series of events which result in her death and damnation. Only a miracle can then resuscitate her and save her soul.

The hermit allows her into the hermitage (v.13497) but he enters his cell alone (v. 13501). A physical barrier remains between the holy space of the hermit and the

¹¹ 'Il ne semble pas qu'il y ait préférence pour un site plutôt que pour un autre; l'important est qu'il soit inhumain: forêt, grottes, gorges, îles sauvages, on pourrait multiplier les textes qui nous donnent de ces solitudes d'épouvantables tableaux', E. Delaruelle, 'Les ermites et la spiritualité populaire', pp. 223-24. Cf. v. 89 of *Sel* (ed. Bornäs): *Etoit en mout sauvage leu*.

¹² Note with regard to role of hospitality the formulaic greeting in *Sel* (vv. 153-56). In *Coq* there is a significant absence of appropriate response - is this because the devil is in the guise of a cleric when he knocks on the window (116-21)? Bretel (p. 535) notes that 'l'ermite manque ici de perspicacité: le refus de la part du visiteur de prononcer le nom de Dieu ou du Seigneur, comme l'y invitait le vers 118, aurait peut-être dû mettre l'anachorète sur ses gardes. Il n'est pas impossible en effet que la demande de bénédiction ait pu être utilisée comme un moyen de reconnaître si l'étranger qui survient est "de par Dieu" ou une créature du diable.'

worldly space in which the woman lives. She must again violate the hermit's holy space and take advantage of his Christian conscience to convince him that a refusal to allow her to sleep by his side would be a serious sin. The tactic works: the hermit invites her into his cell (v. 13517) and the cell loses its isolated and holy nature; the woman can continue her seduction of the hermit, first through flattery:

Estrete sui de halt paraige,
si estes vos, si com je croi.
A vostre estate bien le voi :
biaz braz avez et beles mains,
mais au sorplus est ce del mains,
que la chiere avez si formee
c'onques plus bele fu nee... (vv. 13555-62)

She then turns to physical means of seduction. In order to resist his burning desires and in a gesture of purification the hermit puts his fingers in a flame. The cell now witnesses a heroic and holy gesture but will be profaned by the castle-dwellers who believe the hermit to be capable and guilty of murder: they break the *uisset* (v.13642) and forcibly enter the hermitage. In *Brûlure*, as in *Malaquin*, the holy space of the hermit is violated because of lechery and the protagonists of both tales must leave their hermitages to go and face worldly justice in a castle or city. In the epilogue to *Brûlure* the author implicitly recognises the violent profanation of this holy space:

En astinence a grant vertu;
li prodom en fist son escu,
si s'en horda, si s'en covri
que Deus sa porte li ovri. (my italics, vv. 13718-21)

This would appear to confirm Claude Lecouteux's observation that 'en lisant les oeuvres médiévales nous sommes [...] frappés par une bipartition de l'espace qui semble s'opérer à l'insu des écrivains.'¹³

This apparent concern to situate the tales in an appropriate symbolic framework is conspicuous in some small illustrations, of modest quality but still fascinating, that are at the head of each tale in three thirteenth-century manuscripts. It is these illustrations that offer the modern scholar a precious opportunity to study the contemporary reception of the first *Vie*. This appendix is a sample of future research and

¹³ Lecouteux, *Au-delà du merveilleux*, p. 116.

bases its remarks on three manuscripts, about which little is known. As such, the present study of the interplay of textual and paratextual features is less 'scientific' than may be wished. However, if Stephen G. Nichols' hypothesis that manuscript versions of even the same text were illustrated 'for no discernible reason' is taken as a starting point, even an 'unscientific' study of the illustrations of the first *Vie* can help the modern scholar to go beyond text and paratext and consider the text as might have done a thirteenth-century reader.¹⁴ The illustrative programme of a medieval manuscript is not a simple matter of decoration and the modern reader may view these illustrations in the same way as scribal interpolations, even if he does not know who (of all those working on the manuscript) had actually read and was reacting to the text. As Anne Hedeman has noted, there were no standard textual or illustrative editions in the Middle Ages, patrons and artists having different needs and concerns in different situations.¹⁵ It is important never to lose sight of the fact that a text such as the first *Vie*, which today is conserved in over fifty extant manuscripts, would have been read and perceived in many different ways: all depended on the context of the production of the manuscript, its eventual destination and its performance. Let us not forget either the people whose involvement led to the production of the manuscript - author, chef d'atelier, scribe, artist, rubricator - and that each of these influenced the form of the text, even if they had not read it: 'each system is a unit independent of the others and yet calls attention to them; each tries to convey something about the other while to some extent substituting it'.¹⁶ Images play a fundamental role in the reading of a manuscript, each suggesting perhaps a different solution to the same problem. It is not easy, of course, to distinguish an 'individual' interpretation from the use of standard images, but even the use of the latter implies that someone working on the manuscript has read or is familiar with the text and, still more significant, that he has interpreted it.¹⁷ Michael Camille has made the important remark

¹⁴ S.G. Nichols, 'The image as textual unconscious: medieval manuscripts', *L'Esprit Créateur: Psychoanalysis and the French Text*, 29 (1989), 7-23, p. 7. For the arbitrary nature of manuscript illustration, see O. Pächt, *Book Illumination in the Middle Ages: An Introduction* (London: Harvey Miller / Oxford University Press, 1986). J.R. Doner believes that there was no 'comprehensive system governing the choice of topics for illustration', and that 'this need not mean, however, that the process was totally arbitrary', cf. 'Scribal whim and miniature allocation in the illustrated manuscripts of the *Continuation-Gauvain*', *Medium Ævum* 56 (1996), 72-95, pp. 89-90.

¹⁵ A.D. Hedeman, *The Royal Image. Illustrations of the Grandes Chroniques de France 1274-1422*, Berkeley, Los Angeles & Londres: University of California Press, 1991.

¹⁶ Nichols, op. cit., p. 7.

¹⁷ Cf. Jane Taylor, art. cit.; B. Brenk, 'Vie des saints au Moyen Age', pp. 31-41 dans *Texte et image, Actes du Colloque International de Chantilly (13-15 octobre 1982)*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1984; and M.A. Stones, 'Sacred art and profane art: secular and liturgical book-illumination in the thirteenth

that the medieval artists 'was not shackled [...] by the tyranny of originality' and Janet R. Doner insists on the fact that 'a common core of focal images' was not enough to standardise manuscripts produced by and for a variety of people.¹⁸ There was, therefore, an interpretation made by those working on the manuscript version of the text and their choice of episodes for illustration and selection of common iconographical models implies a reaction to the text. Very often, in the case of the first *Vie*, this choice seems to centre on either the most graphic scene of a tale or on a conversion scene or miracle. It is perhaps only natural to want to catch the attention of the reader by depicting the spectacular, and it is true that in general 'certain adventures were considered more appealing for illustrative purposes than others'.¹⁹ This does, however, call into question certain relationships: first, between image and text - is the image ancillary to the literary narrative, serving as mere ornamentation, or does it respond to the text and provide a new gloss on the narrative? Second, between image and rubric - does the rubric serve as an introduction to the text or as a caption for the image? Also, it questions whether the artist actually read the text he was illustrating. There has been much recent debate on the order in which planner, rubricator and artist worked on a manuscript, and this is important since it can shed some light on the relationships between the various parts of a manuscript and raises the question of who were the 'responsible readers' of the text. This in turn can help the modern reader better interpret the gloss offered by the paratext and so be better placed to understand the contemporary reader's reactions and attitudes towards the text.

In the case of the first *Vie*, the fixed forms of the tales - prologue, narrative, epilogue - means that the choice of scenes, motifs and messages is restricted, as is the place in which the illustration will be drawn. In other words, a comparative study of all the illustrated manuscripts of the first *Vie* should reveal a fairly solid indication of the reception of the tales in a precise context. By way of example, three illustrations that accompany *Brûlure* can be briefly studied. In MS B.N. fr. 1039 fol. 112 v, preceded by the rubric *De cele ki vaut faire l'ermite gesir a li* (fig. 7), the illustration is enclosed within the lettrine 'Q'.²⁰ It concentrates on the exciting action of the tales that is

century', pp. 100-112 in *The Epic in Medieval Society: Aesthetic and Moral Values*, ed. H. Scholler, Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1977.

¹⁸ M. Camille, *Images on the Edge*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992, p. 160; Doner, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁹ Janet Doner, p. 76.

²⁰ Doner believes that the illuminated initial is 'a privileged element of the verse text' which reinforces the introductory role of the illustration, op. cit., p. 76.

certainly not its principal teaching but which is the textual element most likely to strike the reader. The hermit defends himself by way of a gesture that recalls three lines of the narrative:

bien vit que il ne dormoit pas,
qu'ele l'entendi verseillant
et sa lanterne vit ardent.

(vv. 13457-59)

In this almost biblical context, the illustration shows a scene of corruption and lust.²¹ There is a violation of internal space since the woman tries to seduce the hermit; the latter puts his hand in the flame. The candlestick separates the characters, and despite the fact that the woman dominates in terms of position and size, it is in fact the candlestick and the hermit that form the centre of interest. The two characters look at each other and communicate and the daring position of the woman, who is wearing revealingly tight clothing, shows that the authority has been transgressed. It is perhaps significant that, in this illustration, the woman's face has been rubbed out by the readers of the manuscript.²²

In B.N. NAF 13521 fol. 231 v. (fig. 8), the same tale is also illustrated within the enclosed space of a lettrine. Painted under the rubric *De l'ermite qui ardi ses doiz*,²³ the image is more stylised than that of MS. B.N. fr. 1039. It shows the expulsion scene rather than the seduction scene: the woman leaves the scene and pulls apart a curtain at the doorway. It is therefore the hermit who dominates in position, size and posture: his feet rest on the frame of the letter and the woman, his subordinate in every regard, is obliged to leave the holy space created by the hermit's heroic gesture. In fact, the hermit's hand is exposed to a *lanterne ardant*, a term that is twice repeated in the text (in v. 13459, cited above, and v. 13624). What is more, this is not mentioned in the rubric. The woman looks behind her, in an echo of vv. 13624ff, and above the lettrine a

²¹ Doner notes that in the illustrated MSS of the *Continuation-Gauvain* 'it is perhaps significant that the illustrations choose [...] the least problematic portions of the material, and avoid the more controversial seduction/rape portions of the tale' (ibid., p. 89). As for the first *Vie*, the illustration of B.N. fr. 1039 is the only one that I have as yet been able to identify that openly concentrates on a scene of attempted rape, the motif also appearing in *Sénéchal* and *Malaquin*.

²² This is also the case on fol. 88v of the same manuscript, where the head of the Duke Malaquin, represented as a Jew, has been rubbed out.

²³ Rappelons la remarque de Nichols à propos du rôle de la rubrique: celle-ci 'does not simply "explain" or describe what is to be found in the miniature or passage it introduces. The rubric focuses attention, telling us what it is we are to see in the visual scene or laying out the narrative thrust of the verbal text', op. cit., p. 7.

voulted canopy - a common and important gothic illustrative device - gives the scene a *locus* and expresses a notion of security.

The illustration of *Brûlure* in MS B.N. fr. 12471 (fig. 9), far from being the most explicit of the three, is perhaps the one that is the most faithful to the moral teaching of the tale. The artist does not concentrate on the action of the narrative (seduction, holy heroism, expulsion) but paints a symbolic representation that illustrates the fundamental aspect of the tale. To the right is a castle with an open and welcoming doorway: this is a direct invitation to the world. The cell to the left, on the other hand, is very modest and recalls the 'beehive cells' of ancient Irish hermits. The open book symbolises wisdom and the trees underline the traditional isolation topos, both physical and spiritual. Here is a clear division between secular and religious and an effective way of visualising the difference between the holiness of the hermitage and the worldliness of the castle.

Given the violation of forms, meanings and space, the relationship between motifs such as sex and salvation in the first *Vie*, as shown in the three illustrations of *Brûlure*, reveals itself to be extremely complex. In fact, if the motif of sex informs the audience/reader that the good Christian God will pardon all sins when sincerely confessed, the fact that the motif plays such an important role in over half of the tales shows that, perhaps, the author knows his public: is he composing his tales in reaction to the new 'profane' literature?²⁴ A close study of the text, paratext and context reveals to the modern reader tangible evidence of contemporary reception, even if this is the reaction of a medieval man working on a manuscript rather than the text's target audience (and who is to say that the target audience might not have included artisans anyway?). In the scenes briefly outlined above it is not merely a question of combat between good and evil and so there is established a complex latticework of representation, given the author's desire to emphasise his tales's moral teachings rather than their exciting action. It is far from certain that this concentration on moral rather than plot is always intentional, the very *raison d'être* of all analogous literature - to

²⁴ J. Voisenet has remarked that, before the thirteenth century, 'le sexuel et le sacré s'excluent', but that later on the common motif of the debauched cleric signifies that 'la rencontre du sexuel et du sacré n'est pas traitée sur le mode de la moralisation mais [sur celui] du rire', 'Figures de la virginité ou images de paillardise: la sexualité du clerc au Moyen Age', pp. 569-79 in *Le Clerc au Moyen Age*, Senefiance 37, Aix-en-Provence: CUERMA, 1995, pp. 571, 577-8. The first *Vie* is, however, an exception: does this mean that the author is reacting to a new fashion? The lines taken from *Fornication imitée* and placed at the head of my chapter on Author and Audience are most significant in this context, for it should also be remembered that the only composer of fabliaux known to be active at this early date is Jehan Bodel. This is indeed a new fashion and the role of the *conte pieux* as 'anti-fabliau' cannot be easily dismissed.

entertain and to edify - means that the action, however attractive it may be, cannot be more important than the message (nor, if we stretch the point, vice-versa). However, this admixture of 'profane' and 'holy', 'light' narrative details and 'serious' morals, of sex and salvation, although posing a problem of interpretation for the modern reader, would have presented no difficulties for the medieval audience. In its textual manifestations, that are based on orality, and in the visual images of its miniatures, the text and its interpretation can be seen to be based on a network of motifs familiar to the public, such as that of holy space that the modern researcher must decipher with all the problems implied by his alterity with the Middle Ages.

Illustrations

- 1 C. Manhes-Desramble, *Les Vitraux narratifs de la cathédrale de Chartres*, Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1993, pp. 364-65, pl. 44.
- 2 Good Samaritan window, Chartres, *ibid.*
- 3 'Ici chache l'angre Adam et Eve de pareis', *Bible historiée*, John Rylands University of Manchester Library MS fr. 5.
- 4 'Ici est enfers e li angels ki enferme les portes', Winchester Psalter, MS Cotton Nero C.IV fol. 39 r; illustration taken from Joan Evans, *The Flowering of the Middle Ages*, Londres: Thames & Hudson, 1966, p. 230, pl. 51.
- 5 MS B.N. fr. 412 fol. 228 r (in prose).
- 6 MS B.N. fr. 1951 fol. 1 r (in verse).
- 7 MS B.N. fr. 1039 fol. 112 v. Cf. A. Weber, 'Untersuchungen über die Vies des Anciens Pères', dans *Handschriftliche Studien auf dem Gebiete Romanischen Litteratur des Mittelalters*, Fraunfeld, 1876, pp. 7-20; Schwann, p. 236; A.P. Ducrot-Grandeyre, *Etudes sur les miracles de Gautier de Coinci*, Helsinki: Annales Academiae Scientiarum Fennicae, 1932, B. 35, 2, pp. 92-93.
- 8 MS B.N. NAF 13521 fol. 231 v. Cf. S. Solente, *Scriptorium* 7 (1953), 226-34; Ducrot-Grandeyre, *ibid.*, pp. 97-98.
- 9 MS B.N. fr. 12471 fol. 126 v. Cf. Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-35; Schwann, *op. cit.*, p. 236.





Iei chache langra Adam e ene de pareis.

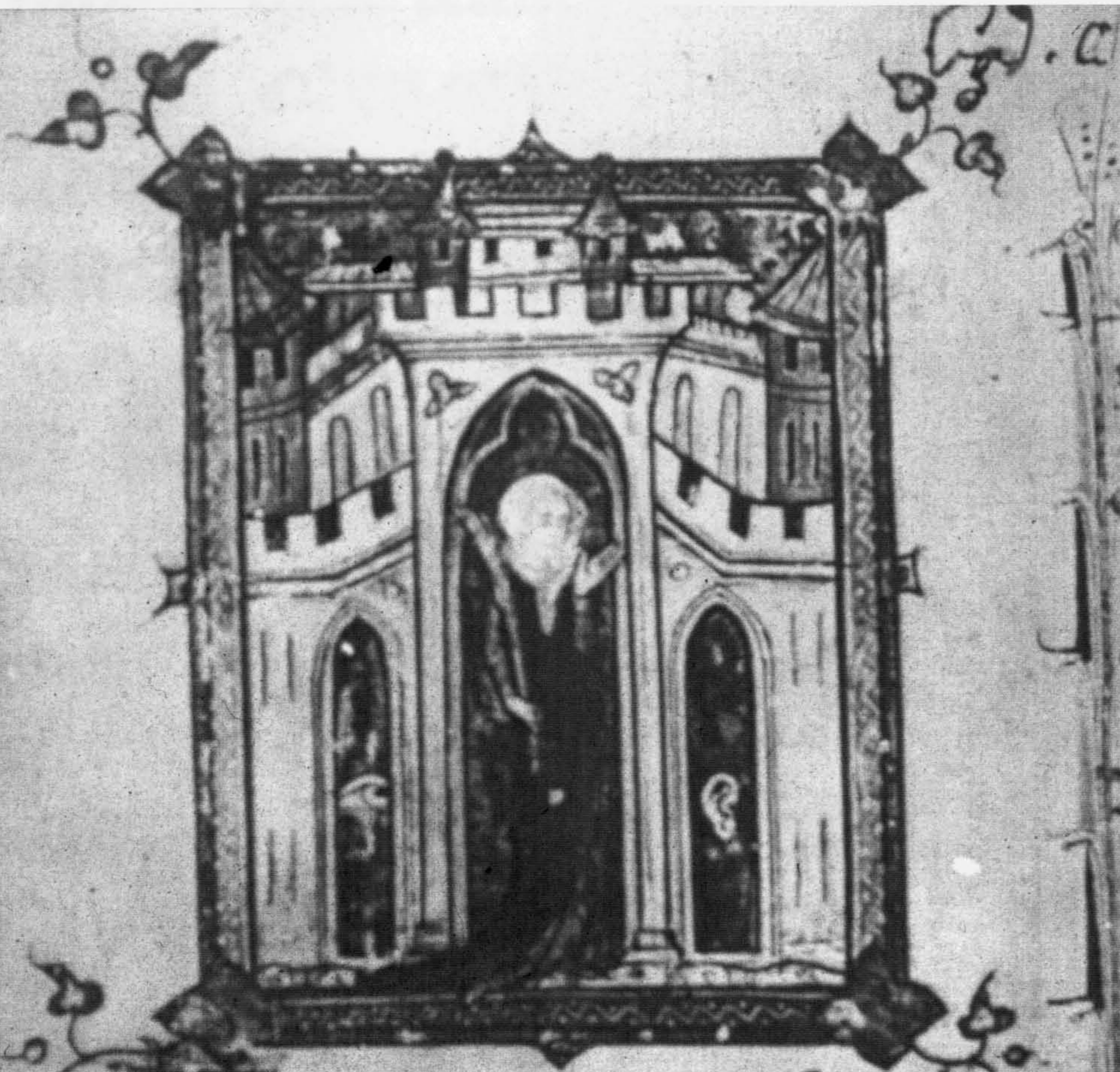






Dites
gens
desir
rent
par
natu
re a
sauoir
Et por
ce que
nul
ne pu

et tot sauoir. Ja soit ce que chascune cho
se puiſt estre ſeue: ſi couient que chas
cuns face aucune chose. et ce que li uns
ne ſoit que li autres le face. ſi que tout
est ſeu en tel maniere quil n'est ſeu de
nulun aparliu: mais de tous enſam
ble: car il est ainſi que totes gens ne
uiuent mie enſemble: ainſi ſont li
un mort aucois que li autre naiſſent.



C'ommes au lai fait lige l'ornage
 Sans faulxer de fin corage
 Mais iamaiz a nul iour retraire
 Ne sanot cōprendre. i. afaire
 Il n'empendrai nul volentier
 C'ō al. q' sui siēs ennos
 Mais q' il plait 7 il li fiet
 Bien q' la chose me grier
 C'oit il conques grier de nēs

Q' en ce monde sauve lame
 li orent **De celi ki nait faire le**
 bñ sozēc. **mite gesir a li. xxx**



chie.
 ie.
 possiēc.
 ierent.
 etit.
 mist.
 itache.
 itance.

A celui q' le bien li dist
 p' o' entendre ce con li dist

oi talent
 a de bien
 aprenre
 z o'eilles
 z aier do
 rendre



XIII



XXIX

Q ou plus leon n'ul animal
 A nsi q fu al foy vilains
 Q sere n'ist en la cheurie
 C il fet son preu qui tunc helo
 T qui a celu guerre donne
 Et biest que cest liede li don
 D e l'ermite qui ardi se dorz



iutalant a
 de bien
 a prendre
 Oreilles
 et aier
 idont tēdre
 a celu

Q vile bien li dit
 P entendre ce que li dit
 Q le bienot et n'iretient
 C elu resemble qui sen uiet
 M orant de loif de la fontaine
 V ne vent sont amiet et n'ont



Qui talent a de bñ apñdre
 les oreilles del cuer doit redire
 a celui qui le bñ li dist
 p our entendre cou q leur dit
 A un le bñ ot et nel retient
 E oin resamble qui sen vient